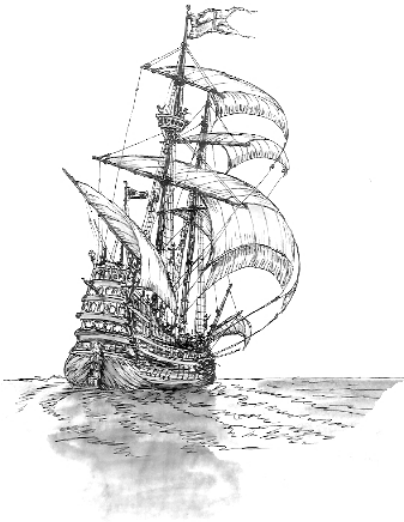


CALVIN 500 SERIES

**500th Anniversary of the Birth of JOHN CALVIN
(10 July 1509 – 27 May 1564)**



#3: The Galleons In The Reformation Fleet



We may safely assume that just about everyone who has a serious interest in the religious world has heard about, ‘The Five Points Of Calvinism.’

I am not so convinced that all of the same people have knowledge of ‘The Five Articles of Arminianism.’ Perhaps even those who have a preference for this school of thought are not aware of their existence.

Yet, the ‘Five Articles of Arminianism’ were formulated and made public first – and provoked, prompted, teased out, ‘The Five Points of Calvinism.’

The controversy between Arminianism and Calvinism arose in Holland in the early 1600’s.

The founder of the Arminian party was Jacob Arminius (1560-1609).

He studied under the strict Calvinist Theodore Beza at Geneva and became a professor of theology at the University of Leyden in 1603. Gradually Arminius came to reject a number of Calvinist teachings, and opened up a controversy on the subject. This controversy spread all over Holland, where the Reformed Church was the overwhelming majority.

The Arminians drafted their creed in Five Articles (written by Uytenbogaert), and laid them before the state authorities of Holland in 1610 under the name ‘Remonstrance,’ signed by forty-six ministers.

The Calvinists then responded with a ‘Counter-Remonstrance.’

However, the official Calvinistic response came from the Synod of Dort which was held to consider the Five Articles (of Arminianism) from 13 November 1618, to 9 May 1619. Eighty-four members and eighteen secular commissioners served on this Synod.

The Synod wrote what has come to be known as the Canons of Dort.

Therefore, the so-called ‘Five Points of Calvinism’ were not chosen by the Calvinists as a summary of their teaching. They emerged *as a response* to the Arminians who chose to oppose the Reformed form of doctrine on these five issues.

It may be a 400-year-old controversy, but these five points still lie at the heart of Biblical theology. They are not unimportant. Where we stand on these things deeply affects our view of:

- God,
- man,
- salvation,
- the atonement,
- regeneration,
- assurance,
- worship,
- and missions.

Is this subject controversial?

Certainly is!

... Those who have been the opponents of Calvinism - both when John Calvin was alive, and even now, 500 years after his birth, do not tend to like the clear presentation of theology that comes through the ‘Five Points.’

Westminster Seminary California president and professor of church history W. Robert Godfrey, in a new biography, ‘John Calvin: Pilgrim and Pastor,’ states:

“In his own day Calvin was attacked primarily by two groups. First, his theological opponents’ passion was provoked in part by the effective, clear, and persuasive way in which Calvin presented his thought. The force of his ideas led those who disagreed with him sometimes to attack him quite personally”

One of the attacks on Calvinism that is still launched today is the attempt to reduce this set of biblical teachings to nothing more than a personal issue:

“‘The Five Points of Calvinism’ ... so you take your teaching from a man - John Calvin. You follow the words of a man; we prefer to follow the Word of God!”

Truth is, John Calvin:

- did *not* give the name 'Calvinism' to the theology he developed through his works such as the famous 'Institutes of the Christian Religion' – in fact, he would have been quite embarrassed by the name!

- was *not the first* to teach the doctrines that appear in what are now known as the 'Five Points of Calvinism' ... this teaching goes right back through church leaders like Augustine - and the Apostle Paul!

- Each of these teachings *were not conceived by* John Calvin's own mind, but were taught explicitly in the Word of God. **'Calvinism' is Bible theology!**

John Calvin himself warned that no man should go beyond what the Bible says:

"For we shall know that the moment we exceed the bounds of the Word, our course is outside the pathway and in darkness, and that there we must repeatedly wander, slip, and stumble.

Let this, therefore, first of all be before our eyes: to seek any other knowledge of predestination than what the Word of God discloses is not less insane than if one should purpose to walk in a pathless waste [cf. Job 12:24], or to see in darkness. And let us not be ashamed to be ignorant of something in this matter, wherein there is a certain learned ignorance.

Rather, let us willingly refrain from inquiring into a kind of knowledge, the ardent desire for which is both foolish and dangerous, nay, even deadly" (III. 21: 2).

Tonight, **we would like to spell out what we believe the Scripture teaches on these five points** (otherwise known as 'The Doctrines of Grace').

Somewhere down the line of history these five points came to be summarised under the acronym "TULIP."

T - Total Depravity
U - Unconditional Election
L - Limited Atonement
I - Irresistible Grace
P - Perseverance of the Saints

Personally, I much prefer to use *another* acronym, "G-O-S-P-E-L," to say exactly the same thing ... only, with this one, we are not led off course by reference to a 'Dutch' flower (Tulip), but the emphasis sits clearly where it belongs in Calvinistic theology – on the grace of God in Christ.

Grace is ...

O-bligatory,
S-overeign,
P-rovision-making,
E-fficacious,
L-asting.

The title of this third message in the 'Calvin 500 Series' is:

[3] THE GALLEONS (OF GOSPEL GRACE) IN THE REFORMATION FLEET: THE FIVE POINTS OF CALVINISM.

Galleons were large purpose-built multi-decked warships used primarily by the nations of Europe from the 16th to 18th centuries. They were stronger, more heavily armed, and also cheaper to build than a class of ships they largely replaced - Carracks, that tended to be lightly armed and used for transporting cargo.

The principal warships of the opposing English and Spanish fleets in the 1588 confrontation of the Spanish Armada were galleons. Then, the modified English "race built" galleons developed by John Hawkins proved decisive in the battle, while the massive Spanish galleons, designed primarily as transports for long ocean voyages, proved incredibly durable in the battles and in the great storm on the voyage home; most of them survived.

To keep with the sea-faring imagery that we have been using in this series, we picture John Calvin as the Admiral of the Reformation Fleet, installed on the deck of the Flagship of that Fleet, flying the flag with the words, 'Soli Deo Gloria' emblazoned on it. Right behind this Flagship comes a quintet of vessels of an imposing structure – 'The Galleons of Gospel Grace.'

[The Calvinist sees the grace of God running through the whole of our history – from eternity past through to eternity future.](#)

From our election in ages past, to our eventual revelation as the sons and daughters of God in the Glory, as Peter indicates in **1 Peter 5:12**, we stand by virtue of "the true grace of God"!

C.H. Spurgeon once penned a best-selling book, entitled, 'All Of Grace' ... and this aptly sums up our experience of God and His salvation!

At no point can we pause along the journey, point to this action or that spiritual action, and boast, "*I did that. I earned that. Or, I deserved that.*"

The testimony of **Ephesians 2:8&9** can be summoned: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast."

Henry Mahan, Pastor of Thirteenth Street Baptist Church in Ashland, Kentucky, says:

1. It was Covenant GRACE that Chose us (**2 Timothy 1:9**);
2. It was Invincible GRACE that Pursued us (**Galatians 1:15**);
3. It was Redeeming GRACE that Saved us (**Ephesians 2:8**);
4. It is Preserving GRACE that Keeps us (**Philippians 1:6**).

"Glory," he concludes, "is nothing more than grace fully developed!"

I like the way Philip Doddridge and Augustus Toplady highlighted the central role grace plays in God's operations on earth in their 'combined' hymn:

**Grace first contrived a way
To save rebellious man;
And all the steps that grace display,
Which drew the wondrous plan.**

**Grace first inscribed my name
In God's eternal book;
'Twas grace that gave me to the Lamb,
Who all my sorrows took.**

***Saved by grace alone!
This is all my plea:
Jesus died for sinful men,
And Jesus died for me.***

Much of the 'religious world' around us, to one degree or another, declares that salvation is accomplished, not by grace, but by the will of man, the worth of man, and the work of man. However, the Word of God declares that salvation is by the will of God alone, the worth of Christ alone, and the work of the Holy Spirit alone. It is ... all of grace!

Galleon #1:

[1] TOTAL DEPRAVITY (GRACE IS OBLIGATORY).

ALL MEN AND WOMEN BY NATURE ARE TOTALLY DEPRAVED.

When we speak about man's depravity, we mean man's natural condition apart from any grace exerted by God to restrain or transform man.

[John Calvin certainly saw illustration after illustration of the Depravity of Man in events that occurred in his own lifetime.](#)

Not only were the times harsh and immoral, they were often barbaric. He described in a letter the cruelty common in Geneva:

"A conspiracy of men and women has lately been discovered who, for the space of three years, had [intentionally] spread the plague through the city, by what mischievous device I know not."

The upshot of this was that fifteen women were burned at the stake.

"Some men," he said, "have even been punished more severely; some have committed suicide in prison, and while twenty-five are still kept prisoners, the conspirators do not cease ... to smear the door-locks of the dwelling-houses with their poisonous ointment."

Calvin himself was driven out of his homeland, France, under threat of death.

For the next 20 years he agonised over the martyrs there and corresponded with many of them.

In 1552, five young pastors, who had been trained in Switzerland, returned as missionaries to France and were arrested. They were condemned to death by burning. Calvin wrote to them through their trial.

“We pray,” he wrote, “that [God] would glorify Himself more and more by your constancy, and that He may, by the comfort of His Spirit, sweeten and endear all that is bitter to the flesh, and so absorb your spirits in Himself, that in contemplating that heavenly crown, you may be ready without regret to leave all that belongs to this world.”

Man generally has a high view of himself, ... and is more than happy to compare himself to other members of the human race who ‘have more sin’ than him!

- *“Intentionally spread a deadly disease - I’d never do that!”*

- *“Slaughter preachers of the Gospel - you’d never catch me agreeing with that!”*

The doctrine of man’s original sin and total depravity does not mean that all men are as sinful and corrupt as they can be. God will not allow men in this world to be as wicked in deed as we all are in heart.

The terrible condition of man’s heart will never be recognised by people who measure themselves only against other men.

Total depravity is our condition in relation to God primarily, and only secondarily in relation to man. Unless we start here we will never grasp the totality of our natural depravity.

[Man’s depravity is total in at least four senses.](#)

1. Our rebellion against God is total.

Apart from the grace of God, man has no delight in the holiness of God, nor does he gladly submit to the sovereign authority of God.

Of course totally depraved men can be very religious and very generous.

They can pray and give alms and fast, as Jesus said (**Matthew 6:1-18**). But their very religion is rebellion against the rights of their Creator, if it does not come from a childlike heart of trust in the free grace of God.

‘Religion’ is one of the largest cloaks that man uses in an effort to conceal his unwillingness to forsake self-reliance and place all his hopes on the unmerited mercy of God (**Luke 18:9-14; Colossians 2:20-23**).

The totality of our rebellion is seen in **Romans 3:9-12&18**. “What then? are we better [than they]? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; 10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. 18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

That same passage of Scripture proceeds to show how man's throat, tongue, lips, mouth, feet, eyes all suffer from depravity. From head to toe, this depravity that affects us is total! (cf. **Isaiah 1:5&6**).

It is a myth that man in his natural state is genuinely seeking God!

Men do seek God ... but they do not seek Him for who He is. They seek Him when they are in trouble as someone who might preserve them from death or enhance their worldly enjoyments. Apart from conversion, no one comes to the light of God.

2. In his total rebellion, everything man does is sin.

No action of ours is totally pure.

The poison of sin effects even the best things we do. No one has absolutely pure motives, though we often deceive ourselves into thinking so.

• In **Romans 14:23** Paul says, "... whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

• In **Romans 7:18** Paul says, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing"

"Flesh" refers to man in his natural state - apart from the work of God's Spirit. So what Paul is saying in **Romans 7:18** is that, apart from the work of God's Spirit, all we think and feel and do is **not** good (cf. **Romans 15:18**).

Let me qualify

It is good that most unbelievers do not kill, and that some unbelievers perform acts of benevolence.

However, such outward conformity to the external pattern of life that God has commanded in Scripture is not righteousness in relation to God.

- It is not done out of reliance on Him or for His glory.

- He is not trusted for the resources, though He gives them everything.

- Nor is His honour exalted, even though that is His will in all things (**1 Corinthians 10:31**).

Therefore even these "good" acts are part of our rebellion and are not "good" in the sense that really counts in the end—in relation to God.

John Calvin stated:

"Therefore let us hold this as an undoubted truth which no siege engines can shake: the mind of man has been so completely estranged from God's righteousness that it conceives, desires, and undertakes, only that which is impious, perverted, foul, impure, and infamous. The heart is so steeped in the poison of sin, that it can breathe out nothing but a loathsome stench.

But if some men occasionally make a show of good, their minds nevertheless ever remain enveloped in hypocrisy and deceitful craft, and their hearts bound by inner perversity.” (II.5.19).

3. Man’s inability to submit to God, or reform ourselves, is total.

When we talk about man’s total depravity, we are talking about *spiritual death and moral inability* ... in other words, we are on **Romans 5:12 and **Ephesians 2:1-3** territory.**

- **Romans 5:12:** “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”
- **Ephesians 2:1-3:** “And you [hath he quickened], who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 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: 3 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.”

Ephesians 2:1 says that we Christians were all once “dead in trespasses and sins.” The point of deadness is that we were incapable of any life with God.

- Our hearts were like a stone toward God (**Ephesians 4:18; Ezekiel 36:26**).

- Our hearts were blind and incapable of seeing the glory of God in Christ (**2 Corinthians 4:4-6**).

We were totally unable to reform ourselves.

Man by nature is spiritually dead, morally depraved, lost under the curse of God’s law, and altogether incapable of changing his ruined condition (Psalm 51:5; 58:3; Jeremiah 13:23; 17:9; Romans 5:12; Ephesians 2:1-3).

When Adolf Eichmann, the infamous Nazi war criminal and director of Hitler's 'Final Solution,' was captured and tried for his heinous offences during WWII, one old Jewish man trembled on his way out of court. He was asked if it was the sight of this hideous monster that had shaken him, but he explained the reason behind his great shock was that Eichmann looked just like any other typical grandfather!

4. Our rebellion is totally deserving of eternal punishment.

Ephesians 2:3 goes on to say that in our deadness we were “children of wrath.”

The reality of hell is God's clear indictment of the infiniteness of our guilt. If our corruption did not deserve an eternal punishment, God would be unjust to threaten us with a punishment so severe as eternal torment.

But the Scriptures teach that God is just in condemning unbelievers to eternal hell (**2 Thessalonians 1:6-9; Matthew 5:29f; 10:28; 13:49f; 18:8f; 25:46; Revelation 14:9-11; 20:10**).

In summary, total depravity means that our rebellion against God is total, everything we do in this rebellion is sin, our inability to submit to God or reform ourselves is total, and we are therefore totally deserving of eternal punishment.

- Total depravity means that man is so far away from God that he cannot get back to God, unless God Himself brings him back.
- Total depravity means that you cannot be saved by your works.
- Total depravity means that “Salvation is of the Lord” - entirely; A-Z. If ever you are saved you must be saved by grace alone!

Salvation is *not* determined by you. Salvation is *not* dependent upon you.

It is hard to exaggerate the importance of admitting our condition to be this bad - far-through. If we think of ourselves as basically good or even less than totally at odds with God, our grasp of the work of God in redemption will be defective.

CALVIN ON REMEDY

In his Commentary on **Isaiah 53:6**, Calvin stated:

“If we do not perceive our wretchedness and poverty, we shall never know how desirable is that remedy which Christ has brought to us, or approach him with due ardor of affection. As soon as we know that we are ruined, then, aware of our wretchedness, we eagerly run to avail ourselves of the remedy, which otherwise would be held by us in no estimation. In order, therefore, that Christ may be appreciated by us, let every one consider and examine himself, so as to acknowledge that he is ruined till he is redeemed by Christ.”

And here is the good news

[2] UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION (GRACE IS SOVEREIGN).

ALMIGHTY GOD, FROM ‘OLD’ ETERNITY, CHOSE SOME OF ADAM’S FALLEN RACE TO SALVATION AND ETERNAL LIFE IN CHRIST – AND HIS LOVING CHOICE OF THESE PEOPLE WAS AN UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION OF GRACE.

I subscribe to the truth that the one true and living God is totally Sovereign in all things ... including the sinners He chooses to save!

John Calvin stated: *“We call predestination God’s eternal decree, by which he compacted with himself what he willed to become of each man”* (III. 21.5).

The Sovereignty of God was the great doctrine rediscovered and proclaimed during the Protestant Reformation ... the truth that God is supreme Ruler of His universe ... that His rule is unlimited, unrestricted, and cannot successfully be opposed.

This truth is taught in:

• **Psalm 135:6**: “Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.”

• **Daniel 4:35**: “And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?”

The words in this latter text were spoken by a formerly heathen king, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

Man hates the doctrine of God’s sovereignty - and, for much of his life, Nebuchadnezzar was no exception. He was an extreme case of a man who imagined he was so self-important, self-sufficient, and in sole charge of all his affairs. As he paced the terrace in the palace of Babylon, and surveyed that tremendous city, full of fascinating architecture and bustling commerce, he exclaimed (**Daniel 4:30**): “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?”

Nebuchadnezzar was a magnified ‘little Jack Horner’! This world is full of little Jack Horners, sitting in corners, eating their pies; they stick in a thumb, and pull out a plum, and announce, “*What a GREAT boy am I!*”

Of course Nebuchadnezzar discovered that, in the eyes of the Most High God, the populations of earth were reputed as nothing ... that He is sovereignly independent of every one and of every thing - of all conditions - of every kind of circumstance ... He is God, and “beside Him there is none else”!

What lies back of the truth of divine sovereignty is this ... that God has His way - that He has always had His way - that He is having His way now even when we do not realise it or cannot discern it.

To flesh out this thought a little:

(a) God is the sovereign CREATOR of all things.

We do not have to go any further into scripture than **Genesis 1:1-3** for a declaration of this: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. 2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness [was] upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. 3 ¶ And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.”

Who was counselling God back then? ... advising Him? ... keeping Him right? No-one! (**Isaiah 40:13&14** and **Romans 11:34** are key texts here).

(b) God is the sovereign RULER of all things.

Romans 8:28; 11:36: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”

Now before someone starts objecting to this fact, consider the alternative: if God does not govern everything, then something governs God! And if God is not totally, absolutely, universally sovereign, then we must arrive at the conclusion that faith in God is nothing more than throwing a coin into a wishing well - because ...

- No promise of God can be sure!
- No prophecy of God can be absolute!
- No word from God can be believed!

However, I rejoice in *the truth* of the sovereignty of God! I am glad that my God *is on* the throne!

(c) God is the sovereign DISPOSER of all things.

Revelation 4:11: “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

**There’s not a sparrow or a worm
But’s found in His decrees;
He raises monarchs to their thrones,
And sinks them as He please.**

And this God who is sovereign in Creating the Universe, ruling over everything that is in it, and in disposing of all things (d) is *also* totally sovereign in the EXERCISE OF HIS SAVING GRACE.

Romans 9:11-33 presses the point that our God is totally sovereign in the exercise of His salvation – and supports this case with the examples of Jacob, Esau and Pharaoh (and with relevant quotations from Moses, Isaiah and Hosea).

Verses 20-24 gives the answer to all who oppose this doctrine: “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed [it], Why hast thou made me thus? 21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? 22 [What] if God, willing to shew [his] wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: 23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, 24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?”

And - again in the context of God’s salvation - you could consider **John 5:21:** “For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will.”

Isaac Watts asked the question in one of his hymns:

**May not the sovereign Lord on high
Dispense His favours as He will?
Choose some to life while others die,
And yet be just and gracious still?**

**What if He means to show His grace,
And His electing love employs
To mark out some of mortal race,
And form them fit for heavenly joys?**

Shall man reply against the Lord,

**And call his Maker's ways unjust,
The thunder of whose dreadful word
Can crush a thousand worlds to dust?**

The one true and living God is **TOTALLY SOVEREIGN** in all things.

ALMIGHTY GOD, FROM 'OLD' ETERNITY, CHOSE SOME OF ADAM'S FALLEN RACE TO SALVATION AND ETERNAL LIFE IN CHRIST - AND HIS LOVING CHOICE OF THESE PEOPLE WAS AN UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION OF GRACE.

I know that many people stagger at this truth – that God could elect a people whom He gave to His Son in the Covenant of Grace before the foundation of the world ... and elect them freely and not because of any good work that was in them, or any good thing that He could foresee them performing.

THREE REASONS WHY CALVIN BELIEVED IT

1. It clearly takes away from human ability to earn salvation and gives the glory to God;
2. Calvin saw that some had faith and others did not - even though they were exposed to the same sermon and environment.

How could one explain how one person's heart was hard and another's heart was responsive to the same message?

Predestination seemed to answer that.

It is, of course, what Calvin said about predestination that goads certain people.

But Calvin was extremely careful not to speculate here.

3. The third reason, and really the over-arching reason for Calvin, was that the Bible taught it.

He talked about predestination--in the same way that Paul does in **Romans 8 and 9**.

A "cleverly invented story" (cf. **2 Peter 1:16&17**) will not do; what does the Word say?!

He read (as we read) ...

- **Ephesians 1:4**: "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world"
- **2 Thessalonians 2:13&14**: "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: 14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."
- **John 15:16**: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit"
- **Acts 13:48**: "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."

A careful reading of Scripture will clearly reveal that election is a Bible doctrine. And if you understand what the Bible teaches about election, you know that it is a precious Bible doctrine. God almighty sovereignly chose a great multitude to whom He would be gracious and determined to save them before the world began ... this is certainly precious to my heart!

[1] TOTAL DEPRAVITY (Grace is OBLIGATORY);

[2] UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION (Grace is SOVEREIGN);

[3] PARTICULAR REDEMPTION (GRACE IS PROVISION-MAKING).

IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME THE LORD JESUS CHRIST DIED FOR AND EFFECTUALLY REDEEMED ALL GOD'S ELECT.

The atonement is the work of God in Christ on the cross whereby He cancelled the complete debt of our sin, appeased God's holy wrath against us, and won for us all the benefits of salvation.

On Calvary's cross Jesus did not die for everyone without distinction. He did not die to make salvation possible for every member of humanity.

Rather, He died to purchase atonement for the sins of every one of His own people. The Son of God redeemed all whom He came to redeem, and He shall save all whom He came to save.

- The Lord Jesus Christ suffered and died as a Substitute for God's elect - His sheep - those who are actually saved by His blood.
- He died for those for whom He makes intercession.
- He did not make it possible for all men to be redeemed. He actually redeemed His people.

Is there any Bible proof of this claim?

... Plenty!

- **Isaiah 53:8:** "... He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of My people was He stricken."
- **John 10:11,15&26:** "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. 15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. 26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you."
- **Ephesians 5:25:** "... Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it."

Nowhere in the Bible is it written that Christ died for everyone in the world, redeemed everyone in the world, or made atonement for everyone in the world. The doctrine of 'universal redemption' is one of the most hideous and blasphemous doctrines ever spawned by man.

- It reduces the love of God to nothing.
- It perverts the justice of God.
- It is a mockery of the blood of Christ.

- It makes man his own saviour.

The Puritan preachers (notably John Owen) used to summarise this truth in this way – and the whole argument does come down to this ...

Either:

- (i) Christ died for some of the sins of all men.**
- (ii) Christ died for all the sins of all men**
- (iii) Christ died for all the sins of some men.**

No-one says the first statement is true -

(i) Christ died for some of the sins of all men ... because they know that in this case no-one would be saved and no-one would end up in heaven, for all would be lost because of the sins that Christ did not die for. If Jesus died only for some of the sins of all men, every man would still have some sin that no atonement had been made for, therefore all would be consigned to everlasting hell.

or (what the Arminians say):

(ii) Christ died for all of the sins of all men. ... in which case every man would be saved and go to heaven.

That, we know, is *not* the case, for there are people in hell - and multitudes more are heading there.

Why, then, is everyone not saved?

The Arminian will answer, “*Because some do not believe.*”

But surely this unbelief not one of the sins for which Christ died?

If they say yes, “*Christ died for all of the sins of all men,*” then why is unbelief not covered by the blood of Jesus and all unbelievers saved?

If they say no (unbelief is not a sin that Christ has died for) then they must say that men can be saved without having all their sins atoned for by Jesus!

... or they must join us in affirming statement number three:

(iii) Christ died for all of the sins of some men ... in which case those “some” men and women from earth would be saved and enter heaven - and that is exactly what we know to be the case!

He died for the unbelief of the elect so that God's punitive wrath is appeased toward them and His grace is free to draw them irresistibly out of darkness into His marvellous light.

We believe, according to the Scriptures, that Christ died for and redeemed God's elect. His blood was not shed in vain. It was particular redemption. I am not a fan of the term ‘Limited Atonement’ as it is liable to give the wrong impression that there was some sort of

defect in the work of Christ on Calvary. The atonement of Christ is limited in scope, but not in efficacy. It was limited in design, but not in merit. "It is finished!" indicated that the full price that was necessary to redeem God's people was paid by the death of Christ. Our Saviour's limited atonement was and is the effectual redemption of His people.

The issue of the gospel is not the bare fact that Christ died, but "HOW that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures" (**1 Corinthians 15:3**).

This is how He died:

* Sovereignty! ... "I lay down my life!" (**John 10:15&17**).

* Substitution! ... "For the transgression of My people" (**Isaiah 53:8**).

* Satisfaction! ... "I have found a ransom!" (**Job 33:24; Mark 10:45**).

* Success! ... "He shall not fail!" (**Isaiah 42:4**).

[1] TOTAL DEPRAVITY (Grace is OBLIGATORY);

[2] UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION (Grace is SOVEREIGN);

[3] LIMITED ATONEMENT / PARTICULAR REDEMPTION (Grace is PROVISION-
MAKING);

[4] IRRESISTIBLE GRACE (GRACE IS EFFICACIOUS).

SALVATION IS WROUGHT BY THE IRRESISTIBLE POWER AND GRACE OF GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT.

God the Holy Spirit effectually calls every chosen, redeemed sinner, causing each to come to Christ in faith.

The psalmist exclaimed, in **Psalm 65:4**: "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple."

Having chosen us in Christ from before the foundation of the world - and having provided the ransom price for our salvation on Calvary's cross through the work of His Son - God sends the Holy Spirit to our hearts to apply the benefits of Christ's finished work to us ... to convince us, convict us, call us, convert us, convey faith and repentance to us! (**Psalm 65:4; 110:3; John 6:63**).

If our doctrine of total depravity is true, there can be no salvation without the reality of irresistible grace. If we are dead in our sins, totally unable to submit to God, then we will never believe in Christ unless God overcomes our rebellion.

• In **John 6:44** Jesus says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him"

This drawing is the sovereign work of grace without which no one can be saved from their rebellion against God.

• Specifically, **John 6:64&65** says, “But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. 65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.”

Notice two things:

(i) Coming to Jesus is called a gift. It is not just an opportunity. Coming to Jesus is “given” to some and not to others.

(ii) Second, notice that the reason Jesus says this, is to explain why “there are some who do not believe.”

Someone may say, “Yes, the Holy Spirit must draw us to God, but we can use our freedom to resist or accept that drawing.”

Our answer is: except for the continual exertion of saving grace, we will always use our freedom to resist God. That is what it means to be, “unable to submit to God” / totally depraved!

The doctrine of irresistible grace does not mean that every influence of the Holy Spirit cannot be resisted. It means that the Holy Spirit can overcome all resistance and make his influence irresistible.

• In **Acts 7:51** Stephen says to the Jewish leaders, “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers [did], so [do] ye.”

• And Paul speaks of grieving and quenching the Holy Spirit (**Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19**).

• God gives many entreaties and promptings which are resisted. In fact the whole history of Israel in the Old Testament is one protracted story of resistance, as the parable of the wicked tenants shows (**Matthew 21:33-43**; cf. **Romans 10:21**).

The doctrine of irresistible grace means that God is sovereign and can overcome all resistance when He wills.

• **Daniel 4:35**: “And all the inhabitants of the earth [are] reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and [among] the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?”;

• **Psalms 115:3**: “But our God [is] in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.”

When God undertakes to fulfill His sovereign purpose, no one can successfully resist him.

When a person hears a preacher call for repentance he can resist that call. But if God gives him repentance he cannot resist because the gift is the removal of resistance. Not being willing to repent is the same as resisting the Holy Spirit. So if God gives repentance it is the same as taking away the resistance. This is why we call this work of God “irresistible grace.”

If He purposes to do a work, He performs that work! He does not attempt to save a person - and then stand back helpless as He sees that attempt end in miserable failure with that soul He tried to save slipping through His fingers and down into hell!

**I know not how the Spirit moves,
Convincing men of sin;
Revealing Jesus through the Word,
Creating faith in Him.**

But I *do* know this ... all of those for whom Christ died SHALL come to Him for mercy .. not one of them will go through life uncalled and unconverted!

**The people of Jehovah's choice
Are registered on high,
And they shall hear His sovereign voice,
And by His grace draw nigh.**

**Yes, they SHALL COME, 'tis Heaven's decree
They shall to Jesus bow;
This precious SHALL COME conquered me,
And gives me comfort now.**

[1] TOTAL DEPRAVITY (Grace is OBLIGATORY);

[2] UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION (Grace is SOVEREIGN);

[3] LIMITED ATONEMENT / PARTICULAR REDEMPTION (Grace is PROVISION-
MAKING);

[4] IRRESISTIBLE GRACE (GRACE IS EFFICACIOUS);

And more than this ...

[5] THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS (GRACE IS LASTING).

**EVERY BELIEVER SHALL PERSEVERE IN FAITH, BECAUSE ALL WHO TRUST
CHRIST ARE INFALLIBLY PRESERVED BY THE GRACE OF GOD.**

John Calvin states:

“Since the church consists of the people elected by God, it is not possible for those who are truly its members to perish finally, or be destroyed by evil forces. For their salvation depends on so sure and solid a foundation that, even though the whole world be thrown out of its orbit, it cannot fail or fall to pieces. They may waver and fluctuate and even fall down, but they will not be bruised, because the Father supports them Hence, those whom the Father elects he surrenders into the protection and care of his son Christ that none of them should perish, but that they might be all restored on the final day. Under such good protection they can both wander and totter, but they surely cannot be lost.” (OS 1:87)

Every true believer - every genuinely saved soul - shall continue in the grace of God ... being preserved, sealed, and kept by the grace and power of God Himself. All who are saved by grace are saved forever.

The perseverance of the saints (or, as some call it, the eternal security of believers) is clearly taught in passages like:

- **John 10:28:** “And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.”
- **Philippians 1:6:** “Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”
- **1 Peter 1:5:** “Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

There are four bold challenges of faith, found in **Romans 8:31-39**, that draw attention to this doctrine of the saints’ perseverance to the end (or, to put it another way, of *God’s preservation* of His child until His heavenly kingdom).

- * “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (**v31**).
- * “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” (**v33**).
- * “Who is he that condemneth?” (**v34**).
- * “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (**v35**).

The same chapter argues that ... the foreknown are predestined, the predestined are called, the called are justified, and the justified are glorified. No one is lost from this group. To belong to this people is to be eternally secure.

In the light of these tremendous gospel truths, I encourage you to:

(1) make your calling and election sure ... “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” is the command of the gospel ... and faith in Christ is both the fruit and the proof of -

- God’s election!
- Christ’s redemption!
- The Spirit’s call!

In Book 3, Chapter 11, Section 1-23 of his ‘Institutes,’ John Calvin writes a chapter that begins a series of seven chapters on the topic of justification by faith.

He quotes from Ambrose about Jacob stealing Esau’s birthright to illustrate the nature of justification by faith. He says that, *“he who did not merit the birthright in himself personated his brother, put on his garments, which gave forth a most pleasant odour, and thus introduced himself to his father that he might receive a blessing to his own advantage, though under the person of another, so we conceal ourselves under the precious purity of Christ, our first-born brother, that we may obtain an attestation of righteousness from the presence of God.”*

The French language at this point (*“so we conceal ourselves under the precious purity of Christ”*) literally means “under the robe” – a beautiful description of our position before God, sheltering under the robe of Christ.

Although we have a new nature within us and the presence of the Holy Spirit, our natures are not changed to become totally sinless and thus deserving of God’s approval. No, we are only justified because we hide under the robe of Christ; we take refuge from the wrath that our wickedness accumulates by sheltering under the protection of our Saviour. It is His

righteousness that saves us from first to last. We are still full of sin even after our hearts have been regenerated, but praise God that we can hide under the shadow of the Son of Man's wings until that day when we will finally become like Him.

Are you 'under the robe'? Have you exercised real faith in Christ, and is it the testimony of your life today:

**Jesus, more than life to me,
I am clinging, clinging, close to Thee;
Let Thy tender love to me,
Keep me ever, only, Lord to Thee!**

(2) join me in the proclamation of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God around the world.

(3) give God alone all praise, honour, and glory for His great grace to us great sinners in His great Son.

This is the basic reason why God has done what He has done ... to glorify His name (cf. **John 17**). *Soli Deo Gloria!*

**'Twas not from the creature
Salvation took place,
The whole was to God, to
The praise of His grace;
And all to His glory
Shall tend by and by
To accomplish the lifting
Of Jesus on high.**

So then:

**Suffer a sinner whose heart overflows,
Loving His Saviour, to tell what he knows;
Once more to tell it, would I embrace -
I'm only a sinner saved BY GRACE!**