

# CALVINISTIC GRACE

By Donald Townsley

There was a time when most of God's people had a fair understanding of "Calvinistic grace". This was when gospel preachers were debating on every hand sectarian preachers who held to the doctrine of Calvinism. Now it is different. We have not preached on the subject as we should have, few debates have been held in recent years on the subject, and we now have a generation of people in the church who do not understand Calvinism. Because we have not dealt with this vital doctrinal error, we are reaping the bitter fruits among God's people! Many gospel preachers have now espoused this error and have been able to lead many members astray with the false doctrine!

In this article we will study "Calvinistic grace" that we might be able to identify it when we hear it preached. To study "Calvinistic Grace" one must study the Calvinistic system of theology (articulated by John Calvin) which emphasizes five distinct doctrines. These five doctrines of Calvinism are the main pillars upon which the theory of "Calvinistic grace" rests. This system is so interlocked that if any one point is proven to be false, all the other points fall with it. You cannot have one point without having them all. These five points will be more easily remembered if we associate them with the word T-U-L-I-P -- TOTAL INABILITY (or Total Depravity); UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION(or Predestination); LIMITED ATONEMENT; IRRESISTIBLE GRACE; and PRESERVERANCE OF THE SAINTS. Let us now study this system point by point:

**TOTAL INABILITY** (or Total Depravity): This is the doctrine of "original sin". The doctrine simply stated is that Adam's sin has been transmitted to the whole of the human family. So, the Calvinistic believes that every infant born into this world is totally depraved. Edward T. Hiscox, D. D. says it this way: "*Being by nature utterly void of that holiness required by the Law of God, positively inclined to evil; and therefore under just condemnation, without defense or excuse.*" ( The Standard Manual for Baptist Churches, page 60). Loraine Boettner Th. M., D. D. says it this way: "*Fallen man is so morally blind that he uniformly prefers and chooses evil instead of God, as do the fallen angels or demons.*" ( The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination, page 63). Dr. Gogard in Total Depravity says it this way: "*The depraved sinner cannot act except by enabling grace of God through the Spirit.*" (page 13).

Now, when we come to the Bible, it is very clear that this doctrine is not taught. Man is not born into this world a sinner. He does not inherit Adam's sin. Ezekiel said in the long ago, "*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.*" (Ezek. 18:20). Jesus taught that children are innocent and free from sin in Matthew 18: 3 - 4, "*And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*" Sin is not something one inherits; sin is foreign to the nature of man. Sin is something one acquires, not inherits. Sin is an act of violating God's law. "*Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law:*" (I John 3: 4). As you can see, this point falls in light of Bible teaching.

**UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION** (or Predestination): The next step in Calvinistic grace is Unconditional Election (or Predestination). The Westminster Confession defines this doctrine: "*By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated to everlasting life, and others are foreordained to everlasting death.*" We are told that this number is so definite that it cannot be changed: "*And their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished.*" ( Confession of Faith, The Presbyterian church, page 15). Now, let us see what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches that God would have ALL MEN to be saved: "*Who would have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth*" (I Tim. 2:4). "*The Lord is not slack concerning his promises as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*" ( 2 Peter 3:9). The Bible teaches that man comes to God conditionally. Notice just a few examples: "*I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*" (John 8:24); "*I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*" (Luke 13:3); "*Then*

*Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2: 38).*

**LIMITED ATONEMENT:** The next error that follows the doctrine of predestination is Limited Atonement. The doctrine stated: *"If God has elected some and not others to eternal life, then plainly the primary purpose of Christ's work was to redeem the elect."* (The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination, page 151). So according to the doctrine of "Calvinistic Grace" Christ died only for the elect, but the Bible teaches that Christ died for all men: *"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with the glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."* (Heb. 2:9). Jesus shed His blood that man might have the remission of sins. (Matt. 26:28). The New Testament teaches that the ground of man's salvation is the blood of Jesus Christ (I Peter 1: 18 - 19; I Cor. 6:20; Rev. 1:5). Man receives the benefits of Christ's blood conditionally (John 8: 24; Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38). The fact that God saves man through forgiveness kills the Calvinistic theory that the perfect righteousness of Christ must be imputed to man for him to be saved. The New Testament teaches that man stands righteous before God through forgiveness in the blood of Christ (Rev. 1: 5; Acts 22:16). Calvinists teach that man stands righteous before God because he has been clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ. By the doctrine of the righteousness of Christ being imputed to man the Calvinist does away with the need for an atonement.

**IRRESISTIBLE GRACE:** The fourth error is the doctrine of Irresistible Grace ( or The Direct Operation of the Holy Spirit); Hiscox's Manual, page 63, states the doctrine this way: *"That regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind; that it is effected in a manner above our comprehension by the Holy Spirit, in connection with Divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel."* The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit works through the word to bring about conversion: *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."* (Romans 1: 16).

**PRESEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS** (or Unconditional Security): The doctrine stated: *"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."* (Westminster Confession). This doctrine simply stated is *"once saved, always saved"*. This doctrine of *"once saved, always saved"* is the logical conclusion one comes up with when he starts with the false premise that God by His sovereign will predestinated certain ones to be saved and then sent His Son to die for those predestinated ones, and then saved them by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit. It naturally follows that if they were so predestinated by God it would be impossible for them to be lost. The Bible teaches that one can fall from grace. In Galatians 5:4: *"Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."*

Calvinistic grace is wrong in its very first doctrine that man is born depraved. When this is disproved, all the other four doctrines fall. These doctrines must stand or fall together. One cannot be consistent and hold to any one of these doctrines separate from the others.

Let us be aware of this false doctrine and be prepared to refute it with the word of God.

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