

**Five Points of Grace**  
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## Introduction

I was first introduced to Calvinism at the age of fifteen. Our family had just suffered a nasty divorce, and my mother and I thought it appropriate to move to another city. After our relocation my mother decided to start checking out some local Christians Churches. Previously we had not been attending a Fellowship on any regular basis.

She found a local non-denominational Church that she felt comfortable attending. At first, I was not pleased. I was, for the most part, very disinterested in going to Church. I was too busy living for my own pleasures and my own goals. However, my disinterest was short-lived.

The Church was a typical non-denominational Fellowship. There attendees held a variety of theological views. Some were Dispensational; some were not. Some believed in speaking in tongues; some did not. Some believed in “Eternal Security;” while, others believed that one could lose their salvation. These topics were debated often in the meetings.

However, the pastor was a Calvinist. I will skip the story of how He came to pastor this “mixed-multitude” and how the Church eventually fell-apart.

But there I was, fifteen and bewildered and to a degree fascinated at the variety of theological views. Argumentation at Bible study was a regular part of my Church experience. Sometimes these discussions were friendly; however, there were also times when these discussions got very heated. But Pastor Caleb debated these issues using the authority of God’s Word. The logic he used seemed to be inescapable, and the verses he

quoted appeared to be conclusive. In those early years, I was definitely being persuaded by Reformed Theology.

This pastor became the father figure-figure I was lacking and taught me what it meant to take the Christian walk seriously. His zeal for godliness was never second-place to his knowledge about Calvinism. This is to say that his heart for God was just as defined as his head for God. He would often ask me, “What did you do for the Lord this week?”

Even though I was leaning toward Calvinism, I was not completely convinced. I considered the typical “foreknowledge” view of predestination. I also toyed with the idea that man retained some type of freewill. I was very much undecided.

Shortly before this Church fell apart, I walked away from the Fellowship and lived a very ungodly life for about three years. But God, in His love and sovereignty, brought me back to himself. About the time I started going back to Church, Caleb was an elder at another Fellowship. I was really in need of a radical step toward Jesus Christ. Caleb offered to send me to Discipleship Training School (D. T. S.) at a Youth With A Mission (YWAM) base in Texas. I accepted.

While I was away, I really began to question the Calvinistic doctrines that I had learned earlier in life. When I finished D. T. S., I came back home with many questions for Caleb. Through his teaching and several tapes he had purchased, it was not long before I became a decided Calvinist. Calvinism seemed to be so logical. It seemed to be the only system that took the sovereignty of God and the fall of man seriously. The Scriptures were so clear to me on these issues.

However, there were times in my Bible reading that troubled me as a young “Reformer.” I was stumped when I would read passages like John 3:16. I would think to my self: *how does the concept of God loving everyone fit into Calvinistic doctrine?* I was equally stumped when I read passages like 2 Peter 3:9 and 1Timothy 2:3-4 which seem to teach that God wants to save everyone.

I initially resolved the conflict within my conscience by remembering that the verses that teach Calvinism far out-weighed those which appeared to teach Arminianism. However, I became more and more uncomfortable with this type of reasoning. I needed answers.

Finding answers was not as easy as it is today. The internet had just come out and very few of my friends had access to it. To compound things, I lived in a very small town that was without a Christian bookstore. It appeared that the only Calvinists were me and Caleb. But with a little digging and the radical growth of the internet, I did find my answers and with every answer, my conscience began to ease. Eventually, I found the answers to all those verses that were troubling me. I am now convinced that the Bible nowhere teaches Arminian theology.

Caleb took a lot of heat for being Reformed. He used to jokingly refer to himself as an “un-repentant Calvinist.” Today, I am pleased to consider myself the same.

### **Intention of the Book**

I have a three-fold intention for this book. My first desire is to accurately explain and defend what is known as Five Point Calvinism.

However, even though the majority of the work will be devoted to defending Calvinism, I will give particular attention to those verses cited by the Arminians that once troubled me. Explaining these verses is the second purpose of this book.

Finally, I will also deal with many of the arguments that I have heard over the years against Calvinism that are not Scripture specific. These are the arguments that are more philosophical in nature.

I do have one more intention in writing this book. Although I will not be able to deal with this as in depth as I would like, there will be times of digression in this book to touch upon what is known today as Moderate Calvinism. This is sometimes called Calvinianism. It is like nails on a chalk board when I hear someone say, "I'm not a Calvinist or an Arminian." When someone says this I know two things about this person immediately. First, this person just does not understand the differences that divide these two schools of thought. The second thing is that the person making the claim is *usually* Arminian at best and Semi-Pelagian at worst.

When someone claims to be neither Calvinistic nor Arminian they normally mean something like, "I do not believe that God is so sovereign that Christians do not have to witness. Nor do I believe that there are people who really want to go to heaven, but God will not let them because they are non-elect. On the other hand, I also do not believe that man can just do whatever he wishes and God is not involved in His creation. God is not helpless; He can accomplish what He needs to."

The truth is neither of these views accurately represents Calvinism nor Arminianism. I will answer what Calvinism is in the pages to come. Right now I want to

identify a group of people I refer to as *Unconscious Arminians*. Here is a simple test that demonstrates whether or not one is an Arminian:

1. Do you believe that God loves everyone equally?
2. Do you believe man is a sinner and cannot save himself without God's grace, but he still has the ability within himself to accept or reject the gospel?
3. Do you believe that Christ intended to save everyone when He died on the Cross?
4. Do you believe that one must first believe and then he is born again?

If you know answered yes to these questions then you are Arminian! These doctrines do not lie somewhere between Calvinism and Arminianism; these are the very pillars of Arminian theology. It is these doctrines that are antithetical to Calvinism. The truth is there is no middle ground between these two schools of thought. A person will always land on one side or the other of the theological fence.

**Chapter One**  
**Grace is the Dividing Line**

*For who makes you superior?  
What do you have that you did  
not receive? And if you did  
receive it, why do you boast as  
though you did not receive it?  
1 Corinthians 4:7*

Before we discuss the Five Points of Calvinism proper, I thought it best to devote a small portion of this book to two important topics:

1. The history of Five Point Calvinism.
2. The underlying controversy that divides Calvinism from Arminianism.

While I will not attempt to give a detailed history of Five Point Calvinism, I do think it is necessary to briefly sketch the historic controversy that gave rise to these points. Understanding the history of the Five Points helps to underscore their importance.

First, I must say that Calvinistic theology<sup>1</sup> is Biblical theology. That is, their ultimate justification is found in the Word of God. However, a Biblical defense for Calvinism will be given at another time. Currently I will explain how these points came into existence within the context of Church history.

### **Arminianism**

In order to understand the historical doctrines of Calvinism it is important to understand the historical doctrines of Arminianism. However, even to properly understand that, it is important to examine the man for which the theology of Arminianism is named.

Jacob (or James) Arminius, was a popular Dutch seminary professor. Although he was Dutch, he spent a great deal of his studies under Theodore Beza in Geneva. He started out affirming Calvinistic theology. Later he received a doctorate from the University of Leiden. Between the years 1603 and 1609 Arminius taught theology for the University.

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<sup>1</sup>Calvinistic theology encompasses more than just the Five Points. However, out of convince I will be using the terms “Calvinism” and “Calvinistic theology” at times to refer specifically to the Five Points.

Arminius began to question Calvinistic theology sometime earlier than this when he lost a debate with a Roman Catholic. He found himself unable to defend his position Biblically. This caused him to seriously question the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism with particular regard to their teaching on grace and predestination.

Later, as professor of theology at Leiden, he was able to pass his views onto his students. Some of his students were very popular and became known as Arminians. He, along with his students, called for the Church of Holland to reevaluate key issues of disagreement. Unfortunately, Arminius died in 1609 before he was able to address his grievances with the Church in any official way.

One year later, his students drew up a remonstrance containing five points of disagreement. David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas write:

The Arminian party insisted that the Belgic Confession of Faith and the Heidelberg Catechism (the official expression of the doctrinal position of the Churches of Holland) be changed to conform to the doctrinal views contained in the Remonstrance<sup>2</sup>

Summations of the five protests are as follows:

1. Conditional Election: God's election unto salvation is determined by fore-seeing how certain individuals would respond to the call of salvation. In other words, God elects those whom He knew would receive Him and rejects those whom He knew would reject Him.
2. Universal Atonement: Christ's work on the cross was intended to save everyone. However, Christ's work is ineffective until belief on the part of the sinner is secure.

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<sup>2</sup>David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas, *The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended, Documented* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1963), p. 13.

3. Human Ability: Man is sinful and cannot save himself. However, God offers all sinners enough grace that any one can receive the offer of the gospel if they are willing.
4. Resistible Grace: The ultimate determining factor in salvation is the will of man. Man *can* receive the grace of God, but man also has the ability to *resist* the grace of God.
5. Falling from Grace: Arminians were divided on whether or not one could lose their salvation. However, they strongly believed that the issue needs further investigation. It is important to note that there is no logical conflict between the other four points and the belief that one can lose their salvation.

As a digressive note: I find it interesting that often people deny that they are Arminian based on the fact that they believe in some type of “eternal security.” But Arminians were never united on this point. In other words, believing that one cannot lose their salvation does not exempt one from being an Arminian.

### **The Five Points of Calvinism**

In 1619 a Synod assembled at Dort to evaluate these five points of Arminianism. This synod convened over six months with more than one-hundred-fifty sessions. Representatives from nearly every major protestant country came to discuss this controversy. The Synod of Dort finally rejected the Remonstrance of the Arminian party. However, the simple rejection of the five points was not enough. The assembly thought it appropriate to draw up five of their own points over against the five points of the Remonstrance. Those five points are summarized under the acrostic T. U. L. I. P.:

1. T stands for *Total Depravity*: This means that sin has so affected man that he is incapable, in his fallen state, to do anything which is pleasing to God or to *cooperate* with the grace of God to receive salvation. Another way to put this is man is wholly in bondage to sin.
2. U stands for *Unconditional Election*: This doctrine teaches that God elects those who will be saved on His own immutable council and not on anything foreseen in the creature. He made this election in eternity past. This is to say that God predestines those who will be saved and those who will be lost.
3. L stands for *Limited Atonement*: This means that Christ's intention on the cross was to save the elect only. His suffering was to secure the salvation of His elect. He did not die only to create the possibility of redemption; rather he actualized it for His people.
4. I stands for *Irresistible Grace*: The act of the Holy Spirit in regeneration is monolithic and it happens prior to faith. Those who have been regenerated will come to Jesus for salvation.
5. P stands for *Perseverance of the Saints*: This point refers to the doctrine that those who are elected will persevere in their faith through all the trials of life. The truly saved can never lose their salvation because salvation is a gift from God and not an act of man.

### **Grace: The Real Issue**

In order to fully understand Calvinism, it is important to understand how these points relate to God's graciousness. The relationship is as follows:

1. Total Depravity—Grace Needed.

2. Unconditional Election—Grace Conceived.
3. Limited Atonement—Grace Accomplished.
4. Irresistible Grace—Grace Applied.
5. Perseverance of the Saints—Grace Victorious.

When a person is in a discussion over the extent of man's depravity or ability, he is really debating over how badly grace is needed in the life of a sinner. All Christians believe that man is in need of grace. The controversy is over the extent of grace. While most Christians will profess that man is in total need of God's grace, many are not willing to accept the logical conclusion of that proposition. If man is in total need of God's grace, then man has no ability to choose God in his unregenerate state. If man does indeed retain some small ability to choose God, then he is not in *complete* need of God's grace. One might think that grace has accomplished a tremendous amount, but what sets those who are redeemed apart from those who are lost is something man himself accomplishes.

Some have responded, "Grace is completely necessary. People cannot be saved without it. But the sinner must cooperate with God's grace." They think they have sidestepped the issue by making this statement. But again, if man must cooperate with grace then those who are lost are those who do not cooperate. And those who are saved are those who cooperate. In the end, the reason a sinner is saved is a result of something the sinner does. If a person is saved by something he does, then he is not in *total* need of God's grace.

Some have attempted to skirt the issue of grace by teaching that men will be saved unless they resist the grace of God. But again, the dividing line comes down to

those who resist and those who do not. If the sinner does not resist, then the sinner will be saved. If this resistance or non-resistance quality is something sinners are capable of doing, then they do not have a *complete* dependency on grace.

There really is no way around the issue of grace. If man is in total need of grace, then man does not have cooperative or non-resistant qualities. I will give the Biblical argumentation for why man is in complete need of grace in the next chapter. The only thing I wanted to demonstrate here is that the need for grace is the key issue in the doctrine of Total Depravity.

In the issue of Unconditional Election, the question of grace persists. Is the election unto salvation dependent upon something God foresees in man, or is it solely based on God's unconditional grace? If God issues grace because of some type of foreseen good on the part of the recipient, then the recipient is not saved by grace alone. The only way a sinner can truly be saved by grace alone is if that grace is dispensed on the immutable charter of God.

Limited Atonement means that Christ accomplished grace on behalf of His elect. While all Christians rejoice the atonement of Jesus—believing that it alone saves us—few are willing to be consistent with what accomplished atonement means. It does not simply mean available atonement. Accomplished grace means that Christ, through his sacrifice, made a narrow bridge between God and men. But this bridge goes extends all the way across and *reaches* the intended sinner. In contrast, the Arminian view teaches that Jesus built a wide bridge; however this bridge does not completely bridge the chasm between God and man. Man has to use his faith to actualize the bridge's potential. If this

is true, then the dividing line in salvation is once again something the sinner does and is not the result of what Christ accomplished.

The issue surrounding *Irresistible Grace* has to do with the application of grace. Does the Holy Spirit woo all men in the hopes that some will respond? Or does His regenerative act take place before the sinner is even able to respond? The issue could be put another way: does the sinner believe and then becomes “born again?” Or is one “born again” and then he is able to believe? If a sinner is able within himself to believe, thereby activating the new birth, then the sinner is not saved by grace alone. He is saved by his activating power. The Calvinist is not debating the need for faith but the grounds of faith. For the Calvinist the grounds of faith are found in the active application of grace by the Holy Spirit. Again the real issue is grace.

Perseverance of the Saints is another issue that has grace at its core. Is the grace of saving faith secured in the plan of God or must it be maintained in the work of man? For salvation to be an act of grace it must be contingent on the success of Jesus and not upon the success of the sinner. Or one could consider: how good does one have to be to keep his salvation? And how bad does one have to be in order to lose his salvation?

At the extreme end of the scale, one might answer that a Christian has to be 99.9% bad before he can lose their salvation. That means a Christian can keep their salvation if he maintains .001% righteousness. However, if a Christian must maintain his righteousness by .001% in order to keep his salvation then he is not saved by grace but by work of some kind. The truly redeemed will keep their faith through the trials and failures of the Christian walk because it is God who gives him that faith. Their belief is not a result of “free will” but the result of free grace.

Ultimately there are only two choices in answering why a person is saved or lost.  
Either it is man's will that saves him, or it is God and His grace that saves him.

## Chapter Two Total Depravity

*“Not even one person is righteous.  
No one understands.  
No one searches for God.  
All have turned away.  
They have become completely worthless.  
No one shows kindness, not even one person!  
Their throats are open graves.  
With their tongues they deceive.  
The venom of poisonous snakes is under  
their lips.  
Their mouths are full of cursing and  
bitterness.  
They run swiftly to shed blood.  
Ruin and misery characterize their lives.  
They have not learned the path to peace.  
They don't fear God.  
Romans 3:10-18*

The Bible states some very unflattering things about the fallen human condition. It repeatedly says that we are sinful. Christians of every variety affirm that man is sinful. The dispute is over how deep is that infection of sin. The doctrine of Total Depravity answers this question in three ways:

1. Man is so sinful that he cannot incline himself toward God in any way. Nor can the sinner make himself pleasing to God by anything he can accomplish.
2. Man is born with this sinful nature and inherited it from the fall of Adam.
3. Sin has affected the totality of a person. It has affected the mind, the emotions, and the will. So total has sin affected the person that it has rendered the sinner incapable of responding favorably to the gospel.

### **One Misconception**

Before we consider a defense of the above stated beliefs, there is one misconception about the Total Depravity that we need to address. Total Depravity does not teach that man is as bad as he can possibly be. Dr. R. C. Sproul addresses the issue:

Total Depravity is not utter depravity. Utter depravity would mean that we are all as sinful as we possibly could be. We know that is not the case. No matter how much each of us has sinned, we are able to think of worse sins that we could have committed.<sup>3</sup>

Even though this doctrine does not state the utter depravity of man, it does teach repeatedly that our corruption is inherent and wholistic. And as I have stated above, sin has even rendered sinners unable to respond favorably to the Gospel.

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<sup>3</sup>R. C. Sproul, *Chosen by God* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1986), p. 104.

## Jesus and the Doctrine of Total Depravity

The doctrine of Total Depravity may seem to some to be overwhelmingly harsh. However, it may also surprise some to know that Jesus was a major proponent of the radical fallen state of the human condition. In responding to challengers, Jesus said:

If God were your father you would love Me, for I have proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own invitation, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you *cannot hear* My word. You are of your father the devil and you want to do the desires of your father (emphasis added, John 8:42-44, NASB).

Jesus teaches three things in these verses:

1. The first is that God is not the father of those who were/are rejecting His words.
2. Next, Jesus indicated who their father was, namely the Devil.
3. And lastly, He taught that the reason they could not accept His message is that they were deaf to His words.

It is this last point that has significant relevance to the doctrine of Total Depravity. Here Jesus taught the inability of man clearly, “Why do you not understand what I am saying?” Jesus rhetorically asks this because He was about to give the answer, “It is because you *cannot hear* my words.” Jesus is clear about the condition of His objectors. Sin had left them with the inability to hear Jesus.

It was not a physical inability Jesus was addressing. His objectors could physically hear what Jesus was saying, but they were spiritually deaf. They did not have the *ability* within their fallen state to *spiritually* understand what Jesus was saying or grasp the reality of who He was.

Jesus also addressed this incapability earlier in His ministry. After He miraculously fed the five thousand, He gained a considerable crowd who wanted to be His disciples. However, Jesus had some issues He wanted these “followers” to understand. One thing He wanted to communicate was the fact that true followers can only come to Him as a result of the Father granting them the capability to do so. Jesus said, “No one *can come to Me* unless the Father who sent Me draws him, and I will raise him to life on the last day” (emphasis added, John 6:44). In the chapter on Irresistible Grace, we will explore what it means for the Father to draw sinners. However, currently it is important to underscore the type of language Jesus uses to define the ability of these followers. He says “*No one can come.*” This is a statement of inability. He is not simply saying that they will not come (this of course is true); He is saying that they lack the ability to be genuine disciples.

Again, this is a spiritual problem, not a physical problem. It is not as though they lacked the physical ability to follow. After all, they were following Jesus when He said this. Jesus was addressing their spiritual condition. Their sinful condition left them unable to come to Jesus.

After much discourse, many of these people decide not to follow Jesus. In an address to the people who did stay, Jesus reiterates this message with stronger language, “That’s why I told you that *no one can come to Me* unless it be *granted* him by My Father” (emphasis added, John 6:65). Jesus was clear about the spiritual condition of the sinner. He taught that they *could not* receive His message nor genuinely be a disciple.

## Paul on the Fallen Human Condition

The Apostle Paul also wrote about the inability of man, “But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he *cannot understand* them, because they are spiritually appraised” (emphasis added, 1 Corinthians 2:14, NASB). Paul teaches two co-relative truths:

1. Man *does not* accept the things of God.
2. Man *cannot understand* the things of God.

The inability of man is inextricably tied to the unwillingness of man. This means that they work together in such a way that it is difficult to separate them functionally even though we can separate them logically. For instance, is man unwilling because he is unable or is man unable because he is unwilling? The truth is they are co-relative. Man is unwilling because he is unable and he is unable because he is unwilling.

A digression needs to be made here because the unwillingness factor is very important when it comes to the understanding of Total Depravity. Notice again what Paul says, “But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him.” Paul elsewhere writes, “For the message about the cross is nonsense to those who are being destroyed” (1 Corinthians 1:18a).

Part of man’s depravity is rooted in what he thinks about the gospel and Christianity in general. He would never come to Christ because he finds the whole idea silly at best and hates it at worst. In other words, the sinner evaluates the gospel as foolishness or nonsense.

Christians can partially grasp this when they consider the practices of other religions. For instance, some strains of Hinduism consider it holy to drink cow yearn and

cover themselves with the animal's excrement. Personally speaking, I find this just plain disgusting. Not only do I intellectually reject Hinduism, I find this type of practice gross. I might go as far as to say that I have an *inability* to participate in such nonsense.

To a much greater degree this is what it is like for the non-Christian when they consider Christianity. They look at Christians going to Church, paying tithe, and singing songs to Jesus, and the unbeliever's very best thought is that this is all a big waste of time. To make things worse their disposition is compounded by spiritual darkness.

Paul strengthens this theme when he writes:

For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, *for it is not even able to do so*, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God (emphasis added, Romans 8:6-8, NASB).

Again Paul addresses two aspects of the sinful condition. First he addresses the disposition of the fleshly mind. He says that the fleshly mind is hostile toward God. Paul heightens his description by saying that those sinners, according to the flesh, with their fallen thoughts, are not indifferent but hostile toward God. This hostility drives the sinner to be unwilling to subject his thoughts to the law of God.

The natural hostility of man toward God is not always pronounced. It is rather relative to the proximity of the holiness of God. When a person is not under the conviction of his duties to God, he may not even be aware of this enmity. However, when the person is exposed to the holiness of God, or exposed to doctrines like sovereignty and Hell, the sinner becomes angry. They hate that type of God.

Paul does not stop with the sinner's enmity toward God. He also addresses man's incapability. Here he uses two phrases "not even able" and "cannot please." According to the Apostle, the sinner does not possess the *ability* to submit to God nor please Him.

The Apostle Paul says many things about the condition of the sinner. I think he summarized the situation when he wrote:

You used to be dead because of your offenses and sins, that you once practiced as you lived according to the ways of this present world and according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now active in those who are disobedient. Indeed, all of us once behaved like them in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of our flesh and senses. By nature we were destined for wrath, just like everyone else (Ephesians 2:1-3).

Paul is explaining to Christians what their spiritual condition was prior to their conversion. The first way he describes them is as dead. He also uses this description in verse four of this same chapter and also in Colossians 2:13. Dead people do not hear, they do not understand, and they do not respond.

This is where Calvinistic theology and *common* Arminian theology decisively part ways. They would essentially see man as extremely sick but not dead. It is as though a person is lying on a hospital bed so sick that he is about ready to die, but in comes the doctor with life giving medicine. He takes the medicine and places it on the lips of the patient, but it is up to the patient whether or not he will take or refuse the medicine.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>This author is not the originator of this illustration. However, it has used by so many pastors and teaches with many variations that it is difficult to give it proper credit.

The *common* Arminian view sees man as dependent on God. He sees God as doing nearly all of the work. But the sinner has just enough life to accept or reject the gospel.<sup>5</sup>

The truth is the Bible does not say that man is sick. It says that he is dead. Dr. James White explains:

...spiritual death involves the inability to will and do what is good and pleasing in God's sight. . . . those who are dead in sin can indeed understand the facts of the gospel message, but they will always respond in the same fashion: with rebellion, rejection, or suppression.<sup>6</sup>

Paul does not stop his description with death. He goes on to describe that the unregenerate are under the power and influence of the world and Satan. And that we were all once driven by the lusts of the flesh.

Paul and Jesus are clear about the spiritual state of man. The sinner is left unable to come to Christ, unable to receive His message, and unable to discern spiritual matters.

### **Other Aspects of Depravity**

The overall disposition of the Bible on the subject of man's depravity is also very clear. It teaches that man is so depraved that even what most consider righteous acts are abominations to Him. Isaiah writes, "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like a filthy rag" (Isaiah 64:6a). The term "filthy rag" is a little stronger in the Hebrew. It literally has to do with the rags associated with cleaning menstrual blood.

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<sup>5</sup>I need to make a very important digression here. I use the term *common* Arminian here because there is a strain of Arminian theology that agrees that man is totally dead in sin. However, through Prevenient grace, God gives them just enough life to accept or reject the gospel. I bring this up here because I do not want to be unfair in my treatment of Arminian theology. I also want to say that I will deal with this view in the chapter on Irresistible Grace. There I will discuss what it means for God to impart life.

<sup>6</sup>Dave Hunt and James White, *Debating Calvinism* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2004), pp. 68-69.

The shocking thing about this verse is that what God condemns is the “righteous” acts of men. People in general do not have to be convinced the *evil* things people do are condemned by God. However, it is not those “evil” things that is under discussion here. When God sees an unbeliever doing what the world at large perceives to be a righteous action, He is disgusted!

This deep and infectious view of depravity has been around for a very long time. In Genesis, God destroyed the world because of the wickedness of sin. Moses wrote, “The LORD saw that human evil was growing more and more throughout the earth, with every inclination of people’s thoughts becoming only evil on a continuous basis” (Genesis 6:5). Humans, according to God, are evil *all the time*.

So bad is the condition of man that the Bible says, “The heart is more deceitful than anything. It is incurable—who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). The force of Jeremiah’s words here are incredible. There is nothing more deceitful than the human heart.

The Old Testament says many more things about the sinfulness of man. However, the verses examined above teach three important things:

1. Man is displeasing to God in every action.
2. Man sins continually.
3. Man sins from his heart.

### **The Origin of Our Depravity**

The affects of sin can be seen immediately after Adams fall:

As a result, they both understood what they had done, and they became aware that they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

When they heard the voice of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden during the breeze of the day, the man and his wife concealed themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden (Genesis 3:7-9).

There is one result that we can see here that is relevant to the doctrine of Total Depravity. That is the fact that they tried to hide themselves from God. Sin had rendered Adam and his wife natural fugitives of God's presence. This was not their original nature at their creation. They were created in the image of God to love Him and have fellowship with Him. Now that image is fallen—it is not erased but fallen. It is this *fallen* image that Adam's posterity is born into.

The Scriptures go on to state, "When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth" (Genesis 5:3, NASB). Now the question is: what is meant by image? Image means more than look-a-like. Biblically speaking, bearing the image of something means to reflect the quality and character of that something. The posterity of Adam is now born in *his image*; that is a fallen image. His children now reflect the quality and character of Adam in his fallen state. Adam's children are born fugitives of God's presence.<sup>7</sup>

The fact that people are born sinners is clearly seen in the Psalms. David writes, "The wicked go astray from the womb; they go astray, telling lies even from birth" (Psalm 58:3). About his own origin, David writes, "Indeed, in iniquity I was brought forth; in sin my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5). David was direct in what he believed concerning the natural state of a man.

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<sup>7</sup>I do not want the reader to think that I am refuting Arminian theology at this point. Arminians disagree with extent of sin in the individual but they *do not* dispute that our sinfulness is a result of Adam's sin. Both Arminians and Calvinist agree that we are all born in sin and that sinful nature was passed down to us from the fall of Adam.

The Apostle Paul was blunt about this subject when he wrote:

You used to be dead because of your offenses and sins, that you once practiced as you lived according to the ways of this present world and according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now active in those who are disobedient. Indeed, all of us once behaved like them in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of our flesh and senses. *By nature* we were destined for wrath, just like everyone else (emphasis added, Ephesians 2:1-3).

Paul is addressing what sinners are *naturally*, and not what they become by influence.

### **Summation of Total Depravity**

So much is said in both the New and Old Testaments about the origin, extent, and depth of depravity that it is difficult to properly give a just examination of every verse on the subject. This would take an entire volume in itself. However the basic concepts are summarized in the doctrine of Total Depravity and defended by clear Biblical teaching.

Paul summarizes the concept perfectly in his letter to the Romans:

As it is written,

“Not even one person is righteous.  
No one understands.  
No one searches for God.  
All have turned away.  
They have become completely worthless.  
No one shows kindness, not even one person!  
Their throats are open graves.  
With their tongues they deceive.  
The venom of poisonous snakes is under their lips.  
Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.  
They run swiftly to shed blood.  
Ruin and misery characterize their lives.  
They have not learned the path to peace.  
They don't fear God” (Romans 3:10-18).

## **Answering Objections to Total Depravity**

Not all objections are created equal. There are some objections that I have heard that are a result of misunderstanding Calvinism. This is to say that the very definition of the Five Points preemptively answers many common objections. For instance, one objection goes something like, “I object to Total Depravity because I see people who are not Christians doing things that are good.” These objectors go on to give examples like non-Christians having good marriages or raising their kids properly. There are even examples of non-Christians laying down their lives to save others.

However, as I stated above, this objection is overcome by the definition of Total Depravity. This doctrine does not propagate that man cannot do things that are good. The good he does is relative goodness. It is good when compared to other people; it is not good when compared to God’s standard of goodness. In the light of God’s revelation, even the righteous acts that man accomplishes are considered to be unrighteous acts (Isaiah 64:6a).

### **Seeker Objection**

Another objection is closely related to the previous one. It has variations to it but the gist of it goes something like this: “How can you believe in Total Depravity? After all, I have met genuine seekers. They may not have come to Christ yet but they are genuinely searching for the truth.”

The seriousness of this objection came to me when I was training to become certified in a popular evangelism school. The Church that hosted the training conference was anything but Reformed. After our training sessions, the trainees would put what they

had learned to practice by going to the houses of people who had filled out visitor cards for the Church. On one of these occasions, I and two other people talked to another individual for nearly an hour. I, along with my team, could tell that the person was deeply moved. But, at the end of the gospel-presentation, he declined.

On the ride back to the Church, I expressed how disappointed I was about this man's refusal to receive the gospel. One of the people in the car responded, "Yeah, but he is seeking."

*Seeking!* I thought to myself. *He is more like running.* Sproul does an excellent job explaining this:

We see people searching desperately for peace of mind, relief from guilt, meaning and purpose to their lives, and loving acceptance. We know that ultimately these things can only be found in God. Therefore, we conclude that since people are seeking these things they must be seeking after God.<sup>8</sup>

What Sproul is saying is that there is a difference between searching for what God can give and searching for God Himself. The scripture is explicit, "No one searches for God" (Romans 3:11b).

### **Adam's Spiritual Death Argument**

The next objection comes from Norman Geisler's notorious lecture, "Why I'm not a Five Point Calvinist." The argument revolves around the fact that Calvinists justify Total Depravity by appealing to Paul's use of the term dead in his descriptions of fallen humanity (Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 2:13). He argues that Calvinists make too much of these verses. He says that the Biblical definition of death is separation not annihilation.

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<sup>8</sup>Sproul, p. 110.

Geisler argues that when Calvinists use the term “death” to justify inability, that this is more analogous to annihilation than separation. Geisler uses Adam as an example. He argues that when Adam sinned, this did not leave him unable to hear God, answer God or go onto do what God commanded.<sup>9</sup>

This erroneous argument needs to be addressed at three points:

1. What the Bible actually says about Adam.
2. Adam is an incorrect comparison.
3. What the Bible actually says about spiritual death.

First of all, Geisler simply ignores what the Bible actually says about Adam and his spiritual condition. As we have already seen, when Adam was confronted by God after the fall, he tried to hide. It was God who had to seek him out; it was God who had to confront him; it was God who made atonement for him. Without God’s intervention, Adam would not have, in and of himself, responded favorably at all.

Next, it is incorrect to compare Adam’s spiritual fall with the spiritual death of the common person for two reasons. First, Adam and Eve were unlike every other human being. They were the only people who have gone from spiritual life to spiritual death. No one else has experienced this condition. His connection with God would have been unlike the rest of sinners who were born in sin. The next reason is that it is improper to compare Adam with at least *most* other sinners. God *directly* intervened with Adam. Adam heard God’s audible voice. He (according to many theologians) experienced God in a

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<sup>9</sup>Norman Geisler, “Why I am not a Five Point Calvinist”  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OFs64zcTCYc&feature=related>, accessed prior to 7/19/11.

theanthropic form. It is just improper to compare the direct, auto, visual experience of Adam to the common person who has not experienced these things.

Finally, this whole argument just side-steps the actual texts that deal with the issue. Whatever we want to make of spiritual death, we must define it as the Bible defines it. As I have already argued earlier, the natural man is dead, unable to hear, unable to understand, and unable to respond.

### **The, “Dead to God Dead to Sin” Objection**

This is another argument is also based on what the Bible says about death. The reasoning goes something like this: Calvinists justify Total Depravity by appealing to the fact that the Bible says we are “dead” in sin (Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 2:13). Calvinist specifically uses the term “death” to justify their belief that men are unable to choose or respond favorably to the gospel.

Up to this point the objector is sound. We do use these verses and the term “death” as a proof text that men are *incapable* of responding favorably to the gospel.

The argument continues: The Bible also says that Christians are dead to sin (Romans 6:2-4). (This is also true.) Now comes the clincher: Christians can *choose* to sin even though they are described as dead to sin. Why then cannot those who are called dead *in* sin choose God? In other words, If death does *not* mean “unable to choose” for the Christian, then why *does* it mean “unable to choose” for the non-Christian?

On the outset, we can see that this is a sophisticated argument and deserves our consideration. But, upon close analysis this argument is not a good argument against Total Depravity. First, like the previous argument, it totally ignores the texts that

specifically deal with the inability of man. The only way we can define death is by what the Bible says about it. In the case of fallen humanity, there is no question that the Scriptures specifically address a lack of ability on the part of the sinner.

However, this objection is on to something very significant, and we need not undermine what the Bible says about death regarding the believer. The real problem with this argument is that it does not take into consideration the fact that believers are described as having *two* natures. Paul deals with this in chapter seven of Romans:

So I find this to be a principle: when I want to do what is good, evil is right there with me. For I delight in the Law of God in my *inner being*, but I see in my body a *different principle* waging war with the Law in my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin that exists in my body. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is infected by death? (Emphasis added, Romans 7:21-24).

Paul talks here about the “inner being” and this “different principle.” In the context, these are euphemisms for the old nature and the new nature, the nature we are born with and the nature we receive at the new birth.

Here is what the objector does not understand: the new nature *is* truly dead to sin. This new nature is not the faculty within the constitution of the Christian that chooses sin. The problem is that we still have the old nature to deal with. If we only had the new nature we would never sin. In heaven we will only have the new nature, and in heaven it will be impossible for us to sin.

### **We Can Do What God Commands Objection**

This next argument has a few components to it. It states:

1. God calls everyone to come to Him in repentance (Acts 17:30).

2. According to Calvinism, people cannot come to God in repentance.
3. Therefore, God is commanding that people do things they cannot do.

The conclusion is that God would be unfair if he asked people to do what they cannot (in themselves) do.

The first three points of this argument are accurate; however, the summation that this would mean that God is unfair is totally false. When this objection comes, I often like to ask the Arminian if God requires us to keep His commandments. And I often clarify that I am not just talking about the Ten Commandments but the whole moral law of God. The answer to this is always yes, God does require us to keep His law. Of course I am not suggesting that we are saved by keeping God's laws. However, God is serious about righteousness. The follow up question I ask the Arminian is: can you keep the law? If they are being honest, they will answer no. The truth is God asks us to do things we cannot do all the time. In fact, Jesus said, "So be *perfect*, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (emphasis added, Matthew 5:48).

The reason why God commands us to do things we cannot do is because God does not lower His righteousness because of our sin. One analogy that illuminated this concept for me goes like this: There was once an owner of a garden who employed a worker to keep the garden. The owner warns the employee that there is a pit next to the garden and that it is easy to fall into and impossible to get out of. If the employee falls in he will not be able to complete the job. The owner leaves and the employee, for one reason or another, falls into the pit. The owner comes back and sees that the work is not done. He then goes over to the pit and asks the employee why the work is not complete. The employee answers, "I can't do the work from the pit."

Now, what is the owner suppose to do? Is he supposed to respond by ignoring the need of the garden because the employee cannot complete the work? Not at all! The owner's standard of work does not lower because the employee is in the pit. This is the same with God. God does not lower the standard of righteousness because sinful people cannot live up to those standards.

All of this is to show that it is not wrong for God to command things that sinful humans cannot live up to. The truth is: God does this all the time and in many areas of our lives. This includes the command to repent and believe in Jesus.

### **A Few Thoughts on Freewill and Total Depravity**

The subject of freewill is huge to say the least. There are entire volumes dedicated to examining the topic. When addressing the issue of freewill there are some parliamentary questions that need to be asked. The first question is what does someone mean by freewill? Free from what and free to do what? Generally, what the objector to Calvinistic thought means is that he is free to choose to receive the gospel and free to choose to reject the gospel.

Those who believe in this type of freedom ignore two very important issues. The first issue is textual. Once again these objectors have to ignore clear Biblical teachings on the subject of human freedom. Jesus even went as far as to say, "Truly, I tell you emphatically, everyone who commits sin is a *slave* of sin" (emphasis added, John 8:34). Slavery is diametrically opposed to freedom. Many Biblical texts have to be ignored to believe this view of freedom.

The second problem is the type of reasoning surrounding the topic of freewill. It is just not well thought through. What the Arminian wishes us to believe is that sin has affected every part of the individual except the will. It is as though sin affected our minds, our emotions, our bodies, but the will *still* is free.

The will is not somehow separate from these other faculties. We will to do what our minds, emotions, influences tell us to do. This is to say that our will is the *out-working* of these faculties, they are not *independent* of these things. Our wills are not *free*.

John Reisinger illustrates this well when he tells us of a man who is psychotic and out murdering people. Would anyone seriously go to that person and appeal to his will to stop? Would one even think about saying, “Hey, Mr. ax-murder, if you just exercise your will you can stop being an ax-murder.” This will not work because what he is willing to do is tied-up in his mental illness. If you heal his mental and emotional illness, you will heal his will.<sup>10</sup>

Another example would be like asking a member of P. E. T. A. to kill their own dog. They would never do something like that. It is not as though the dog is indestructible. It is not as though the person does not have many means at their disposal to kill a dog. There are, after all, lots of ways to kill a dog. It is not as though they lack the physical or intellectual capacity to carry out the action. The problem is that they would never be *willing* to do anything like that. Their will is based on what they believe about animal rights, and their feelings about animals, and how they feel about their own

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<sup>10</sup>Examples like this are plentiful in nearly all his messages on Calvinism.

personal pet, and a whole host of other issues. Their will is anything but free in regard to this issue.

When we come to the unbeliever, there is this same sort of problem. We are talking about people who are blinded by the devil (2 Corinthians 4:3-4), unable to understand spiritual truth (1 Corinthians 2:14), and spiritually deaf (John 8:43). In addition, these people view the gospel as foolish at best (1 Corinthians 1:18a) and are enemies to it at worst (Romans 8:7). And the Arminian wants us to believe that these people are capable of willing to receive the gospel? The unregenerate are not free to will it because their wills are tied to their *fallen* nature.

Because Calvinists do not believe in this form of free will, they are accused of not believing in genuine choice. However, this is just not true. We believe that man is free to do what he wants to do. He is free to do what is in his nature to do. Man makes genuine choices but never free choices.

## **Conclusion**

The Calvinistic doctrine of Total Depravity is another way of summarizing what the Bible itself has to say about the subject of fallen humanity. It is clear that all humanity is born spiritually dead as a result of Adam's sin. This spiritual death has left everyone incapable to respond and receive the offer and calling of salvation.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Unconditional Election**

*Just as he chose us in the Messiah before the creation of the universe to be holy and blameless in his presence. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself through Jesus the Messiah, according to the pleasure of his will*

*Ephesians 1:4-5*

In dealing with the subject of Unconditional Election, there are two preliminary issues that need to be addressed:

1. What the Bible does not mean by predestination.
2. The extent of God's sovereignty.

When discussing the issue of Unconditional Election we are really examining the topic of predestination. In fact, Unconditional Election is just one competing view on the broader subject of predestination. Sometimes, even the word predestination can spark controversy. However, Christians must remember that the word itself is Biblical (Ephesians 1:4-5; Romans 8:29). Believers, if they are to be Biblical, need to deal with predestination.

Prior to explaining and justifying the doctrine of Unconditional Election, we need to address one erroneous but popular view. That view is the foreknowledge view. This view teaches that God looks down the corridor of time to see who will respond favorably to Him and those who will not. He chooses (or in this perspective "predestines") them or damns them based on foreseen faith or rejection.

There is also a variant of this view that is popular among those who are more thoughtful in their rejection of Unconditional Election. This view is known as Molinism. It states that God in eternity past sees all possible futures, and this would include those who would choose or reject the gospel. God choose the future that would bring Him the most glory and save the most people.

There are several ways this view(s) needs to be addressed. However, the main refutation is Biblical. I will address what the Bible actually says about predestination later

in this chapter when I defend Unconditional Election. In the meantime, there are at least four other problems beside an *explicit* exegetical one.

The first problem is this view undermines the foundation of Salvation. That foundation is grace. If God elects based on some foreseen good action in the individual, then God would be electing on the basis of a work. Some may object at this point and say that faith is not a work. In fact, some objectors are quick to point out that faith is listed in opposition to works (Romans 3:21-22). However, the reason Paul can place faith outside of work is because not only is salvation a gift, but faith is a gift also (Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 1:29). Paul is not placing a faith that has its ultimate origin in the individual in opposition to works. Paul is putting faith that has its ultimate origin in the grace of God in opposition to works.

The next problem is this view does not take into serious consideration the doctrine of Total Depravity. If God looked down the corridor of time to see who would receive the gospel, He would be waiting a very long time. All men naturally reject the message of Christ. And all God would ever see are people rejecting the gospel. Those who advocate the fore-knowledge view must first deconstruct the Biblical evidence for Total Depravity.

Another problem is this view makes nonsense of the words used on this subject. If what God does is look through time and chooses those who choose Him then this would not be *predestination*. This would simply be pre-approval or pre-disapproval. But the Biblical writer does not use words that would indicate this notion. Paul uses the word “predestination,” and he does it for a reason.

Finally, this view is simply not thought through well enough. For example, if I want to know how many books are in my office, I look to those books and count them.

Those books exist out-side of me in an objective sense. However, before time began, before God created anything, there was *only* God. Where does God look to see the future? He can only look to Himself. Any possible future or futures originate with Him and are a result of His mind and will.

### **The Sovereignty of God**

The other core issue that must be kept in mind is that of God's sovereignty. In the last chapter, we discussed the depth of depravity. In fact, the real issue was: in light of man's depravity, how much grace does man need? Likewise, in this chapter, there really is only one issue: How sovereign is God? Is God sovereign over who goes to heaven and who goes to hell?

Like many theological issues, the doctrine of Sovereignty is not a unified topic. There are competing theories on the subject. This means the Calvinistic position on Sovereignty must be explained. The best explanation is given in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*:

God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin; nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established (3:1).

This type of sovereignty is taught throughout the Bible. In Genesis, the patriarch Joseph made this statement to his brothers, "As far as you're concerned, you were planning evil against me, but God intended it for good, planning to bring about the present result so that many people would be preserved alive" (Genesis 50:20). After Joseph's father died, his brothers thought that he would want to kill them for what they had done to him earlier. They threw him in a pit and sold him to into slavery. What

Joseph is saying is that there were two wills at work in these events. God *planned* that Joseph be thrown into a pit and sold into slavery. His brothers also *planned* to throw him into a pit and sell him into slavery. However, when they did it, they did it out of evil motives. But when God planned it, he planned it out of good motives.

We also must keep in consideration that the brothers *wanted* to do this to Joseph. They were upset with him and wanted to harm him. It is not as though God's plan rendered them robots. They did what they did because they wanted to.

Solomon also talks about God's sovereignty this way in the Proverbs, "A king's heart is a water stream that the LORD controls; he directs it wherever he pleases" (Proverbs 21:1). It is not as though God controls the king's heart by putting him under some kind of spell. The king does, for the most part, what he wants to do. However, through the providence of God, his heart is directed by the plan of the Lord.

This view is also seen in the New Testament:

For in this city both Herod and Pontius Pilate actually met together with the gentiles and the people of Israel to oppose your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, to carry out everything that your hand and will had predetermined to take place (Acts 4:27-28).

Herod, Pilate, and the masses were not forced to do the evil that they committed. God did not twist their arm to do what they did in crucifying Jesus. However, Jesus' crucifixion was God's *predetermined* plan. But God's predetermined actions and purpose is different than the purposes of Herod's, Pilate's, and the rest.

The Bible teaches that God is so sovereign that not even a sparrow dies outside His will (Matthew 10:29). He is sovereign over birth defects (Exodus 4:11), the weather (Psalms 147:15-17), and perceived "random" events (Proverbs 16:33). The Bible even goes so far as to teach that those who hold positions of authority hold those positions only

by the providence of God (John 19:11). God is sovereign over the little things and the major things, and yes, He is sovereign over who goes to heaven and who does not (as we will see). A. W. Pink summarizes what the sovereignty of God means:

...the supremacy of God, the kingship of God, The God hood of God. To say that God is sovereign is to declare that God *is* God. To say that God is sovereign is to declare that He is the Most High, doing according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth (Dan. 4:35). To say that God is sovereign is to declare that He is the Almighty, the Possessor of all power in heaven and earth, so that none can defeat His counsels, thwart His purposes, or resist His will (Ps. 115:3). To say that God is sovereign is to declare that He is “The Governor among the nations” (Ps. 22:28), setting up kingdoms, over throwing empires, and determining the course of dynasties as pleaseth Him best. To say that God is sovereign is to declare that He is the “Only Potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15).<sup>11</sup>

All Christians believe in the sovereignty of God. The reason for this is that the Bible plainly teaches it. We might even debate whether one can be a Christian and deny the sovereignty of God. However, many Christians are inconsistent with what the Bible teaches about sovereignty. God is in control of a sparrow’s death, the establishment of rulers and apparently over what we think are free choices. Why would anyone think that His sovereignty ends over the process of salvation?

### **Unconditional Misconception**

There is one more thing before we dive into a Biblical construction of Unconditional Election. We need to understand what the Calvinist position is *not* saying. We are not saying that God is forcing people against their will into heaven. Rather, God changes their will (more on that in the chapter on Irresistible Grace). God is not forcing people into heaven simply because they are elect. Nor are we saying that some people

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<sup>11</sup>A. W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1988), pp. 20-21.

who reject the gospel and die in unbelief, yet because they are elect, will somehow end up in heaven.

We are also not saying that there are some people who would really like to be in heaven, who believed in Jesus, but are going to hell because they were non-elect. These are common misconceptions of Calvinism. All those who believe and trust in Christ's finished work, for their salvation *are* God's elect and *will* go to heaven.

### **A Biblical Case for Unconditional Election**

Unconditional Election states that from eternity past God has chosen a group of people whom He has decided to redeem from sin. He did not make this decision based on anything in the creature either good or bad, but upon His own council and immutable character. This does not mean that God chose capriciously or randomly. It means that He has His own reasons why He chose to save some and not others, and He has decided not to share that reason with us. However, as we will see, He has told us that those reasons are not based on us. This is to say that God elects some to salvation without regard to the *condition* of the creature. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* summarizes this faithfully when it says:

Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of his free grace and love alone, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto; and all to the praise of his glorious grace (3:5).

There are several reasons why we as Calvinists have come to this position. First of all, the Bible is explicit that faith, the sole instrument by which we are saved is a gift. Paul writes, "For you have been *given* the privilege for the Messiah's sake not only to

*believe* in him but also to suffer for him” (emphasis added, Philippians 1:28). Paul is comforting Christians who are suffering persecution. He says two things have been *given* them: Suffering and faith in the Messiah.

Faith and repentance must be granted as a gift to the sinner to come to Christ. This is due to the sinner’s natural condition. The natural man is unable to produce faith (see previous chapter). This is why Paul writes:

The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may *grant them repentance* leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will (emphasis added, 2 Timothy 2:25-26, NASB).

The Apostle is instructing that Christians should not be “quarrelsome.” This quarreling is not the presenting of good and sound arguments for the Christian Faith. The type of quarreling Paul is addressing is arguing for the sake of arguing. In other words, to put it plainly, don’t be a jerk in your apologetic. The reason is that God might *grant them repentance*.

Repentance is a big subject theologically and has many facets. However, the repentance in view here is the repentance of faith. We can be certain of this because of the context. The Apostle is writing about repentance that is needed by the unbeliever. What they need is faith in Christ. Some may argue that it means more than this; but, it does not mean anything less than this. Repentance must be *granted* by God.

This is in absolute opposition to the Arminian position. If the Arminian concept of faith was true, it would have been more appropriate for Paul to write, “God will *offer* repentance.” But what good would an offer do for people who are dead? Repentance

must be *granted* not *offered*. Dead people cannot respond to an offer, but they will respond to God *granting* them repentance.

Paul is explicit about faith being a gift when he wrote, “For by such grace you have been saved through faith. This does not come from you; it is the gift of God and not the result of actions, to put a stop to all boasting” (Ephesians 2:8-9). Some have objected to using this verse to demonstrate that faith is a gift. The reason for this objection is due to the fact that “faith” in the Greek has a feminine ending and the word “this” (in reference to the gift) has a neuter ending. They conclude that the word “this (gift)” grammatically cannot refer to faith.

The conclusion of this argument is absolutely false. It is true that “faith” has a feminine ending and the word “this” has a neuter ending. Grammatically what is happening here is Paul is using the word “this” in reference to the gift is referring back to salvation which includes grace *and* faith. There is no question as to what Paul is writing: grace is a gift *and faith is a gift*. Kenneth Wuest explains:

The Greek word “faith” is feminine in gender and therefore *tauto* [this] could not refer to “faith.” It refers to the general idea of salvation in the immediate context. . . . That is, salvation is a gift of God. It does not find its source in man. . . . It is not produced by man nor earned by him.<sup>12</sup>

When we look at it this way (correctly), this becomes a bigger problem for the Arminian. An Arminian would not object that salvation or grace is a gift. They would readily accept that grace does not originate within the individual or that grace is something the individual is able to produce. Likewise neither is faith! Like grace, faith is a gift, and it does not originate with the individual nor is it something the individual is able to produce. Faith is granted.

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<sup>12</sup>Kenneth Wuest, *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament: Volume One (Ephesians and Colossians)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm, B. Erdmans Publishing, 1953), P. 69.

This is another problem for the “foreknowledge” view. If faith must be granted, then the “foreknowledge” view would be redundant. All God would be doing is looking down the corridor of time and seeing to whom He would and would not impart faith.

The fact that faith is a gift is one exegetical proof of Unconditional Election. If some one has faith, it was given to them. If they do not have faith, then God decided not to give it to them.

Another exegetical proof for Unconditional Election is the fact that the Bible explicitly states that there is a group of people predestined, or chosen to be saved through the work of Christ. Jesus taught this when He said, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out,” (John 6:37, NASB). Jesus teaches that there is a group of people *given* to Him by the Father. This group of people *will* come to Jesus. It is not as though God gives everyone to Jesus and some out of that larger group come (this is basically the Arminian position). Rather, there is a select group given to Jesus and all of that select group will come.

The Apostle Paul expands on this topic when he writes:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, the Messiah! He has blessed us in the Messiah with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realm, just as he chose us in the Messiah before the creation of the universe to be holy and blameless in his presence. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself through Jesus the Messiah, according to the pleasure of his will, so that we would praise his glorious grace that he gave us in the Beloved One (Ephesians 1; 3-6).

Paul clearly teaches that God has a chosen people that He predestined to be in the Messiah. He has selected these people “for adoption.”

Despite the clarity of the passage, I have seen Arminians do their best to explain that this passage is not discussing Unconditional Election. One writer tried to say that this

is not a passage about salvation but about spiritual blessings. What this writer fails to realize is that salvation is a “spiritual blessing.” In addition, he is simply wrong. Paul says that this chosen people are “predestined for adoption.” This is nothing other than salvation. There are many more objections; however, all of them either ignore what is plainly being said, or ignore other pre-established facts.

Paul also teaches another element of Unconditional election, and that is election of salvation is not based on what He sees in the individual. In the verse just quoted, Paul says that God elects out of “love” and the “pleasure of his will.” There is nothing here that would indicate that God elects out of what He foresees in the individual.

Paul becomes even stronger in wording on Unconditional Election in Romans chapter eleven. But, before we get to that passage we need to lay some ground work. Paul is wrapping up a very intense theological argument. The overarching theme from chapters one to eight is the subject of salvation by grace through faith. When we get to chapters nine through eleven we are dealing with the problem of Israel, with both its current situation and the future destiny of the Jewish people. One of the problems Paul deals with is how does this nation now relate to the New Covenant.

Contrary to Arminian belief, Paul tackles this topic by appealing to *individual* election. Individual election is the reason why so many gentiles are coming to this Jewish Messiah. The issue becomes: what is going to happen to physical Israel? Paul states that there is a remnant of Jewish people God has chosen to save. This simply means that some Jew’s will receive Jesus as the Messiah.

This brings us to the point on Unconditional Election. How did God choose this group of believing Jews? Did He choose them because they were Jews? Did He choose

them because He had foreseen their faith? No. Paul writes, “So it is at the present time: there is a remnant, *chosen by grace*. But if this is by grace, then it is no longer on the basis of actions. Otherwise, grace would no longer be grace” (emphasis added, Romans 11:5-5). The reason why God chooses this group of Jew’s to be saved is based on Grace and grace alone. This is to say that God chose this group *unconditionally*. No other reason is given.

## **Romans Nine**

Chapter nine of Romans seems to be the passage of full mention on the topic of Predestination and Unconditional Election. Like I said previously, Paul is dealing with how the nation of Israel relates to the New Covenant. There are many issues surrounding this topic. However, the topic being dealt with specifically here is the topic of salvation. Paul addresses the problem by appealing individual election. Paul writes, “Now it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all Israelis truly belong to Israel, and not all of Abraham’s descendants are his true descendants” (Romans 9:6-7). What Paul is saying is just because they are Jewish does not mean they are saved. *Salvation* is the topic.

Paul goes on to argue that election has always been individual from the very beginning, and election is without regard to anything other than God’s grace. Paul writes:

Not only that, but Rebecca became pregnant by our ancestor Isaac. Yet before their children had been born or had done anything good or bad (so that God’s plan of election might continue to operate according to his calling and not by actions), Rebecca was told, “The older child will serve the younger one.” So it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated” (Romans 9:10-13).

The Apostle is arguing three things here:

1. God chose Jacob over Esau. The language here is very strong. It is said that God “loved” Jacob and “hated” Esau.

2. God's choice was not based on anything in Jacob or Esau. This choice happened
  - A. *before* the twins were born.
  - B. *before* they did anything good or evil.
  - C. And was not based on any of their actions.
3. God's choice was based on His purposes. This choice is "God's plan of election."

Many Arminians have objected here and said that what is being discussed is the election of nations. However, this is only slightly true, and the Arminian totally misses the point of what Paul is arguing. The context is already talking about why some Jews are *saved* and some are not. Salvation is the topic and this becomes clearer as the verses continue as we will see momentarily. What Paul is doing is appealing to Jacob and Esau as examples for *individual and salvific* election. Paul also goes on to use Pharaoh as an example. Is Pharaoh somehow a nation? No, he is a person. All Paul is doing is drawing upon narratives from the Old Testament to demonstrate his point about *individual* election unto *salvation*.

It is true that Jacob became a nation and so did Esau. Jacob fathered the nation God loved and Esau the father of the nation God hated. But the Arminian completely misses the fact that Jacob became the father of that nation because God loved Jacob the *person*. Paul continues:

What can we say, then? God is not unrighteous, is he? Of course not! For he says to Moses, "I will be merciful to the person I want to be merciful to, and I will be kind to the person I want to be kind to." Therefore, God's choice does not depend on a person's will or effort, but on God himself, who shows mercy. For the Scripture says about Pharaoh,

“I have raised you up for this very purpose, to demonstrate my power through you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.”

Therefore, God has mercy on whomever he chooses, and he hardens the heart of whomever he chooses (Romans 9:14-18).

Paul anticipates an objection. If God’s election is based solely on His own will, then would this not make God unrighteous in some way? Paul answers this objection emphatically with, “Of course not!” Parenthetically, it must be stated that this objection makes no sense if Paul is talking about something other than Unconditional Election.

Paul goes on to state that it is God’s prerogative to show mercy and kindness to whoever He wants. Furthermore, Paul is explicit in saying that God’s choice does not depend on the will of the chosen. Paul writes, “It *does not* depend on a person’s will.” Personally speaking I do not see how Paul could be any clearer on this subject—*it does not depend on a person’s will*. This is the one statement that the Arminian needs to hear repeatedly.

Paul furthers his defense by appealing to Pharaoh. God raised Pharaoh up just to display His power in destroying him. The Apostle reiterates, “Therefore, God has mercy on whomever he chooses, and he hardens the heart of whomever he chooses.”

The Apostle anticipates another objection, “You may ask me, ‘Then why does God still find fault with anybody? For who can resist his will?’” (Romans 9:19). Again, this type of objection can only make sense if what Paul is talking about is the Calvinistic view of predestination. In other words, no one accuses God of being unfair, nor do they ask “why does God still find fault for who can resist his will?” when the Arminian view of predestination is being taught. These kinds of objections *only* come up when the Calvinistic view of predestination is being taught.

Paul answers directly:

On the contrary, who are you—mere man that you are—to talk back to God? Can an object that was molded say to the one who molded it, “Why did you make me like this?” A potter has the right to do what he wants to with his clay, doesn’t he? He can make something for a special occasion or something for ordinary use from the same lump of clay (Romans 9:20-21).

According to Paul, we have no right to object because it is God’ prerogative to do what

He wants with what is His. The Apostle continues his argument:

Now if God wants to demonstrate his wrath and reveal his power, can’t he be extremely patient with the objects of his wrath that are made for destruction? Can’t he also reveal his glorious riches to the objects of his mercy that he has prepared ahead of time for glory— including us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but from the gentiles as well (Romans 9:22-24)?

There really is little doubt as to what Paul is talking about. There are some objects *made for* destruction, and there are some objects *made for* glory. This is nothing less than what the Calvinist means by Unconditional Election.

There are many, many more passages that we could be appealed to establish Unconditional Election. However, the scope of this book is to cover all the Five Points and answer objections to them; therefore, we must move forward. But here is what we have established:

1. Faith is a gift. Faith must be granted to the sinner because the sinner cannot produce this himself.
2. God’s election of sinners unto salvation is unconditional. God does not base His decision on anything He sees or foresees in the sinner.

## Answering Objections to Unconditional Election

There are many types of objections posed to the doctrine of Unconditional Election. Some are more philosophical in nature and some are directly Scriptural. We will first deal with those Scriptures that Arminians use that would appear to contradict the Calvinistic teaching on the subject. Then we will move to objections that are more philosophical in nature. But, before we do any of this, there is one objection/issue that we need to work through. That is the issue of double predestination.

I have not yet dealt with the topic thus far, and honestly I have had a couple of chances to do so. I do not want to give the reader the impression that I was not going to address it. This topic is somewhat difficult to deal with in a book like this because it is not *directly* one of the Five Points of Calvinism. And depending how one looks at it, it can be considered a part of Calvinistic theology as a whole, or not part of Calvinism at all. Let us now turn to what is known as double predestination.

Basically, the subject could be stated in a question: if God predestines some for Heaven, then does He not also predestine others for Hell? The doctrine that God predestines some to Hell is known as Reprobation. However, does this mean that God in the same way elects some to Hell as He does those to Heaven? Or let me put it another way: this could be broken down into two issues:

1. Does God elect some to Hell?
2. If so, is His election of some to Hell *identical* as His election to salvation?

The answer to the first question is yes. As difficult as this is the Bible is clear on the subject. To be honest, there is much less on this topic than on the issue of Unconditional Election; however what is there is fairly clear. First, it is obvious that if

faith is a gift, and God gave it to some then, logically, He did not give it to others.

Likewise, if God elected some to heaven then He did not elect others. And we must say that it is not as though God overlooked these individuals by accident.

However, does God purpose that some go to Hell? Again Paul was pretty specific about this in Romans nine:

Now if God wants to demonstrate his wrath and reveal his power, can't he be extremely patient with the objects of his wrath that are made for destruction? Can't he also reveal his glorious riches to the objects of his mercy that he has prepared ahead of time for glory—including us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but from the gentiles as well (Romans 9:22-24)?

According to Paul, there are objects made for wrath. I know that verses like this are shocking for people to hear particularly in light of the subject of Reprobation, but nevertheless it is true.

However, the next issue is something we need to examine carefully. This is because there is a doctrine about double predestination that Calvinists do not believe, and that is the doctrine of Equal Ultimacy. Sproul explains:

Equal Ultimacy is based on a concept of symmetry. It seeks a complete balance between election and reprobation. The key idea is this: Just as God intervenes in the lives of the elect to create faith in their hearts, so God equally intervenes in the lives of the reprobate to create or work unbelief in their hearts.<sup>13</sup>

God does not need to create unbelief because it already exists in the individual. What God needs to do is overcome unbelief. Sproul goes onto explain how God acts in Reprobation. God simply withdraws any grace and leaves that sinner to himself.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Sproul, p. 142.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid, p. 145.

We can boil the difference between reprobation and election down to two simple ideas:

1. God elects some to salvation and some to damnation.
2. The elect He saves in spite of what they do. But the non-elect He sends to Hell *because* of what they do.

God never does what is unjust. All people *deserve* to go to hell. However, God gives some grace and He gives some justice. God never gives anyone injustice.

### **Scriptural Objections to Unconditional Election**

There are some scriptures that would appear to contradict the doctrine of Unconditional Election. Arminians retreat to these verses because they seem to teach that God desires everyone to be saved. These Scriptures would include: John 3:16, Matthew 23:37; 1 Timothy 2:4; and 2 Peter 3:9. It is important that we examine these and provide a cogent and sincere response, recognizing that these verses are inspired in the same way as the verses that Calvinists use to demonstrate Unconditional Election.

Calvinists have dealt with these verses in two ways. The first way is by thoroughly examining the text, demonstrating that a proper rendering of them is consistent with Calvinistic Theology. The other way is to agree that God does desire to save everyone; however, God has a greater desire, a stronger desire, and a more holy desire to only save some. I will be using both methods as appropriate.

#### **John 3:16**

We will first deal with the very popular verse, John 3:16. On one occasion I was explaining Calvinism to a small group of friends. One lady objected, saying, “John 3:16 says it all.” George Bryson wrote a small book: *The Five Points of Calvinism*. On the

cover is a picture with an off set scale. On one side of the scale is the name “John Calvin.” On the other side of the scale, the heavier side, there is John 3:16.

This verse seems to be kind of an Arminian shield against Calvinism. The sad fact is when some one uses John 3:16 this way, it really demonstrates that they have never attempted anything more than a perfunctory examination of this verse.

Before our examination, It is good to look at this verse again, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (NASB). The Arminian, many times subconsciously, reads this verse in light of his presuppositions rather than letting the verse speak in its historical context. They read the verse this way, “For God *so* [extremely] loved the *world* [everyone who existed, past present, and future], that He gave His only begotten Son, so that whoever [meaning anyone] believes [and of course they *can* believe] in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

The Arminian is not entirely to blame in their understanding of this verse. It has been read this way and also to a degree mistranslated so many times that this *interpretation* is nearly synonymous with the actual verse. However, there are some problems with this interpretation, and the Arminian would do well to take those problems into consideration.

First, using this verse to refute Calvinism, in a way, misses the point. All this verse tells us is that those who believe will go to heaven. It says nothing about who will believe or why an individual believes and others do not. One must go to other verses that actually speak on the subject in order discern those issues.

Another issue is the interpretation of the term “so.” This is not an intensifier in Greek. John is not saying God extremely loved the world. Rather “so” means “in this way” or “this is how.” The I. S. V. correctly translates this portion as, “This is how God loved the world” (John 3:16a). To be perfectly clear, the word “so” has nothing to do with intensifying the word love.

The next issue is for the Arminian, and probably the most central to a proper understanding of this verse is found in the term “world.” The assumption is that this term means “everyone who ever lived or who ever will.” However, this is not the case. Thayer alone points out eight different meanings for the word “world.”<sup>15</sup> There are times when John uses this world when it clearly is speaking about something other than the Arminian meaning. For example, John records, “Then the Pharisees told one another, “You see, there is nothing you can do. Look, the *world* has gone after him [Jesus]!”” (Emphasis added, John 12:19). The Pharisees were not saying that everyone who ever lived or who ever will was going after Jesus. *They* were not following Him so obviously they are not part of the group “going after Him.” In the context they are talking about Gentiles *and* those Jews who did not buy into what the Pharisees were saying about Jesus.

In John’s first letter, he writes, “We know that we are from God and that the whole *world* lies under the control of the evil one” (emphasis added, 1 John 5:19). This usage specifically excludes Christians and only refers to the unbelieving world.

Even in the context of John three, he uses the term in a way that cannot mean what the Arminian insists that it means, “For God sent His Son into the *world*” (Emphasis

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<sup>15</sup>Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), pp. 356-357.

added, John 17a). Jesus did not come to every person who ever lived or who ever will. Here John is talking about the created order.

We will discuss what the word “world” means in the context of John three momentarily. However, it is highly exegetically improper for the Arminian to import their meaning into the term without justification or consideration to the fact that the word has a variety of meanings.

The next problem is that the term “whosoever” is absent from the Greek text. This may be shocking for people to hear, but it is never-the-less a fact. This shock only solidifies that people have read this text so often in their Arminian tradition that they are not letting the text speak for itself. What is being said in the Greek literally is, “every believing one.” This gets translated as “whosoever believes.”

This brings us back to the meaning of the term “world.” This word must be interpreted in light of its context, and the context is specifically speaking about every believing one. Both Thayer and Strong have a list of the different meanings of the term “world.” And one definition that they both give is believers only. In addition, both cite John 3:16 as an example of this meaning. And unless one thinks that this is a Calvinistic interpolation, it is important to realize that neither Thayer nor Strong were Calvinists.

Here is a correct interpretation of this verse based on sound exegeses from the Greek, For God so[in this way] loved the world [that is the world of believers], that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever [every] believes [believing ones] in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (NASB). Far from being a verse that refutes Calvinism, it is actually a verse that establishes Calvinism.

Some may argue that this interpretation actually diminishes the beauty of this passage that speaks so plainly of God's love. But, this is only true if you think of God's love in terms of scope. The truth is this is a wonderful verse expressing the depth of God's love. It is narrow but it completely extends to the world of the believers. The Arminian wants to extend this love abroad; however, it never accomplishes its intended goal, the salvation of everyone.

Others have objected, saying that if what John meant was *believers* then why did he just not use this term? However, this argument can be reversed. We could ask if what John wanted to communicate was *everyone who ever existed and who ever will at all times*, why did he not say that? Why did he use a word that has at least eight different meanings? It is the incumbent on all believers to justify their position and not to simply assume it. And in the context, according to unbiased Greek scholars, there is no question that what John is talking about is the world of believers.

### **Matthew 23:37**

This, in my opinion, is one of the most misquoted verses that Arminians appeal to in an attempt to disprove Calvinism. However, the only way they can do this is by citing the passage improperly. If the verse is not *misquoted* then it has zero bearing on the doctrine of election. First, let us look at the passage as it is misquoted by the Arminian:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones to death those who have been sent to her! How often I wanted to gather *you* together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were unwilling!  
(Emphasis added).

The objector argues that Jesus wanted to save these people, but He could not because of their freewill. When we examine the passage correctly, however, a different conclusion is necessary:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones to death those who have been sent to her! How often I wanted to gather *your children* together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were unwilling! (Emphasis added, Matthew 23:37).

The indictment here is to the leadership of Jerusalem hindering his teaching ministry of Jesus within the city. Jesus is not expressing a desire to gather together those who kill the prophets. His desire is to gather their *children*. The phrase, “you were unwilling!” is *not* in reference to Jesus gathering the ones who kill the prophets. It is in regards to them being unwilling to have Jesus gather their *children*.

### **1 Timothy 2:4**

This verse also has implications to Limited Atonement. So I will save my comments on this verse until I get to the objections on Limited Atonement.

### **2 Peter 2:9**

“The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some people understand slowness, but is being patient with you. He does not want anyone to perish, but wants everyone to repent” (2 Peter 2:9).

Here is another verse that on the outset appears to be contradictory to Unconditional Election. How can God only act to save some if He really wants to save everyone?

The truth is that there are some grammatical problems with trying to say that God does not want “anyone” to perish but “everyone” to come to repentance. In the Greek, it simply says that, “He does not want *any* to perish, but wants *all* to come to repentance.” These words are left without an object. The question becomes *any* of what? And the other question is *all* of what? Does God not want *any* cancer cells to perish, but wants *all* cancer cells to come to repentance? The only way to determine the object of these words

is by looking at the context. The first part of the verse states, “The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some people understand slowness, but is being patient with *you*” (2 Peter 3:9). The answer to the questions is found in identifying the “you” in the sentence. In the first verse of this chapter, Peter is clear who he is writing to, “Dear Friends.” He is addressing Christians. The passage could very well read, “The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some people understand slowness, but is being patient with you. He does not want *any of you* to perish, but wants *every one of you* to repent.”

The elect are the ones who are in view in this passage. The passage is addressing why Jesus is delaying His second advent. And far from being a passage that supports the Arminian position it is actually in diametric opposition to it! God has decreed a certain number of believers that He has decided to bestow His grace upon, and He is delaying His return until that number is complete.

### **God’s Desire**

All this discussion about what the Greek says and objects of terms may seem to some to be doing the equivalent of mental gymnastics to get around what the verse plainly says. I must admit that to a degree I understand this concern. And I am not alone in letting a verse like this, simply, say what it appears to say and that is God desires to save everyone. This has caused some modern Calvinists leaders to deal with this verse and verses like this in another way.

The *apparent* problem between this verse and Calvinism is resolved in realizing that there are different levels or degrees of willingness in the character of God. Jeremiah writes, “For he does not deliberately [literally, “from the heart” in Hebrew] hurt or grieve human beings” (Lamentations 3:33). In other words, there is one level of God’s character

that does not desire to inflict harm upon people. He does not do this from His heart. However, He still does hurt humans. This is because there is a deeper, more righteous motive in the pain that He inflicts in punishment rather than refraining from inflicting punishment. Every *good* parent should be able to identify with this to some degree. One may at times have to discipline their child; but, this does not make him a kill-joy.

It must be said that the above mentioned analogy is weak at best; though, it does bring out the fact that it is possible to have two desires, but only act on one of those desires for one reason or another. On one genuine level God desires the salvation of everyone. However, on another deeper level He desires the salvation of only some, and He *acts* on that level.

### **God and Foreknowledge**

The foreknowledge view of predestination has already died many deaths. We have already seen that it cannot survive philosophically or exegetically. However, the Arminian will often run to Romans 8:29 as their Biblical stronghold, “For those whom he *foreknew* he also *predestined* to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that the Son might be the firstborn among many brothers” (emphasis added). The Arminian will say that this verse clearly teaches that God predestines out of foreknowledge.

First of all, Calvinism is not in conflict with the concept of foreknowledge if by foreknowledge one means God knows things in advance. The question is: *how* does God know things in advance? God does not know the future as though He was looking at something that exists independent of His will (for reasons we have already examined). He knows the future like the architect knows a blue print. An architect knows in advance the

outcome of a particular building because he drew the plans. God knows the future because what will take place is part of His will. Isaiah writes:

I am God, and there is none like me. I declare from the beginning things to follow, and from ancient times things that have not yet been done; saying, “My purpose will stand, and he will accomplish everything that I please” (Isaiah 46:9b-10).

God *declares* what is going to take place in the future. He does this because He has a specific plan that He desires to accomplish and *nothing* will thwart that plan.

Even though God knows the future, and He knows this because He planned it, Romans 8:29 is not discussing God’s predetermined knowledge. The word “know,” Biblically speaking, goes beyond an intellectual experience. “Adam *knew* his wife and she conceived” (emphasis added, Genesis 4:1b E. S. V.). This is obviously discussing more than just an intellectual experience.

Amos wrote, “You alone have I *known* from among all of the families of mankind; Therefore, I will hold you accountable for all your iniquities” (emphasis added, Amos 3:2). Does this mean that God only has intellectual knowledge of Israel and is *ignorant* of other nations? Of course not! What he is saying is that He is in an active relationship with only them. He has a *special* providence over them and not others.

Jesus will say on the Day of Judgment, to some who think they are saved, “I never *knew* you. Get away from me, you who practice evil!” (Emphasis added, Matthew 7:23b). Does this mean that Jesus will not have an *intellectual knowledge* of who these people are? He obviously knows who they are because He identifies them as those who practice evil.

John Piper says that the closest we can come to translate this term is the word “acknowledge.”<sup>16</sup> This makes sense of the contexts of Romans 8:29 because it says “*whom* he foreknew” not “what he foreknew.” In other words, the reference is in regard to relationship not an action. When we look at the Biblical usage of the word “know” and apply that to Romans 8:29, it becomes clear what Paul is talking about:

For those whom he *foreknew* [acknowledged, had a special providential relationship with beforehand] he also *predestined* to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that the Son might be the firstborn among many brothers” (emphasis added).

### **Other Objections to Unconditional Election**

There are several other objection to Unconditional Election. I will deal with them here; however, they appear in no particular order.

#### **Why Witness**

Often, when the reality of Unconditional Election is understood by someone, they will object by saying something like, “Why witness if God has already determent who will go to heaven and who will not?”

The first and best reason anyone needs to witness is Christ commanded us to witness regardless if we can figure out *why* we should in light of predestination (Matthew 28:19). We witness out of obedience to Christ’s great commission.

Also, this objection does not take into consideration the *way* God has planned to save His elect. In other words, God not only predestined who will be saved but also how His elect will be saved. He decided to save His elect through the ministry of preaching the gospel.

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<sup>16</sup>John Piper, “Unconditional Election” <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/seminars/by-title>, accessed prior to 8/6/11.

## **How and Why**

The doctrine of God's sovereignty can often frustrate our human intellect. Often people want to know for what reason did God elect some and not others. This is regularly tied to the question of how is God able to predestine people and still have the recipient not acting under compulsion or against their will.

We must admit that the idea that God is completely sovereign and man is completely responsible is a divine mystery. Yet, we must operate within this mystery and not flee to man-made doctrines like freewill in order to escape the tension this mystery can sometimes create.

Some may think we are dodging the issue by appealing to mystery. But, if a particular mystery is Biblically based, then it is perfectly acceptable to appeal to mystery. The fact that God is sovereign and man is responsible is something we do not know *how* God is able to accomplish. However, if not knowing *how* God is able to do something constitutes a mystery then all Christians accept mystery. We do not know *how* God created the world in six days, or *how* He made a virgin have a baby, or *how* He made the dead to rise. In fact, we do not know how God does any of His miracles.

In addition to this, we do not know how many things in the material world work. How does gravity work? Some might think they are giving an explanation by giving a further description saying, "Mass attracts mass," or some other scientific formula. But this is not an explanation of *how* gravity works. This is simply a more detailed explanation of *what* gravity does. Just because we can explain with scientific language what gravity does, this by no means answers *how* gravity works.

Likewise, we can explain that God is completely sovereign and man is completely responsible without knowing how God accomplishes this. Not knowing how God does this is not a valid reason for rejecting the doctrine.

The same is true when we come to the *why* questions? *Why* did God do things this way? The truth is we do not know. However, not knowing is not a sufficient reason for rejecting Unconditional Election. The question we should be asking is: is it Biblical? If it is then we need to accept it regardless if we know *how* or *why* God does it.

### **Saved Elected, Elected Saved**

Dr. Norman Geisler is a continual frustration to Calvinists everywhere. Even though he has been soundly refuted in books like *The Potter's Freedom*, by Dr. James White, his arguments repeatedly come up time and time again. In his famous sermon, "Why I'm Not a Five Point Calvinist," one of the reasons he gives for rejecting Unconditional Election is that salvation is always conditioned on belief. He says that salvation is unconditional on God's part, but *is* conditional on man's part. It is conditioned on whether or not a person believes.

What Geisler does here is confuse categories. He confuses *election unto salvation* with *salvation* itself. All Calvinists agree that one must believe in order to be saved; however, the *reason* why a person believes is due to the fact that God gave him faith because God elected him to salvation unconditionally. Unconditional Election should not be confused with unconditional salvation.

### **Summary**

I want the reader to know that I did not try to skirt around any issues. In fact, there were many more scriptures we could have examined to prove Unconditional Election.

However, we did examine the primary passages on the subject as well as answer the major arguments against Unconditional Election. The conclusion of this study is simple:

1. There is an overwhelming and sufficient amount of exegetical evidence to substantiate the doctrine of Unconditional Election.
2. The arguments against the doctrine do not stand under careful examination.
3. There is no sufficient evidence to believe the Arminian position.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Limited Atonement**

*But when the Messiah came as a high priest of the good things that have come, he went through the greater and more perfect tent that was not made by human hands and that is not a part of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood he went into the Most Holy Place once for all and secured our eternal redemption.*

*Hebrews 9:11-12*

Limited Atonement is arguably the most controversial point in the Five Points of Calvinism. This is due to the fact that what is being discussed is the meaning of the Cross. Because we are examining the intentions of the sacrifice of Jesus, we touch upon the very heart of the gospel. However, before we tackle the subject of Limited Atonement we need to define what we do and do not mean.

### **A Definition**

The first thing we need to understand is every Christian limits the atonement. After all, there is a Hell and those who go there did not have their sins atoned for. Put quite simply: if they had their sins atoned for, they would not be suffering in Hell.

The question becomes in what way is the atonement limited? The Arminian limits the atonement in its effectiveness. However, they do not limit it when it comes to its scope. In other words, Jesus intended to save everyone by dying, but His death does not accomplish its intended proposes. That is to say, its intended goal is limited.

The Calvinist position is just the opposite. The Calvinist limits atonement in its intention, but considers it unlimited in its effectiveness. In other words, it *accomplishes* its intended proposes. We can summarize the major Calvinistic position in these points:

1. We affirm Substitutionary Atonement. This is to say that Christ suffered for the actual sins of His people. This is also to say that God punished Jesus in the place of sinners.
2. This Atonement accomplishes what it was intended to accomplish. God from all eternity desired to save an elect group of people and the Cross is the way God saves those people.

3. The Atonement was intended to *save* only the elect. This last point is where the controversy really lies.

It is very important that we understand what is not under discussion:

1. We are not discussing the *value* of the atonement. Calvinists affirm that the Atonement is infinite in value. God could save as many sinners as He desires with this one act of redemption.
2. Nor are we discussing how many people will go to Heaven or Hell. Both Arminians and Calvinists believe there are some who will go to Heaven and some who will go to Hell. Both sides even agree that the number of those who will be in Heaven and Hell are fixed (although both sides believe this for different reasons).
3. We are also not discussing who goes to Heaven and who goes to Hell. Both sides agree that only believers go to Heaven, and unbelievers will go to Hell.

### **The Possible Reasons Christ Died**

As stated above, the real controversy between the Calvinist and the Arminian is found in the reason Jesus died. To help understand this better, it is useful to examine the possibilities for Christ's death:

1. Christ died for no sins of any people.
2. Christ died for some sins of some people.
3. Christ died for some sins of all the people.
4. Christ died for all the sins of all the people.
5. Christ died for the all sins of His people.

We know that some of these options can be dismissed immediately. Biblically, we understand that Christ's death saves sinners; therefore, options one and two can be taken out of the equation.

The third option does not guarantee anyone will be saved, but it does leave a possibility that some might be saved. However, this would depend upon which sins Jesus died for. If Jesus died for some sins of all people, and a person just does not commit the sins Christ did not die for, then that person will be saved. This third option may seem a little complex; but, later we will see that it will play a significant role in the issues between the Calvinist and the Arminian.

The fourth option breaks down into two camps, one of which is heretical. The heretical camp is known as Universalism. It reasons that Jesus died for all sins of all people; therefore, all people will be in heaven. *This is not the Arminian position.*

The other camp is known as Hypothetical Universalism. It states that Christ died for all the sins of all the people, yet some people will not make it into heaven. It is *Hypothetical Universalism* because Jesus died with the purpose in mind to save everyone. However, the Atonement does not guarantee salvation to anyone. There must be something added to activate the Atonement. This is *primarily* the Arminian position.

The fifth view is the Calvinistic view. It says that Jesus paid the full price for His people, and that His death does not make salvation hypothetical but actual.

### **Resolving the Issue**

There are two reasons for rejecting the Arminian position. The first, as we will see momentarily, is that it is not the Scriptural view. This view cannot handle the majority of

texts that specifically deal with the substitutionary nature of the atonement in a consistent way.

The second reason (and we will take a moment to digress here) is that the view itself is logically inconsistent. When the Arminian asserts that Jesus died for all the sins of all the people we need to ask: why then are not all people going to heaven? If Christ died for *all* their sins, then what is keeping them out of heaven? Normally, the response is that one must put your faith in Christ. At this point they are in a real dilemma. The next question is going to be whether or not unbelief is a sin? The answer is, of course, yes. In fact, it is the very sin that will keep a person out of Heaven. But if Jesus died for all sins then He died for unbelief as well. If He died for unbelief, then unbelief cannot keep a person out of heaven.

There are a couple of ways out of this problem. One is to say that Christ did not die for unbelief. Of course, this creates a whole host of other problems. The first of which is that if Jesus did not die for unbelief then He did not die for *all* the sins of all the people. This would refute their original proposition.

If it is true that Jesus did not die for unbelief, then the Arminian really believes the third option listed above with a slight twist. They would say that Christ died for almost all the sins of all the people. However, this again creates a work-based salvation. The ultimate reason why a person is saved is that *he* refrained from a particular sin, namely unbelief. Once again, it comes down to whether or not a person is saved by grace or some kind of grace/work combination.

However, the biggest problem here is this: if Christ did not die for unbelief, then why is anyone saved? After all, we were all unbelievers at some point. The problem

could be stated another way: if Jesus did not die for unbelief *at all*, then He did not die for the *believers* past unbelief. If He did not die for the believers past unbelief, then the believer has no atonement for the previous sin of unbelief. One could be forgiven for all their other sins, but the sin of unbelief is left without a sacrifice. The problem is that this view damns everyone. No one goes to heaven because we *all* have un-atoned for sins.

The only way one can get out of this mess is to say that Christ died for *some* past unbelief but not *all* past unbelief. In other words, Jesus died for the believers past unbelief. However, this is coming dangerously close to the Calvinistic view of the Atonement. This is to say, that the only way out of this dilemma is to assert that Jesus did something more in the cross for the believer than He did for the unbeliever. Or to put it another way, there are some people Jesus did not pay the *full* price for. In any case, propositions three and four are falsified.

### **A Scriptural Appeal**

Many times, the reason people are Arminian in their view of the Cross is because of what they believe the Bible says about Christ's death. The Arminian may be thinking that all this *logical* augmentation ends with what the Bible says about the subject—Jesus died for everyone (1 Timothy 2:6; 1 John 2:2...). Their line of thought continues with something like, "If the Calvinist view is in disagreement with the Bible, then the Calvinist view is wrong regardless of their *logical* problems." And they just live within this logical tension.

There are several things I want to say about this line of thinking:

1. To a degree, I admire this line of reasoning. It is a way of thinking that says the Bible is true no matter what logic would appear to dictate. And

I want the Arminian to know that personally speaking I am not unsympathetic when it comes to this type of reasoning. After all, we Calvinists appeal to mystery when we talk about the Compatible view between God's sovereignty and human responsibility.

2. However, we should not let logical problems abound where there is a Biblical answer. In other words, Calvinists have no problem appealing to mystery or just resting in some sort of logical tension *after* we appeal to all of what the Bible says about the subject.
3. Later we will see that the verses the Arminians turn to, do not teach their view of the Atonement. I will address those scriptures that Arminians appeal to in the section on objections.
4. I do not want to broad-brush all Arminians in this last point. Regardless, I have found that many appeal to the Biblical text not because they are looking for a Biblical answer, but because they hate Calvinism. This hatred becomes exposed after all their verses are answered and after all the Calvinistic argument is put forth, and the Arminian still wants to hold to his position. This is the view that says, don't bother me with the facts, I've already made up my mind.

### **Last Appeal**

Finally, if they are going to save this fourth option, the Arminian must say that Christ's death did not *actually* pay the debt of sin in His death for anyone, but only *hypothetically* paid it for everyone. However, this view will just not stand up to what the Bible says on the subject.

## A Biblical Case for Limited Atonement

The case for Limited Atonement is rooted in the fact that Jesus suffered as an actual substitute for sins. Through the Cross Jesus *accomplished* redemption and did not merely make redemption possible. The substitutionary and accomplished nature of Christ's death is prophesied in the Old Testament. Isaiah wrote:

Surely he has borne our sufferings and carried our sorrows; yet we considered him stricken, and struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, and he was crushed for our iniquities, and the punishment that made us whole was upon him, and by his bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned, each of us, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he didn't open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, as a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

From detention and judgment he was taken away, and who can even think about his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living, he was stricken for the transgression of my people. Then they made his grave with the wicked, and with rich people in his death, although he had committed no violence, nor was there any deceit in his mouth.

Yet the LORD was willing to crush him, and he made him suffer. Although you make his soul an offering for sin, He will see his offspring, and he will prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will triumph in his hand. Out of the suffering of his soul he will see light and find satisfaction. And through his knowledge his servant, the righteous one, will make many righteous, and he will bear their iniquities (Isaiah 53:4-11).

A full discourse on this passage is beyond the scope of this book. However, it is obvious to see that the one being prophesied of here (Jesus) is suffering in a substitutionary way. That is to say the one mentioned in this passage is actually being punished for the sins of others. The one taking the punishment is not the one who committed those sins. Phrases like “borne our sufferings and carried our sorrows,” “crushed for our iniquities,” and “he made him suffer” make this clear.

The relevance of this to Limited Atonement is found in the verse, “Out of the suffering of his soul he will see light and find *satisfaction*” (emphasis added). What this verse is saying is that God sees Jesus suffering and He is *satisfied* by it. If it is the case, as the Arminian reasons, that the Father punished Jesus with the *intention* of saving everyone, then there would be little *satisfaction* in the Cross. His intentions could never be *satisfied*. On the contrary, if this view is true, God would be frustrated to no end.

But, if Jesus made an actual atonement with the intention of saving the elect, then God would be satisfied. Or to put things another way: God was *satisfied* with the atonement because the atonement did (and will do) exactly what the atonement was meant to do—Save the elect!

This substitutionary and limited nature of the atonement is also seen in the New Testament, when Joseph was told by the angel, “She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he is the one who *will save his people from their sins*” (emphasis added, Matthew 1:21). There are three things clearly taught here:

1. Jesus *will save*. Jesus is not a failing mission. It does not say that He will attempt to save everyone. What God sets-out to do will be accomplished.
2. Jesus will save *His people*. The ones who He saves are His people. His mission is limited in its scope to those who He will save.
3. Jesus will save His people *from their sins*. Every Christian will admit that the way Jesus saves people from sin is through the Cross. Jesus’ *intention* in the Cross is to save His people from *their sins*.

The book of Hebrews is clear about the accomplished nature of the Atonement:

But when the Messiah came as a high priest of the good things that have come, he went through the greater and more perfect tent that was not made

by human hands and that is not a part of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood he went into the Most Holy Place once for all and *secured our eternal redemption* (emphasis added, Hebrews 9:11-12).

The Arminian may want to draw upon the phrase “once for all” and miss the entire point of the passage. Let us deal with that phrase first, so to avoid the accusation that we are dodging any issues. The term “once for all” does not mean “once for everyone.” This is a statement of finality and not a statement of extension. This is similar to the English expression of the same phrase.

An example from my own life will help illustrate this. I really do not enjoy yard-work. This displeasure has caused me to ignore at times the care needed to keep our yard looking nice. There have been times when our yard has been over-run by weeds. Now if I say to my wife (which I have on occasion), “I need to clean those weeds *once and for all*.” By this I do not mean that I need to clean the weeds *once and for everyone*. In fact, in the grand scope of things, very few people care if my yard is clean. The statement “*once and for all*” is a statement of finality. It means that I need to *complete* the project.

This statement of finality actually clarifies what the author of Hebrews is talking about. Jesus did not make “eternal redemption” possible, but He “secured” it; He finalized it. Notice that the passage does not say that Jesus made “eternal redemption” *possible*. His blood “*secured eternal redemption*.”

If what Jesus did on the Cross secured and finalized the atonement, then it cannot be for everyone, otherwise, everyone would go to heaven. What the Arminian must do in order to believe that Jesus did this for everyone and yet not have everyone be saved is to empty the words like “secure” of its Biblical meaning. So “secure” does not mean *secure* but something less than *secure*. Instead, it means *possible* or something similar. However,

if we are to take the passage in its context, then Jesus secured salvation and He did so for the elect.

### **Forgotten Verses**

There is a whole host of verses that would indicate that Christ did not die for everyone who ever existed. In fact, these verses are found in places that if Jesus did die for everyone, it would be a perfect time to confirm that belief. Instead, the opposite is taught.

For example, while discussing servant leadership, Jesus said, “Because even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for *many* people” (emphasis added, Mark 10:45). If Jesus was giving His life for everyone, this would be a perfect time to say it.

Or consider what Christ said at the Last Supper, “Because this is the blood of the New Covenant that is being poured out for *many* people for the forgiveness of sin” (emphasis added, Matthew 26:28). Here is another example when Jesus could have said everyone if He meant everyone.

Jesus also said, “I am the good Shepard. The good Shepard lays down his life *for* the sheep” (emphasis added, John 10:11). Then He goes on to identify the Pharisees, saying, “But you do not believe because you do not belong to my sheep” (John 10:26b). The implication here is that Jesus did not die for them.

The book of Hebrews, says, “So the Messiah was sacrificed once to take away the sins of *many* people” (emphasis added, 9:28a). The intention here is for *many* people, and the strong implication is not for all people.

## **Jesus on Limited Atonement**

In Jesus' High Priestly prayer, He said, "It is for their sake I sanctify myself, so that they, too, may be sanctified by the truth" (John 17:19). When Jesus said "I sanctify myself" He was not talking about a moral sanctification. Jesus is the very standard of morality. What He is discussing is being *set apart* for the mission He was about to undertake. He was about to face the Cross.

Jesus is very specific for *whom* He is enduring the Cross. The beginning of this verse says, "It is *for their sake*." He is asking to be set apart for this particular set of people because it is this particular set of people for whom He will atone. The question becomes who is the "their" in the passage?

This question is answered earlier when Jesus prayed, "I am asking on *their* behalf. I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of *those you gave me*, because *they* are yours" (emphasis added, John 17:9). Jesus is not praying for everyone who ever existed past, present, and future because He is not going to the Cross for everyone. He is asking to be set apart for the elect because it is for *them* He was about to suffer.

There is a reason why this prayer is called Jesus' High Priestly prayer. He is fulfilling what the High Priest did in the Old Testament. Under the Old Covenant, the High Priest would pray for *Israel*—not the Babylonians and not the Egyptians, or any other nation. Then he would make a sacrifice for *Israel* and not for the other nations. Likewise, Jesus as our High Priest does the same thing. He prays for the elect because He was going to the Cross for the elect.

## **The House of Eli**

When God judged Eli and his family, He said some extremely severe words, “Therefore I’ve sworn concerning Eli’s family that the iniquity of his family is not to be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever” (1 Samuel 3:14). This verse is a direct affront to the Arminian view of the atonement. Jesus could not have died for every person who ever lived because He did not die for Eli and his family. The words are extreme and difficult, but they are plain—no atonement—no sacrifice—forever!

Limited Atonement is the Biblical view of the Atonement. It is exegetically sound, and it is the only view of the Atonement that can take seriously Biblical words like “satisfaction,” “secure,” and a whole host of other Biblical words. But, can Limited Atonement also account for words like “all” and “world”? There are verses that use these words in regard to what Jesus did on the Cross. It is to these verses, verses that Arminians use to debunk Calvinism that we now turn.

## **Answering Objections to Limited Atonement**

Most of the time, those who object to Limited Atonement appeal to a certain number of Scriptures that appear to teach that Christ died in order to save everyone. Those Scriptures would include: 1 Timothy 2:6; 1 John 2:2; 2 Peter 2:1. We will deal with these in the order listed here.

First, is the very popular 1 Timothy 2:6. We will read it here from verse one to verse six for the context:

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man

Christ Jesus, *who gave Himself as a ransom for all*, the testimony given at the proper time (emphasis added, 1Timothy 2:1-6, NASB).

It is almost as if one could hear the Arminian saying, “See! What greater proof could there be. Jesus gave Himself as a ransom for all. How much clearer could the Scripture be on this point?” However, the truth is that there are at least three possible interpretations of this verse:

1. A Universalist interpretation. This would take seriously the term “ransom” and also interpret the word “all” in verse five to mean *everyone who ever lived and who ever will*. The conclusion is that everyone will be in heaven.
2. The Arminian interpretation. This view would also interpret the word “all” to mean *everyone who ever lived and who ever will*. This view must take the term “ransom” to mean something other or less as the ransom. Ransom would really mean potentially ransom.
3. The Calvinistic view. This view would take seriously the word “ransom” to mean a real ransom. This view seeks an alternative interpret to the words “all” and “all men” than the Arminian interpretation.

Issues about death and the afterlife are beyond the scope of this book. At any rate, the first view should be rejected for its non-Christian view on the subject of Hell.

The conflict in the Christian world is over the second and third interpretations. There are a few reasons why the Calvinistic view should be favored over the Arminian view.

First of all, we have already seen that Jesus suffered in a substitutionary way for a specific and limited amount of people. The Arminian would need to give a legitimate

alternative exegesis of the passages that deals with substitutionary and actual atonement and then construct an Arminian position.

Next, and probably most central to the debate, is that the use of the terms “all men” and “all” in the passage, can legitimately be interpreted *all types of men* instead of *everyone who ever existed or who ever will*. This is to say that the Calvinist looks at these terms to mean *all men without distinction* and not *all men without exception*.

There are several reasons to interpret these terms to mean all men without distinction rather than all men without exception. The first is that the context of the passage would appear to lend itself to that interpretation. For example, verse one starts out, “First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men” (1 Timothy 2:1, NASB). The question must be asked: Does this verse include those people who are already in Hell? Is Paul asking the Church to make prayers and petitions for people whose fates are already sealed? Even the Roman Catholic Church, who believes in praying for the dead, would answer no to that question. If “all men” does not include people in Hell, then it cannot possibly mean *everyone who ever existed or who ever will*.

So if Paul is reasonably excluding *certain* people from when he says to pray for all men, then is it not reasonable to conclude that he is excluding certain people when it says that God wants *all men* to be saved, and when it says Christ died for *all*?

Furthermore, Paul writes, “First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, *for kings and all who are in authority*” (emphasis added, 1 Timothy 2:1, NASB). Paul was not commanding the Church to pray for everyone who ever existed because God wants to save everyone who

ever existed and Christ died for everyone who ever existed. What Paul is warning against is a type of spiritual snobbery. The Church may feel justified in not praying for authorities because it is those in authority that are causing the Church problems. Paul is saying, don't do that. Pray for *all types of people* like people in authority because Christ died for *all types of people*.

Also, Jesus used this term *all* in reference to the Cross, and He specifically means *all types* of people without distinction and not all people without exception. Jesus said, "As for me, if I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself" (John 12:32). In the Greek, the term "people" is absent from the verse. It simply reads "I will draw all to myself." In the Cross, Jesus was not drawing everyone who ever existed or who ever will. Most of the world had not even heard of Jesus when He was crucified. This is an obvious reference to all kinds of people.

To be perfectly clear, there are five reasons why the Calvinistic interpretation of 1Timothy 2:6 is the correct view:

1. It is consistent with what the rest of the Bible says about the *actual* and *limited* atonement of Christ.
2. It is the only view that can use the word "ransom" and really mean ransom without logically ending up in the Universalist camp.
3. Both the Arminian and the Calvinist would have to agree that the term "all" and "all men" cannot mean everyone who ever existed or who ever will. Unless the Arminian is going to include those who are already in Hell.

4. The verse in its context, is talking about all types of men. That is to say all men without distinction not all men without exception.
5. The term “all” in reference to the Cross is used by Jesus to mean *all types* of people.

These five reasons should leave little doubt about which interpretation one should choose.

### **1 John 2:2**

1 John 2:2 is another verse often quoted by the Arminian in order to prove that Jesus died for everyone. Let’s look at it from verse one for the context:

My little children, I’m writing these things to you so that you might not sin. Yet if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus, the Messiah, one who is righteous. It is he who is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world’s (1 John 2:1-2).

Like John 3:16, the key here for the Arminian is to try to make the term “whole world” mean everyone without exception. However, as we have already seen when examining John 3:16 the term “world” does not mean everyone who ever lived or who ever will. I do not want to go through all those verses again. If you are unconvinced of this, please read the section, *Answering Objections to Unconditional Election* in the previous chapter.

However, I do not want to leave this passage without talking about what John does mean by the term “whole world” here. In other words, we should look beyond what the verse *does not* mean and ask: what *does* the verse teach? The answer is found in other passages also written by John. The first passage is found in the Gospel of John, “Then the Pharisees told one another, ““You see, there is nothing you can do. Look, the *world* has

gone after him [Jesus]!” (Emphasis added, John 12:19). The Pharisees were not saying that everyone without exception was going after Jesus. *They* were not interested in following Him so they were obviously not part of the word “world” in their vocabulary. The Pharisees were using this term “world” to mean both Jews (bad Jews in their opinion) and Gentiles. You can find this same meaning of the term “world” in John 4:42, and also in the writings of Paul, Romans 11:11-16.

So what is John getting at in 1 John 2:2? He is discussing the same thing Paul was in 1 Timothy 2:5, that Jesus died for everyone without distinction. He died for rich people, poor people, slaves, and people who own slaves, citizens, and rulers, and the list could go on. God has comprised His elect from every tribe, tongue, and nation. This is what John is discussing.

### **2 Peter 2:1**

This is in my opinion the toughest verse the Arminians use in their attempt to refute Limited Atonement. The verse reads:

Now there were false prophets among the people, just as there also will be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies and even *deny the Master who bought them*, bringing swift destruction on themselves (emphasis added, 2 Peter 2:1).

Even though this is a difficult verse to interpret within the Calvinist system it is not impossible. However, to really understand this verse in light of Limited Atonement we need to digress for just a moment.

One of the reasons I want to take a digression here is due to the fact that there is a Calvinistic interpretation of this verse that is simple and straight to the point. It goes something like this: Peter is discussing apostates that held high positions in the Church. Because of this, Peter is describing them as they appear not as they actually are. It is not

as though Christ actually bought them. But they were so integrated into the body of Christ that Peter could use this phrase in sort of a loose sense.

While this interpretation may be true, *and* it is a better interpretation than the Arminian one, it does seem (at least to me) to be a *saving* explanation rather than an explanation that is consistent with Peter's view of the Cross. By "saving" explanation, I mean that this explanation sounds like something one can just *say* in order to avoid difficult verses and *save* his theology. Personally speaking, I'm not interested in this kind of answer. I want sound exegetical explanations that render faithful meaning to what the author was trying to communicate. Here is where our digression begins.

Over the last decade or so there has been a renewed interest in Calvinistic circles over the relationship between the non-elect and the Cross. This interest became public for a time; however, this public interest was short lived and few felt it. It had its culmination in two places. The first was on the popular internet radio show *The Narrow Mind* with host Gene Cook Jr. The second place this was seen was in a series of blog "debates" between Dr. James White and Dr. Eric Svendsen.<sup>17</sup> The issue really is this: Was there *anything* that Jesus did *for* the non-elect in the Cross?

In order to unravel this question, we must understand that the majority of the Calvinistic world has been highly influenced by John Owen in this area. In his book, *Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, Owen gives a masterful and strict Limited Atonement view of the Cross. Owen leaves practically nothing for the non-elect in the work of Christ. His influence has had a tremendous affect in both the Presbyterian and Reformed Baptist circles. Even this chapter of this book has strong Owen overtones and repeats (in this author's own words) some of his arguments.

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<sup>17</sup>You can still read this debate at <http://ntrminblog.blogspot.com/>

But, one of the criticisms of Owen by Calvinists has been that Owen's view is more logical and less exegetical. It is the exegetical issues that have caused me and others to reevaluate the relationship between the non-elect and the Cross.

One of the views, in this reevaluation process, has been the revival of the Dual Intentionist Theory. The modern name for this view is Calvinism 4.5. This was the view advocated by Svendsen in his written debate with White. This was also the view that was debated on a few episodes of *The Narrow Mind*. These proponents advocate that Jesus did die for everyone; however, with different intentions. They believe that Jesus died for the non-elect to justly condemn them for rejecting the gospel, and He died for the elect in order to save them. Svendsen analogized that one might *buy* the entire news paper with the intention of only keeping the sports page. Basically, this view of the Atonement would affirm Particular Redemption but deny Limited Atonement.

There are two things that I would like to say about this view. First, is that this view is a legitimate, historical, Calvinistic view. I say this for two reasons. First, there is enough ambiguity in Calvin on this point that this view might be a legitimate way to interpret Calvin himself on this issue. And second, there were many early Calvinists who held to this view. Dr. Curt Daniel, in his series *The History and Theology of Calvinism* points out that *one third* of the Westminster Divines believed the Dual Intentionist Theory.<sup>18</sup> The truth is we have been so influenced by Owen that the majority of the Reformed Church has forgotten that there were shades of disagreement on this issue within Calvinistic circles prior to Owen's book on the subject.

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<sup>18</sup><http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/histtheocalvin.html>, accessed prior to 8/21/11.

The second thing I want to say about this view is that I disagree with it. I disagree with it because this view itself is insufficient to explain the passages that deal specifically with Limited Atonement (e. g., 1 Samuel 3:14). The second issue is that many of the verses that this view would appeal to substantiate its claims can *legitimately* be interpreted in ways more consistent with Definite and Limited Atonement (e. g., 1 Timothy 2:5).

These issues are resolved when we ask the right question. Instead of asking: Was there *anything* that Jesus did *for* the non-elect in the Cross? We need to ask: What did Jesus buy with His life, death, and resurrection? And here is where we find our resolve: Jesus bought and paid for, in His earthly ministry, the right or prerogative over the *entire* creation. This prerogative over the creation would include the non-elect. This is the only way we can say that Jesus bought the non-elect. Let me be perfectly clear. Jesus did not die for the non-elect in the hopes to save them. Nor did He *atone* for them in order to justly condemn them for not receiving the gospel. They are already condemned for a multitude of sins. What Jesus did was gain back what Adam lost. He gained in His human *kingship*. And as king He has prerogative, right, and control over everyone and everything in the created order.

This understanding seems to be consistent with what Peter is saying in this passage. Let's look at it again:

Now there were false prophets among the people, just as there also will be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies and even *deny the Master who bought them*, bringing swift destruction on themselves (emphasis added, 2 Peter 2:1).

Notice that Peter does not say, "...the Master who *atoned* for them." Nor does he write, "...the Master who *wanted to save* them." Rather, he says, "...the Master who *bought*

them.” Buying them in order to have legal, governmental control over these apostates is faithful to the verse and consistent with *Limited Atonement*.

## **Summary**

At the beginning of this chapter, I stated that the doctrine of Limited Atonement is probably the most controversial of all the Five Points of Calvinism. However, in light of the discussion above, it shouldn't be. Particular and Limited Atonement is exegetically sound and completely consistent with the entirety of Scripture.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Irresistible Grace**

*All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.*

*John 6:37, NASB*

Like the doctrine of Total Depravity, Irresistible Grace can often be misunderstood. Sometimes it is misunderstood because the name itself (Irresistible Grace) can be confusing. However, sometimes it is deliberately misrepresented by people who should know better. Because of the name *Irresistible Grace*, the misunderstanding is that God's grace can *never* be resisted.

But, the truth is Calvinism does not teach this. We, of course, observe that as the gospel is proclaimed, people resist God's gracious offer. Resisting God's grace does not end after conversion. As Christians, we are still sinners, and left to our sinful nature all we would ever do is resist the grace of God.

The real issue we are dealing with in Irresistible Grace is why it is, on some occasions, we stop resisting the grace of God? Or the issue could be put another way: we are all born with a fallen will that under normal circumstances we would *never* respond favorably to the gracious offer of the gospel. So, what kind of miracle must take place in a person's heart that would overcome this resistance? The answer to this question is known in scriptures as the *new birth* or being *born again*. The theological term is *regeneration*.

## **The Controversy**

The controversy between Calvinism and Arminianism is over *regeneration*. When does it happen? How does it happen? And who is responsible for it? The Arminian position is that regeneration comes after salvation. In other words, one believes *then* he is born again. The Calvinist position is that regeneration precedes salvation. In other words, one believes *because* he is born again.

Another way to view this is by understanding that the issue between Calvinism and Arminianism revolves around the belief each system has regarding life and will. The Arminian says that free will creates life, or at best free will *allows* God to create new life in us. This view goes back to what the Arminian believes about the state of the natural man. The natural man is radically affected by sin, but he has not been damaged to the point that he cannot choose to accept or reject the gospel. At the most, the Arminian will admit that the natural man only needs *Prevenient Grace* to get him to make a favorable decision for Christ.

Prevenient Grace is the doctrine that teaches God entices, woos, or gives a person just enough grace to put him into a state of moral neutrality. This allows one to exercise his will to either reject or *choose* the gospel. However, in the final analysis, being born again is dependent on man's *free* choice. (More on Prevenient Grace in a moment)

The Calvinist, on the other hand, believes man is dead in sin. He is incapable of receiving the gift of salvation. The only remedy for him is for God to renew him to life. After his renewal, and only after his renewal, is he able to receive the gospel. The Calvinist position is that new life frees the will in order to make a favorable decision for Christ.

### **An Illustration**

An illustration will help in understanding the difference between Calvinism and Arminianism:

Joe B was once an unbelieving God-hater. Now Joe is a committed Christian. If you would have talked to Joe three years ago, he would have told you that he is not interested in becoming a Christian. In fact, being a Christian would seriously alter his

lifestyle, and those are changes that Joe just does not want to make. However, if you see Joe today, he is regularly attending Church and other fellowship functions. He reads his Bible, listens to Christian music, and frequently prays. What happened to Joe? Why is he so radically different today than he was three years ago? Bottom line, what made the difference?

There are really only two answers to these questions—freewill or free-grace. Either Joe chose to be born again, or God renewed his heart and then Joe changed.

Arminians will try to say that it was a cooperative act. They do this because they do not like being stuck between those two choices. This is where they will introduce the doctrine of Prevenient Grace. They will say that Joe did not come to belief independent of Christ, but God wooed him or enticed him with the glory of the gospel. Prevenient Grace does just about everything to lead a person to belief *except* tampering with a person's will. Prevenient Grace also does not renew a person's nature through regeneration.

The Arminian thinks he has created a third alternative, but this is just faulty thinking. In the end, the ultimate factor in whether one chooses to receive the gospel comes down to whether or not one chooses to yield to Prevenient Grace. Another example will help:

Jane Doe is not a believer. And for example, let's say she received a fair amount of Prevenient Grace. But (for the illustration) she never comes to faith and dies in unbelief. In the *final* analysis what made the difference between Jane and Joe? The Arminian would have to say that Joe, with his freewill responded to Prevenient Grace. And Jane used her freewill to reject Prevenient Grace and ultimately did not receive the

gospel. Prevenient Grace does not create a third option. Someone is saved as a result of freewill or a result of free-grace.

### **One More Misconception**

Irresistible Grace is not a grace that forces the elect into heaven against their will. Instead, what God does is impart a nature to the elect that willingly receives the gospel. One pastor illustrated: It is like a young boy who fights with his parents over the issue of bathing. The boy does not want to bath and his parents must make him do so. Later, after meeting a very cute girl, the boy desires to bath. Now the parents no longer have to fight with him over bathing issues.

### **Summary of Irresistible Grace**

To summarize, this doctrine states five very important things:

1. God overcomes the resistance we naturally have.
2. God does this for the elect only.
3. God accomplishes this through the power of the Holy Spirit in  
Regeneration.
4. Regeneration is an act of God alone.
5. Regeneration *always* leads the recipient to make a favorable decision  
for the gospel.

### **Biblical Defense of Irresistible Grace**

The doctrine of Irresistible Grace is strongly taught by the Apostle John. In fact, it seems to be somewhat thematic in his gospel. In the opening chapter of his Gospel, John writes:

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, *who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God* (emphasis added, John 1:12-13, NASB).

John states that there is a birth that believers experience. This birth is given by God alone. John says that this birth does not come from blood. This statement was probably making a reference to Judaisers who thought that there was some special connection to God based on their race. John goes on to say that this birth is not a result of the will of man in any sense. In other words, it is not dependent on any human condition or desire. This birth is a result of the will of God alone.

Not only does John verify the Calvinistic view in this verse, but he also refutes the Arminian view. The refutation that man is responsible for the new birth is not just an idea that came out of the controversy between Calvinism and Arminianism. Biblical authors themselves are concerned with this issue.

Jesus was also concerned with this issue. He said:

It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh accomplishes nothing. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. That's why I told you that no one can come to me unless it be granted him by the Father (John 6:35, 36).

I want to anticipate an Arminian objection at this point. An Arminian might say that it is not their flesh that makes the decision to be born again, but their spirit. First, this objection ignores the text itself. Jesus categorically says, "...no one *can come* to me unless it be granted to him by the Father." No individual has the ability either in his flesh or spirit to come to Jesus.

The next thing is that this objection also ignores the Biblical usage of the term *flesh*. It is a reference to the fallen human nature (Ephesians 2:1-3). This is not merely a reference to the body, but the desires *the inner real person* has through the body. To see

this clearly we must understand that it is not the flesh itself that has a problem. Jesus had flesh, but he was not fleshly. Adam, before the fall, had flesh, but was not fleshly.

Believers will have flesh in the resurrection, but again, will not be fleshly. When Jesus said that, "... the flesh accomplishes nothing" He was saying that the fallen human nature accomplishes nothing.

Jesus also used this term when He was talking about spiritual issues to Nicodemus:

Truly, I tell you emphatically, unless a person is born of water and Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God. *What is born of the flesh is flesh*, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Don't be astonished that I told you, 'All of you must be born from above.' The wind blows where it wants to. You hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. That's the way it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit (emphasis added, John 3:5-8).

Jesus says that the flesh (*i. e.*, the fallen human nature) only gives birth to flesh. This is like the 0 times tables. What is 0 x 1? It is 0. What about 0 x 10? Still 0. What about 100 x 0? Or 1,000,000,000 x 0? It is still zero! Flesh times flesh times flesh times flesh will only yield flesh. The fallen human nature times the fallen human nature a billion times will only lead to the fallen human nature. There is nothing in us naturally that can activate a spiritual birth.

It is only the Holy Spirit that gives life. Consequently, if someone does not have the new birth or never experiences regeneration it is because the Holy Spirit never gave it to them. The Holy Spirit is at the command of the Father working according to His plan and not according to the will of man. This is why Jesus says:

What is born of the Spirit is spirit. Don't be astonished that I told you, 'All of you must be born from above.' *The wind blows where it wants to*. You hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. That's the way it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit (emphasis added, John 3:6b-8).

The analogy is that the Holy Spirit is like the wind. We do not have command over the wind. Likewise, we do not have command over the new birth by an act of our will.

There is another analogy that Jesus uses. It is that of being set free. On one occasion Jesus said:

Truly, I tell all of you emphatically, that everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin. The slave does not remain in the household forever, but the son does remain forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed! (John 8:34-36).

Jesus said that those who are slaves need to be set free. He goes on to say that the Son makes slaves free indeed! Jesus did not say that slaves need to be given the opportunity for freedom. The freedom that Jesus gives originates outside the slave and gives the slave more than an opportunity to be free but truly sets the slave free.

Of course John spends a lot of time on this doctrine but it can also be found elsewhere in the Bible. Peter writes, “His divine power has given us everything we need for *life and godliness* through the full knowledge of the one who called us by his own glory and excellence” (emphasis added, 2 Peter 1:3). Everything that pertains to life is given us. This would include both spiritual and physical life. Both of these things come from outside the individual.

Ezekiel prophesied:

*I'll* sprinkle pure water on you all, and you'll be cleansed from your impurity and from all of your idols. *I'm* going to give you a *new heart*, and *I'm* going to give you a *new spirit* within all of your deepest parts. *I'll* remove that rock-hard heart of yours and replace it with one that's sensitive to me. *I'll* place my spirit within you, empowering you to live according to my regulations and to keep my just decrees (emphasis added, Ezekiel 36:25-27).

All the promises concerning the new birth are completely contingent on the will of God.

There is no room for a theology that says that God is going to give someone just enough

grace for him to make his own decision. Not only is a “cooperative” doctrine absent from this verse (as well as all the verses cited), the complete opposite is taught. Everything in this verse (and the other verses) completely puts the new birth under the direct control of God.

Digressively speaking, these words of Ezekiel were supposed to be words of comfort. The Prophet is looking forward, with longing anticipation to the New Covenant where the promises are contingent on God alone. But now that the promise is realized, most Christians find little comfort in these words. People are much happier with a covenant that is cooperative rather than monergistic. Many Christians today would be more content if Ezekiel rewrote these promises to include freewill.

### **The New Birth Leads to Salvation**

We need to anticipate the desperate retort that I have heard from some Arminians. When confronted with the Biblical evidence that the new birth is from above and is not dependent on the will, some have responded that the new birth only brings someone into a state of neutrality. Then it is up to the individual to accept or reject the gospel.

The passage in Ezekiel is a great transition verse demonstrating not only that the new birth comes from God alone but also produces a result:

I'll sprinkle pure water on you all, and you'll be cleansed from your impurity and from all of your idols. I'm going to give you a *new heart*, and *I'm* going to give you a *new spirit* within all of your deepest parts. I'll remove that rock-hard heart of yours and replace it with one that's sensitive to me. *I'll* place my spirit within you, *empowering you to live according to my regulations and to keep my just decrees* (emphasis added, Ezekiel 36:25-27).

There is more going on in this verse than just faith. We are given the power to live according to the regulations of God. However, the very first regulation (I think everyone

can agree) is faith. In other words, this new birth brings someone to salvation and beyond.

This passage appears to be the Old Testament counterpart to Paul's *Golden Chain of Redemption*. The Apostle Paul writes:

For those whom he foreknew *he* also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that the Son might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom *he* predestined, *he* also called; and those whom *he* called, *he* also justified; and those whom he justified *he* also glorified (emphasis added, Romans 8:29-30).

There are three very important things about this verse:

1. This chain starts in eternity past and goes into eternity future.
2. This chain is strung together by the pronoun *He*. It is not contingent on the will of man.
3. And most importantly for our discussion on Irresistible Grace, this chain is complete. There is a group that is *called*. This calling is not the general call of the gospel because many people reject that type of call. This call results in justification and then subsequent glorification. These called ones are not left in a state of neutrality but they *will* be justified.

Luke also picks up on this theme in the book of Acts:

A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a dealer in purple goods, was listening to us. She was a worshiper of God, *and the Lord opened her heart to listen carefully to what was being said by Paul* (emphasis added, Acts 16:14).

Opening the heart of Lydia was the Lord's prerogative. He does not ask Lydia for permission. Also this opening was for a very specific purpose. Namely, to have Lydia "listen carefully to what was being said by Paul." Lydia went on to become one of the

founding members of the Church at Philippi. The opening of her heart by God did not leave her in a state of neutrality but led to her conversion.

This aspect of the doctrine of Irresistible Grace is again strongly taught in the Gospel of John. John records when Jesus stated, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him to life on the last day” (John 6:44). Some might think that it is interesting to sight this verse in reference to Irresistible Grace. This is because the word “draw” seems to be more in line with the Arminian concept of wooing, or enticing (*i. e.*, the doctrine of Prevenient Grace). However, this is only due to the weak translation of the word “draw.” In Greek it literally means to move by force or drag. It is the same word translated as “haul” in John 21:6. The disciples could not *haul* the nets because they caught so many fish. It is also the word used translated “dragged” in Acts 16:19. Paul and Silas were *dragged* to the authorities after casting out a demon from a slave girl. James White comments on this verb, “It speaks of force being applied to move something from one place to another.”<sup>19</sup>

Another interesting aspect of this verse is that the ones who are compelled to come are the same ones who are raised by Jesus on the last day. This is nothing other than what the Calvinist means by the doctrine of Irresistible Grace.

Earlier, in the same chapter Jesus said, “All that the Father gives Me *will come to Me*, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out” (emphasis added, John 6:37, NASB). There are few statements in the New Testament that better describe the doctrine of Irresistible Grace than this one. Jesus makes it clear that the elect will come to Him. It is not as though the elect *might* or even that there is a good *probability* that they

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<sup>19</sup>James White, *drawn by the Father* (Lindenhurst, NY: Great Christian Books, 2000), p. 53.

will come. It is a certainty that those that are predestined by the Father will come to the Son.

## **Answering Objection to Irresistible Grace**

Most objections to Irresistible Grace are answered as one works through the doctrine. This does not mean that *every* objection has been answered. But the objections that are left are limited. We will only deal with two and neither one is Scriptural in nature.

### **Objection One**

The first objection is based on experience and is more informal in nature. It usually comes up in the course of a conversation. The Unconscious Arminian might say something like this, “I see what you’re saying, but I have witnessed to people before and have seen the Spirit move on them, convicting them, drawing them. However, that person still did not accept the gospel.”

There are two problems with this objection. First, this argument has a very faulty presupposition. It assumes that the Holy Spirit is always and only trying to bring a person to faith. This is not the only duty of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that part of what the Spirit does is to convict the world of sin and judgment (John 16:8). The Spirit is not going around *trying* to save everyone. In fact, God does not *try* to do anything.

The second problem with this objection is that the Arminian is attempting to use experience to interpret the Bible. Using experience to interpret the Word of God happens too often in the Christian community. Christians should use the Bible to interpret their experience and not their experience to interpret the Bible. The Word of God expresses the

role of the Holy Spirit very clearly. Any experience should be in subjection to what Scripture says.

### **Objection Two**

The other objection comes from Dr. Norman Geisler. It is the “Divine Rape” argument. This objection states that if God *forces* His love on those who are unwilling, then God would somehow be violating the unbeliever.

This objection assumes that it is intrinsically wrong to interfere with a person’s freedom. It also does not take into account God’s prerogative to do what He wants with what is His. Like all Arminian arguments, this argument does not survive under Biblical scrutiny.

King Nebuchadnezzar knew what it meant for God to impose on his freedom. God made Nebuchadnezzar like an animal for an extended period of time and afterwards the King said:

I blessed the Most High, praising and honoring the one who lives forever: For his sovereignty is eternal, and his kingdom continues from generation to generation. All who live on the earth are nothing compared to him. *He does what he wishes with the heavenly armies and with those who live on earth. No one can hold back his power or say to him, ‘What did you do?’* (emphasis added, Daniel 4:34b-35).

God is not cosmically tip-toeing around human freedom as though it was inviolate. God has a will for history and if the will of man is in conflict with God’s will, God’s plan *will* prevail.

Paul clearly states that God has absolute right and control over His creation, “A potter has the *right* to do what he wants to with his clay, doesn’t he?” (Emphasis added, Romans 9:21a). Paul’s question is rhetorical. He is saying that God has the right to do with people what He wants to do the same way a potter has prerogative over the clay.

Besides this, the objection of “Divine Rape” is much deeper than whether or not God has the ability to interfere with human freedom. This is a discussion about who imparts nature. The nature of a bird is to fly. Who gave the bird that nature? The answer is God alone. Yet we would not accuse God of any injustice when the bird stretches its wings and uses his nature to fly. This is not any different when it comes to the new nature. The fact that God imparts new nature to whomever He wants does not make God guilty of anything. It simply means that God is God. In addition, the Scripture is clear about who imparts the new nature of the believer. Consider again Ezekiel:

I'll sprinkle pure water on you all, and you'll be cleansed from your impurity and from all of your idols. I'm going to give you a *new heart*, and *I'm going to give you a new spirit within all of your deepest parts. I'll remove that rock-hard heart of yours and replace it with one that's sensitive to me.* I'll place my spirit within you, empowering you to live according to my regulations and to keep my just decrees (emphasis added, Ezekiel 36:25-27).

This type of priority that God has over the nature He imparts to humans can hardly be considered “Divine Rape”!

Could we imagine a father being accused of “rape” if he rescued his son from on coming traffic by yanking him by the arm? Would the Arminian rather see the father stay on the side of the road and only call his child to himself? Would anyone consider it cruel for the father to run out into the street and rescue the child from the dangers of traffic?

Personally speaking, I am so glad that God rescued me. I was like that child in the street, but my situation was far more serious than some child that wandered into traffic. I was in the street because I wanted to be there. I willingly ignored the danger signs and, in fact, thought it would be fun to break the rules. I was in the street and shut my own eyes and plugged my own ears so I could not hear the Father's warnings. While I was in the

street I cursed the Father and hated Him in my heart. I was fascinated by the oncoming traffic instead of terrified. What a fool I was. But the Father pulled me from the dangerous street and gave me a new heart that desired to stay where it is safe. I guess some people would call that “rape.” I call it unfailing love.

## **Conclusion**

The truth is every Christian believes in the doctrine of Irresistible Grace in their prayer life. When an Arminian prays for an unbeliever to come to faith, they do not pray that God will allow the person to exercise their free will. Normally, they say something like, “Lord, please save my dad, mom, friend....” The reason why every Christian does this is that in their heart of hearts they know that the only thing that separates the saved from the lost is the grace of God—alone.

## **Chapter Six**

### **Perseverance of the Saints**

*My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, they will never be lost, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given me is more important than anything, and no one can snatch it from the Father's hand.*

*John 10:27-29*

The doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints is a doctrine that many who are otherwise Arminian have accepted. The reason for this acceptance is that this doctrine teaches that the saved can never be lost. However, sometimes Perseverance of the Saints can be confused with such popular slogans as “Once-Saved-Always-Saved,” or the doctrine of Eternal Security. There is much overlap between these concepts; but, there are also many distinctions. These distinctions must be handled correctly or there can be unnecessary confusion as a result.

### **Perseverance of the Saints**

The doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints teaches that once a person is saved he can never lose his salvation. Or to put it another way, once a person is in a state of saving grace he can never fall away from a state of saving grace. However, this is not all that the doctrine teaches. Perseverance of the Saints also means that those who have saving faith will persevere in *that faith* throughout the trials of life. The faith of a believer is an active and living faith; thus, those who are truly regenerate are preserved by God and will persevere in sanctification. So, there are two elements at work in this doctrine:

1. The Preservation of the Saints. A true believer cannot lose his salvation.
2. The Perseverance of the Saints. A true believer will continue in sanctification.

It is important to keep in mind what the Calvinists are not saying. We are not saying that sanctification contributes to salvation. Nor is sanctification the basis of our continued state of grace. However, sanctification is the necessary result of salvation, and it is sanctification that outwardly identifies those who are saved.

Another thing we must keep in mind is that sanctification comes in at least two forms. The first is a life of moral obedience. The second is doctrinal obedience. Often

people think of sanctification as in terms of moral obedience only. However, true Christians will also persevere in *authentic* Christian belief.

Another aspect of this doctrine that needs to be addressed is the Christian's relationship to sin. We are not saying that Christians are free from sin. Nor are we saying that a Christian cannot fall into serious sin and remain there for an extended period of time. True believers do fall into serious sin and that fall can sometimes last years. *The Westminster Confession of Faith* explains this topic well:

Nevertheless they [the truly saved] may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their perseverance, fall into grievous sins; and for a time continue therein: whereby they incur God's displeasure, and grieve his Holy Spirit; come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts; have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded; hurt and prevalency others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves.

And:

They whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved (Of the Perseverance of the Saints: 3,1).

### **Once-Saved-Always-Saved and Perseverance of the Saints**

Given what is explained above, one might think there is no difference between the Once-Saved-Always-Saved, or Eternal Security and the Perseverance of the Saints.

However, there are some distinctions that need to be made.

First, the doctrine of Once-Saved-Always-Saved is often taken to mean that anyone who has ever said the "sinner's prayer" is without-a-doubt saved, and therefore, will remain saved. There are Christians who will not take lifestyle or creed into consideration once a person had said the "sinner's prayer." In other words, advocates of this doctrine *often* do not seriously consider the reality of false conversions and apostasy.

We who believe in the Perseverance of the Saints are not saying that we can judge the heart, or that we have some type of special access to the *Lamb's Book of Life* to determine whether or not a person is truly saved. That said, we can judge immorality and doctrine. And to put it quite simply, if we cannot see Jesus working in someone's life, there is no good reason to believe that Jesus is in that person's heart.

To digress for a moment, I have had to deal with this situation, first hand, with a close friend. We will call him Jim to protect his identity. Jim and I have handed out tracts together and shared the gospel with many people. We have attended many Bible studies together and have had intense theological discussions. I have even witnessed Jim weep in prayer before the Lord. Unfortunately, he has fallen into serious sexual sin. He no longer reads his Bible with any regularity, does not pray, and refuses to attend any local Church. There are no visible signs that he has a love for Jesus. To make things worse, he has been like this for over ten years.

Now it could be that Jim is saved. There may come a day when the Lord will break through his unrepentant heart and discipline him. However, I would not bet anything near and dear to me on Jim's salvation. The fact that there are no identifying marks of a Christian in my friend's life can lead me to believe only one thing—that Christ is, more-than-likely, not in his heart.

Furthermore, I do not have the right to assure Jim of his salvation. If I truly care for him I will call him to repentance.

I will give another personal story, one that took place some years back to illustrate the point. I was working in a factory and had many associates that were for the most part friends. I invited many of these co-workers to Bible study and a few of them had

occasionally accepted the offer. One of the people who accepted was named Ed. He was a worldly person, but he did nothing that would have made him stand out in the worldly crowd. He was living with his girlfriend, and was an occasional drug user. He was the kind of person we all have run into on a day-to-day basis. But he came to Bible study, and I was excited.

At the end of the Bible study, the teacher asked if anyone wanted to receive the Lord. My friend accepted the offer. After he asked the Lord to come into his heart, he was grinning from ear-to-ear. He even went home and told his girlfriend about it. They planned to go to Church that Sunday and also planned to come back to Bible study the following week. Then the excuses set in. One thing came up and then another. And as long as I knew him, he never attended Church; he never stopped fornicating; and he never stopped using drugs.

The fact of the matter is that not everyone who says the “sinner’s prayer” is necessarily saved. Many people who believe in Eternal Security do not take seriously that when Jesus is received in salvation, He is received as *Lord* and Savior.

The next problem is that many who believe Once-Saved-Always-Saved, in the sense that anyone who says the “sinner’s prayer” is saved, will also use trickery to get someone to say the prayer. Dr. Robert Morey tells of a woman who was involved in child evangelism. This lady would hold up a roll of Life-Savors candy and tell the children that Jesus is a life saver, and any one who accepts Jesus as savior will get a roll of candy. Needless to say, all the children “received” the Lord.<sup>20</sup> Tactics like this are prevalent among those who believe in Eternal Security.

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<sup>20</sup>Robert Morey, *Finney: The Man, the Myth, the Message* (Ervin, CA: Faith Defenders, n. d.). Audio message.

These are some of the reasons we must make a distinction between Eternal Security and Perseverance of the Saints. Both believe that Christians cannot lose their salvation. However, there are—or there at least can be—many differences between the two views.

### **Moderate Calvinism, Cal-Minians, and Eternal Security**

Many times those who are Unconscious Arminians believe that holding to Eternal Security puts them on some type of middle-ground between Calvinism and Arminianism. There are two things we need to say about this:

1. We must remember that original Arminians were not united on the topic of Eternal Security. Some believed that Christians could lose their salvation and some did not. So, just believing that a Christian cannot lose his salvation does not mean that a person is on some type of middle ground between Calvinism and Arminianism. It just means that they are not a five point Arminian.
2. It is more consistent to for those who believe in the other four points of Arminianism to also believe that one can lose his salvation. Do not misunderstand Calvinists on this point. We are always happy when an Arminian is inconsistent and believes that Christians cannot lose their salvation. However, the Arminian must face the fact, whether they like it or not, that there is a real inconsistency in believing in Arminian theology on the other four points and then affirming something similar to Perseverance of the Saints on the last point. After all, if freewill got you into a state of grace why is it that freewill cannot get you out of a state of grace? This is why Calvinists

jokingly refer to these Arminians as “whisky Calvinists.” They only have one fifth, and that one fifth is not even full-proof.

### **Consistent Arminianism**

Unfortunately, even though there are many *whisky Calvinists*, there are also many consistent Arminians. That is the group of Arminians that believe that a Christian can and do lose their salvation. Arminians who believe this come in various forms.

The first form of consistent Arminians are those who believe that Christians who knowingly involve themselves in any willful disobedience lose or can lose their salvation. Although there may be many ignorant Christians who believe this, this belief is very heretical. If salvation could be lost on these grounds, then salvation is completely based on works and not on grace. In this view, salvation is maintained on a sinner’s achievements and not on the merits of Christ. Not to mention that every Christian involves themselves in willful disobedience from time to time. And those who say that they do not are lying, self deceived, or both.

The next group is those who say that Christians cannot sin their way out of salvation, but they can give it up. In other words, you can receive Jesus and be saved. And then later reject Jesus and be lost.

The final group is those who say that the only way a Christian can lose his salvation is if he commits the *Unpardonable Sin*. This camp will often disagree over what precisely the *Unpardonable Sin* is. Some of these Arminians really belong to the second group listed above because they describe the *Unpardonable Sin* as giving up their salvation.

Regardless of which group one may belong to, the basic element in all these systems is the same. They all believe that a person can, at one time be in a *saving* relationship with Christ, and at a later time not be in a saving relationship with Christ. None of these systems are Biblically accurate.

### **A Biblical Case for Perseverance of the Saints**

As we begin our Biblical case for the Perseverance of the Saints, we must keep in mind the dual aspect taught in this doctrine. The first is the Preservation of the Saints. That is true Christians cannot lose their salvation. And the second is the Perseverance of the Saints. That is a Christian will persevere in sanctification (both moral and doctrinal). We will deal with these in order. In other words, we will first see that the Bible is clear on the fact that a true believer cannot lose his salvation. Then we will examine that the believer *will* continue in sanctification. It is to this first proposition we now turn.

There are many Biblical texts that deal with the Preservation of the Saints. There are so many in fact, that entire volumes have been written on this subject alone. This makes it somewhat difficult to know where to begin.

The foundation of this doctrine must be rooted in the will and plan of God. That is to say it is vitally important that we understand that the reason why we as Calvinists teach that a true believer cannot lose his salvation but will endure to the end is based on the fact that this is God's plan for the believer. Because it is God's plan for the believer, the believer is kept by God. Jesus Himself was a strong advocate of this. He taught:

My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, they will never be lost, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given me is more important than anything, and no one can snatch it from the Father's hand. (John 10:27-29).

Jesus assures us that “no one” has the ability to breach the relationship between the saved individual and God. The reason for this is twofold. First, we as Christians are *held* by Jesus in this saving relationship. Second, and very similarly, we are held by the Father. The power of this sustaining relationship comes from God and not us. While there may be failure on our part, there is no failure on God’s part.

Unfortunately, some Arminians have responded by saying that no one can snatch us out of the Father’s hand but we can jump out if we choose. But, this is just faulty thinking. If “no one” is able to breach that relationship, then the believer himself cannot breach that relationship. To take the passage to mean “no one else but me” is unwarranted by the text and unjustified logically.

This is also expressed by the Apostle Paul in Romans, “And those whom he predestined, he also called; and those whom he called, he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified” (Romans 8:30). As we have seen in a previous chapter, this is known as the *Golden Chain of Redemption*. It started in eternity past and extends into eternity future. What is important for the discussion here is the completeness of this chain. The group of people who are predestined *will* make it to glorification. Those who are saved will make it to heaven because this is the Father’s plan for the elect.

### **Confidence as Christians**

Another reason Calvinists affirm that Christians cannot lose their salvation is due to the confidence we have in God now that we are Christians. The Apostle explains this:

But God demonstrates his love for us by the fact that the Messiah died for us while we were still sinners.

Now that we have been justified by his blood, how much more will we be saved from wrath through him! For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life (Romans 5:8-10)!

Paul is arguing for the Preservation of the Saints on the grounds that God will do *more* for those who are justified than He will do for those who are not. In other words, what Paul is saying is that the Father gave up His Son for those who were lost. This was an immeasurable sacrifice on the part of the Father and the Son. Paul is saying we can be confident of more from God now that we are saved, not less. The Christian gets more grace and more love after conversion than he got before. There is no question in the mind of Paul that the Christian will make it to glorification.

Paul also writes, “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6, NASB). Paul’s confidence is in God’s continued work in the life of the Christian. This work will be completed because it is God who is doing the work. If Paul is confident of this, then we too can be confident.

### **Nothing Can Come Between Us and Glorification**

In addition, the Bible is very clear that there is nothing that can separate us from the grace of God. We have already seen this in the teachings of Jesus (John 10:27-29), but Paul also teaches this:

Who will separate us from the Messiah’s love? Can trouble, distress, persecution, hunger, nakedness, danger, or a violent death do this? As it is written,

“For your sake we are being put to death all day long.  
We are thought of as sheep headed for slaughter.”

In all these things we are triumphantly victorious due to the one who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor anything above, nor anything below, nor anything else in all creation can separate us from the *love of God that is ours in union with the Messiah* Jesus, our Lord (emphasis added, Romans 8:35-39).

It is important to note that Paul is not talking about love in some nebulous sense. This love (as the I. S. V. puts it here) is in union with Jesus. Paul is arguing that we cannot be separated from *Jesus* because this is where the love of God chiefly resides. *Nothing* can separate us from Jesus—nothing!

This is not only the doctrine of Jesus and Paul, but also of Peter, “For you have been born again, not by a seed that perishes but by one that *cannot perish*—by the living and everlasting word of God” (1 Peter 1:23). The seed of the new birth that is in every believer cannot perish.

As I have said previously, there is enough Scripture to write an entire volume on this topic. However, to keep the flow of this book going it is important to stop here. But before we go onto the next subject let us briefly summarize why true Christians cannot lose their salvation:

1. We are in God’s hands and our salvation is kept by Him (John 10:27-29).
2. Glorification is God’s plan for the elect (Romans 8:30).
3. God does more for the believer than the unbeliever (Romans 5:8-10).
4. God will complete the work He started (Philippians 1:6).
5. Nothing can separate us from God’s love in Jesus (Romans 8:35-39).
6. Our new birth is imperishable (1 Peter 1:23).

### **Continuing in Sanctification**

The next thing we need to establish is the clear teaching that the Christian will continue in sanctification through the trials of life. This will take us back to two scriptures that we have already examined. The first is Paul’s statement, “For I am

confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6, NASB).

As Christians, we must keep in mind that the “good work” that God is completing in us does not stop at justification. He also begins the process of sanctification. God promises that the good work He started in us is a work He *will* finish.

The second verse we have already examined was the one found in John when Jesus said:

My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, they will never be lost, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given me is more important than anything, and no one can snatch it from the Father’s hand. (John 10:27-29).

The sheep of God have two marks on them:

1. They hear Jesus.
2. They follow Jesus.

The Apostle John also addresses this issue in his first epistle:

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Messiah has been born from God, and everyone who loves the parent also loves the child. This is how we know that we love God’s children: *we love God and keep his commandments*. For this demonstrates our love for God: We keep his commandments, and his commandments are not difficult, because everyone who is born from God has *overcome the world*. Our faith is the victory that overcomes the world. Who overcomes the world? Is it not the person who believes that Jesus is the Son of God (1 John 5:1-5)?

This chapter begins with John identifying believers as those who love God and keep His commandments. John goes on to guarantee that Christians will overcome the world. This is the very thing we mean by the theological term Perseverance of the Saints.

The reason why we will overcome is due to the *new birth*. This new birth also brought with it a new heart and a new nature. This new heart desires different things than

we used to desire in our fleshly nature. This is what was promised in the Old Testament by Ezekiel:

I'll sprinkle pure water on you all, and you'll be cleansed from your impurity and from all of your idols. I'm going to give you a *new heart*, and *I'm* going to give you a *new spirit* within all of your deepest parts. I'll remove that rock-hard heart of yours and replace it with one that's sensitive to me. *I'll* place my spirit within you, *empowering you to live according to my regulations and to keep my just decrees* (emphasis added, Ezekiel 36:25-27).

This promise not only defies the Arminian notion of freewill, but also is a glorious guarantee that we will stay faithful to the commandments of God. This is the statement that John echoed when he wrote, "everyone who is born from God has overcome the world."

Of course these promises do not mean that we will keep the law perfectly. Christians do struggle with sin. Paul describes his own struggle in Romans seven. He describes the war between his old nature and his new nature saying that there is a part of him that still desires sin and he struggles with that desire. He wishes he could quit sinning. However, we must remember that God will chasten a true Christian who falls into any serious type of sin (Hebrews 12:6). God's love is the reason for this discipline. God promises that His people *will* walk in newness of life, even if He must chasten them to do so.

In summary, the Bible is very clear on two points:

1. Those who are truly saved will remain saved.
2. Those who are saved will display visible signs of regeneration. The sanctifying work of Christ will take place in the life of a Christian even at the cost of chastening.

## **Answering Objections to Perseverance of the Saints**

Like many objections to Calvinism, the objections to Perseverance of the Saints come in two forms. There are objections that are more philosophical in nature, and there are objections that are based on Scripture.

### **Philosophical Objection**

In my experience, there really has only been one philosophical objection that merits its own discussion. This is not to say that there has only been one objection that falls into this category. However, other philosophical objections on this point revolve around how God, or why God would do things this way, and we have already dealt with those issues previously in this book. The answer to these objections will not change just because they are now directed at Perseverance of the Saints.

So what is this one philosophical objection that merits its own discussion? The truth is this objection is so logically flawed that even it hardly deserves an answer. The amazing thing about it is that I (and am sure many Calvinists) have heard it so many times that it needs to be answered. The objection goes something like this: If you teach that a Christian cannot lose his salvation, then this security of salvation might breed an attitude of irresponsibility. The fear is that the Christian might be a worse sinner if he is confident that he cannot lose his salvation.

There are many problems with this objection. The first is that this objection is irrelevant to whether or not the Bible teaches the Preservation of the Saints. In other words, this objection has nothing to do with what the Bible actually says on the subject.

The next problem is that this is a line of thinking based on *perceived* results. This is another logical fallacy. The perceived result of what a doctrine may or may not lead to does not have logical bearing on whether or not the doctrine in question is true or false.

In addition, arguments based on perceived results are never reliable because only God knows for certain what will take place in the future. Occasionally, God, in His Word, does tell us what the result of a particular belief will be. Only when we have God's word on the subject can we be sure of what the result will be; otherwise, we leave the results up to Him.

Another problem with this objection is that it is simply not true. Genuine believers are drawn closer to God by His love and mercy. I have only one challenge for those who use this objection: What if Jesus Himself came and personally told you that you can never lose your salvation. What if He said that He knows every sin you are going to commit and in spite of it all, you will make it to heaven. What would your response be (assuming the objector is a Christian)? Would your response be to go commit more sins? Would you begin to foster some type of joy in your heart for your future sins?

Personally speaking, I think the first thing I would do is weep. I would be stricken with both joy and grief. My grief would arise from the fact that I know how much of a sinner I really am, and what I am really capable of doing. My joy would come from knowing that God's love and grace is greater than all my sins—past, present, and future. The desire of my heart after reassurance of salvation is toward a greater commitment to Christ not a lesser commitment to Him.

The truth is a Christian can sin all he wants. In fact, a true Christian will admit that he sins more than he wants. We must remember that saying a payer does not make a

person a Christian. The objection given is only relevant to false converts. It is not a cogent refutation for the Preservation of the Saints and it is not a concern for the true Christian.

### **Scriptural Objections**

Arminians also use select verses that can be misleading if not read in their proper context. The objections include:

1. The Unpardonable Sin in Matthew 12:31.
2. The “sin that leads to death” in 1 John 5:16.
3. And other Scriptures that appear to teach that one can lose his salvation (Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26).

Before this chapter is finished, we will deal with each of these passages and demonstrate that none of them, in their context, teach that a Christian can lose his salvation. But first we need to note that there is an exegetical and hermeneutical problem with using these verses against the Perseverance of the Saints.

Biblical hermeneutics teaches that one must always interpret unclear passages in light of clear passages. The verses that we used to establish the Perseverance of the Saints are clear and plentiful. In fact, we did not even cover all the verses we could use to establish this doctrine. This clarity needs to take priority over wild and different interpolations of, for example, the “unpardonable sin.” Theologians of all varieties disagree over precisely what this sin is, and who can commit it. Some say that this sin is the rejection of the gospel. Some say it is the rejection of the gospel in light of clear evidence. Others say that it is knowingly attributing the work of Christ to Satan. Also,

there are those who say that anyone can commit this sin. Others say that only a Jew living in the first century is in danger of committing this sin. And the disagreements continue.

There are also disagreements on both sides over what the “sin that leads to death” is. There are also disagreements on both sides about the precise exegesis of Hebrews 6:4-6. These verses should not be the standard in which we interpret Romans 8:30 or John 10:27-29. Sound hermeneutics would dictate that we interpret Hebrews 6:4-6; 1 John 5:16; and Matthew 12:31 in light of John 10:27-29 and Romans 8:30.

### **The Unpardonable Sin**

The first scripture we will look at is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, also known as The Unforgivable or Unpardonable Sin. The reference for this sin is found in all three of the synoptic Gospels. For the purposes of this discussion, the passages from Matthew and Mark are the most useful. This is because they are the most identical and they both narrate the situation that gave rise to the discourse. Luke, on the other hand, only gives this as part of the oral text (Luke 12:8-10).

In both Matthew and Mark, Jesus is not addressing believers. Rather, He is addressing unbelievers who had witnessed the miraculous deeds of Jesus firsthand. These unbelievers were doing everything in their power to misrepresent the source of Jesus’ power.

According to Matthew and Mark, Jesus was casting out a demon (Matthew 12:22; Mark 3:22). When the synoptic picture is taken, both the Scribes and Pharisees accuse Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Satan. In addition, they accuse Jesus of being demon possessed Himself (Matthew 12:24; Mark 3:22).

Jesus responded to this accusation by saying:

So I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the one to come (Matthew 12:31-32).

Mark includes the precise reason that Jesus said this, “For they had been saying, “He has an unclean spirit”” (Mark 3:30).

There are a few reasons why these verses are not a refutation of the Perseverance of the Saints:

1. In this account, Jesus is not addressing believers but unbelievers. He is not admonishing followers, but critics. It makes no sense to say that Jesus is warning a group of people who are not saved that they can lose their salvation.
2. The next reason this is not a refutation of the Perseverance of the Saints has to do with the sin itself. There is much disagreement over what this sin actually is. Nevertheless, this sin seems to be connected to attributing the work of Christ to the work of Satan *in the light of overwhelming evidence*. It seems as though this is a warning that an unbeliever can codify himself in unbelief to such a degree that there becomes no possibility of salvation. A Christian would be exempt from this kind of warning because a Christian is by definition someone who believes.
3. Finally, these verses do not meet the requirements to establish a doctrine that would teach that a Christian could lose his salvation. Jesus does not say that a Christian can lose his salvation in this discourse.

Neither is there an example of a Christian losing his salvation in these verses. This discourse just does not touch on these issues.

These are three very compelling reasons to reject the idea that Jesus was teaching that Christians can lose their salvation.

### **The Sin That Leads to Death**

The next objection comes from a statement that John makes in his first epistle:

If anyone sees his brother committing a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray that God would give him life. This applies to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. *There is a sin that leads to death.* I am not telling you to pray about that (emphasis added, 1 John 5:16).

The Arminian must make a few assumptions in order to make this passage teach that one can lose his salvation. The first assumption is that John is talking about spiritual death. Some Calvinists have suggested that what John is talking about is a Christian undergoing the most severe form of discipline by God. In other words, what John is talking about is physical death not spiritual. To put it another way, what John may be prohibiting here is our temptation to pray for a Christian who may be undergoing physical discipline from God. We should not pray for that because God is using physical death to purge His child from sin.

Perhaps an example would help. If we were in the Church at Corinth, and we were witnessing our brothers and sisters getting sick and seeing some of them actually die as a result of taking communion improperly (1 Corinthians 11:29), we might be tempted to pray for the welfare of these Christians. It may be that this type of prayer is what John was prohibiting. John is commanding that we should not pray for an alleviation of God's physical discipline even when that discipline leads to death.

However, this explanation appears to be somewhat weak. It is weak because the Apostle says that “There is *a* sin that leads to death.” God does not dispense the judgment of physical death over just one kind of sin. God killed some in the Church for improperly taking the Lord’s Table, and He killed Ananias and Sapphira for lying to the Holy Spirit.

So we must ask: what then is the Apostle talking about? This leads us to the next assumption that the Arminian must make. He must assume that this “*sin that leads to death*” is about spiritual death and this sin is committed from a position of spiritual life. Regardless, this is an assumption that is not necessarily warranted from the Bible.

To help us understand what we are talking about here we need to digress for a moment and examine an example from another aspect of theology. The writer of Hebrews says that Jesus *learned* obedience (Hebrews 5:8). Now we must not assume that Christ learned obedience from disobedience. Rather, He learned obedience from obedience, and what the writer of Hebrews is saying is that the task of obedience grew greater and greater culminating in His obedience unto death. We know that this is the proper explanation of what it means for Christ to *learn* obedience because of what the entire Bible says about the sinless nature of Jesus, and we know this because the writer of Hebrews himself describes Jesus as sinless (Hebrews 4:15). Therefore, Jesus could not have possibly learned obedience from disobedience.

In a similar manner, we must not think that the sin that leads to death is committed by those who are in a position of spiritual life. All Christians (even Arminians) agree that there are stages of spiritual death. For example, we are born in a state of death; yet, for some, that state will worsen in eternity. In other words, there are some who go from one form of spiritual death to a greater form of spiritual death. For

example, those who are thrown into the Lake of Fire on the final Day of Judgment are said to be suffering the “second death” (Revelation 21:8). This group of people was already spiritually dead, then suffered physical death, and throughout eternity will suffer the “second death.”

This “death to death” model not only fits what the entire Bible says about Christians not being able to lose their salvation, but also fits in the context of 1 John. We must remember that it is John who said, “They left us, but they were not part of us, for if they had been part of us, they would have stayed with us. Their leaving made it clear that none of them *was really part of us*” (emphasis added, 1 John 2:19). John’s view of those who leave the Christian Faith is not that they were saved and then lost; rather, John teaches that they were never saved to begin with.

So then, what is the explanation of 1 John 5:16? First of all, the sin that John is referring to is more than likely the sin of apostasy. But, whatever sin that is being committed, it is not being committed by Christians. These apostates are codifying their spiritual death to the point of no return.

### **Committing Knowing Sin**

For if we choose to go on sinning after we have learned the full truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but only a terrifying prospect of judgment and a raging fire that will consume the enemies of God (Hebrews 10:26-27).

I’m going to keep my remarks on this verse fairly brief. This is due to the fact that the explanation for this passage is tightly interwoven with the entire theme of Hebrews. And this intimate connectedness also has to do with how we explain Hebrews 6:4-6. It becomes very difficult to explain one without explaining the other. Because the passage in 6:4-6 takes an explanation that is more detailed, we will give greater attention to the

theme of Hebrews when we examine those verses. For now, we will only briefly touch upon this verse as it relates to the theme of Hebrews.

One of the major themes in Hebrews is apostasy. The writer is specifically dealing with Jews who came into the Church and are now returning to the Old Covenant model of the sacrificial system. The writer of Hebrews is not arguing that, if we choose to sin, there is no more *forgiveness* in the sacrifice of Christ. He is arguing that there is no more “*sacrifice*” for sin under Old Covenant laws. In other words, it is useless to return to the sacrificial system of the Old Covenant now that Jesus has established the New Covenant in His blood. In *that* old system there is no more sacrifice.

One of the major problems with interpreting this verse to mean that a Christian can lose his salvation is that this would damn every Christian. All Christians (more often than we would like to admit) “choose” sin, and all Christians sin “knowingly.” In fact, some translations of this verse are more strongly worded. For example, the NASB says, “For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins” (Hebrews 10:26). What Christian does not “willfully” sin? Unfortunately, there are Christians who believe this verse teaches that one can lose his salvation, while maintaining that they only sin unknowingly or accidentally. Dealing with these people becomes difficult because they seem to be very self-diluted. Any Christian who thinks this way has something wrong with their self-perception and it is useless to try to reason with them.

### **Hebrews 6:4-6**

The last passage we will deal with is Hebrews 6:4-6. Out of all the passages that the Arminians use to try to prove that one can lose his salvation, this one appears to be

the most extensive. Therefore, we will spend some considerable time on what the writer of Hebrews wanted to communicate here. The passage reads:

For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame (Hebrews 6:4-6, NASB).

This is generally where the Arminian stops to make his case. However, an adequate explanation cannot be rendered without examining the next three verses. We will quote them here and return to them when we come to the Calvinistic explanation of this passage:

For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned. But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way (Hebrews 6:7-9, NASB).

The first thing we must do is look seriously at the warning. The writer of Hebrews is saying that if this group of people (the people mentioned in 4-6) fall away, it is *impossible* to renew them to repentance. Their fate is sealed and they cannot be saved again. The writer of Hebrews is not giving a, “saved, then lost, then saved...” theology that is so popular with many Arminians. To put it directly, if a Christian can lose his salvation, then he can *never* gain it back.

The reason we need to feel the weight of this warning is that many Arminians will back off of these verses after realizing what is actually being said. Yet even still, there are some Arminians who are consistent with their theology, and they will teach that a Christian who loses their salvation cannot be saved again. It is not enough, therefore, to

give cursory attention to this passage. We must understand its warning and the explanation.

Of course Calvinists have maintained that these verses do not teach that one can lose his salvation. However, there has been a variety of ways Calvinists have argued for this. We will deal with three explanations that I have found most viable.

Every explanation depends on whether or not this group of people is truly saved or if they only appear to be saved. We are given five attributes:

1. Once Enlightened.
2. Tasted the Heavenly Gift.
3. Partakers of the Holy Spirit.
4. Tasted the Good Word of God.
5. [Tasted] the Power of the Ages to Come.

Some Calvinists have agreed with Arminians that the group of people under discussion is truly saved. They even agree that if someone who displays these attributes falls away they will be lost forever. However, the Calvinists who believe this also take the warning of the writer to be *only* hypothetical. To justify this belief these Calvinists draw upon the term “*if*” used in some translations. For example, the New King James renders this passage:

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, *if they fall away*, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame (emphasis added, Hebrews 6:4-6, NKJV).

Those who hold this explanation also draw upon the phrase, “though we are speaking in this way” found in verse nine. According to Calvinists who argue in this way, the author

of Hebrews is speaking in a *manner* contrary to reality. This is taken to be a sort of a literary wink. The writer is only giving the Church something that is hypothetically true, not true in actuality.

An analogy would go something like this: suppose a loving father warns his child not to stray from the house into the road. He warns the child that *if* he goes into the road, he could get hit by a car and die. This is a true and sound warning. But, also suppose that the father is perfect and was watching the child at all times. Every time the child wandered too close to the road, the father would run out and grab the child and bring him back into the yard.

The Calvinist argues that *if* someone is saved, and *if* they fall away from grace, then, yes, they would be lost forever. However, the Father will never let that happen. The writer is speaking in a “manner” that is not necessarily a reality.

### **Nation of Israel**

Another interpretation is that this passage is talking about the nation of Israel. Those who argue for this position advocate that the description given in verses four through six fits Israel as a nation. They had once been enlightened, and had tasted the heavenly gift. They had become partakers of the Holy Spirit under the Old Covenant administration. They had the word of God, and had tasted the power of the age to come.

Those who argue for this say the warning is for the nation of Israel not to reject Jesus and the administration of the New Covenant. If they do, there is no way to renew them to repentance under the Old Covenant.

## **Apostasy**

Still another section of Calvinists would agree with the Arminians that the author is talking about apostasy. Apostasy was a real issue in the early Church particularly among the Jews. There were many Jews who had come over to the Christian faith and for one reason or another went back to the religion of Judaism. However, the Calvinists would say that those who do go into apostasy were never saved in the first place. Those who adopt this model look for a different way to understand the list of attributes found in these verses. Let's look at the list again and see if there is a viable alternative to the Arminian interpretation:

1. Once Enlightened.
2. Tasted the Heavenly Gift.
3. Partakers of the Holy Spirit.
4. Tasted the Good Word of God.
5. [Tasted] the Power of the Ages to Come.

The first thing to notice is what is not on the list. It does not say these people are justified. This list also does not mention the new birth or any synonyms associated with the new birth. It does not say that these people are: born again, born from above, or regenerated. It does not even specifically say that these people are saved. In fact, none of the phrases used in the Bible to identify a Christian is used in this list. And what is here is not necessarily talking about salvation.

The first attribute is *Once Enlightened*. It is possible to be enlightened and not necessarily be saved. Or to put it another way: There are a variety of ways one can be enlightened that does not entail salvation. For example, a person's mind can be

enlightened to theological truth and yet that person's heart still remains spiritually darkened. Unbelievers, particularly those who have had close association with the Church, can often know a great deal of information about the Bible. A good example (but a sad one) is that of Children who grow up in reformed Churches. They often can know all the answers to their Church's catechism. Often, they can even admit that they intellectually agree with truths of the Bible. Yet, they remain unsaved.

The second description is that these people have *Tasted the Heavenly Gift*. The fact of the matter is that this heavenly gift is not identified. What is likely being referred to here is the Holy Spirit. In other words, the second description is a literary introduction to the more direct wording of the third description. The third description is more direct, *Partakers of the Holy Spirit*. The idea that the Holy Spirit is the gift makes sense in light of what Jesus said about sending the Holy Spirit after He is gone (John 14:15-16).

What should we say about this description? It does seem to at least hint at salvation. In fact, people who are saved do partake in the Holy Spirit. However, the truth is that the Holy Spirit has done many works in both the New and Old Testaments that are not necessarily associated with salvation. In the Old Testament, Balaam prophesied accurately over Israel (Numbers 37:7-10, 18-24; 34:3-9, 15-24). Surely one might think that someone who displayed the spiritual gift of prophecy was saved. But Balaam is condemned in the New Testament as someone who will for sure suffer the pains of eternal Hell (2 Peter 2:15, Jude 11).

The fourth and fifth description are also a bit difficult to break apart. In fact, all the descriptions kind-of function as a unit and are generally talking about the same thing, namely spiritual blessings. *Tasted the Good Word of God* and *Tasted the Power of the*

*Age of Come* along with the rest of these descriptions are all references to partaking in genuine spiritual blessings in a legitimate way.

The assumption by the Arminian is that you must be saved in order to participate in the spiritual Gifts in any meaningful way. However, this is just not the case. At the establishment of the New Covenant, the visible Church received gifts. The gifts to the Church are not necessarily indications of personal and individual salvation. Rather the signs that were poured out on the Church were to establish that God was genuinely behind the establishment of this New Covenant Community. Remember what Jesus said:

Many will say to me on that day, “Lord, Lord, we *prophesied* in your name, *drove out demons* in your name, and *performed many miracles* in your name, didn’t we?” Then I will tell them plainly, “I never knew you. Get away from me, you who practice evil!” (emphasis added, Matthew 7:22-23).

Notice that Jesus did not say, “I knew you at one time, and now you have fallen away.”

Rather, He said, “I *never* knew you.”

The interpretation that the spiritual gifts are given to the visible Church, and that these gifts are not signs of individual salvation makes sense in light of what the writer goes on to say:

For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned (Hebrews 6:7-8, NASB).

We need to pay close attention to this analogy because it is the key to understanding the previous description and warning. The analogy is that the rain falls on ground and it feeds *both* good plants and bad plants. The writer does not say that good plants somehow turn into bad plants, but that the thorns and thistles soak up the rain just

like the useful plants do. Likewise, spiritual blessings are poured out on the visible Church and bless the truly regenerate and in many ways the unregenerate.

In the end, the writer himself indicates that the description and the warning are not talking about true converts when he says, “But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, *and things that accompany salvation*, though we are speaking in this way” (emphasis added, Hebrews 6:9, NASB). The people who fell away and the people who do fall away permanently were never saved in the first place. They did not have those qualities that accompany salvation.

Apostasy is a real phenomenon in the Church. And the warning here is for the visible body of people who gather together to worship in the Christian manner. There is no way the writer (or any of us) can tell with certainty those who are truly saved and those who are false converts. This is why the warning must go out to the *visible institution*. The writer is not suggesting that a saved person can become lost any more than he is warning that useful plants can turn into thorns.

As I said above, apostasy is a real phenomenon. However, there is only one passage in the entire Bible that explains this phenomenon. That passage reads:

They left us, but they were not part of us, for if they had been part of us, they would have stayed with us. *Their leaving made it clear that none of them was really part of us* (emphasis added, 1 John 2:19).

Those who fall away permanently are not saved people who then lost their salvation. They never were *really* saved in the first place.

### **Can I Know if I am Saved?**

Before we move into our concluding remarks, I thought it important to touch upon the subject of assurance of salvation. Perhaps many of the readers of this book, hearing about the reality of false conversion, may have wondered if they are truly saved. After all,

there are those in the visible Church who *think* that they are saved and are on their way to Hell (Matthew 7:21-23).

Personally speaking, I have had my own severe struggles with assurance—struggles which were in many cases severe. I have at times worried myself into near insanity wondering if I was one of those people self-deluded, believing that I was saved when, it was possible that in reality, I was not. During the many years I concerned myself with this, I would answer almost every alter-call. Every time there was an opportunity to “get saved” I would respond. In a two year period, I probably responded to twelve alter calls. And when I did not answer an “alter call,” I would chastise myself, accusing myself of being a coward for not going forward.

Perhaps the readers of this book are finding themselves in the same position that I was in, wondering if they too are false converts. Allow me to speak personally to you for a moment. First, it is a healthy sign to worry about your salvation. Paul writes:

And so, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, not only when I was with you but even more now that I am absent, continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who is producing in you both the desire and the ability to do what pleases him (Philippians 2:12-13).

Paul says to work out our salvation with *fear* and *trembling*. Worrying about ones salvation is somewhat of a misguided way of obeying the Apostle’s command. The reason this is a healthy sign is false converts do not generally concern themselves with whether or not they are truly saved. The friend I mentioned earlier, Jim, once told me that even in the midst of his sexual depravity he did not question his salvation. Recently, a friend of mine had to deal with a lady in his church who had been “saved” for many years. Later he found out that she denied the Trinity and questioned the reality of the

bodily resurrection of Christ. When confronted, she was suspicious of these orthodox doctrines but sure of her relationship with the “Lord.” Again, to put it quite simply, concerning yourself with salvation is a sign of salvation.

However, concerning yourself with salvation is not in-and-of itself the acid test. We need to move on from here and ask three very important questions.

The first of these questions is: What am I placing my trust in for my salvation? The only answer to this question is the finished work of Jesus Christ. If you are putting your trust in anything other than the redemptive work of God through the ministry of Christ you are lost. Answering an alter call does not save you. Baptism, communion, or Church membership does not save you. Only Christ can save you. These can all be great things in their proper context, but they are not proof of salvation.

The next question is: Do you love God? Every honest Christian will admit that their love for God is flawed and far from perfect. But, every Christian will also admit that they do love God to some degree. Our soul is moved deeply by God’s holiness, goodness, and righteousness. We do not love God perfectly but we want to. If there is any love in your heart for the true God of the Bible, then this is a sign of regeneration. Remember, the natural man is an enemy of God. Only a redeemed person can have any love in his heart for God.

We must be cautious here. The love we have for God must be the true God of the Bible. Anyone can love a god they create. The question must be: Do you love the holy, sovereign God? Do you love the God who demands holiness and obedience from you? Again, if you answer yes, this is a strong sign of the redemptive power of Christ in your life.

The last question is: What is your response to the sin in your life? Unfortunately, regeneration does not imply perfection. All Christians will sin. And, regrettably, we sin because we want to sin. There is still a part of us that likes sin. But, is there a part of you that hates the fact that you still sin? Do you have an inward struggle with sin? Is there any part of you that is truly grieved when you do sin? And are you grieved that you offended God because of your sin? Do you, *in the core of your being*, look forward to the day of your glorification when you will no longer sin? If so, then this is another sign of true salvation.

If you are trusting Christ alone for your salvation, if you love God to some measure in your heart, and if you are convicted of your sin, then there is no reason to doubt your salvation.

I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so *that you may know that you have eternal life* (emphasis added, 1 John 5:13).

## **Conclusion**

The Bible teaches that those who are saved will always be saved. The Bible teaches that those who are saved will persevere in faith and practice. The reason for this is that salvation never has been nor ever will be a work of freewill. Salvation is a work of God. God is the designer and sustainer of salvation. Salvation is of Him and *secure* in Him!

# **Chapter Seven**

## **Concluding Thoughts**

While Joseph, the father of Jesus, was contemplating what to do with his betrothed wife, God sent him an angel. The angel told him that the conception of Jesus was the work of the Holy Spirit. Then the angel proceeded to tell Joseph what to name him, "...and you are to name him Jesus, because he is the one who *will save* his people from their sins" (emphasis added, Matthew 1:20b-21).

The debate between Calvinism and Arminianism can be reduced to how one views the success of God. Is God successful in what He wants to do, or does God try and fail? In the final analysis, the Arminian really believes in a failing God. He wants to save everyone; He tries to save everyone; but because of human freedom, He cannot save everyone.

This failing idea about God is completely foreign to the Bible. The verse quoted in Matthew says, "...because he is the one who *will save* his people from their sins." Jesus was not sent here to *try* to save people. He was sent *to save* His people, and He will accomplish His purposes.

### **The Golden Off-Ramp**

Let us look again at the *Golden Chain of Redemption*:

For those whom *he* foreknew *he* also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that the Son might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom *he* predestined, *he* also called; and those whom *he* called, *he* also justified; and those whom *he* justified he also glorified (Romans 8:29-30).

As we have seen before this is a chain of redemption: Predestined, Called, Justified, and Glorified. This chain is linked together by the term *He*. Not only is this chain linked together by God, it is also limited by the term *those*. It is *those whom*.... In other words, it is not intended for everyone. *Those* who are predestined are *those* who are

called. *Those* who are called are *those* who are justified and glorified. This is a specific, limited, and a complete chain.

The Arminian view is that God's plan is not like a limited and complete chain. Rather it is like a freeway with off-ramps and on-ramps at any juncture. It would not be connected by the word *he* but by the term *I* or at best *we*. Here again, the debate between Calvinism and Arminianism comes down to whether or not God is successful in His efforts or whether or not He fails.

For King Nebuchadnezzar, the God of the Hebrews was not a God who attempted to do anything. Nor was He a God whose plan could be thwarted by human action. God turned Nebuchadnezzar into a beast for an extended period of time. And when Nebuchadnezzar came to his senses he said:

For his sovereignty is eternal, and his kingdom continues from generation to generation.

All who live on the earth are nothing compared to him.

He does what he wishes with the heavenly armies and with those who live on earth.

No one can hold back his power or say to him, 'What did you do?' (Daniel 4:34b-35).

God does not take freewill into consideration when He makes decisions about what He is going to do in Heaven or on Earth. God has a plan for everything. This plan includes everything from the creation of the world to the depths of eternity. This plan even included who will experience glory in heaven and who will suffer the flames of Hell. God does what He wishes with the heavenly armies and with those who live on earth. Human "freewill" did not enter the equation at all.

## Conclusions

There are several conclusions I would like to make now that we have come to the end of this book.

### Conclusion One

The Arminian view of the relationship between God and man in the work of salvation is a myth. I have heard theological arguments on this subject since I was fifteen. What I am about to pen next, I do so with sincerity and honesty: I have never heard one cogent argument against the doctrines of Calvinism. The Scripture that the Arminian uses are often quoted out of context or without proper exegesis. Often the Arminian presuppositions are read into the text *ipso facto*. There is also often many faulty analogies and erroneous argumentation.

### Conclusion Two

Middle ground or an amalgamation between Calvinism and Arminianism is also a myth. Those who say they have arrived at a synthesis between the two schools can be very sincere, but they are also very wrong. Those who say that there is middle ground (some *knowingly* and some *unknowingly*) often misrepresent Calvinism, Arminianism, or both. Their synthesis always turns out to be some type of Arminian Soteriology.

### Conclusion Three

The Five Points of Calvinism, often represented by the acrostic TULIP are Biblically exegetical. These five points arise from the Bible and are the faithful representation of Biblical Soteriology. We may not like the historic labels that have been associated with each of the points; however, each of the points, as they are understood and explained by Calvinists, are faithful to the Biblical text.

## **Personal Hopes**

My hope for this book is that those who read it will be persuaded by it. For those who are Arminian: My hope is that you will be persuaded by the Biblical evidence of the truths of the Calvinist system.

For those who are Cal-Minian: I know that this book in many ways did not directly deal with those who believe that there is middle ground between Calvinism and Arminianism. However, I did deal with topic where I found it most necessary. But my hope for the Arminian is the same for you. I hope that you will see the Biblical accuracy of Calvinism and abandon any system that would attempt to compromise sound biblical theology.

For Calvinists who have read this book: I hope that it has strengthened your resolve in favor of the Five Points. I also hope that this book has offered you meaningful answers to objections we so often hear against the Doctrines of Grace.

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