

Calvinism or Arminianism

Selective Scriptures

I. Total Depravity:

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IV. Irresistible Grace:

V. The Perseverance of the Saints:

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Introduction:

- to understand how and why the system of theology known to history as Calvinism came to bear this name and to be formulated into the “Five Points” one must understand the theological conflict which occurred in Holland during the first quarter of the 17th century
- it was the year 1610, just one year after the death of Jacob Arminius (a Dutch seminary professor) that the “Five Articles of Faith” based on his teachings were drawn up by his followers
- the Arminians, as his followers came to be called, presented these five articles to the State of Holland in the form of a “Remonstrance” that is a protest
- the Arminian party insisted that the “Belgic Confession of Faith” and the “Heidelberg Catechism” (both the official expression of the doctrinal position of the Churches of Holland) be exchanged to conform to the doctrinal views contained in the “Remonstrance”
- the Arminians objected to those doctrines upheld in both the “Confession and the Catechism” relating to the following
- human inability, predestination, particular redemption, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints
- it was in connection with these matters that they wanted the official standards of the Church of Holland revised
- now, the system of thought embodied in the “Remonstrance” contains the theology known today as Arminianism
- and Arminian theology maintains the following five positions;
- 1) man is never so completely corrupted by sin that he cannot savingly believe the gospel when it is put before him

- 2) God's election of those who shall be saved is prompted by His ability to foresee that they will of their own accord believe
- 3) Christ's death did not ensure the salvation of anyone, for it did not secure the gift of faith to anyone, because there is no such gift; therefore, what it did do was create a possibility of salvation to anyone if they believe
- 4) man is so independent of God, that the Holy Spirit's application of Christ's saving work is contingent on the sinner's prior acceptance of the gospel
- 5) eternal life is not secured when a sinner comes to Christ, but depends on the Christian's faithfulness to Christ, until death
- loved ones, this summary of Arminianism expresses what many Christians in the visible contemporary church believe today
- and what all five of these articles share is the insistence that the sovereignty of God's grace must in some way be limited by the freedom of human choice
- in other words, Arminianism made man's salvation dependent ultimately on himself
- and saving faith being viewed throughout as man's own work
- for the Arminian, salvation is accomplished thru the combined efforts of God, who takes the initiative and man who must respond
- thus, man's response being the deciding factor - that system of theology friends, makes God subject to man
- now, in response to the "Five Articles of Faith" of Arminianism, a national "Synod" was called to meet in Dort in 1618, for the sole purpose of examining the articles of Arminius in the light of Scripture
- thus, the great "Synod of Dort" was convened in Holland on November 13, 1618
- there were 84 members, including delegates from England, Germany, and Switzerland
- they held 154 sessions during the seven months that the "Synod" met
- the "Synod" had given very close examination to the "Five Articles of Faith" which had been advanced by the "Remonstrance"

- and after close and careful scrutiny with the testimony of the Scriptures, the delegates failed to reconcile the “Five Articles of Faith” with the teaching of the Word of God
- unanimously the delegates rejected them
- but, the delegates felt that a mere rejection alone of the “Articles” was not sufficient
- therefore, it remained for them to set forth the true teaching of Scripture in relation to those matters called into question by the “Remonstrance”
- and this they proceeded to do, embodying the Calvinistic teaching in five chapters, which have ever since been known as the “Five Points of Calvinism”
- named after the French reformer, John Calvin (1509 – 1564) who had done so much in expounding and defending these Scriptural teachings
- now, no doubt it will seem strange to many in our day that the “Synod of Dort” rejected as heretical the “Five Articles of Faith” advanced by the Arminians, for these doctrines have gained wide acceptance in the modern church today
- in fact, they are seldom questioned in our generation today
- but, the vast majority of the Protestant theologians of that day took a much different view of the matter
- they maintained that the Bible set forth a system of doctrine quite different from that advocated by the Arminian party
- salvation was viewed by the members of the “Synod” as a work of grace from beginning to end
- in no sense did they believe that the sinner saved himself or contributed to his salvation
- Adam’s fall completely ruined the human race
- all men by nature were spiritually dead in trespasses and sin and their wills were in bondage to sin and Satan
- and the ability to believe the gospel was itself a gift from God, bestowed only upon those whom He had chosen to be objects of His unmerited favor
- it was not man, but God who determined which sinner would be shown mercy and saved

- this, in essence is what the members of the “Synod of Dort” understood the Bible to teach, and they were correct
- beloved, the issues raised in this historic controversy are indeed grave
- because they vitally affect the Christian’s concept of God
- the Christian’s concept of sin
- and therefore, the Christian’s concept of salvation
- J.I. Packer in contrasting these two systems of theology is certainly correct in asserting;
- “one makes salvation dependent on the work of God, the other on the work of man”
- “one regards faith as part of God’s gift of salvation, the other as man’s own contribution to salvation”
- “one gives all the glory of savings believers to God, the other divides the praise between God and man, who by believing it operated it”
- now, the question of supreme importance is not how the system under consideration came to be formulated into the five points, or why it was named Calvinism
- **but, is it supported by Scripture**
- friends, the final court of appeal for determining the validity of any theological system is the inspired, authoritative Word of God
- if Calvinism can be verified by the clear and explicit declaration of Scripture, then it must be received and embraced
- if not, it must be rejected as aberrant and possibly heresy
- you’ve heard me say this over and over again; “Test all opinions and utterances on the altar of Biblical fidelity” E.G. Young, professor of theology at Westminster Chapel , during the Martyn Lloyd Jones era
- and that’s precisely what we are going to do, verify with Scripture the **“Five Points of Calvinism”**

I. Total Depravity:

- **“Total Depravity”** is the first of Calvinism’s famous five points
- it is somewhat unfortunate that the doctrine is called **“Total Depravity”** because this title can be misleading
- it has prevailed because it fits the familiar acronym **“TULIP”** where the **“T”** makes up the term **“Total Depravity”**
- but, the term is misleading because it suggests a moral condition of utter depravity
- that man can do no good
- that man is entirely destitute of any good virtue
- but, this belief that man can do no good is very erroneous
- men are capable of doing good deeds
- to be **“Totally Depraved”** is to suffer from corruption that pervades the whole person
- sin has permeated every part of our physical, mental, and emotional makeup so that there is nothing about us that remains untouched by sin
- this corruption invades every aspect of our being, so that nothing we are or do is completely free from sin
- loved ones, in this sad and pervasively sinful state, we have no inclinations to seek God
- in our unregenerate state, we do not have the free will capacity for believing on or receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior
- even faith must come as a gift, because prior to the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit our depravity renders us impotent to cooperate with God’s saving grace
- therefore, human inability would be a much better description of man’s condition
- you see, since the fall man rests under the curse of sin

- that he is actuated by wrong principles
- that he is wholly unable to love God or to do anything meriting salvation is what Scripture clearly teaches
- man is a free agent, but, he cannot originate the love of God in his heart
- as the bird with a broken wing is free to fly but not able, so the natural man is free to come to God but not able
- how can he repent of sin when he loves it ???
- how can he come to God when he hates him ???
- John 3:19; “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil”
- John 5:40; “But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life”
- beloved, man cannot come because he will not
- Paul tells us in Rom 8:7; “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be”
- you see, the natural man was born with a sin nature
- since the fall of Adam back in the garden “sin entered” all men born of woman
- turn with me please to Rom 5:12, Rom 3:23, Job 5:7, Job 14:1,4, Job 15:14-16, Psa 51:2-3,5
- loved ones, Scripture clearly illustrates the fact that all men are born in iniquity and sin
- man’s condition is clear, from conception sin has poisoned all men to the core
- the great Apostle Paul quoting the O.T. summarizes the universal condition of man
- turn with me please to Rom 3:9-18,23
- friends, in bringing the whole human race before the tribunal of God, Scripture indicates all of us, without exception are unrighteous

- “There is none righteous” now the qualifying phrase “. no, not one”
- sin, has become man’s natural bent so that he has no desire for salvation
- but, fallen man is never compelled to sin
- no, he does it freely and delights in it
- because his dispositions and desires are so inclined, again [John 3:19](#)
- now, Scripture also declares that fallen man is a captive, a willing “slave of sin”
- and entirely unable to deliver himself from its bondage and corruption
- a state in which the subject is free only to do the will of his master, which in this case is sin
- it was to this which Jesus referred when He said; “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin” [John 8:34](#)
- is the natural man really a free agent ? ? ? certainly not free towards his salvation
- Scripture attests that he is a “slave of sin”
- Paul summarizes the Biblical description of fallen man in Ephesians
- turn with me please to [Eph 2:1-5](#), [Eph 4:17-19](#)
- even Colossians has something to say about the description of fallen man
- turn with me please to [Col 2:13](#)
- several more passages I’d like to share with you regarding the fallen condition of man
- turn with me please to [Gen 6:5](#), [Psa 58:3](#), [Psa 143:2](#), [Pro 20:9](#), [Ecc 7:20](#), [Ecc 9:3](#), [Jer 17:9](#), [Titus 1:15](#),
- it is this human inability which the Scriptures teach when they declare; “So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God” [Rom 8:8](#)
- or as the writer of Hebrews expresses; “But without faith it is impossible to please (God)”

II. Unconditional Election:

- the fall of the human race into a state of sin and misery is the basis and foundation of the system of redemption which is set forth in the Scriptures
- and the first link in the redemption plan is the doctrine of election, **“Unconditional Election”**
- the term **“Unconditional”** simply means; ‘with no conditions attached’
- since the condition of the human race is as bad as the Biblical doctrine of depravity indicates it is, then salvation must originate with God
- it must be a work of the Triune God accomplished and applied by Him without any assistance on our part
- now, we know this to be true because Paul clearly emphasized that humanity is never going to **“seek”** God
- **Rom 3:11; “. There is none who seeks after God”**
- therefore, God is going to have to reach out to us and save us
- and that is exactly what God does
- and the first step in this reaching out is God’s determination to do it, which is what the word **“election”** refers to
- that is, God’s sovereign choice outside of man
- read attached **“The Five Points of Calvinism; Defined, Defended, Documented”** by David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, pg30, bracketed
- **“election”** means that what happens to an individual’s salvation is determined by the prior decision of God
- the One who established the decrees of salvation in Christ **“before the foundation of the world”**
Eph 1:4
- **“Unconditional”** indicates that this decision is made apart from anything God might foresee in the sinful man

- if “**election**” was based on anything the sinner might be or do, then ultimately salvation would depend on human merit
- but, in order to prove that salvation is all of grace “**Unconditional Election**” is a loving act of God’s sovereign choice and will
- now, we must realize that “**Unconditional Election**” encompasses the doctrine of predestination
- and of course the agent of predestination is God Himself
- you see, from all eternity past, God decided to save some members of the human race and to let the rest of the human race perish
- God made a choice, and Jesus expressed that choice very clearly
- **John 15:16; “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you”**
- yes, God made a choice, and He chose some individuals to be saved unto everlasting life in heaven
- and He chose to pass over others, allowing them to suffer the consequences of their sin, eternal punishment in hell
- now, the question is, do we find this doctrine taught in Scripture ? ? ?
- turn with me please to **Eph 1:4-11**
- loved ones, notice how strongly Paul speaks of “**election**”
- he says that “. (God) chose us” vs. 4, not that we chose God
- then Paul adds that “. (God) predestined us” vs. 5 or “. (God) predetermined us”
- moreover, the sovereign choice is emphasized by the statement that “. (God) chose us in (Christ) before the foundation of the world” vs. 4
- that is “. (God) chose us” not because of ourselves and our merits, but because of “. (Christ Jesus)”

- and that took place “. before the foundation of the world”
- friends, we did not even exist to provide any works for God to see
- thus, Eph 1 excludes an “**election**” that is based on anything found in “. us”
- now, this conclusion is further strengthened when Paul adds that this choice and predestination is “. according to the good pleasure of (God’s will)” vs. 5
- you see, God did not choose man because He foresaw anything worthwhile in man, such as faith
- for then He would have said that ‘He predestined us according to the foreseen faith of man’
- but no, Paul omits any reference to man and says that the reason is to be found in “. (God’s) good pleasure” alone
- yet, to bring out more forcibly this “**Unconditional Election**” this sovereign choice of God, which was not based on anything in man, Paul adds the phrase “. according to (God’s) will ” vs. 5
- this was not necessary for Paul’s reasoning
- he said the choice was “. according to (God’s) good pleasure”
- that statement alone was sufficient to indicate that God’s choice was for reasons entirely within Himself
- but, when Paul added “. according to(God’s) will ” that indicated more strongly still the freedom of God’s choice
- and the fact that the reason is to be found in “. (God’s) will ” alone, that ends the argument
- Psa 65:4; “Blessed is the man You choose, and cause to approach You”
- beloved, the Scriptures represent “**Unconditional Election**” as occurring in time past irrespective of personal merit, and altogether by the sovereign act of God
- and you yourself can see that all the past references of Scripture shows that God does not “elect” people because of something in them that attracts God

- Rom 5:8; But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”
- here we see that God’s love was not extended towards us because we were good
- but, in spite of the fact that we were bad
- in fact, “. while we were still sinners”
- now, one of the most powerful passages of Scripture proving God’s sovereignty in “Unconditional Election” is the irrefutable chapters of Rom 9, 10, 11
- the Apostle Paul dedicated these three chapters in the Book of Romans to clearly illustrate the sovereignty of God in His “Unconditional Election” of the “elect” to salvation
- turn with me please to Rom 9:4-26
- the chief argument of Rom 9-11 is this; How can the Israelites who had all the blessings of God in the past, be spiritually lost ? ? ?
- has God forgotten His promises to Israel ? ? ?
- Paul answers these questions with a firm no
- vs. 6; “But it is not that the Word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel”
- without me having to provide an entire exposition on Rom 9, allow me to flush out the important points that Paul has established to prove the sovereignty of God in “Unconditional Election”
- after Paul answers the rhetorical question in Rom 9:6, he goes on in the rest of the chapter to show that salvation does not come because one is a physical descendent of Abraham
- Paul has to work against the idea that salvation is passed on biologically or through the visible nation of Israel
- that salvation is given by the sovereign grace of God through “Unconditional Election”
- and the first example given is found in the fact that in Rom 9:7, Paul speaks of the sovereign choice of Isaac over Ishmael

- you see, in the middle east culture the first born son receives the blessing and the inheritance always from his father
- Abraham's first born son was Ishmael
- but, in **Rom 9:7**, Paul speaks of God sovereignly choosing Isaac and disregarding the common practice of the first born son receiving the blessing
- **vs. 7; ". In Isaac your seed shall be called"**
- then Paul points to the same sovereign choice God makes in the case of Jacob and Esau
- Jacob and Esau had the same parents and were even born at the same time
- they were twins
- yet, God sovereignly chose Jacob and passed by Esau the first born of the twins
- to show that God's choice was not based on foresight, Paul writes that God made His choice known to Rebecca before her twins were born
- before they had done anything good or bad
- **vs. 11; "(for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil)"**
- this was done Paul says, to show **". that the purpose of God according to election might stand"** vs. 11
- loved ones, God did not choose Jacob because He foresaw that he would be good
- nor did God choose Jacob because He foresaw that he would believe
- the source of the choice is not found in man, but in **". (God) who calls"** vs. 11
- to clinch the sovereignty of this choice, God simply states **". Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated"** vs. 13
- now, Paul feels the sense of dissatisfaction that will undoubtedly rise in the minds of those who read this letter
- he senses that some will very naturally think, How can God be like that ? ? ?

- He isn't fair – loving one and hating the other even before they were born and therefore before they had a chance to prove themselves
- so, in the next verse, vs. 14, Paul asks the question “What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!”
- friends, that's the rub of it
- **“Unconditional Election”** seems to imply there's injustice in God
- or so man reasons
- but, do you really want to question the justice of God
- God would be justified to pass by all of humanity and not exercise His grace and mercy on anyone
- if God were to exercise His justice, no one would be saved
- no, I don't think we want to question the justice of God
- now, before we go on to see Paul's answer to this charge, reflect for a moment that this very question Paul asks presupposes **“Unconditional Election”**
- the question of injustice in God never, never arises in the Arminian Theology
- for according to the Arminian, God is not arbitrary in His **“election”** since He foresees who will exercise good deeds and faith
- according to the Arminian, God's choice is based on something that man does or believes
- therefore, His foreordination is entirely fair, because it is decided upon the merits of man
- you see, the charge of injustice in God can only arise on the basis of **“Unconditional Election”**
- to man it seems foolish to speak of a good and fair God who simply chooses Jacob and passes by Esau, especially when Jacob is no better nor none deserving than Esau
- its foolishness man thinks
- God must be unjust man thinks

- but, the very fact that Paul raises the question of unfairness presupposes that he is speaking about **“Unconditional Election”**
- for the Arminian who believes in conditional election, there is no possibility of raising the question of injustice
- but, Paul does, showing that he is teaching **“Unconditional Election”**
- and the answer of the infallible Word of God to Paul’s question is not to retract the sovereignty of God’s **“election”**
- or to try to give a rational explanation to doubting men
- no, Paul simply states; **“Certainly not”**
- do not ever say or think that God is unjust
- God is a good God, a holy God, and not unjust for a moment
- well, Paul goes on to state God’s **“Unconditional Election”** in another way by quoting the O.T.
- look with me please at vs. 15; **“For (God) says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion”**
- Paul makes it crystal clear that it was not the actions of Jacob and Esau that determined God’s sovereign choice of Jacob over Esau
- no, it was God **“ (who) will have mercy on whomever (He) will have mercy ”**
- and later Paul reiterates that declaration
- note vs. 18; **“Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens”**
- beloved, according to the Bible the choice is entirely up to God
- He is free to love whom He wants and He is free to pass by others
- not because of any good or bad in man, but for His own good reasons
- now, at this juncture it would be possible for us to rest our case, to rest our evidence, at any one of the numerous points mentioned above in **Rom 9**

- Paul has demonstrated conclusively that salvation is not of the man who works but of God that calls, and that His election is **“unconditional”**
- thus, there should be no need to go on
- and yet, it almost seems as if Paul had the Arminian in mind when he wrote vs. 16
- vs. 16; **“So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy”**
- Paul says unequivocally that there can be no misunderstanding at all
- **“So then it is not of him who wills”**
- notice the little word **“ it ”** **“ it ”** refers to salvation
- friends, could anything be any clearer ? ? ?
- salvation does not depend on the **“ (man) who wills, nor the (man) who runs ”**
- but, salvation depends fully, solely, and wholly on God **“ who shows mercy ”**
- now, before moving on, one of the reasons the Arminian chooses to make man rather than God the decisive factor in his salvation, is that he hopes to save man’s freedom
- they believe that if God foreordains all things, then man is not free and responsible
- so, they opt to reduce God’s determinative plan and suggest that man acts freely and independent of God
- contrary to what most people think, the Calvinist teaches that man is free
- free to do exactly what he wants
- but, just because man is free, man is a **“slave of sin”**
- his will is bent towards sin
- his will is captivated by sin
- a drunkard, a compulsive drinker, is not free

- technically he has the external choice of drinking or not drinking
- but, really there is only one thing he can do
- he can no more stop drinking than he can stop breathing
- he has to drink
- why ??? because he is a “slave of sin”
- and yet, he is free
- he does exactly what he wants to do
- nobody is compelling him to drink
- in the same way, the non-Christian is free
- he does precisely what he wants to do
- he follows his heart desires
- and because his heart is rotten and inclined to all kinds of evil Jer 17:9
- therefore, he freely does what he wants to do, namely, sin
- he hates the Triune God and all He stands for
- thus, in reality he will never choose God
- he cannot, for he does not want to
- just because the unregenerate is free, he’s a “slave of sin”
- he is a “slave” to the devil and his evil desires, and therefore cannot serve God
- again the inability of humanity, the “Total Depravity” of man
- that’s why there needs to be an “Unconditional Election”
- to those who favor a conditional view of election face a serious difficulty

- they must assume fallen people are capable of responding positively to the gospel
- this assumption presupposes that original sin weakens the will but does not render it unable to incline itself to the things of God
- you see, the Arminian believes the will is sick
- the Calvinist believes the will is “dead in trespasses and sin”
- if the Calvinist view of original sin is correct, then God would see no unregenerate person choose Christ in the future
- God would know from all eternity, that left themselves, fallen humanity will never choose Christ
- friends, the Gospel of John records that Christ addressed this matter
- turn with me please to [John 6:64-68](#)
- beloved, Jesus says that “. no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father”
- John relates this to the comment that “. Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him”
- again, the reaction to the teaching of Jesus is telling
- many of His disciples deserted Him
- but, if the words are given an Arminian cast, we see no reason for the offense
- yet, if we understand Jesus’ words to teach human inability, and an utter dependence on God’s grace, the offense becomes understandable
- loved ones, the “**Doctrine of Total Depravity**” has offended many
- and many have rejected Calvinism precisely because of it
- earlier in John’s Gospel Jesus says something similar regarding human inability
- turn with me please to [John 6:43-44](#)

- the key statement is the word “..... draw”
- what is meant by “..... drawing” ???
- the word “draw” comes from the Greek word “elko” which literally means; ‘to compel by irresistible superiority’
- the word “draw” in its simplest form means; ‘to compel’
- now, to see the force of this verb, let us examine two other passages in the N.T. where “elko” is used
- turn with me please to [Acts 16:19](#), [Jam 2:6](#)
- beloved, it would be ludicrous to say that Paul and Silas were “wooded” to the authorities
- the text clearly indicates that they were compelled to come before the authorities
- this is just another argument for the need for **“Unconditional Election”**
- Calvinism does not teach that God brings the “elect” kicking and screaming against their wills into His Kingdom
- “A man convinced against his own will is not convince at all”
- no, Calvinism teaches that God so works in the heart of the “elect” as to make them willing and pleased to come to Christ
- they come to Christ because they want to
- they want to come because God has created in their heart a desire for Christ
- for the non-believer, the unregenerate, God passes over them leaving them to their own devices
- He does not coerce them to sin or create fleshly evil in their hearts
- He leaves them to themselves, to their own choices and desires
- and they always choose to reject the gospel

- it's important to remember that in His decree of **"election"** God considers the mass of humanity in their fallen and sinful condition
- He chooses to redeem some people from this condition and to leave the rest in that condition
- He intervenes in the lives of the **"elect"** while He does not intervene in the lives of the lost
- one group receives mercy and the other receives justice
- turn with me please to **Psa 115:3, Psa 135:6, Matt 11:27, Matt 20:15, Luke 18:7, John 15:16, Acts 13:48, Acts 18:27, Rom 10:20, Rom 11:4-6, I Cor 1:27-29, Phil 1:29, Jam 2:5**
- loved ones, the **"Doctrine of Unconditional Election"** is but a part of the much broader Biblical doctrine of **"God's Absolute Sovereignty"**
- you see, the Lord God rules over heaven and earth with absolute control
- and nothing comes to pass apart from His eternal purpose, nothing

III. Limited Atonement:

- of the five doctrines summarized by the acronym **“TULIP”** the most difficult for most people to understand and accept is **“Limited Atonement”**
- now, the question which arises with the doctrine of **“Limited Atonement”** is this; ‘Did Christ offer up Himself a sacrifice for the whole human race’ ???
- the Arminian says yes, and therefore says the **“Atonement”** is universal
- thus, the Arminian believes in **“Universal Atonement”**
- in other words, Christ atonement, Christ’s sacrifice, is for every individual without distinction or exception
- or did Christ’s atonement, did Christ’s sacrifice, have special reference to the **“elect”** ???
- in other words, was the sacrifice of Christ merely intended to make the salvation of men possible ???
- or was it intended to render certain the salvation of those who had been given to Him by the Father ???
- Arminians hold that Christ died for all men alike
- Calvinists hold that in the secret plan of God, Christ died for **“elect”** only
- instead of the term **“Limited Atonement”** maybe a much better term to use might be a **“Definite Atonement”** or a **“Particular Atonement”**
- I prefer either term **“Definite or Particular”**
- but, nonetheless, Christ’s atonement is of course strictly an infinite transaction, infinite in its ability to atone for all sin
- but, the limitation comes in the application of the benefits of Christ’s sacrifice
- in other words, who did Christ’s sacrifice truly benefit ???

- friends, the atonement was limited only in the sense that it was intended for and is applied to **“particular”** persons
- namely, to those who are actually saved
- allow me to say this another way, the value of the **“atonement”** was sufficient to save all mankind
- but, it was efficacious and efficient to save only the **“elect”**
- loved ones, Christ is said to have been a **“ransom”** for His people
- **Matt 20:28; “just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many”**
- notice, that this verse does not say that Christ ‘. gave His life for all’ but for **“. many”**
- if the suffering and death of Christ was a **“. ransom”** for all men rather than for the **“elect”** only, then the merits of Christ’s work must be communicated to all alike
- furthermore, the penalty of eternal punishment cannot be justly applied, or inflicted on any
- if the suffering and death of Christ was a **“. ransom”** for all men, then hell would not exist
- if the suffering and death of Christ was a **“. ransom”** for all men, then we must say that God was either unable or unwilling to carry out His plans
- now, that’s blasphemy !!!
- since the work of God is always efficacious, efficient, and successful, then those for whom the **“atonement”** was made and those who are actually saved must be the same people, God’s **“elect”**
- however, not so fast one may argue, what about the passages that appear to teach that God’s redemption is for the whole world
- to bolster their position, the Arminian appeals to such passages as the following
- turn with me please to **John 4:42, II Cor 5:14, I Tim 2:6, II Pet 3:9, I John 2:2**

- an objection to **“Limited Atonement”** is made on the fact that the Bible explicitly says in several passages that Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world
- if He died for **“..... all”** it is reasoned that He did not die for a **“limited”** number
- the answer to this objection is that often the Bible uses the word **“world”** and **“all”** in a restricted **“limited”** sense
- you see, words and phrases must always be interpreted in their context and in the light of the rest of Scripture
- for example, Luke records that Caesar commanded that **“..... all the world”** should be registered and that **“..... all went to be registered”** Luke 2:1-3
- now, it is clear that **“..... all”** is not all
- for the Greeks, the Italians, the Germans did not **“..... all”** register
- when Jesus said **“..... (when) I am lifted up from the earth, (I) will draw all people to Myself”** John 12:32
- here again, it is plain that **“..... all”** is not all
- there are millions of people who have not come to Christ
- Jesus may have meant one of two things; **“..... all”** the elect would be **“..... drawn”** to Him
- or Gentiles as well as Jews would be **“..... drawn”** to Him
- but, one thing is clear **“..... all”** men have not been **“..... drawn”** to Christ
- that is because **“..... all”** is not all
- I believe **“..... all”** is a reference to the **“elect”**
- in I John 2:2, where we read that Christ **“..... is the propitiation for our sins, not for ours only but also for the whole world”** means that Christ died not only for the sins of the Jews, but also for every ethnic group in the world
- Greeks, Italians, Germans, etc., etc., etc.

- but, it does not mean for every single Jew, every single Greek, every single Italian, and every single Germans, etc.
- one more 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 N.T. writers to emphatically correct this mistake
- but, how are we to understand “The Lord is long suffering towards us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” II Pet 3:9
- the restrictive phrase in this passage is the phrase “. towards us”
- “. towards us” refers to God’s “elect”
- we know this, because first and second Peter are written by a believer to believers
- and so Peter, writing to fellow believers is telling them that God “. is not willing that any (believer) should perish but that all (believers) should come to repentance”
- beloved, what Peter is saying is that God “. is not willing that any (of His elect) should perish”
- II Pet 3:9 is not teaching a “**Universal Atonement**”
- this text is teaching that God sovereignly decrees that none of His “. (elect) shall perish”
- that all of His “. (elect) shall come to repentance”
- loved ones, the “**atonement’s**” ultimate purpose is found in the ultimate purpose and will of God
- and this purpose does not include the entire human race
- if it did, the entire human race would surely be redeemed
- friends, Christ Himself “**Limited**” the purpose of His death to the “elect”
- turn with me please to [John 10:11, 14-16](#)

- if Christ laid down His life for “. the sheep” then the atoning character of His work was not universal
- turn with me please to [John 10:25-26](#)
- will anyone maintain that Christ laid down His life for the Pharisees, seeing that He pointedly excluded them ? ? ?
- friends, Christ not only dies for His “. sheep” but He also prays for them
- in His high priestly prayer He removes any consideration for universalism
- turn with me please to [John 17:6-12](#)
- Jesus intercedes here on behalf of “. those whom the Father has given Him”
- it is abundantly clear that this does not include all mankind
- vs. 9; “. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me”
- you see, the Father gave to Christ a “**limited**” a “**particular**” number of people, the “**elect**”
- they are the ones for whom Christ prays
- they are also the ones for whom Christ died
- therefore, they are the ones for whom the atonement is “**limited**” to
- we have the same teaching elsewhere in the N.T. where it is stated that Christ died for His church
- turn with me please to [Acts 20:28](#), [Eph 5:25-27](#)
- Christ’s “**atonement**” was not for an indiscriminate love of which all men were equally the objects
- but, a “**particular**” infinite love for His “**elect**”
- Christ died, not for an unorderly mass of humanity but for His people, His bride, His church, His “**elect**”

- and thereby **“limiting”** the **“atonement”**
- I’d like to show you further evidence of this **“limiting or particular atonement”**
- turn with me please to [Matt 1:21](#), [John 10:11](#), [Acts 20:28](#), [Rom 8:32-34](#), [Eph 5:25-27](#),
[Heb 9:15](#)

IV. Irresistible Grace:

- two college students attend a church worship service
- two strangers, they both hear a sermon on John 14:6; "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the father except through Me"
- one believes and the other does not
- two boys, in fact twins, are brought up in the same home with the same religious upbringing and instruction
- one loves God, and the other hates Him
- their names, Jacob and Esau
- why ??? why do two people in precisely the same circumstances react in opposite ways ???
- why does one believe and the other reject Christ ???
- the Biblical answer "**Irresistible Grace**"
- "**Irresistible Grace**" is the sole cause for these different reactions and responses
- "**Unconditional Election**" is the work of God the Father
- "**Limited Atonement**" is the work of Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity
- "**Irresistible Grace**" is the work of the Holy Spirit, the third member of the Trinity
- and the Holy Spirit's efficacious work is to apply the benefits of Christ's work to those "elect" people whom Jesus has redeemed
- as we continue to follow the acronym "**TULIP**" the "**I**" represents the "**Irresistible Grace**" which refers to the way God calls us to Jesus Christ
- but, once again the words "**Irresistible Grace**" are somewhat misleading
- for they do not mean as they seem to imply that God will coerce us kicking and screaming into heaven

- that God will cause someone to do what he does not want to do
- but, this is not the meaning of the words **“Irresistible Grace”**
- really, a much better description of God’s **“Irresistible Grace”** is **“Efficacious Grace”** or **“Certain Grace”**
- you see, when God calls us to faith in Jesus Christ, He calls us effectively
- succeeding in His purposes to save us
- it succeeds because the grace of God’s calling is overwhelmingly efficacious
- loved ones, God always does this in a way that man likes it
- God carefully changes the heart of man from evil to good
- through **“Irresistible Grace”** God does not leave the heart unchanged
- no, God regenerates the man, changes his heart, and thereby changing his nature
- radically altering his character so that man is now truly sorry for his sins
- leaving man wanting to embrace Christ for his iniquities
- now, with his heart changed, he abhors the things he used to do
- this is how the **“Irresistible Grace”** the **“Efficacious Grace”** of God works
- and once again, the determining factor in a person’s salvation is God’s grace, God’s **“Irresistible Grace”**
- allow me to illustrate what **“Irresistible Grace”** looks like from a couple of Biblical examples
- turn with me please to [John 11:38-45](#)
- Lazarus was dead, not critically ill or at the point of dying
- he was already a decaying corpse
- the stench from his rotting body was repugnant to the people present

- now, recognize that the miracle of his resurrection was accomplished without human means
- that is, by medical assistance like CPR or heart resuscitation equipment
- the only power used was Christ's call
- Jesus uttered a command, not an invitation or a request
- Jesus made no attempt to coerce Lazarus from the tomb
- no, Jesus simply called him
- furthermore, Lazarus rendered absolutely no assistance
- he did not help one iota
- Lazarus was incapable of assisting in any way because he was completely dead
- yet, some may argue that though Christ supplied the initial power of Lazarus' resurrection, Lazarus nevertheless had to respond to Christ's call to come forth from the tomb
- now, here is where most of the confusion regarding regeneration enters the picture
- obviously Lazarus did respond
- he came out of the tomb in obedience to Jesus' call
- but, Lazarus came out of the tomb only after life flowed anew in Lazarus' body did he become active
- Lazarus acted, he responded, he came forth from the tomb
- but, the crucial point is that he did none of these things while he was still dead
- he did not respond to the call of Christ until after he had been made alive
- his restoration to new life preceded his response
- now, in a like manner, that's how we step out of the tomb of spiritual death
- remember, we are ". dead in trespasses and sin" Eph 2:1

- and because we are “. made alive” or “. quickened to life” Eph 2:1 we also respond when we hear the call of Christ
- our regeneration does not preclude (prevent) such a response
- no, regeneration is designed to make this response not only possible, but certain
- the fact is, that unless we first receive the grace of regeneration, we will not and cannot respond to the gospel in a positive way
- regeneration must occur first before there can be any positive response of faith
- unfortunately, Arminianism reverses the order in salvation
- it has faith preceding regeneration
- the sinner, who is “. dead in trespasses and sin” and in bondage to sin, must somehow shed his chains, revive his spiritual vitality, and exercise faith so that he or she can be born again
- this makes regeneration a reward
- what is so said about this theological system is that it’s unsupported by Scripture
- allow me to show you two more Biblical examples of **“Irresistible Grace”**
- turn with me please to Acts 9:1-6, Acts 16:14
- friends, these are Biblical illustrations of **“Irresistible Grace”** or **“Efficacious Grace”**
- the Lord called Paul with an abrupt call, and the Lord called Lydia with a quiet call
- so, what the unregenerate person desperately needs in order to come to faith is regeneration
- thus, unless God changes the dispositions of our sinful hearts, we will never choose to cooperate with grace or embrace Christ in faith
- these are the very things to which the flesh is indisposed
- if God merely offers to change my heart, what will that accomplish for me as long as my heart remains opposed to God ???

- if God offers me grace while I am a “. slave of sin” and still in the flesh, what good is the offer ? ? ?
- **beloved, saving grace does not offer liberation, it liberates**
- **saving grace does not merely offer regeneration, it regenerates**
- this is what makes grace so gracious
- God does for us what we cannot do for ourselves
- now, the “**Doctrine of Irresistible Grace**” has been historically called the “**effectual call**” by theologians
- therefore, I now want to discuss this “**effectual call**” that has brought every true believer to faith in Christ
- I begin by saying that there are two kinds of calls, a general call and a specific call
- the first call, the general call is external and universal
- meaning, it is an invitation to all people to repent of sin, to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, and be saved
- allow me to illustrate this; **Matt 11:28; “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”**
- **Matt 22:14; Many are called, but few are chosen”**
- **John 7:37; “. If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink”**
- these are examples of the general call
- at Pentecost when Peter preached the first sermon of the Christian era, likewise extending a general call to believe on Jesus

we are told that on that occasion Jerusalem was filled with; **“Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs — (and) we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.” Acts 2:9-11**

- when Peter issued that call, the call was general, universal, meaning it went out for everyone present
- anyone who wanted to respond could come to Jesus Christ and be saved
- now, the difficulty with this general, this external, this universal call is that if people are left to themselves, no one would actually respond to it
- once again, **John 3:19**; “This is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men love darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil”
- you see, men need the specific call, the “**effectual call**” to enlighten them to regeneration
- the second kind of a call is internal, specific, and effectual
- it not only issues the invitation but also provides the willingness or ability to respond
- it is a case of God bringing spiritual life to those who without that “**call**” would remain spiritually dead forever
- friends, the “**effectual call**” is effectual because in it and by it God effects exactly what He intends
- that is, the “**quicken**ing” of spiritually dead souls to spiritual life
- the making “**alive**” of spiritually dead souls to spiritual life
- and this “**effectual calling**” refers to the Holy Spirit’s inward or secret operation on the soul
- that is what the Holy Spirit does
- the Holy Spirit operates through the preaching and teaching of the Word of God to call to faith those whom God previously predestined to salvation and for whom Christ specifically died
- apart from these three actions; the act of God predetermining, the work of Christ in atoning, and the power of the Holy Spirit in “**calling**” there would be no hope for anyone
- you see, apart from these three actions, no one would be saved
- but, because of these actions, because of God’s sovereign grace, even the worst of rebels may be turned from his or her folly to the Savior

- allow me to illustrate this from Scripture
- turn with me please to [Rom 1:5-7](#), [I Cor 1:9](#), [Eph 4:1](#), [II Tim 1:8-9](#), [II Pet 1:10](#)
- loved ones, in each one of these texts, and many others, the “**call**” of God effectively saves those to whom it is addressed
- and the “**effectual calling**” is the point at which the eternal foreknowledge and eternal predestination of God applies to us in real time
- and then the “**call**” starts the process by which the individual is “**drawn**” from sin to faith in Christ
- why is this internal and specific “**call**” so effective ???
- the reason the “**effectual call**” is so effective is that it is God’s “**call**”
- it issues from God’s “**call**” and everything that issues from God’s “**call**” accomplishes that for which it is sent
- thank God for “**Irresistible Grace**” for without it no one would be saved
- read “[The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination](#)” by Loraine Boettner, pg.164, highlighted

V. The Perseverance of the Saints:

- we come to the last letter in our acronym **“TULIP”** the letter **“P”** which represents the doctrine of **“The Perseverance of the Saints”**
- please understand that this doctrine does not stand alone, but is a necessary part of the Calvinistic system of theology
- loved ones, the **“The Perseverance of the Saints”** is an absolute and direct result of the doctrines of **“Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, and Irresistible Grace”**
- follow with me, if God has chosen men absolutely and unconditionally to eternal life
- and if His Spirit effectively applies to them the benefits of redemption
- then, the inescapable conclusion is that these persons shall be saved
- you see, those who once become true believers have within themselves the agent of eternal life, and that agent is the Holy Spirit
- and since the Holy Spirit dwells within them, they are already set aside for eternity
- it’s true that they are exposed to many trials
- but, they can rest assure that **“. He who began a good work in you will complete it”**
Phil 1:6
- the fact is, the very presence of strife within their lives is the very sign of eternal life and the promise of victory
- let’s take a look at a powerful prospect that guarantees our perseverance
- the nature of the change which occurs in regeneration is a sufficient guarantee that the new life imparted shall be permanent
- because regeneration is a radical and supernatural change of the inner nature, through which the soul is made spiritually alive, and the new life which is imparted is now immortal
- and since it is a change in the inner nature, it is in a condition which man does not have control

- because no created creature is at the liberty to change the fundamental principles of its nature, for that is the prerogative of God, and God alone as Creator
- therefore, nothing short of another supernatural act of God could reverse this change and cause new life to be lost
- turn with me please to [Titus 3:5-7](#)
- **beloved, the infinite, mysterious, eternal love of God for His people is a guarantee that they can never be lost**
- because this eternal love is not subject to fluctuations but is as unchangeable as His being
- [Mal 3:6](#); “For I am the Lord, (and) I do not change”
- [Rom 11:29](#); “For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable”
- now, I think we have already exhausted the fact that the true believer has eternal life that cannot be lost
- but, I want to end our study by saying that our eternal security is based on the fact that it has been promised to us
- in other words, our eternity is based on God’s promise of eternal and everlasting life
- turn with me please to [John 4:13-14](#), [John 5:24](#), [John 6:37-40](#), [John 6:47-58](#), [John 10:27-29](#), [John 11:25-26](#), [John 12:25-26](#), [John 14:1-4](#), [John 18:9](#)
- the greatest text is found in the Book of Romans
- turn with me please to [Rom 8:28-39](#)
- friends, some people fall away from a profession of faith
- but, none fall away from the saving faith of God
- [II Cor 2:14](#); “Now, thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ”
- therefore beloved, “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” [Eph 4:30](#)

- one more strong argument regarding the permanency of our salvation
- the disciples were told to rejoice because their names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life
Luke 10:20, Rev 3:5
- this book is a catalogue of the "elect" determined by the unalterable counsel of God
- beloved, the names of the righteous, the true believer are found there, written there
- but, the names of those who perish have never been written there from the foundation of the world
- God does not make mistakes
- that's blasphemy to ever think that God makes mistakes
- He does not write a name in that book in which He will later remove that name
- therefore, none of the Lord's "elect" will ever perish because "(there) citizenship is in heaven"
Phil 3:20
- and because "the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one"
II Thes 3:3
- and because ". the Lord knows those who are His" II Tim 2:19

In Closing:

- all kinds of thoughts ran through my mind as to how to finish up our study of Calvinism
- you see, Calvinism is really a systematic theology of the sovereignty of God in relation to the redemption and the salvation of God's elect
- and though the sovereignty of God is difficult to fully comprehend and understand for the finite human mind regarding an infinite God's purposes, we cannot and must not reject it
- in other words, because of our inability to fully comprehend such great Biblical truths, we do not reject what Scripture clearly teaches
- thus, we submit ourselves to the authority and teaching of God's Word and be content not to fully understand
- turn with me please to [Isa 55:8-9](#), [Rom 11:33-36](#)
- friends, this is where we began our study of **"The Doctrines of Grace"** reminding ourselves that our human reasoning is tainted by sin, thereby limiting our capacity to fully understand the infinite Triune God
- [Psa 50:21](#); **"(And) you thought that I was altogether like you"**
- now, I'd like to share a couple more principles for application from our study of Calvinism
- if the true Calvinist is a sinner who has received God's grace and therefore seeks to live for God's glory, then the prophet Isaiah is the perfect example of a Calvinist
- to put it another way, if the essence of Calvinism is a passion for God's glory, then one could hardly come up with a better example than the prophet Isaiah
- turn with me please to [Isa 6:1-8](#)
- in the simplest of terms, what Isaiah saw was a vision of God's sovereignty
- enthroned in heaven is the God who rules all things
- and from His throne He issues His royal decrees, including His sovereign decree of election

- also from His throne room, God executes His sovereign plan of salvation
- drawing sinners to Himself by His efficacious and persevering grace
- it is not without reason that God's throne is known as ". the throne of grace"
Heb 4:16
- for all the grace defined by "**The Doctrines of Grace**" flow from God's heavenly throne
- loved ones, the way that God makes a "**Calvinist**" is by exposing them to their sin, and bringing that person into His throne room, there to bow before His supreme majesty, showering them with His grace
- and all of this is being done by His divine sovereignty, **without the aid of man**
- Sinclair Ferguson is the pastor of St. George's Church in Glasgow, Scotland
- before he returned to Scotland, he was Professor of Systematic Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, in Philadelphia
- his students well remember how he would begin his course on theology
- he would say; "The goal of theology is the worship of God, the posture of theology is on one's knees, the mode of theology is repentance."
- the late James Montgomery Boice, pastor emeritus of Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia penned these words; "Since grace is the source of the life that is mine – and faith is a gift from on high – I'll boast in my Savior, all merit decline, and glorify God till I die."
- beloved, Calvinism teaches that in salvation God does for us what we cannot do for ourselves
- and that is true at every step of the way
- long before we could choose for God, the Father chose us in Christ
- when we were unable to remove our guilt, the Son died for our sins
- and when we would not come to God in faith, the Spirit of God drew us by His irresistible grace
- thus, Calvinism requires the sinner to accept God's sovereignty in salvation

- read attached both of these men were right
- lastly, Calvinism often has a stigma hanging over its head, and sometimes rightfully so
- sometimes the Calvinist is labeled narrow in their thinking, and uncharitable in their attitudes towards those who disagree
- sometimes they have a bad reputation, and sadly, perhaps some of it is deserved
- now, I'm not advocating unity at the expense of Biblical fidelity
- I'm not suggesting compromise at the expense of Biblical truth and orthodoxy
- but, may I say that there has been a combative tendency to defend Calvinism
- and whenever the **"Doctrines of Grace"** are divorced from warm and loving Christian attitudes, people tend to get ornery
- some people seem to be overly concern about converting people to their side of theology
- still others have memorized **"TULIP"** but somehow seem to be missing the heart of the gospel
- beloved, the true Calvinist ought to be the most loving, gentle, and warm Christian
- not ornery and unkind, but grounded in God's grace and thereby generous and loving in spirit
- Calvinism which is founded on Biblical fidelity does not need defending
- God's Word, the Bible, the Holy Scriptures can defend themselves
- Calvinists want to present God's Word in a loving, kind, and gentle manner, making its truth palatable to receive
- you don't hear me suggesting watering it down and compromising it
- you hear me suggesting presenting it in a loving and warm way that people will hear you
- the conviction to its truth is the role of the Holy Spirit – deliver it in such a way that you can be an instrument of grace, a vessel of grace that the Holy Spirit can use
- shall we pray