

# Rapid Summary of Calvinism

prepared by Neil Short

Calvinism is firstly a reaction to Catholicism's on salvation by works. The Calvinists have overreacted by positing that man has no part in his own salvation. In the Calvinist position, God redeems (regenerates) a man before the man even comes to faith.

Secondly, Calvinism embraced theological philosophy, first embraced by Augustine, of the pagan Greek philosophers (Plato and others). The philosophers concluded that there must be a single god – the Creator – who is infinite and perfect. Since he is perfect, he must be unchanging (immutable). Assuming that all change is either for the better or for the worse, and understanding the all powerful god as perfect, he cannot change in any way without becoming imperfect. Therefore, he never changes.

The result of the above philosophical logical bridges is that this god certainly must be all-determining. Everything that happens did so because it was determined by this god. When the Christian reformers accepted this theology they came to the conclusion that anybody who is saved was determined by God to be saved; and anybody who is condemned was determined by God to be condemned. Therefore, God *elects* some people to salvation without condition and He chooses to not *elect* other individuals – also without condition. This position is known as **Unconditional Election**. It is from this doctrine that springs the other four core doctrines of Calvinism.

This theology did not arise from scripture but from classical philosophy and assumptions and from Reformism's negative reaction to Catholicism. The Calvinists do, however, support their positions with scripture.

I believe the Calvinists base their modern positions upon misunderstanding nearly every proof text they cite. I believe Calvinism is harmful to unbelievers whose only knowledge of God has come from Calvinism. When these unbelievers are taught the truth - that God prescribes conditions to salvation and there are choices that must be made by the individual - they see it as a contradiction with what they have learned. They have heard that man has nothing to do with his own salvation.

Calvinism is harmful also to believers because, at some time or another they will need to reconcile a loving God who, according to their theology, predestined some meaningless personal disaster. If you have ever heard an atheist rail against Christianity you probably heard them criticizing the God of Calvinism. Many Christians abandon their faith out of anger toward the God they believe determined terrible misfortune in their lives.

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## Some Terrific Resources

Brents, T. W. *The Gospel Plan of Salvation*. Gospel Advocate Company: Nashville. 2001 (originally published 1874). This work is currently available at the following URL:

<http://www.oldpaths.com/Archive/Brents/Thomas/Wesley/1823/gosplan.html>

<http://www.gregboyd.org/category/qa/predestination-free-will/scriptures-dealing-with-determinism/>

<http://www.youtube.com/refutingcalvinism>

## The Five Doctrines of Calvinism

The TULIP acronym

Calvinism has five core doctrines that are expressed by the acronym **TULIP**. These doctrines tie together consistently. They stand or fall together. If a person accepts as truth one of the doctrines he will eventually and logically accept all five. If a person at some point recognizes one of the points as heretical he will eventually and logically reject all five. The scripture lists below are far from exhaustive.

**Total Depravity:** Man has no innate ability to choose good over evil. Man was born depraved. (Thus, the Calvinist doctrine of Original Sin and a misuse of **Isa 45:7**).

“Proof” texts: Jer 17:9; Mark 4:11f, 7:21-23; John 1:13, 6:28-29, 8:5-8, 43, 47, 10:26, 12:37-40, 18:37; **Acts 13:48**; **Rom 3:10-12**, 5:12, 6:20, 7:18, 8:5-8, 29, **9:9-23**; 1Cor 2:9-14; **Eph 1:1-11**, 2:1-5, 15; Phil 1:29

Contradicts: Gen 3:22; Deut 30:11-19; Jer 5:23, 4:14; Mat 12:33, 18:1-3; Act 2:40

**Unconditional Election:** Before the foundation of the world, God selected some individuals for salvation. This selection was based on nothing but God's choice. Here we have the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination (which I hold to differ from the Biblical doctrine of predestination). This doctrine is the basis for the other four points.

“Proof” texts: Eph 1:4-8, 2:10; Rom 9:11, 15, 21; 2 Pet 1:10; John 10:11, 15, 26, 17:9

Contradicts: 1Ki 11:6, 9; 2Ch 12:14, 36:12-13; Is 30:1; Jer 3:14; Eze 33:11; Mat 7:21; Luk 7:30; Act 10:34; Heb 11:6

**Limited Atonement:** Christ's atoning sacrifice was for the benefit of God's chosen elect and for no one else.

“Proof” texts: Mat 26:28; John 10:11, 15, 17:9; Ac 20:28; Eph 5:25-27

Contradicts: 1Tim 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9; Mat 23:37; Rom 5:6; 1Jo 2:1-2

**Irresistible Grace:** Nobody among the elect can refuse the destiny God has chosen for him nor can he reject God's grace. (This doctrine logically follows from “U” and “T”. Scriptures refuting Unconditional Election also refute Irresistible Grace).

“Proof” texts: Rom 8:3, 14, 9:16; Phil 2:12-13; John 1:12-13, 3:6-8, 6:28-29, 37, 44; Acts 7:51, 13:39, 48; 1Pet 5:10;

Contradicts: Tit 3:4-6; Act 2:40; ; Mat 23:37; Luk 7:30

**Perseverance (or Preservation) of the Saints:** God's elect *cannot* lose their salvation (once saved, always saved).

“Proof” texts: John 6:39, 47, 10:27-28; **Rom 8:1, 28-39**; 1Cor 10:13; **Phil 1:6** [NASB].

Contradicts: 1Cor 9:27; Mat 10:1 (including Judas, who was later lost); Heb 10:19-29; 2Pe 1:2-12; Phil 2:12