

What does the Bible teach?**Lesson 1****Introduction**

Introduction

1. The Reformation and the Calvinistic Reformation in Geneva
2. John Calvin (1509-1564) and Jacob Arminius (1560-1609)
 - Calvin and Luther agreed that the will of the unconverted was in bondage.
 - The Synod of Dort (1618-1619) – official Calvinistic response to the Arminians (November 13, 1618 to May 9, 1619). The result was the Canons of Dort.
 - The churches which have inherited the teachings of Calvin
3. The five points of Calvinism (response to the five articles of the Remonstrance) – The following summary is taken from The Moody Handbook of Theology, by Paul Enns.
 - Total Depravity – As a result of Adam’s fall, the entire human race is affected; all humanity is dead in trespasses and sin. Man is unable to save himself.
 - Unconditional Election - Because man is dead in sin, he is unable to initiate response to God; therefore, in eternity past God elected certain people to salvation. Election and predestination are unconditional; they are not based on man’s response.
 - Limited atonement – Because God determined that certain ones should be saved as a result of God’s unconditional election, He determined that Christ should die for the elect. All whom God has elected and Christ died for will be saved.
 - Irresistible Grace – Those whom God elected and Christ died for, God draws to Himself through irresistible grace. God makes man willing to come to Him. When God calls, man responds.

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- Perseverance of the Saints - The precise ones God has elected and drawn to Himself through the Holy Spirit will persevere in faith. None whom God has elected will be lost; they are eternally secure.

4. Why are we doing this study?

- The study of God's Word is always profitable. The doctrines pertaining to our salvation are fundamental truth.
- It is useful to study an expression of truth that has attracted much attention through the last four hundred years.
- This study is not being pursued in order to bully or coerce anyone who believes to the contrary. But all of us must examine the Scriptures as the Bereans, "to see whether these things are so" (Acts 17:11).

I. Total Depravity

- A. The Bible teaches that all have sinned. Sin is a universal problem. Every human being is infected with it.
- B. Sin has affected man's total being (body, soul, and spirit) – intellect (2 Cor. 4:4), conscience (1 Tim. 4:2), will (Rom. 1:28), heart (Eph. 4:18).
- C. Man is a sinner by imputation, transmission (inheritance), and action. We are born sinners. "By nature" we are the children of wrath (Eph. 2:3). The heart is "deceitful" (Jer. 17:9).
- D. Man can do nothing to please God in himself, i.e., "nothing within the natural man that can give man merit in God's sight." Man cannot save himself. He is hopeless and helpless (no means of recovery within himself, Rom. 7:18; Eph. 2:8; 2 Pet. 2:14).
- E. Man hates God. Without the restraints of God's government, man would go from bad to worse.

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- F. Man has the ability to commit the worst sins (under favorable conditions). The roots are there (like a garden). All sorts of sin are there. They may be well beneath the surface of the soil, but the roots are still there.
- G. Man can do good to his fellow man. He can do things which benefit others, but can never in himself do things for God's glory alone.
- Illustration – Human goodness like a canoe
- H. Total depravity does not mean that:
- Everyone is as bad as they can become (2 Tim. 3:13), or that all have made the progress in sinning.
 - One does not know what he ought to do (what is right) – Rom. 2:14-15.
 - The unsaved person commits every form of sin. “We all violate God's commandments in thought, but not all of them in action.” For example, all have hated but not all have murdered. Everyone has lusted but not all have committed adultery, etc.
- I. God's restraints of sin are a testimony to man's nature.
- Human government
 - Presence of believers
 - Sin itself and its awful consequences (scares some)
 - Conscience and the fear of getting caught
- J. Man the sinner must have divine enablement to be saved.
- Divine enablement in understanding the gospel (the Holy Spirit)
 - Divine enablement to believe on Christ (“calling”)
 - Divine enablement to be alive (regeneration)

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K. Arminianism

- “As a result of the Fall, man has inherited a corrupted nature. Prevenient grace has removed the guilt and condemnation of Adam’s sin.” TMHOT

- “Arminianism teaches that man is to some degree depraved, but that he receives enough grace to counteract the effects of depravity. The scales are therefore rather evenly balanced. So man is capable of making his choice after all.” Erwin Lutzer, The Doctrines that Divide

- “Believing in Christ and receiving from Him the free gift of eternal life require *no ability* – a child can believe.” Dave Hunt, Debating Calvinism (five points, two views)

Conclusions/summary

What does the Bible teach?**Lesson 2****Total Depravity**

- I. The total depravity of man necessitates God's grace if there is to be the forgiveness of sins and new life imparted.
- This new life that is imparted is the work of regeneration. It is the sovereign and miraculous work of God whereby the believing sinner becomes a new creation in Christ (Jn. 1:12-13; Tit. 3:5; 2 Cor. 5:17).
 - The regenerating work of the Spirit of God is the new birth (Jn. 3:1ff.).
 - In the new birth the believer receives a new nature (divine nature) with its disposition to please God (2 Pet. 1:4; Rom. 7:13-25).
- II. Total depravity renders man incapable of seeking God, knowing God, and obeying God. We are helpless to make any move toward God and need His grace if we are to believe.
- Many of the Reformed persuasion insist that because the unsaved are spiritually dead new life from God is necessary before they can believe ("a dead man cannot respond to anything—he cannot hear, see, feel, think, touch, taste, act, or believe. And, therefore, God must regenerate him/make him alive ("quicken him") before He can believe.")
 - "He (those dead in their sins) is unable to ask for help unless God changes his heart of stone into a heart of flesh, and makes him alive spiritually (Eph. 2:5). Then, once he is born again, he can for the first time turn to Jesus, expressing sorrow for his sins and asking Jesus to save him." Edwin H. Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinism*
 - "The Reformed assertion is that man cannot understand and embrace the gospel nor respond in faith and repentance toward Christ without God first freeing him from sin and giving him spiritual life (regeneration)." James R. White, *The Potter's Freedom*
 - "Therefore we can say that regeneration comes before the result of effective calling (our faith)." Wayne Grudem, *System Theology*
 - It is regrettable that many Reformed theologians level the charge of synergism (that man works together with God to accomplish his salvation) against those who believe that faith and regeneration are simultaneous. As will be pointed out, faith is not a work and in no way is a "cooperative effort" with God for one's salvation.

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- III. However, it is more biblical to understand faith and regeneration as being simultaneous (occurring at the same time). Faith is not a work and is made possible through the work of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:30).
- If a sinner has new life (is saved) through regeneration, why does he need to believe? A rather strange situation emerges from this. One has to be saved in order to believe. Or to put it another way, one has to be a Christian in order to become a Christian. This contradicts such passages as Acts 16:30, 31 and John 20:31.
 - Placing regeneration before faith is based on a mutated metaphor. Being “dead in trespasses and sin” certainly speaks of man’s separation from God and inability to respond to God without divine aid, but this does not mean that it is impossible to believe (“a dead corpse cannot do anything”). But being dead does not mean we are “nonbeings” without responsibility.
 - The unsaved do not come to Christ because they are unwilling to do so (Jn. 5:40).
 - Belief in Christ for salvation is possible only by the work of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 6:45, 65; Matt. 11:27; 16:16-17; Acts 16:14). “Both repentance and faith are gracious works of God in the life of the believer . . . God regenerates those who repent and believe.” Millard Erickson. God enables the sinner to repent and believe as a part of His effectual call.
 - The sinner is judged by God because he has refused to obey the gospel of Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 1:8). Why do people not believe in Christ? It is because they refuse to come to Christ by faith (Jn. 5:40; 2 Thess. 2:10, 12).
 - If regeneration precedes faith then can a lengthy period of time elapse before one believes? Apparently the editors of *The Reformation Study Bible* think so. In the article “Regeneration: The New Birth” (page 1664) infant regeneration is possible: “Infants can be born again, although the faith that they exercise cannot be as faith as that of adults.” In correspondence to clarify this V. A. Voorhis (assistant to R.C. Sproul the General Editor) says, “An infant’s faith may not come until years after God has worked by His Holy Spirit to regenerate him or her.” George Zeller, *Does Regeneration Precede Faith?*
 - If regeneration precedes faith then what must a sinner do to be regenerated? “A doctrine of total depravity that excludes the possibility of faith must also exclude the possibilities of hearing the Word, giving serious application to divine truth and praying to the Holy Spirit for conviction and regeneration. The extreme Calvinist deals with a rather lively corpse after all.” Roy Aldrich as quoted by George Zeller in *Does Regeneration Precede Faith?*
 - The view that regeneration precedes faith does not make us worship a “more glorious God” than those who are persuaded otherwise. Going beyond Scripture and minimizing the place of faith in coming to Christ does not produce grander worship. True worshippers

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are those who drink of the water of life (Jesus Christ) which is to believe in Him (Jn. 4:14, 23, 41).

- The Westminster Shorter Catechism answers the following questions as to how the sinner comes to Christ.

Q. 29. How are we made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ? A. We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us by His Holy Spirit. Q. 30. How doth the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ? A. The Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling. Q. 31. Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel.

It should be noted though that the Westminster Confession of Faith associates the effectual call with regeneration.

In conclusion, if it be said that we must have life in Christ before we can believe in Christ, we are left to wonder what such Scripture as John 20:30 means when it says, "but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." A call to come to Christ, like that in Romans 10:13, "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved" is not invitation of synergism (working with God to accomplish one's salvation), but is receiving the salvation God has provided in Christ.

What does the Bible Teach?**Lesson 3****Unconditional Election**

Introduction

1. The biblical doctrine of election in a special sense is for believers only. Election as such is not proclaimed to the unbeliever. An evangelistic message would not focus upon the doctrine of election.
 2. Gospel presentation always precedes any discussion of election. The issue for the unbeliever is to “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” When the sinner comes to Christ for eternal life then the truth of election is brought forth. This is the biblical pattern - Matthew 11:25-27; John 6:40; Acts 13:44 (offer, belief, election).
 3. We must avoid trying to press God into our preconceived mold. For example, one may say that “election isn’t fair.” But in answer to this read Romans 9:19-20. There is also the danger of trying to force a “system” onto the Bible statements (making verses fit one’s system of theology).
 4. Genuine humility is a prerequisite to a study of the biblical doctrine of unconditional election. There are some who give the impression that they have it all solved. There are some unanswered questions in this doctrinal area and only God has the answers. We want to make God fit into our conceptual boxes.
 5. Remember that man is always held responsible for his decisions (Rom. 9, 10; 1 Pet. 2:6-8). If one is lost he has no one to blame but himself (Jn. 3:36).
 6. There are three viewpoints on the biblical doctrine of election.
 - God elects on the basis of foreseen faith.
 - Corporate election – Some say God elected Christ and all elected in Christ. Others say God elected the church (in Christ) but not individuals (“When an individual believes in Christ, he is placed in that elect group, and then he can be said to be elect.”).
 - God unconditionally, from eternity past, elected some to be saved. Election is not based on man’s future response.
- I. Unconditional election is that sovereign act of God (His decision only) in eternity past whereby He chose all believers to salvation with all its accompanying blessings and obligations (Eph. 1:4-7; Acts 13:48; Jn. 15:16; 1 Pet. 1:2; Jn. 17:2).
- A. Election is unconditional because it is not based on any condition man must meet before God chooses to save him.
 - B. This election occurred before the foundation of the world (pretemporal).
 - C. This election is unmerited (by grace alone).

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- D. Jesus Christ is the ground and cause and guarantee of the election of individuals. Election is primarily the election of individuals who then form a group, the church.
- II. Unconditional election is a part of the larger doctrine (Eph. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2; Rom. 8:28-34; Psa. 33:11).
- A. The decree of God is His plan for everything. A decree is a decision made by one possessing authority, stating what is to be. The decree contains many decrees.
- B. The “divine decrees” refers to the whole plan of God decided upon by God in eternity past (Eph. 1:11; 3:11; 1 Pet. 1:20; Acts 4:27, 28; 2 Tim. 1:9). God designed a plan before He ever created a thing.
- Decree to create – Decree to permit the Fall (angels and man) – Decree to provide salvation in Christ (sufficient for the needs of all) – Decree to secure the actual acceptance of this salvation on the part of some (i.e., election).
- C. The divine decrees included everything (the acts of God, the actions of His creatures, causative decrees and permissive decrees, Acts 4:27-29; 2:23; 2 Pet. 3:9; Psa. 78:29).
- D. Election, therefore, is a part of the infinitely wise plan of God. It is that part of the plan of God that relates to the believer.
- III. Unconditional election is based on the perfect character of a sovereign God.
- A. It is not based on the volition of man (Rom. 9:16; Jn. 15:16).
- B. It is not based on the works of man (2 Ti. 1:9).
- IV. Unconditional election is based on the grace of God (Rom. 9:11; 11:5-6; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Cor. 1:27, 28; 4:7; Eph. 1:4; 2:8). All human merit is ruled out. God did not choose the believer because the believer chose Christ. If so, then God chooses on the basis of one’s decision which is clearly contradictory to Romans 9:16.
- V. Election is according to the foreknowledge of God (1 Pet. 1:2; Rom. 8:28-30). This means that He entered into a relationship with the elect through foreknowledge.
- A. There are those who interpret “foreknow” to mean “foreknew those who would believe in Jesus” (Rom. 8:29). In other words, to preserve the self-determining power of man God predestines people only on the basis of faith which He foresees that certain people will produce by their self-determining power.
- B. A more accurate interpretation of foreknowledge (*prognosis*) is to see it as meaning a favor that is bestowed, not merely foresight. “Foreknew” refers to a special kind of knowing which signifies choice, i.e., election. It means much more than just mere knowledge of the fact.
- The idea of foreknowing contains its own limitations. It is not necessary to add “foreknew those who would believe in Jesus.”

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- C. It has its background in the Old Testament (Amos 3:2 “you only have I set my favor upon;” Hos. 13:4, 5; Psa. 1:6 “knows the way of the righteous”).
- D. It is used in this sense in the New Testament as well (Gal. 4:9; 1 Cor. 8:3; Matt. 7:23; 1 Jn. 3:1; Rom. 11:1-2 “foreknew Israel”).
- E. It means, therefore, an intimate relationship between God and the believer. It is something to the effect of “whom he fore-loved in a special way.”

VI. Unconditional election encompasses the totality of the believer’s salvation.

- A. Union with Christ (Eph. 1:4, 5)
- B. Growth in Christ (Rom. 8:29; 1 Pet. 2:9; Col. 3:12-17; Jn. 15:16; 2 Thess. 2:13)
- C. Glorification in Christ (Rom. 8:30; 9:23)

VII. Unconditional election will demonstrate itself in the life of the believer (1 Thess. 1:4; 2 Pet. 1:10; Acts 13:48; Jn. 10:27). Can we know who the elect are? Not in a final way, but those who do know Christ as their Savior will give some evidence.

VIII. Unconditional election does not violate human responsibility (Acts 13:48; Jn. 6:37; Rom. 10; 2 Cor. 5:10; 6:1). It is important to note that the Bible never teaches election wholly apart from the universal offer of the gospel.

- A. The so-called “logical assumption” of double predestination is not supported by biblical texts. The damnation of unbelievers as a part of the divine decrees is best left with the “secret things” that belong to the Lord our God (Deut. 29:29).
- B. All those who die without believing are held responsible for their condition (Jn. 8:43-44; Matt. 23:37; Rom. 1:20).
- C. “The Scriptures do contain a doctrine of preterition (the passing over of those not elected to salvation) though there is not a decree to condemn in the same sense that there is a decree to elect. Obviously the very idea of election has to include the idea of the greater number out of which they were chosen, and those who were not chosen were certainly passed by.” Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*

IX. Unconditional election is revealed in Scripture for its God-exalting purposes.

- A. It is a call to God-exalting worship (Rom. 9:11, 33-36).
- B. It is the foundation for our comfort, encouragement, and stability through pain and suffering (Rom. 8:28; 9:37-39).
- C. It moves us to carry the gospel to the all men everywhere (Jn. 10:16). Gospel witness is the God-ordained means of drawing God’s elect to Himself.

X. Objections to the doctrine of unconditional election

- A. Election is based on foreseen faith and is not unconditional.

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1. But this does not answer the problem. Because even one's justification, which is by faith, is determined beforehand (Rom. 8:30).
 2. If this is true, that we are elected based on foreseen faith, then God elects on the basis of human belief. Man is placed at the center rather than God's sovereignty.
- B. Election is based on one's acceptance of Christ. This view says that Christ only was elected in eternity past and the believer is elected when he receives Christ as Savior.
1. This view is defective in that it ignores the plain statements that individual believers were chosen before the foundation of the world.
 2. God does not choose on the basis of human choice which is again a violation of the grace principle.
- C. Election is (being elected) to service for Christ only.
1. This view says that the believer is not elected to salvation but rather has been chosen to be "conformed to the image of Christ."
 2. How can one possibly distinguish between salvation and the obligation for service? This view only evades the issue.
- D. Election of all to salvation in Christ
1. This amounts to universalism and is clearly in contradiction to the plain statements of Scripture that one must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.
 2. This contradicts John 14:6.

**What does the Bible Teach?
Lesson 4**

Limited Atonement - For Whom Did Christ Die?

Introduction

1. The “L” in the acronym TULIP stands for Limited Atonement. The belief is that “God determined that Christ would die for all those whom God elected. Since Christ did not die for everyone but only for those who were elected to be saved, His death is completely successful.” (*The Moody Handbook of Theology* by Paul Enns.) Many Calvinists prefer the terminology, “definite atonement” or “particular redemption.”

2. Issues
 - Was the death of Jesus intended to secure salvation for a limited number or was the death of Jesus intended to provide salvation for everyone?
 - Did Christ die to make all men savable or did He die to only save the elect?
 - Is an “every person” offer of Christ’s atonement inconsistent with its limited reception?
 - Is the atonement best described as “limited” or “unlimited” or, is there a more accurate term?
 - Is it more important to ask, “For whom did Christ die?” or “Why did Christ die?”
 - Does the sufficiency of the atonement necessarily have to equal its efficacy?

3. Options
 - Man alone chooses to receive or reject the salvation offer of God which Christ secured with an all sufficient atonement. God did not elect those whom He knew would believe, but rather chose those who, because of their election, would believe.
 - God unconditionally elected some to salvation and provided a particular atonement which was limited only to secure the elect’s redemption.
 - God unconditionally elected some to salvation which He secured with an all sufficient atonement.

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I. The principle of the paradox

A. God's inerrant Word contains paradoxes which elude full human understanding and explanation. The mind of God is complex and He is able to view reality in a way that we cannot fully comprehend (Isa. 55:9). Therefore, the paradoxes within His written revelation do not diminish His wisdom or tarnish the teaching of Scripture.

- Antinomy – an apparent contradiction which cannot be humanly reconciled (“The opposition of one law, rule, or principle to another”).
- Paradox – a statement that may be true but seems to say two opposite things: “More haste, less speed, and “The child is father of the man.”
- The paradox of prayer – Why pray if God has already sovereignly determined the outcome of all things (Lk. 18:1 with Isa. 46:10)?
- The paradox of Christ's death – Did God kill Christ (Acts 2:23), or the Jews (Acts 2:23), or the Romans (Acts 2:23, by the hand of godless men), or humanity in general (by virtue of their sin and need of a Savior)?

B. The Bible teaches unconditional election unto salvation. Human beings do not have final self-determination for their own salvation. God does (Jn. 1:12; 6:44, 65; Acts 2:39; 13:48; Rom. 8:28-30; 9:19-24; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:4-5, 11; Col. 1:13; 2 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:9).

- Another paradox – Does God determine our salvation or do we (Rom. 10:13)? What is the relationship of human responsibility to the exercise of God's sovereign will?
- The paradox of Christ's atonement – “How can a ‘whosoever gospel’ be consistent with the truth of unconditional election? How can an atonement with unlimited potential ultimately be efficacious only for the elect?”
- A proposed explanation of this paradox
 - ⇒ Man fell.
 - ⇒ God's love for mankind provided a Savior for all.
 - ⇒ God sovereignly elected some unto salvation.
- What is the better question to ask? “For whom did Christ die?” or “Why did Christ die?”

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- What is the best option that answers all the biblical data?

II. A survey of key Scripture passages

- Isaiah 53:6 – What is the significance of “all we” and “us all?”
- John 3:16 – Does “world” mean “the elect all over the world?”
- 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 – For whom is the gospel good news?
- 1 Timothy 2:6 – Does “all men” refer to all humanity?
- 1 Timothy 4:10 – In what sense is God the Savior of all men?
- Hebrews 2:9 – Does “for everyone” mean “everyone” or “everyone of the elect?”
- 2 Pet. 2:1 – For whom was redemption’s price paid?
- 1 John 2:2 – Does this mean “potentially for all without distinction” or “effectively for all without exception?”

III. Conclusions regarding the extent of the atonement

- “God unconditionally elected some to salvation which Christ secured with an all sufficient atonement.”
- The atonement of Christ is limited in some aspects. It does not extend to angels or animals. It is not efficaciously applied to all humans.
- The atonement of Christ is unlimited in some aspects. It focuses upon the whole human race in its suitability. It benefits all of the elect in its efficacy. It is sufficient for all men, but efficient only for the elect. It makes all men accountable in terms of eternal responsibility. Its message is extended to all in its proclamation (D. Mayhue).
- “The hypothesis of universal atonement is able to account for a larger segment of the biblical witness with less distortion than is the hypothesis of limited atonement.” (Milliard J. Erickson)
- We must not allow the semantical debate over the extent of the atonement to deflect our attention away from the beauty and meaning of the atonement. “Quite possible to get so tied up with the scientific aspects of botany, flowers, as to lose sight . . .”
- The good news is not, “Perhaps you have been elected,” or “perhaps Christ died for you.”

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IV. Some questions and objections considered

- Are those who believe in an unlimited atonement universalists (that all will be saved)?
- Did God see Christ's death with respect to the elect in a different way than He saw Christ's death with respect to everyone else?
- Is some of the value of Christ's death lost if all for whom He died are not actually saved?
- Do the nonelect have their sins paid for twice?
- Did Christ pay the penalty of sin for those who reject Him? If He did, then would they not have to pay it themselves in hell?
- Does the gospel message have anything to do with the extent of the atonement?
- Is it correct to say that Christ died for all men without distinction but He did not die for all men without exception?
- Is it correct to say that Christ died for all men, but His death benefits the non-elect only in a temporal sense, He did not really pay the penalty for their sins?

Summary

- We have a gospel for all the unsaved.
- Anyone who is saved must believe (Jn. 3:36; 6:37, 44).
- We tell the unconverted that God loves them (Jn. 3:16).
- The ultimate distinction between the believer and the unbeliever is found in the purposes of God, not in the final self-determination of man.

**What Does the Bible Teach?
Lesson 5**

Irresistible Grace – Is It or Is It Not?

Introduction

1. When we come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, why and how did we actually come?
 - Pelagianism – Teaches that man was created neutral (neither sinful nor holy) and with the capacity and will to choose freely either to sin or to do good.
 - Semi- Pelagianism – Teaches that man retains a measure of freedom by which he can cooperate with the grace of God. Man’s will has been weakened but he is not totally depraved. In regeneration man chooses God who then adds His grace.
 - Arminianism – Teaches that man’s free will limits the Spirit in the application of Christ’s saving work. The Holy Spirit can draw to Christ only those who allow him to have his way with them. “Through prevenient or preparatory grace, which is given to all people, man is able to cooperate with God and respond to Him in salvation. Prevenient grace reverses the effects of Adam’s sin.” Paul Enns
 - Calvinism – The Holy Spirit irresistibly draws sinners to Christ. “The Spirit graciously causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, to come freely and willingly to Christ. God’s grace, therefore, is invincible; it never fails to result in the salvation of those to whom it is extended.” H. Wayne House

2. The drawing of the sinner to Christ is known as effectual calling.
 - “God chooses some persons to be saved, and their conversion is a result of that decision on God’s part. Because all humans are lost in sin, spiritually blind, and unable to believe, however, some action by God must intervene between his eternal decision and the conversion of the individual within time.” Millard J. Erickson

3. Effectual calling is to be distinguished from a general calling (Lk. 14:16-24; Jn. 7:37).
 - In a general calling the gospel goes out to all who hear (Isa. 55:11; Matt. 11:28; 22:14; Jn. 7:37-38; Rev. 22:17).
 - In this general call there is an explanation of the facts of the gospel, the condition for salvation (believe), and an invitation is extended (2 Cor. 5:20).

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- In this general call the convicting work of the Spirit may take place (Jn. 16:8-11).
 - This call may be rejected (Matt. 22:1-6; 23:37; Acts 7:51; Mk. 16:15-16).
 - Those who reject this call are held accountable and punished (Matt. 22:7; Acts 13:46; 2 Thess. 1:7-9).
- I. The effectual grace (irresistible grace) of God is successful in bring the elect to salvation in Christ (Rom. 8:28-30; 1 Cor. 1:23-24, 26; 1 Thess. 5:22-24).
- Luke 14:15-24 – Distinction between the general call and the effective call
 - The chosen are not “compelled” against their will. They are enabled by the Holy Spirit to respond in repentance and faith (Acts. 16:14; Jn. 6:44-47; Phil. 2:12-13).
- II. The effectual grace of God draws the elect to Christ through the gospel message (2 Thess. 2:14).
- God uses human instruments to proclaim this gospel (Rom. 10:14-17).
- III. The effectual grace of God draws the elect to Christ through the enabling work of the Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 1:5; Tit. 3:5).
- The Holy Spirit’s work is necessary because of the total inability of the natural man to please God (1 Cor. 2:6-16).
- IV. The effectual grace of God brings God’s elect a cornucopia of riches in Christ (Rom. 1:6).
- This includes freedom in Christ (Gal. 5:13), peace (Col. 3:15), fellowship (1 Cor. 1:9), God’s kingdom and glory (1 Thess. 1:12), holiness (Rom. 1:7), and God’s light (1 Pet. 2:9).
- V. Questions regarding effectual calling
- Cannot the Holy Spirit be resisted in some ways (Acts 7:51; Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19)?
 - Are only the elect convicted by the Holy Spirit?

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- Is everyone in the world convicted by the Holy Spirit?
- Do the circumstances of the effectual calling differ from Christian to Christian?
- Does not God draw all men, not just some (Jn. 12:32)?
- Can the elect be convicted by the Holy Spirit a number of times before they experience effectual grace?
- Is anyone ever saved against his or her will?
- How can I know if I am one of the elect?

**What Does the Bible Teach?
Lesson 6**

Perseverance of the Saints

Introduction

1. What is the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints (the “P” in TULIP)?
 - “All who are chosen by God, redeemed by Christ, and given faith by the Spirit are eternally saved. They are kept in faith by the power of Almighty God and thus persevere to the end.” H. Wayne House
2. Can a Christian sin in such a way as to lose his salvation (relationship to Jesus Christ)? Can a saved person ever be lost?
3. Answers to this question:
 - “All mortal sins render men children of wrath and enemies of God” (Council of Trent). Roman Catholic: Salvation may be lost by committing a mortal sin.
 - The answer of some is that believers may fall from grace and lose their salvation. They deny that the true child of God is eternally secure (Arminians). Two possible grounds: Willful sin. Apostasy.
 - Others say that believers are secure in their salvation. They believe that the true child of God is eternally secure (Calvinists).
4. There is disagreement among Calvinists over the extent to which a believer can backslide.
 - Historical Calvinism: “Our faith must endure to the end if we are to be saved.” “Obedience, evidencing inner renewal from God, is necessary for final salvation.” “God’s elect cannot be lost.” “There is a falling away of some believers, but if it persists, it shows that their faith was not genuine and they were not born of God.” “God justifies us on the first genuine act of saving faith, but in doing so he has a view to all subsequent acts of faith contained, as it were, like a seed in that first act.” “God works to cause his elect to persevere.” “Therefore we should be zealous to make our calling and election sure.” Some who hold this view of perseverance teach that there are no carnal Christians.
 - Other Calvinists: Prefer the term “eternal security.” “Eternal security is the work of God which guarantees that the gift of salvation, once received, is forever and cannot be lost.” The emphasis is upon “God’s activity in guaranteeing the eternal possession of the gift of eternal life.” Good works are the confirming evidence of regeneration but in no way contribute to the gift of salvation given to those who believe. They believe in the possibility of carnal Christians and that true believers can fall into doctrinal and moral failure. They also believe in the possibility of sin unto death (1 Cor. 11:30).

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Is the true believer eternally secure in Christ?

- I. The believer's eternal security depends on God the Father. It is impossible for God to break His salvation promises.
 - A. It depends upon God's sovereign purpose (Eph. 1:4-6, 11-12).
 - A. It depends upon His infinite power (1 Jn. 2:2; Jn. 6:39; 10:27-29; 5:24).
 - B. It depends upon His "much more" love (Rom. 5:6-10).
 - C. It depends upon His answer to the prayer of the Son (Jn. 17:11-12).

- II. The believer's eternal security depends upon God the Son.
 - A. It depends upon His substitutionary death (Col. 2:14; Heb. 9:12; 10:12, 14).
 - B. It depends upon His substitutionary life (Rom. 10:4; Rom. 5:19; Col. 2:10).
 - C. It depends upon His present session in heaven (Rom. 8:34; 1 Jn. 2:1-2; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:23-25).

- III. The believer's eternal security depends upon God the Holy Spirit.
 - A. It depends upon his ministry of regeneration.
 - Spiritual birth (Tit. 3:5; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:10)
 - Eternal life (Jn. 11:25-26)
 - B. It depends upon His baptizing ministry (1 Cor. 12:13; Rom. 6:3, 8-10).
 - C. It depends upon His sealing ministry (2 Cor. 1:21-22; Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30).

- IV. A consideration of some of the passages of Scripture that are used to teach against the security of the believer
 - A. Galatians 5:4 - Paul is teaching that to "fall from grace" is to fall from the grace way of living the Christian life and into a legalistic way of living.

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- B. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 – This is a warning against losing rewards at the judgment seat of Christ.
- C. Hebrews 6:1-8 (and other warning passages in Hebrews and elsewhere) – This is a warning to true believers concerning the possible loss of rewards at the judgment seat of Christ and earthly chastisement.

V. Questions regarding eternal security and assurance of salvation

- A. What is the difference between security and assurance?
 - Security is the fact that one has passed from death into life through faith in Christ.
 - Assurance is the conviction that one possesses eternal life.
- B. Is there such a thing as a carnal Christian?
 - Yes there is. Paul told the Corinthian believers that they were thinking and acting like unbelievers (1 Cor. 3:1-4).
- C. Is it possible for someone who professes to be a Christian to actually die as an unbeliever?
 - Yes, there are those who will prove not to be genuine in their profession (Matt. 7:22-23).
- D. If the believer is secure, then why the warnings and contingent promises?
 - Believers are challenged to remain faithful.
 - Mere professors and not possessors of Christ are warned.
- E. What about specific cases where certain ones have professed to be Christians, but who turn away in disobedience to Christ?
 - They may be genuine believers who will be disciplined and lose eternal rewards.
 - They may be like the seed that fell upon poor soil (Matt. 4:1ff.).
- F. Can real Christians fall into sin?
 - Yes they can and do – Consider all the warnings and rebukes in the epistles of the New Testament (e.g. Peter, Lk. 22:32).

The Doctrines of Grace

Summary/conclusion

1. The believer's eternal security depends upon God. If it depended upon anything in us, it would not be secure. God saved us and He will keep us.
2. Our salvation is not a matter of holding on to God but of Him holding us.
3. Loving service rendered to Christ is not stimulated by a "running scared" outlook.
4. The provision God has made for our salvation does not make us careless.
5. We must not build doctrines based on observations made from personal experience (e.g., "I knew someone who...").
6. Not all who profess to be Christians are Christians. Only God sees the heart. Jesus never regarded Judas as regenerate.
7. Those who God has called He will glorify! Rejoice Christian.