

The Word of Life

Calvinism

One of the false doctrines that the Jews taught during the times of Christ was that a Jew could not be lost regardless of how he lived (unless he committed suicide). Paul confronted this position in the second chapter of Romans (Rom. 2:1-3, 17-23). There are still those who hold to this false teaching. They think that once an individual is saved, he is always saved. They have a saying that goes like this: "If you seek it, you can't find it. If you find it, you can't get it. If you get it, you can't lose it. If you lose it, you never had it." What they mean of course is that if a supposed child of God goes astray, it is because he was never really saved in the first place. This Calvinistic teaching is a creation of man, not God. Five points called *tulip* are used to summarize this doctrine

Total Depravity
Unconditional Election
Limited Atonement
Irresistible Grace
Perseverance of Saints

Let's examine each one of these points and see what we find.

1. Total Depravity. This point claims that man is born totally depraved having inherited the corrupt nature Adam sustained after his fall. It basically says that we have inherited sin from someone else. The problem is the scriptures do not teach it. If it can be proven that the scriptures do not teach it, the doctrine of Calvinism falls as a whole. So, what does the Bible teach about sin? Is it something we inherited? The very definition of sin denies it. John tells us that sin is a transgression of God's law (1 Jn. 3:4). If that is what sin is, then one is not a sinner until he violates God's law. Hence, being born a sinner is impossible. Even Paul recognized that when he was a child he was not under law. In Rom. 7:9 he said, "*For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.*" When was Paul alive without the law? There is only one answer. It was when he was a child, before he had the capacity to choose between right and wrong. But remember, if Paul was not under the law as a child, he could not have been a sinner, for where no law is, there is no transgression (Rom. 4:16). Why? Because sin is a transgression of God's law. So, the irrefutable conclusion is that Paul was not born a sinner. However, when Paul reached the age where he could choose between right and wrong, sin had its way with him and he died spiritually (Rom. 7:9).

Another passage that proves that we do not inherit sin is Ez. 18:20. Listen to it: "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.*" Pretty clear isn't it? If the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, how can it be said that we inherit sin from Adam? Point one is false.

2. Unconditional Election. Election is a Bible doctrine. Paul indicated that the brethren at Thessalonica had been elected by God (1 Thess. 1:4). Several other passages speak of God's elect as well (2 Tim. 2:10; 1 Pet. 1:2, etc.). Unconditional

election, however, is not a Bible doctrine. There is something for man to do in order to be elected by God. One must obey the gospel. The gospel is God's power unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). Paul said, "*Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (2 Thess. 2:14). God calls us the same way He called those in the first century, by the gospel. The gospel is a message that tells of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. When one hears the gospel, he knows that God has done His part in making our salvation possible. God has done for us that which we cannot do for ourselves. He sent His Son to die in our stead (Jn. 3:16). He raised His Son for our justification (Rom. 4:25). God has indeed done his part. But God has given us a part too. The gospel not only has a message of joy and glad tidings, it has instructions that must be followed. Our salvation depends on our following those instructions. Those instructions are clearly set forth in the New Testament. One must hear the word of God (Jn. 6:44-45), believe in Jesus (Mk. 16:15), repent of his sins (Acts 3:19), confess Jesus with his mouth (Rom. 10:9-10), and be buried in the waters of baptism (Acts 2:38). These five steps are what the Lord has required through His gospel message. He is the author of salvation, but the Bible teaches that He saves those who obey Him (Heb. 5:8, 9). If we refuse to obey the commands that God has set forth, we will not become a part of His elect. Yes, we are elected, but not unconditionally, and any doctrine based on such a conclusion is false and not from God. When man does his part in conjunction with what God has done for him, he is saved and becomes a part of God's elect. Does any of this indicate that we are not saved by grace? No, of course not. Just because we have to do something to take advantage of God's grace does not necessitate the conclusion that we are not saved by grace. Was not Noah saved by grace? If you think not, read Gen. 6:8. It was by the grace of God that Noah was spared. Now, did Noah have to do something to be saved? Yes, he had to build the ark. That was his part. And when Noah obeyed God by faith, he was saved. It wasn't unconditional, but it was still a matter of grace. Such is the case with our salvation from sin. It is a matter of grace, but never is it said to be unconditional.

3. Limited Atonement. The third point teaches atonement is only for a few. That is, Jesus died for a few predestined people whom God chose before the foundation of the world. Again this point is weak in scriptural proof. The Bible just doesn't teach limited atonement, at least not in the way Calvinism advocates. To the contrary, the Bible teaches that Jesus died for every man (Heb. 2:8, 9). Paul said, "*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men*" (Tit. 2:11). There is a sense in which atonement is limited. It is limited to those who obey God. But everyone has an equal opportunity to respond to God's grace. God's grace is extended to all, for it is God's will that no man perish (2 Pet. 3:9).

4. Irresistible Grace. As we look at each of these points, we should be able to see how they build on each other. Point two is necessary because of point one, and point three is necessary because of point two. This is why the whole doctrine crumbles if one point is proven false. Since the doctrine teaches that one is born totally depraved, i.e., without the ability to do right because of a corrupt nature, one must be elected unconditionally. If one is elected unconditionally, then others are rejected unconditionally; hence, limited atonement. Since those who receive atonement are those who have been predestinated unconditionally, they cannot resist the grace that makes the atonement possible. In other words, they are saved whether they want to be or not. There is nothing they can do about it because they had nothing to do with it in

the first place. Salvation is no longer a choice. This may sound well and good, but does it fit what the Bible teaches? Jesus said, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned*" (Mk. 16:16). That sounds like a choice to me. If there were such a thing as irresistible grace, those predestinated could not disbelieve if they wanted to, making the words of Jesus here nonsensical. There is a choice.

5. Perseverance of Saints. This is the only conclusion that one could come to in view of the first four points. It is the once saved always saved doctrine, i.e., the impossibility of apostasy theory. If one is chosen by God without choice, saved completely unconditionally; and if he receives from God saving grace which is irresistible, he surely cannot lose his salvation. However, as we have clearly seen, the first four points are false; therefore, we do not have to accept this fifth point. The truth is this fifth point is the biggest lie ever perpetrated by the devil. The Bible clearly teaches that the child of God can so live as to lose his salvation. Paul taught the brethren at Galatia that they could fall from grace (Gal. 5:4). He warned the brethren at Corinth to beware lest they fall (1 Cor. 10:12). And he recognized himself that he could become a castaway (1 Cor. 9:27). Now, Calvinism says that if a person loses his salvation, he was never saved in the first place. What about Simon. He was converted in Acts 8. He fell from grace and was told to *repent and pray God* (Acts 8:22). Notice carefully what he was told to do in order to regain favor with God. Repent and pray God. If he was never converted in the first place, Peter would have told him the same thing he told the multitude on the day of Pentecost, i.e., repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38), not repent and pray God. That is how one is converted. Peter did not tell Simon that because he had already been converted. Yet, in Acts 8 we find that he lost favor with God, proving that a child of God can lose his or her salvation. Calvinism is false.

Apostasy is possible. We can fall from grace. Let's be careful that we maintain the salvation that we have received by the grace of God.

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