

# The Five Points of Calvinism from Scripture



Sovereign Grace Baptist Church

Below are explanations of TULIP (an acronym representing Calvinism's main tenets) followed by supporting biblical texts. Remember that not all supporting texts will explicitly teach a given tenet. In such instances, the tenet of Calvinism in question will be, to borrow from an old confession, "by good and necessary consequence deduced from" the supporting texts.

### **Total Depravity (or Total Inability)**

When Calvinists speak of man as being totally depraved, they mean that man's nature is corrupt, perverse, and sinful throughout. The adjective "total" does not mean that each sinner is as totally or completely corrupt in his actions and thoughts as it is possible for him to be. Instead, the word "total" is used to indicate that the whole of man's being has been affected by sin. The corruption extends to every part of man, his body and soul; sin has affected all (the totality) of man's faculties - his mind, his will, etc.

As a result of this inborn corruption, the natural man is totally unable to do anything spiritually good; thus, Calvinists speak of man's "total inability." The inability intended by this terminology is spiritual inability; it means that the sinner is so spiritually bankrupt that he can do nothing pertaining to his salvation. The natural man is enslaved to sin; he is a child of Satan, rebellious toward God, blind to truth, corrupt, and unable to save himself or to prepare himself for salvation.

#### *Spiritual Deadness*

Genesis 2:16-17; Psalm 51:5; Psalm 58:3; John 3:5-7; Romans 5:12; Ephesians 2:1-3; Colossians 2:13.

#### *Darkened Minds and Corrupt Hearts*

Genesis 6:5; Genesis 8:21; Ecclesiastes 9:3; Jeremiah 17:9; Mark 7:21-23; John 3:19; Romans 8:7-8; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 4:17-19; Ephesians 5:8; Titus 1:15.

#### *Bondage to Sin and Satan*

John 8:34; John 8:44; Romans 6:20; Ephesians 2:1-2; 2 Timothy 2:25-26; Titus 3:3; 1 John 3:10; 1 John 5:19.

#### *Universal Bondage*

1 Kings 8:46; 2 Chronicles 6:36; Job 15:14-16; Psalm 130:3; Psalm 143:2; Proverbs 20:9; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Ecclesiastes 7:29; Isaiah 53:6; Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:9-12; James 3:2; James 3:8; 1 John 1:8; 1 John 1:10.

### **The Perseverance of the Saints (or the Security of Believers)**

The elect are not only redeemed by Christ and renewed by the Spirit, but 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 predestined to eternal glory and are therefore assured of heaven.

Isaiah 43:1-3; Isaiah 54:10; Jeremiah 32:40; Matthew 18:12-14; John 3:16; John 3:36; John 5:24; John 6:35-40; John 6:47; John 10:27-30; John 17:11-12; John 17:15; Romans 5:8-10; Romans 8:1; Romans 8:35-39; 1 Corinthians 1:7-9; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 2 Corinthians 4:14; 2 Corinthians 4:17; Ephesians 1:5; Ephesians 1:13-14; Ephesians 4:30; Colossians 3:3-4; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 4:18; Hebrews 9:12; Hebrews 9:15; Hebrews 10:14; Hebrews 12:28; 1 Peter 1:3-5; 1 John 2:19; 1 John 2:25; 1 John 5:4; 1 John 5:11-13; 1 John 5:20; Jude 1:1; Jude 1:24-25.

### **Irresistible Grace (or the Efficacious Call of the Spirit)**

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." 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.

#### *The Spirit Saves*

Romans 8:14; 1 Corinthians 2:10-13; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Corinthians 3:6; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; 1 Peter 1:1-2.

#### *The Spirit Gives New Birth*

Deuteronomy 30:6; Ezekiel 11:19; Ezekiel 36:26-27; John 1:12-13; John 3:3-8; John 5:21; 2 Corinthians 5:17-18; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 2:5; Ephesians 2:10; Colossians 2:13; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:3; 1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 5:4.

#### *The Spirit Reveals the Secrets of God*

Matthew 11:25-27; Matthew 13:10-11; Matthew 13:16; Matthew 16:15-17; Luke 8:10; Luke 10:21; John 6:37; John 6:44-45; John 6:64-65; John 10:3-6; John 10:16; John 10:26-29; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 1:17-18.

#### *The Spirit Gives Faith and Repentance*

Acts 5:31; Acts 11:18; Acts 13:48; Acts 16:14; Acts 18:27; Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 1:29; 2 Timothy 2:25-26.

#### *The Spirit Effectually Calls*

Romans 1:6-7; Romans 8:30; Romans 9:23-24; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 Corinthians 1:23-31; Galatians 1:15-16; Ephesians 4:4; 2 Timothy 1:9; Hebrews 9:15; Jude 1:1; 1 Peter 1:15; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 Peter 5:10; 2 Peter 1:3; Revelation 17:14.

#### *Salvation Given by a Sovereign God*

Isaiah 55:11; John 3:27; John 17:2; Romans 9:16; 1 Corinthians 3:6-7; 1 Corinthians 4:7; Philippians 2:12-13; James 1:18; 1 John 5:20.

Job 14:4; Jeremiah 23:13; Matthew 7:16-18; Matthew 12:33; John 6:44; John 6:65; Romans 11:35-36; 1 Corinthians 2:14; 1 Corinthians 4:7; 2 Corinthians 3:5.

### **Unconditional Election**

It would have been perfectly just for God to have left all men in their sin and misery and to have shown mercy to none. God was under no obligation whatsoever to provide salvation for anyone. It is in this context that the Bible sets forth the doctrine of election.

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

Those who were not chosen for salvation were passed by and left to their own evil devices and choices. It is not within the creature's jurisdiction to call into question the justice of the creator for not choosing everyone for salvation. It is enough to know that the judge of the earth has done right. It should, however, be kept in mind that if God had not graciously chosen a people for himself and sovereignly determined to provide salvation for them and apply it to them, none would be saved. The fact that he did this for some, to the exclusion of others, is in no way unfair to the latter group, unless of course one maintains that God was under obligation to provide salvation for sinners - a position which the Bible utterly rejects.

The act of election itself saved no one; what it did was to mark out certain individuals for salvation. Consequently, the doctrine of election must not be divorced from the doctrines of human guilt, redemption, and regeneration, or else it will be distorted and misrepresented. In other words, if the Father's act of election is to be kept in its proper biblical balance and correctly understood, it must be related to the redeeming work of the Son, who gave himself to save the elect, and to the renewing work of the Spirit, who brings the elect to faith in Christ.

#### *A Chosen People*

Deuteronomy 10:14-15; Psalm 33:12; Psalm 65:4; Psalm 106:5; Haggai 2:23; Matthew 11:27; Matthew 22:14; Matthew 22:22; Matthew 22:24; Matthew 24:31; Luke 18:7; Romans 8:28-30; Romans 8:33; Romans 11:28; Colossians 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:9; Titus 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1-2; 1 Peter 2:8-9; Revelation 17:14.

### *Election Not Based on Foreseen Responses*

Mark 13:20; John 15:16; Acts 13:48; Acts 18:27; Romans 9:11-13; Romans 9:16; Romans 10:20; 1 Corinthians 1:27-29; Philippians 1:29; Philippians 2:12-13; Ephesians 1:4; Ephesians 2:10; 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:9; James 2:5; Revelation 13:8; Revelation 17:8.

### *Election Precedes Salvation*

Acts 13:48; Romans 11:7; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 2:10.

### *Election Based on Sovereign Mercy*

Exodus 33:19; Deuteronomy 7:6-7; Matthew 20:15; Romans 9:10-24; Romans 11:4-6; Romans 11:33-36; Ephesians 1:5.

### **Limited Atonement (or Particular Redemption)**

Historical or mainline Calvinism has consistently maintained that Christ's redeeming work was definite in design and accomplishment - that it was intended to render complete satisfaction for certain specified sinners, and that it actually secured salvation for these individuals and for no one else. The salvation which Christ earned for his people includes everything involved in bringing them into a right relationship with God, including the gifts of faith and repentance. Christ did not die simply to make it possible for God to pardon sinners. Neither does God leave it up to sinners to decide whether or not Christ's work will be effective. On the contrary, all for whom Christ sacrificed himself will be saved infallibly. Redemption, therefore, was designed to bring to pass God's purpose of election.

All Calvinists agree that Christ's obedience and suffering were of infinite value, and that if God had so willed, the satisfaction rendered by Christ would have saved every member of the human race. It would have required no more obedience nor any greater suffering for Christ to have secured salvation for every man, woman, and child who ever lived than it did for him to secure salvation for the elect only. But he came into the world to represent and save only those given to him by the Father. Thus, Christ's saving work was limited in that it was designed to save some and not others, but it was not limited in value, for it was of infinite worth and would have secured salvation for everyone if this had been God's intention.

The Arminians also place a limitation on the atoning work of Christ, but one of a much different nature. They hold that Christ's saving work was designed to make possible the salvation of all men on the condition that they believe, but that Christ's death in itself did not actually secure or guarantee salvation for anyone.

Since not all men will be saved as the result of Christ's redeeming work, a limitation must be admitted. Either the atonement was limited in that it was designed to secure salvation for certain sinners, but not for others, or it was limited in that it was not intended to secure salvation for any, but was designed only to make it possible for God to pardon sinners on the condition that they believe. In other words, one must limit its design either in extent (it was not intended for all) or in effectiveness (it did not secure salvation for any). As Boettner so aptly observes, for the Calvinist, the atonement "is like a narrow bridge which goes all the way across the stream; for the Arminian it is like a great wide bridge that goes only half-way across."

### *Jesus Actually Saves*

Matthew 1:21; Luke 19:10; Acts 5:31; Romans 3:24-25; Romans 5:8-9; Romans 5:10; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 1:3-4; Galatians 3:13; Ephesians 1:3-4; Ephesians 2:15-16; Ephesians 5:25-26; Philippians 1:29; Colossians 1:13-14; Colossians 1:21-22; 1 Timothy 1:15; Titus 2:14; Titus 3:5-6; Hebrews 9:12; Hebrews 9:14; Hebrews 13:12; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 John 1:7.

### *Jesus Fulfills the Eternal Covenant*

John 6:35-40; John 10:11; John 10:14-18; John 10:24-29; John 17:1-11; John 17:20; John 17:24-26; Romans 5:12; Romans 5:17-19; Ephesians 1:3-12.

### *How Jesus Died for "All" and Yet for a Particular People (2)*

These texts speak of Christ's saving work in general terms: John 1:9; John 1:29; John 3:16-17; John 4:42; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; 1 Timothy 2:4-6; Hebrews 2:9; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 2:1-2; 1 John 4:14.

One reason for the use of these expressions was to correct the false notion that salvation was for the Jews alone. Such phrases as "the world," "all men," "all nations," and "every creature" were used by the New Testament writers to emphatically correct this mistake. These expressions are intended to show that Christ died for all men without distinction (i.e., he died for Jews and Gentiles alike), but they are not intended to indicate that Christ died for all men without exception (i.e., he did not die for the purpose of saving each and every lost sinner).

These texts speak of Christ's saving work in definite terms and show that it was intended to infallibly save a particular people, namely, those given to him by the Father: Matthew 1:21; Matthew 20:28; Matthew 26:28; John 10:11; John 11:50-53; Acts 20:28; Romans 8:32-34; Ephesians 5:25-27; Hebrews 2:17; Hebrews 3:1; Hebrews 9:15; Hebrews 9:28; Revelation 5:9.