

# Calvinism & The Bible - I

John Calvin (1509-1564) is best known for his *INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION*, published about 1536. In this work, he set forth what has been known as the Five Points of Calvinism. Although the Presbyterians are the ones primarily influenced by his teaching, we can see evidence of his work in nearly every one of the "Protestant" religious organization of our day.

It was 79 years after his death, that the Westminster Confession of Faith was drafted by the Presbyterians at Westminster Abby, in London, England. Later, the Westminster Confession was adopted by the Philadelphia Baptist Association and renamed the Philadelphia Confession of Faith. In 1830, the New Hampshire Baptist Convention met in Concord and the result was the New Hampshire Confession of Faith by J. Newton Brown. This New Hampshire Confession is the version that is found today in most Baptist Manuals. All of these were based on the doctrines that were taught by John Calvin.

For those interested in remembering the Five Points of Calvinism, they are abbreviated: *T-U-L-I-P*. Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace, and Perseverance of the saints. Although some subtitle changes have been made in the original concepts set forth by Calvin, these Five Points have remained virtually in tact throughout the years.

## TOTAL DEPRAVITY

In order to define this concept, let us look at the Philadelphia Confession of Faith, as it appears in the Hiscox Guide for Baptist Churches, Page 165: "Our first parents by this sin fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and we in them, whereby death came upon all, all becoming dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body...the guilt of the sin was imputed (and corrupt nature conveyed) to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation, being now conceived in sin, and by nature children of wrath, the servants of sin, the subjects of death and all other miseries spiritual, temporal, and eternal, unless the Lord Jesus set them free. From the original corruption - whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good and wholly inclined to all evil - do proceed all actual transgressions." Briefly then, this concept is that "from conception and birth man is polluted with sin because of the fall of Adam." (The Five Points Of Calvinism, E.H. Palmer, p.13).

Those who cling to the doctrine of Total depravity use several passages as proof texts. You will see that their use is actually a misuse of each and every passage of Scripture.

1. Psalm 51:5 "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me." The last part of this verse is supposed to teach that we are born sinners. In order to understand what is meant in this passage, let's consider Acts 2:8: "And how {is it that} we hear, each in **our own language in which we were born?**" From this verse, would you conclude that these men were born speaking a language? Of course not. They were born into an environment where this language was spoken. Grammatically, there is no difference between this verse and the one in Psalm 51:5. David was born into an environment where sin was practiced. As you will see later, any other understanding of this verse would constitute a contradiction in the Bible.

2. Isaiah 64:6 "But we are all like an unclean {thing}, and all our righteousnesses {are} like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

There is no doubt that compared to the righteousness of God, our righteousness is like a dirty piece of clothing. But where does this verse say we are born guilty of sin? To the contrary, it says that "our iniquities..have taken us away." Two things to note here are "OUR" sins are at fault, and not the sins of Adam and Eve or anybody else, and that these sins "take us away." We are not born "away" but our sins TAKE us away!

3. Ephesians 2:3 "among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others." Here the term "by nature children of wrath" is supposed to mean that our inborn nature is sinful. Thayer defines the word "nature" here as "a mode of feeling and acting which by long habit has become nature:" (P-660). It is the practice of sin that had caused them to be the "children of wrath" and not the guilt of Adam's sin.

4. Romans 5:12 "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned." Somehow this verse is supposed to convey the thought that since men are dying today, they are still being born guilty of Adam's sin. The verse does say that death was passed to all men *NOT* because Adam sinned, but because "all sinned." John says that "sin is the transgression of the law"(1 John 3:4) and in order for a man to be guilty of sin, he must of necessity violate the law of God.

What does the Bible teach on this subject? We will look at some passages of Scripture that deal with this subject in order to get a clear picture of what God has spoken.

1. Zechariah 12:1 & Hebrews 12:9 Both speak of God "forming the spirit of man within him" and being "the Father of

spirits." Would God form a spirit within man that was devoid of any ability to do anything that was good? Total depravity would make God responsible for all of the evil that is done in the world.

2. Ezekiel 18:19,20 says that "The soul who sins shall die" and that "The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son." In the conclusion of verse 20 He says that "The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself." Where in these two verses can we read that we inherit the guilt of Adam's sin or that we are born sinners? The teaching of this passage is so clear, that any other verse that is construed to teach Total depravity is either misunderstood, or constitutes a contradiction in the inspired Word of God.

3. 2 Timothy 3:13 Paul told Timothy that "...evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse." If Total depravity be true, how could men be any worse than "wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body"?

4. Romans 14:12 & 2 Corinthians 5:10 We are taught that each person will give an account to God and that we will be judged on the basis of what we have done in this life, whether good or bad. If a man remained depraved, and had nothing good to give an account for, it would be God's fault that he was lost, and not his own. Furthermore, the sin that would condemn him would not be his own (initially) but that of Adam. You can see how this false doctrine of Total depravity works to remove the blame from man and to place it on God. But be not deceived, we will all give an account *ONLY* for the things **WE** have done as individuals, and not for the sins of anyone else!

### ***QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION ON LESSON ONE:***

1. By what acronym do the Calvinists refer to the points of their doctrine? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. In your own words, what does the doctrine of *Total Depravity* say about the nature of mankind? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What do the Calvinists believe David was saying in Psalm 51:5 - what did he *really* say? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. In Isaiah 64:6, what vital points do the Calvinists miss in trying to use it to support their doctrine of *Total Depravity*?

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5. Define the word "nature" as it is used in Ephesians 2:3 and explain how Paul was using it in this context. \_\_\_\_\_

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6. What do the Calvinists say about Romans 5:12 and what important points are they overlooking? \_\_\_\_\_

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7. In what way is God related to the spirits of men, and how does this call in question the doctrine of *Total Depravity*?

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8. *If the doctrine of Total Depravity is true, who would be responsible for ALL of the evil that is done in the world?* \_\_\_\_\_

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9. Ezekiel tells us some important facts about *who* is responsible for sin. Enumerate these facts, and show how they contradict the doctrine of *Total Depravity*. \_\_\_\_\_

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10. How does 2 Timothy 3:13 fit into our evidence against Calvinism? \_\_\_\_\_

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11. Who will give an account for what in the judgment, and why is this important to our understanding of the *truth* with regard to the first point of Calvinism? \_\_\_\_\_

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# Calvinism & The Bible - II

In our last lesson, we dealt with the first of the Five Points of Calvinism. We saw that John Calvin asserted that we are all born guilty of the sin of Adam and Eve. In his eyes, we are "*wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.*" We saw that if this were so, God would be guilty of forming defiled spirits (Hebrews 12:9) and such passages as Ezekiel 18:19,20 would need to be removed from inspired writ.

## UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION AND REPROBATION

This point of Calvinism is most commonly referred to as *PREDESTINATION*. Although the Bible does use such words as "predestinated" and "election" (Ephesians 1:4-11; Romans 8:29,30; 9:11-13), we can only learn the Calvinistic doctrine by turning to the writings of men:

*As Scripture, then, clearly shows, we say that God once established by his eternal and unchangeable plan those whom he long before determined once for all to receive into salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, he would devote to destruction. We assert that, with respect to the elect, this plan was founded upon his freely given mercy, without regard to human worth; but by his just and irreprehensible but incomprehensible judgment he has barred the door of life to those whom he has given over to damnation...(Institutes of the Christian Religion, John Calvin, III. xxi. 7)*

As was stated in the introduction to this series, evidence of Calvinism can be seen in nearly every "Protestant" religious institution. So in HISCOX GUIDE FOR BAPTIST CHURCHES, Pages 161 and 162 we find:

*God hath decreed ...from all eternity ... freely and unchangeably, all things whatsoever come to pass;...By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory some men and angels are predestined or foreordained to eternal life,...others being left to act in their sin to their just condemnation ...these angels and men, thus predestined and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished; Those...predestined to life, God...hath... out of his mere free grace and love, without any other thing in the creature as a condition or cause moving him thereunto.*

One Calvinist author, in an effort to prove this doctrine, says that:

*Nothing in this world happens by chance. God is in back of everything. He decides and causes all things to happen that do happen. He is not sitting on the sidelines wondering and perhaps fearing what is going to happen next. No, He has foreordained everything "after the council of his will" (Eph. 1:11); the moving of a finger, the beating of a heart, the laughter of a girl, the mistake of a typist - even sin. (The Five Points Of Calvinism, Palmer P.25)*

Such a doctrine relieves man of all responsibility for his soul. If he is lost, God has determined it "once for all" and there is nothing he can do to change it. Therefore, if I am lost, the only one to blame is God! As Clark H. Pinnock observes in "Grace Unlimited", *Such a position almost makes God into the devil. (P.101)*

One of the major premises for such a doctrine is that God has no boundary of time. Therefore, looking into the future or the past is no problem whatsoever. Calvinists conclude that because of this, God has already made the plans for all eternity, and nothing can ever change them. First, let us note that just as God may look into the future, He may also choose *NOT* to look into the future. One good example of this can be seen in Genesis 22:12. God chose *NOT* to foreknow that Abraham would be faithful, even to the offering up of his only begotten son. There are also many things which God did not fix for certain. God said to Jonah, "*Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.*" (Jonah 3:4). But forty days came and went, and they were *NOT* overthrown! *WHY?* Because God "*saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he said that he would do unto them; and he did it not*" (Jonah 3:10). Many other occasions can be cited where God said that something was going to happen, and then later changed mind.

We shall now examine some of the passages of Scripture that are used by Calvinists to prove their doctrine of Unconditional Election and Reprobation.

1. Ephesians 1:3-12 The word upon which Calvinists base their doctrine in this passage is "predestinated." Thayer says that this word means "to determine, decide beforehand" (P.541). The key to understanding these verses is to determine *WHAT* is "predetermined?" In verse five, the "foreordination" (ASV) is that both Jews and Gentiles were to receive the adoption of sons through Jesus Christ. In essence, verse eleven says the same thing. But in verse eleven, the use of the phrase "according to the purpose" and again "after the counsel of his will", shows us that it's Gods plan that has been in existence from eternity. Some

cling to the term "chose" that is used in verse four, and say that this means "particular, unconditional election". First, consider that he is *NOT* talking about people who are not "in Christ"(Verse 3). Also, he is considering the traits of those who ARE "in Christ" (i.e. `holy and without blemish before him in love'). Thus, He chose that those "in Christ" should be of the character specified. Take note, however, that in no sense does the word "predestinated" as it is used in these verses preclude human will.

2. Romans 8:29,30 The word "foreknew" in the Greek is a compound of *PRO* and *GINOSKO*. *GINOSKO* is not only used to mean "taking in knowledge, to come to know..."(Vine), but "*frequently indicates a relation between the person knowing and the object known...1 Cor. 8:3, `if any man love God;”(Vine)*. *PRO* simply means "before". So, we have God "foreapproving" someone. Those whom God decided beforehand to approve, are those who are conformed to the image of His Son. Those conformed to the image of His Son were the ones "called." But HOW are men CALLED? Through the Gospel of Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:14). Those who heard the calling, and believed, were baptized (Acts 18:8), and in so doing were *Justified* (1 Corinthians 6:11). Thayer says that "glorified" means "to cause the dignity and worth of some person or thing to become manifest and acknowledged"(P.157). By virtue of the fact that a man lost in sin is "declared just", there is bestowed upon him dignity and worth that he never before possessed. It is clear that the entire context is dealing with the *CHARACTERS* that God will accept, and *NOT* particular *PERSONS*. Notice these verses: 1. "...no condemnation to those...in Christ Jesus"; 4. "...who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."; 13. "...live according to the flesh you will die...if by the Spirit...you will live." Note also that in verse 28, the "things work together for good" are for "those who love God." Man may choose to love God, or *NOT* to love God. But if he chooses *NOT* to love God, the "things" that work together for his benefit (i.e. God's plan for the redemption of man) will not be his. Not because God "predestined" him *PARTICULARLY* unto eternal damnation, but because he is not manifesting the *CHARACTER* that God approves.

3. Romans 9:11-13 The Calvinist presupposes that by the use of the word "election" here, that God "unconditionally elects and reprobates" those whom He chooses according to His own "Sovereign grace" and not according to ANY works that they may do. Unfortunately, they have overlooked the fact that the eternal destiny of mankind *IS NOT* under discussion in this passage AT ALL! What *IS* under consideration here is the fact that God did not choose Jacob because of anything he had done to be the one through whom the Messiah was to come. The point is that God's purpose or plan does not hinge upon natural birthright, or human goodness, but upon the will of the Father. Calvinists also try to tie verse 13 in with what was said to Rebecca. But this is not the case at all. This quotation comes from Malachi 1:2,3 and was spoken prophetically to Israel as a nation. God's love for Jacob was with reference to the nation that came forth from him, and God's hatred for Esau was likewise for the nation that descended from him. Try as you might, you cannot find eternal election or reprobation, either personal or national, in this or any other verse in the Word of God.

Countless passages of Scripture present difficulties to the doctrine of predestination. *IF* man's future has been personally sealed for all eternity, WHY did Jesus say "*Come to Me, all {you} who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" (Matthew 11:28) And WHY should He say "*learn of me*" (Matthew 11:28-30), if the destiny of all men was already decided? James says that a man is "drawn away by HIS OWN lusts" (1:13-15), and not because God decided that he would sin!

Because it relieves man of all personal responsibility, the doctrine of "unconditional election and reprobation" has a great appeal to the majority of religionists. But one thing puzzles me. *WHY* are Calvinists spending vast sums of money to evangelize the world when they believe that whether the "elect" hear the gospel or not is of no consequence?(Grace Unlimited, C.H. Pinnock, P.43) And of course, if the "reprobate" hear the gospel, it will do them no good! This, as well as the other points of Calvinism, is not in keeping with the inspired Word of God at all.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION ON LESSON TWO:

1. What is the *single* word most often used to describe this point of Calvinism? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. Name the *two* religious organizations which we have cited in our study of Calvinism thus far. \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. Consider carefully the quotes from the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* near the top of page four, and summarize what Mr. Calvin was saying in your own words. \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. What does this doctrine say that God has determine "once for all" and what do they believe can be done to change it?

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5. What does Mr. Clark H. Pinnock observe about this doctrine? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. Give some examples of God *not* choosing to look into the future, or declaring something that He was going to do which He did *not* do. \_\_\_\_\_

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7. In Ephesians 1:11, what is the meaning of the word "predestinated" or "predestined" {NKJV}? \_\_\_\_\_

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8. Explain the way in which the word "foreknew" is used in the context of Romans 8:29,30. \_\_\_\_\_

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9. Who are the "called" in Romans 8, and how are they "called?" \_\_\_\_\_

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10. What is the meaning of the word "election" in Romans 9:11-13 and what important fact does the Calvinist overlook in this context? \_\_\_\_\_

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11. How does Matthew 11:28-30 challenge the validity of the doctrine of *Unconditional Election & Reprobation*? \_\_\_\_\_

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12. According to James, what is it that causes us to sin? \_\_\_\_\_  
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13. Explain the inconsistency of the Calvinists spending vast sums of money to evangelize the world. \_\_\_\_\_  
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# Calvinism & The Bible - III

In our last two lessons, we have discussed what is referred to as the first of the FIVE POINTS OF CALVINISM. The first was Total Depravity and the second was Unconditional Election and Reprobation (or Predestination). As we consider that the Calvinistic doctrine of Predestination forces God to choose those whom He will save, and condemn the rest to eternal damnation, we see the stage set for another doctrine that will further make God a respecter of persons (Romans 2:11).

## **LIMITED ATONEMENT**

Although the doctrine of the Limited Atonement is generally included in a discussion of Calvin and his teaching, the issue of the Limited Atonement does not appear in his writings. Instead, it is a product of second generation Calvinists. The nearest he came to the discussion of this subject was in his INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, Book III, chapter 24, sections 15 and 16, where he was responding to criticisms about his view of God's sovereignty. But the scope of Christ's atoning sacrifice had received no written attention by John Calvin.

The introduction of this doctrine was the result of necessary conclusions drawn from the doctrine of Predestination. *IF* indeed, God has eternally and unchangeably decreed that certain persons would be saved and others would be lost, *HOW* could the atonement that was made possible by the blood of Christ be universal? It is easy to see how those who subscribed to Calvin's teachings were FORCED to accept the false doctrine of the Limited Atonement.

As always, when a doctrine comes from men and not from God, we are forced to go to the writings of men to understand what is meant by "Limited Atonement":

***"It pleased the Lord to make a covenant of grace wherein he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him that they may be saved; and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life his Holy Spirit to make them willing and able to believe"... "Others not elected...they neither will nor can truly come to Christ, and therefore cannot be saved"... "God did from all eternity decree to justify all the elect, and Christ did in the fulness of time die for their sins"... "God was pleased to give forth the promise of Christ...as the means of calling the elect..." (Philadelphia Confession Of Faith, Articles 7,10 & 11).***

***"The Calvinist, on the other hand, says that Christ died only for the believer, the elect, only for those who will actually be saved and go to heaven. According to the Calvinist, Christ intended or purposed that His atonement should pay for the sins of only those the Father had given Him (John 6:37-40)." (The Five Points Of Calvinism, E. H. Palmer, p.42).***

In order to see how Calvinists misuse the Scriptures to prove their doctrine, let's examine some of the proof texts they use.

1. John 10:11-15 In presenting their argumentation on this verse, the Calvinists say "*Now it is for these sheep and not for the whole world that Jesus says He lays down His life:*" (Five Points Of Calvinism, p.43). Thus, they liken this to the Saviour's use of sheep to describe the righteous and goats to represent the unrighteous in Matthew 25:31-46. The problem is that the account in the gospel according to John is not referring to the final judgment and the division that will be made between the righteous and unrighteous. In order to understand what is being taught in any parable, we must stay within the framework of the central theme of the lesson presented. In short, we must be cautious not to come to conclusions based on what it does *NOT* say. The parable under consideration is dealing with the death of Christ, and not the scope of its benefits. Furthermore, the same inspired writer says that Jesus' purpose was to take away "the sins of the world"(John 1:29) and that Christ intended to "draw all men" unto Himself (John 12:32). In keeping with such clear-cut statements found in the same epistle, we must conclude that Jesus was teaching us that He shows His love for His sheep by dying for them, but makes no statement here that would limit His death benefits to them alone.

2. Ephesians 5:25-27 The contention here is that it is the church and not the world for whom Christ gave Himself up. They say that if the analogy be true of husband and wife, Christ could not love both those in the world and those in the church, else He would violate God's plan for one man and one wife. If we could follow such logic to its necessary conclusion, only those who are *IN* the church can claim the redemptive power that is in the blood of Christ. Thus, those on Pentecost who were in need of salvation could *NOT* have it because they were outside the church. But Peter said that if they would "repent and be baptized" they would receive the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38). And after this, the record says that the *SAVED* were added to the church (Acts 2:47). It is by virtue of the fact that only those whose sins have been washed away by the blood of the Lord are added to the church that we can call the church a blood-bought institution (Acts 20:28).

The following passages are listed with brief comments to show you that the Bible doctrine of the atonement is far from



the Calvinistic doctrine of the Limited Atonement:

1. John 3:16-18 God "*so loved the WORLD*" - "*WORLD should be saved through him*"- the subject of God's love is *NOT* the elect, but the *WORLD*!
2. Romans 5:8 Christ died for us "*while we were YET SINNERS*". Again, nothing about the elect. This entire context contains interesting thoughts about the universal effect of the sin of Adam as opposed to the free gift of God in the death of His Son that the "*free gift came unto ALL MEN to justification of life*" (vv. 18,19). Just as we can choose to partake of the sin that came into the world as a result of Adam's sin, we can choose to partake of the righteousness that came as the result of the atonement.
3. 2 Corinthians 5:14 "*died for ALL*"
4. 1 Timothy 2:6 "*who gave himself a ransom for ALL*"
5. Titus 2:11 "*grace of God*" - "*bringing salvation to ALL men*"
6. Hebrews 2:9 "*taste of death for EVERY MAN*"
7. Hebrews 9:28 "*bear the sins of MANY*"
8. 1 Peter 3:18 "*suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous*"
9. 2 Peter 3:9 "*not wishing that ANY should perish, but that ALL should come to repentance*" - IF ALL means only the elect in the other passages, how could it mean the same thing in this verse? Are there some elect who will NOT repent?
10. 1 John 4:14,15 "*Saviour of the WORLD*- and not just of the elect!
11. 1 John 2:2 "*not for ours (sins) only, but for the WHOLE WORLD*"- some try to read the "elect" into this verse, but it is NOT there!
12. 1 Timothy 4:10 "*Saviour of ALL MEN, specially of them that believe*" - this best expresses the idea of unlimited atonement. The sacrifice of the Son of God has the potential to remove the guilt of sin from **EVERY MAN** on the face of the earth. Therefore, He is "the Saviour of all men". But He does not have the same relationship with unbelievers as He shares with "them that believe."

We might well illustrate unlimited atonement by likening it to a judge's offer of pardon to a convicted murderer. Some years ago, we saw such an example in the state of Utah. Gary Gilmore was sentenced to death and wanted them to carry out the sentence. After being granted reprieve after reprieve, he finally got his wish. The point is that he had the RIGHT to decline the offers of a lighter sentence although many thought he had lost his mind. Right or wrong, man has the right to refuse the offer of forgiveness that comes from the God of heaven. No one can force him to accept God's gracious gift, but to refuse is to resign his soul to eternal condemnation. Unlike the offers of clemency given by men, God's offer is universal and not limited to one person. Also, it is MAN that chooses to refuse or accept and not God arbitrarily choosing some and rejecting others.

You will see when we come to the conclusion of this series of studies that the FIVE POINTS OF CALVINISM stand or fall together. If you espouse one, you will be forced to accept the other four. Such is the way of all false systems of religion. For this reason we strive to know ONLY the way that God has given in His inspired Word, the Bible.

### ***QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION ON LESSON THREE:***

1. In what way do the first two points of Calvinism set the stage for this point? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. Briefly summarize the doctrine of the *Limited Atonement* in your own words after considering the quotes from the Philadelphia Confession of Faith and the book by Palmer on page ten of this lesson. \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. What is the conclusion of the Calvinists on John 10:11-15, and where do they miss the mark? \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. According to the Calvinists, for whom did Paul say Christ gave Himself in Ephesians 5:25-27, and how have they misunderstood this passage? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Out of the twelve passages listed on pages eleven and twelve which show the Bible doctrine of atonement, choose the six which you think are the strongest and clearest and be prepared to explain them in class. \_\_\_\_\_

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6. What are the consequences of refusing to accept God's gracious gift? \_\_\_\_\_

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# Calvinism & The Bible - IV

This is the fourth in a series of five lessons on the doctrine known as Calvinism. One Calvinistic author observes that "The Five Points of Calvinism all depend on each other. If *T* is true, then *U* is true, and so are *L*, *I*, and *P*. They all stand or fall together." (E.H. Palmer, *The Five Points Of Calvinism*, p.60) The truth of this statement will be seen as we proceed into a study of the *I* in *T-U-L-I-P*.

## ***IRRESISTIBLE GRACE***

Because of reasons that will be self-evident, this point of Calvinistic doctrine is also referred to as the Direct Operation of the Holy Spirit. As you will recall from our first lesson in this series, Calvinism teaches that all men are "*from conception and birth... polluted with sin because of the fall of Adam*" (Palmer, p.13). Because of this "Totally Depraved" nature, the only way that man can be saved is by a miracle. Of course, only those whom God has "*predestined and foreordained*" will experience this miracle, else the second point of Calvinism would be found false (which we have already seen that it is).

As has been the case throughout this study, it behooves us to look to the writings of men to find out what Calvinists believe.

*"Man having brought himself under the curse of the law by his fall, it pleased the Lord to make a covenant of grace wherein he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him that they may be saved; and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life his Holy Spirit to make them willing and able to believe"* (Art. 7) *"Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation"* (Art. 9) *"This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone,...the creature being wholly passive therein, being dead in sins and trespasses; until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call and to embrace the grace offered..."*(Art. 10). *"The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the spirit of Christ in their hearts"*(Art. 14). *"Although the gospel be the only outward means of revealing Christ and saving grace, and is, as such, abundantly sufficient thereto, yet - that men who are dead in trespasses may be born again, quickened or regenerated - there is moreover necessary an effectual, insuperable work of the Holy Spirit upon the whole soul for the producing in them a new spiritual life, without which no other means will effect their conversion unto God"* (*The Philadelphia Confession Of Faith*, Art. 20).

*"The new birth, is that change wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit,...the change is instantaneous, effected solely by the power of God, in a manner incomprehensible to reason...and without it salvation is impossible"* (*Hiscox Guide For Baptist Churches*, pp.165-197).

The Calvinistic concept is that God must through a miracle, which is by nature "incomprehensible," make a man "willing and able to believe" before he can even understand what the gospel means! Perhaps you have noted the conspicuous absence of supporting Scriptures in the presentation of this point. This is largely due to the fact that Calvinists feel this to be the logical conclusion drawn from the doctrines of Total Depravity, Unconditional Election and Limited Atonement. Having thus shown that these three concepts are not in keeping with the truth of the Scriptures, their arguments to support this point fall flat!

While the Calvinist maintains that the Holy Spirit works directly on the heart of the sinner, separate and apart from the Word of God, Paul affirms that "the gospel" is "*the power of God unto salvation*" (Romans 1:16). Although James and Peter say that we are "begotten again" (i.e. born again) by the Word of God (James 1:18,21;1 Peter 1:22-25), the Calvinist affirms that "*the new birth, is that change wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit.*"(*Hiscox Guide For Baptist Churches*, pp.165-197). Which one are we to believe?

Trying to maintain that the Spirit is now working in conversion apart from the revealed Word, is to say that we can be saved apart from any knowledge of God's book, the Bible. Jesus said that the purpose in sending the Holy Spirit was to guide the apostles into ALL truth (John 16:13). If the New Testament represents the work of these inspired men, we have available to us today the written essence of ALL TRUTH! Everything that God wants man to know about himself and His plan for the redemption of man is IN this inspired work. In writing to the Ephesian brethren, Paul said that the "*sword of the Spirit*" is "*the Word of God*" (6:17). When some affirm that a man can not believe the revealed Word unless he is miraculously acted upon, has he not cast dispersion on the ability of the Spirit to reveal God's Word? The truth is that any man who will be honest with himself can understand the Bible. To say that he must be changed from his sinful state before he can comprehend the gospel, is like telling a man he must clean himself up before he can take a bath! Neither conform to sound reasoning.

From the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ, until time is no more, the preaching of the Gospel is God's means of reaching lost souls. Where the Gospel has not been preached, none have been saved. If salvation is the result of God sending the Holy Spirit to lost men, why is it that there are NO saved men where the Word has not been preached? If the Holy Spirit saves men apart from the written word, why should we send men to preach the Gospel? Why not save time and money and just allow GOD to save people on the other side of the globe through the direct operation of the Holy Spirit?

In the style of so many man-made doctrines, this part of Calvinism relieves man of the blame for being lost. If God does not choose to work directly on my heart, it is HIS fault that I am lost! Thus the Calvinist has placed on the shoulders of God Almighty the blame that rightfully belongs to each man (Romans 14:12). Furthermore, if I cannot resist the grace of God whenever He chooses me, it is not MY fault in any way that I am saved, and no matter how hard I try, I could not be lost if I wanted to be! This brings us up to our fifth and final lesson on Calvinism.

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION ON LESSON FOUR:**

1. What is the statement made by Palmer concerning the relationship between the five points of Calvinism - is it true thus far in your study? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What other terms are used to describe the concept of *Irresistible Grace*? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. In your own words, please summarize the concept set forth in the quotes from the Philadelphia Confession of Faith and Hiscox Guide For Baptist Churches on page fourteen. \_\_\_\_\_

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4. What was quite noticeably missing in the presentation of this point in the manuals? \_\_\_\_\_

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Why was this so? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Compare what the Calvinists teach concerning the "new birth" and what we find in the pages of God's Word. \_\_\_\_\_

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6. What was compared to a man being told that he had to clean himself up before he could take a bath? \_\_\_\_\_

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7. *IF* the Calvinists are correct about the *direct operation of the Holy Spirit*, what should we be able to find in remote areas where the Bible has never been taught? \_\_\_\_\_

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8. *IF* God does not choose to work on your heart, what does that make God and who is responsible for your being lost?

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# Calvinism & The Bible - V

In the past four lessons, we have covered the first four of the Five Points Of Calvinism. We found that according to Calvinists, man is born totally depraved and incapable of doing anything that is good. They also contend that God in his infinite mercy has unconditionally elected certain persons to salvation, and all others to eternal condemnation. Since they believe that God has determined who will be saved in advance, the atonement of His Son's blood was ONLY for those whom He has decided to save. In order to cause the "elect" to come to Him, God is said to call them by His "irresistible grace" which is said to be "incomprehensible" and will make man "willing and able to believe". This final point of Calvinism is inseparably connected with the first four. It is also true that because the first four have been proven false, the fifth must also be false.

## PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

This point of Calvinism has been called "Eternal Security," "Once Saved, Always Saved," "Impossibility of Apostasy," and the "Preservation of the Saints." All of these terms are fit descriptions of this phase of Calvinism. As we look at the writings of some Calvinistic authors, we will see the consequences of such a doctrine.

*"Those whom God hath accepted...called and sanctified..and given the precious faith...can neither totally nor finally fall from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end and be eternally saved...This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will; but upon the immutability of the decree of election...And though they may...fall into grievous sins, and for a time continue therein, yet they shall renew their repentance and be preserved through faith in Christ Jesus to the end." Philadelphia Confession Of Faith, Article 17; The Hiscox Guide For Baptist Churches, pp. 176,177*

*"We believe the Scriptures teach that such as are truly regenerate, being born of the Spirit, will not utterly fall away and finally perish, but will endure unto the end" New Hampshire Confession Of Faith, Article 12; Hiscox Guide For Baptist Churches, p.198.*

A Baptist preacher by the name of Sam Morris wrote a tract entitled "*DO A CHRISTIAN'S SINS DAMN HIS SOUL*" and subtitled it "*A DISCUSSION WHICH INVOLVES A SUBJECT PERTINENT TO ALL MEN*". The first sentence is:

*We take the position that a Christian's sins do not damn his soul. The way a Christian lives, what he says, his character, his conduct, his attitude toward other people have nothing whatsoever to do with the salvation of his soul." (p.1) If there is any question about what this Baptist believes, consider what he says as he continues in this tract: "All the prayers a man may pray, all the Bibles he may read, all the churches he may belong to, all the services he may attend, all the sermons he may practice, all the debts he may pay, all the ordinances he may observe, all the laws he may keep, all the benevolent acts he may perform will not make his soul one whit safer; and all the sins he may commit from idolatry to murder will not make his soul in any more danger...The way a man lives has nothing whatever to do with the salvation of his soul." (pp.1,2) Based on such doctrine, another preacher said: "I couldn't go to hell - in fact, I couldn't go to hell if I wanted to. If on the Judgment day, I should find that my loved ones are lost and should lose all desire to be saved, and beg God to send me to hell with them, He couldn't do it; and if He did, He would be a liar because He said, 'No man can pluck them out of my hand.'" (Searching The Scriptures, Vol. XVI No.5, p.7)*

Like the other points of this doctrine, Calvinists misuse certain passages of Scripture to prove their point.

1. John 3:36 The argument is that the believer is one who has already obtained eternal life and that it can NEVER be taken away from him. *IF* this is true, why did Christ tell His disciples that they could expect "*in the world to come, eternal life.*" (*Mark 10:29,30*)? Paul wrote to Titus and said: "*In hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie promised before times eternal.*" (*Titus 1:2*). That which one already has, he no longer hopes for (*Romans 8:24*). How could we be hoping for eternal life if we already have it? It is apparent to all who are looking objectively at the Word of God that eternal life is something that we must "*fight the good fight*" in order to "lay hold on" (*1 Timothy 6:11,12*).

2. 1 John 3:9 It is this passage that Calvinists use to teach that no matter how hard you try, if you are a child of God, you CANNOT so sin as to be eternally lost. There are two reasons why the conclusion that a child of God CANNOT sin is a false conclusion: 1) It is direct conflict with *1 John 1:8;2:1* where John says that Christians CAN and DO sin! 2) The word "cannot" does not always mean that the thing referred to is "impossible" Judah told Joseph that Benjamin "cannot leave his father." (*Genesis 44:22*). Did this mean that it was IMPOSSIBLE for him to come down to Egypt? We know that this is not true because later he DID come! When a number of men were invited to a feast, one of them used the excuse: "*I have married a wife, therefore I cannot come.*" (*Luke 14:20*). Was it in fact impossible for him to come to the feast? The phrase "*And he cannot sin*" is translated from the Greek phrase "*kai ou dunatai hamartanein*". *Hamartanein* is a present active infinitive, the force of which is: "*he cannot continue to live a life of sin*". This is the essence of what Paul was teaching in *Romans 6:1,2* when he said: "*What*

shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?" It is impossible to continue to live in sin and call yourself a child of God. The two just don't mix!

3. Romans 8:35-39 The Calvinist uses this to prove that no matter what we do, we cannot forfeit eternal life once we have it. The interesting point is that eternal life is *NOT* even under consideration here! That from which we cannot be separated is *"the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* In this same epistle, Paul says that "...God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."! (5:8). Even our sinful condition did not stop God's love for us. But although He loved us, we were still SINNERS! And as long as we remained in that condition, we were LOST! Although there is no force that can separate us from the love of God, our failure to live according to His will can cause us to be lost eternally (1 Corinthians 9:27).

4. John 10:27-29 *"they shall never perish" and "no one shall snatch them out of my hand"* are the thoughts that supposedly prove the impossibility of apostasy. Notice that His sheep are described as those who *"hear"* His voice. And as a result of their hearing, they *"follow"* Him. This demands that they do not stray, but habitually follow the Shepherd. Any who refuse to hear and follow the Shepherd are NOT the sheep of this passage. There is no doubt that ALL who will continue through life to hear and follow Christ will not perish, and no external force can snatch them out of His hand. This does not preclude the possibility that we might choose to cease following Him and lose our hope of eternal life. Demas forsook the Lord (2 Timothy 4:10) and many others have since. Jude says that there is a "keeping yourselves" in the love of God that we must work on in order to obtain the mercy of Christ "unto eternal life."(v.21).

It is interesting to note that the false doctrine of Eternal Security did not have its beginning with John Calvin. Actually it was first taught in the Garden of Eden by Satan! The Lord had instructed Adam and Eve that if they ate of the tree which He had placed in the middle of the garden, *"You shall surely die."* Along came Satan and said: *"You shall NOT surely die."* Here we have the real beginning of the doctrine that says man can flagrantly disobey the commandments of God and not have to worry about the penalty of eternal separation from the presence of God. The prophet Ezekiel says: *"...the soul who sins shall die."* (18:4). Yet Satan, along with many false teachers today says: "The soul that sins will NOT die, in spite of the fact that he sins willfully." Who can we believe, God or Satan?

The Five Points of Calvinism are without a doubt false from the first to the last. There is not one point that we can say corresponds with the teaching of the New Testament. Having seen this to be true, we must guard ourselves against any, whether it be those of the denominational world or even of our own brethren, who might try to teach and promote any form of this false doctrine.

### ***QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION ON LESSON FIVE:***

1. Besides the *Perseverance Of The Saints*, what other terms have been used to describe this point of Calvinism? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Briefly summarize in your own words the concepts set forth in the quotes from the Philadelphia Confession Of Faith and Hiscox Guide For Baptist Churches on page seventeen. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. In the quote from the Baptist preacher which begins on page seventeen, what type of lifestyle might one who is part of the "elect" live and still be "saved?" \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Discuss the concept of eternal life as it relates to this point of Calvinism and John 3:36. \_\_\_\_\_

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5. What is the contradiction found between the doctrine the Calvinists advocate from 1 John 3:9 and what is found elsewhere in the same book? Discuss the word "cannot." \_\_\_\_\_

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6. How do they misuse Romans 8:35-39 to bolster the doctrine of *The Perseverance Of The Saints*? \_\_\_\_\_

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7. How are the sheep of Christ described in John 10:27-29, and what bearing does this have on the fifth point of Calvinism?

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8. Who was the first to proclaim the doctrine of Eternal Security, and where was it proclaimed? \_\_\_\_\_

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