

What Is Calvinism?

Bible Answers About Denominations

The doctrinal system known as Calvinism forms the foundation for much of the teachings of Protestant denominationalism. This system is named after the French theologian and reformer John Calvin who was born in 1509. A great deal of Calvin's thoughts originated from and is an enlargement of the thoughts of Augustine (354-430 AD).

Calvinism has been popularized under the acrostic "**T-U-L-I-P**." Let's look at each point carefully.

T – Total Depravity: Calvin taught, like Augustine, that man by virtue of the Fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis chapter 3 has a depraved and sinful nature from the point of conception. This doctrine holds that the entire human race has inherited the guilt of Adam's sin, and this guilt is passed on to succeeding generations at birth. All are "born sinners" – "hereditarily, totally depraved." Inherent in this doctrine is the idea of the total inability to do good toward their own salvation. Some Calvinists say that unregenerate men can do nothing that is good at all! Everything they do is said to be evil! Relative to salvation, man is totally passive. Salvation is solely, wholly, and totally of God, according to Calvinism.

U – Unconditional Election: This tenet holds that God decreed from Eternity (before Creation) all things whatsoever to come to pass, both evil and good. Hence the fatalistic phrase "what will be will be." It says that God's decree has predetermined or predestined some men and angels to eternal life, without condition or cause, and all others to eternal damnation or "reprobation." This is all done as a sovereign act of God. Some Calvinists hold that such is purely arbitrary as well. The number of them who are elected to be saved is set and secure and will never change. Those who are subject to "reprobation," cannot do anything at all about their plight. They cannot be saved, even should they desire to be! This decree of God therefore is said to be UNCONDITIONAL, INDIVIDUAL, AND UNCHANGEABLE.

L – Limited Atonement: In keeping with the preceding tenet, this views the blood atonement of Jesus Christ as being limited only to those who are unconditionally elected. The atonement in scope is not universal, but limited, according to Calvinism. It implies consequently that Christ did not die for everyone, as the Scriptures clearly teach. The atonement is viewed as being effectually only for the elect, as proscribed by Unconditional Election.

I – Irresistible Grace: This doctrine maintains that the elect cannot resist the decree of salvation and the subsequent "call" of God for their salvation. They will receive a direct and immediate infusion of saving grace into their soul by the operation of the Holy Spirit before and without the agency of the Word of God! Calvinism involves the idea of a direct, immediate, and miraculous influence of the Spirit on the heart of the alien sinner. Conversion itself is miraculous, with the naked

Spirit of God, as it were, operating on the naked heart of man! The Holy Spirit through the baptism of the Holy Spirit then takes control in justification and sanctification. The operation of the Spirit continues to work in the life of the elect, directly after initial salvation, by sanctifying and preserving him throughout life, and this despite what he does or wants to do!

P – Perseverance of the Saints: This part of the doctrine holds that, because the number of the elect is set and secure and will not change, one who has been elected can NEVER be lost. Calvinists contend that the elect can do nothing to be saved, and, therefore, can do nothing to be lost. Their salvation is unconditional and so is their preservation unto God. The same Holy Spirit who miraculously and irresistibly regenerated them is the same Spirit who miraculously and irresistibly keeps them! They will persevere regardless. They cannot so sin as to be eternally lost. Some Calvinists go as far as to affirm that the elect, once saved, cannot even commit one act of sin, despite I Jno. 1:7-10! Others say that the body may sin, but the spirit of the elect is still sinless and pure, regardless of his attitude toward the sin thus committed!

The doctrine of Calvinism is not a doctrine to be taken lightly. The doctrine of total hereditary depravity or original sin has been accepted by the majority of churches of today. This doctrine becomes the foundational point of Calvinism along with the other tenets as discussed above. The other four tenets are destroyed when the doctrine of total depravity is proven false, for Calvinism is a “logical” arrangement of error with each tenet dependent on that point.

In the tracts to follow each of these tenets (T – U – L – I – P) will be discussed and shown to be completely false and contrary to the Scriptures.

We encourage you to study the Bible for yourself and understand how glorious the gospel of Jesus Christ really is. Please note that all questions are cordially invited and will be answered in love for you and with respect for God’s word.

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