

Why I Disagree with All Five Points of Calvinism

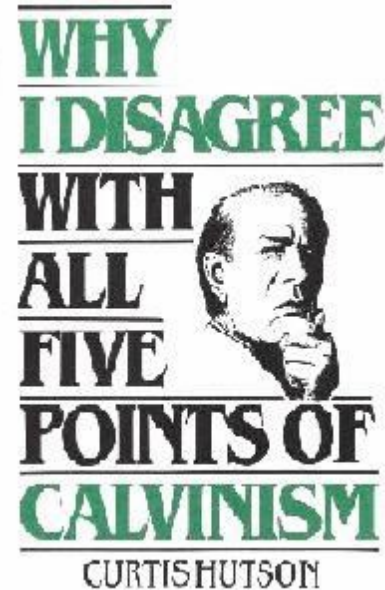
Curtis Hutson

PURCHASE AT: Sword of the Lord Publishers <http://www.swordofthelord.com/>

The term *Calvinism* is loosely used by some people who *do not* hold to Calvin's teachings on predestination and *do not* understand exactly what Calvin taught.

Dr. Loraine Boettner in his book, THE REFORMED DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION, says: "The Calvinistic system especially emphasizes five distinct doctrines. These are known as 'The Five Points of Calvinism.' And, they are the main pillars upon which the superstructure rest." Dr Boettner further says: "The five points may be more easily remembered if they are associated with the word T-U-L-I-P:

Total Inability;
Unconditional Election;
Limited Atonement;
Irresistible (efficacious) Grace; and
Perseverance of the Saints."



These are the five points of Calvinism. I have heard preachers say, "I am a one-point Calvinist." I have heard others say, "I am a two- or three-point Calvinist." I want us to look at all five points of Calvinism as taught by John Calvin, then see what the Bible has to say on each point.

I. Total Inability

By total inability Calvin meant that a lost sinner cannot come to Jesus Christ and trust Him as Saviour, unless he is foreordained to come to Christ. By total inability he meant that no man has the ability to come to Christ.

And, unless God over powers him and gives him that ability, he will never come to Christ. The Bible teaches total depravity, and I believe in total depravity. But that simply means that there is nothing good in man to earn or deserve salvation. The Bible says in Jeremiah 17:9, "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.*" A preacher brought a wonderful sermon on the depravity of the human heart. And, when he finished his message, someone came to him and said, "I want you to know I can't swallow that depraved heart that you preached about."

The preacher smiled and said, "You don't have to swallow it. It's already in you!" While the Bible teaches the depravity of the human race, it nowhere teaches total inability. The Bible never hints that people are lost because they have no ability to come to Christ. The language of Jesus was, "*Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life*" (John 5:40). Notice, it is not a matter of whether or not you CAN come to Christ; it is a matter of whether or not you WILL come to Christ.

Jesus looked upon Jerusalem and wept and said, "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem...how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*" (Matthew 23:37).

Here again notice, He did not say, *"How often would I have gathered you together, but you COULD not."* No. He said, *"Ye WOULD not!"* It was not a matter of whether they could; it was a matter of whether they would. Revelation 22:17, the last invitation in the Bible, says, *"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."* If it is true that no person has the ability to come to Christ, then why would Jesus say in John 5:40, *"Ye will not come to me"?*

Why didn't He simply say, *"You cannot come to me"?* The only thing that stands between the sinner and salvation is the sinner's will. God made every man a free moral agent. And, God never burglarizes the human will. D. L. Moody addressed a large group of skeptics. He said, "I want to talk about the word BELIEVE, the word RECEIVE, and the word TAKE." When Mr. Moody had finished his sermon, he asked, "Now who will come and take Christ as Saviour?" One man stood and said, "I can't."

Mr. Moody wept and said, "Don't say, 'I can't.' Say, 'I won't!'" And, the man said, "Then, I won't!" But, another man said, "I will!" Then, another said, "I will!" And, another said, "I will!" Until scores came to trust Christ as Saviour. Some Calvinists use John 6:44 in an effort to prove total inability. Here the Bible says, *"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him..."* But the Bible makes it plain in John 12:32 that Christ will draw all men unto Himself. Here the Bible says, *"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw ALL men unto me."*

All men are drawn to Christ, but not all men will trust Christ as Saviour. Every man will make his own decision to trust Christ or to reject Him. The Bible makes it clear that all men have light. John 1:9 says, *"That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."* Romans 1:19,20 indicates that every sinner has been called through the creation about him. And, Romans 2:11-16 indicates that sinners are called through their conscience, even when they have not heard the Word of God.

So, in the final analysis, men go to Hell, not because of their inability to come to Christ, but because they will not come to Christ--*"Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."* The teaching that men, women and children are totally unable to come to Christ and trust Him as Saviour is not a Scriptural doctrine. The language itself is not Scriptural.

II. Unconditional Election

By unconditional election Calvin meant that some are elected to Heaven, while others are elected to Hell, and that this election is unconditional. It is wholly on God's part and without condition. By unconditional election Calvin meant that God has already decided who will be saved and who will be lost, and the individual has absolutely nothing to do with it. He can only hope that God has elected him for Heaven and not for Hell.

This teaching so obviously disagrees with the often-repeated invitations in the Bible to sinners to come to Christ and be saved that some readers will think that I have overstated the doctrine. So, I will quote John Calvin in his INSTITUTES, Book III, chapter 23: *"...Not all men are created with similar destiny but eternal life is foreordained for some, and eternal damnation for others. Every man, therefore, being created for one or the other of these ends, we say, he is predestined either to life or to death."*

So, Calvinism teaches that it is God's own choice that some people are to be damned forever. He never intended to save them. He foreordained them to go to Hell. And, when He offers salvation in the Bible, He does not offer it to those who were foreordained to be damned. It is offered only to those who were foreordained to be saved. This teaching insists that we need not try to win men to Christ because men cannot be saved unless God has planned for them to be saved. And, if God has planned for them to be eternally lost, they will not come to Christ.

There is the Bible doctrine of God's foreknowledge, predestination and election. Most knowledgeable Christians agree that God has His controlling hand on the affairs of men. They agree that according to the Bible, He selects individuals like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David as instruments to do certain things He has planned. Most Christians agree that God may choose a nation--particularly that He did choose Israel, through which He gave the law, the prophets, and eventually through whom the Saviour Himself would come--and that there is a Bible doctrine that God foreknows all things.

I have often said, "Did it ever occur to you that nothing ever occurred to God?" God in His foreknowledge knows who will trust Jesus Christ as Saviour, and He has predestined to see that they are justified and glorified. He will keep all those who trust Him and see that they are glorified. But, the doctrine that God elected some men to Hell, that they were born to be damned by God's own choice, is a radical heresy not taught anywhere in the Bible.

I have in my hand a booklet entitled TULIP written by Vic Lockman. In the booklet Mr. Lockman attempts to prove the five points of Calvinism. Under the point, Unconditional Election, he quotes Ephesians 1:4, but he only quotes the first part of the verse: *"He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world..."* However, that is not the end of the verse. Mr. Lockman, like most Calvinists, stopped in the middle of the verse.

The entire verse reads: *"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love."* The verse says nothing about being chosen for Heaven or Hell. It says we are chosen that *in Christ* we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

Under the same point, Unconditional Election, Mr. Lockman quotes John 15:16, *"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you..."* Again, Mr. Lockman, like most Calvinists, stops in the middle of the verse. The entire verse reads: *"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."*

The verse says nothing about being chosen for Heaven or Hell. It says we are chosen to go and bring forth fruit, which simply means that every Christian is chosen to be a soul winner. The fruit of a Christian is other Christians. Proverbs 11:30 says, *"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise."*

Nowhere does the Bible teach that God wills for some to go to Heaven and wills for others to go to Hell. No. The Bible teaches that God would have all men to be saved. Second Peter 3:9 says that He is *"not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."* First Timothy 2:4 says, *"Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."*

Those who teach that God would only have some to be saved, while He would have others to be lost are misrepresenting God and the Bible. Does God really predestinate some people to be saved and predestinate others to go to Hell, so that they have no free choice? Absolutely not! Nobody is predestined to be saved, except as he chooses of his own free will to come to Christ and trust Him for salvation. And, no one is predestined to go to Hell, except as he chooses of his own free will to reject Christ and refuses to trust Him as Saviour.

John 3:36 says, *"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."* Nothing could be plainer. The man who goes to Heaven goes because he comes to Jesus Christ and trusts Him as Saviour. And, the man who goes to Hell does so because he refuses to come to Jesus Christ and will not trust Him as Saviour.

III. Limited Atonement

By limited atonement, Calvin meant that Christ died *only* for the elect, for those whom He planned and ordained to go to Heaven: Conversely, He *did not* die for those whom He planned and ordained to go to Hell.

Again, I say, such language is not in the Bible, and this doctrine wholly contradicts many, many plain Scriptures. For instance, the Bible says in I John 2:2, "*He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*" The teaching of Calvinism on Limited Atonement contradicts the express statement of Scripture. First Timothy 2:5,6 says, "*The man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all...*"

The Bible teaches that Jesus is the Saviour of the world. John 4:42 says, "*And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.*" Again, I John 4:14, "*And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.*" The Scriptures make it plain that Jesus came to save the world. John 3:17 says, "*For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*"

No man will ever look at Jesus Christ and say, "You didn't want to be my Saviour." No! No! Jesus wants to be the Saviour of all men. As a matter of fact, First Timothy 4:10 says, "*For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those who believe.*"

The Bible teaches that Christ bore the sins of all people. Isaiah 53:6 says, "*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*" There are two "alls" in this verse. The first "all" speaks of the universal fact of sin--"All we like sheep have gone astray." And, the second "all" speaks of universal atonement--"...*And the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*" The "all" in the first part of Isaiah 53:6 covers the same crowd that the "all" in the last part of Isaiah 53:6 covers. If all went astray, then the iniquities of all were laid on Christ!

Not only did he bear the sins of all, but the Bible plainly teaches that He died for the whole world. Look at I John 2:2: "*And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*" If that isn't plain enough, the Bible says His death was for every man: "*But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for EVERY MAN*" (Heb. 2:9).

Nothing could be plainer than the fact that Jesus Christ died for every man. First Timothy 2:5,6 says, "*For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all...*" Romans 8:32 states, "*He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*"

Look at the statements--statement after statement: "*...that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man*"; "*...Who gave himself a ransom for all*"; "*...delivered him up for us all.*" John 3:16 has often been called "the heart of the Bible." It has been called "the Bible in miniature." "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*" Jesus died for the whole world. He suffered Hell for every man who has ever lived or ever will live. And, no man will look out of Hell and say, "I wanted to be saved, but Jesus did not die for me."

Some argue that if Jesus died for the whole world, the whole world would be saved. No, the death of Jesus Christ on the cross was *sufficient* for all, but it is *efficient* (effective) only to those who believe. The death of Jesus Christ on the cross made it possible for every man everywhere to be saved. But only those who believe that He died to pay their sin debt, and who trust Him completely for salvation, will be saved.

Again, I quote John 3:36, "*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life...*" Everybody is *potentially* savable, but everybody is not *actually* saved until he recognizes that he is a sinner, believes that Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay the sin debt, and places his trust in Him completely and solely for salvation. The atonement is *not* limited. It is as universal as sin. Romans 5:20 says, "*But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.*" Isaiah 53:6 states, "*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*"

A famous English preacher spoke in an English town, then rushed to catch his train to London. A sinner who heard him preach felt that he must immediately settle the matter of salvation. So, he followed the preacher to the train station. Just as the train pulled into the station, he took hold of the preacher's lapel and said, "I want to be saved! Tell me how!" The minister said, "I must catch this last train to London. Do you have a Bible?" "Yes, I have one at home," said the anxious inquirer. "Then go home and find Isaiah 53:6. Read it carefully. Go in at the first ALL, and come out at the last ALL, and you will be saved."

The preacher rushed away, and the anxious sinner was left alone. He went back to his home, and opening his Bible, he turned to Isaiah 53:6. What did the preacher mean, he wondered--"Go in at the first ALL and come out at the last ALL, and you will be saved"? He found the verse and read it carefully: "*All we like sheep have gone astray...*" Well, he thought to himself, I can certainly go in at the first ALL. I have gone astray. I am a poor, lost sinner. Then he read the last part of the verse, "*...And the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*" He said to himself, "If I come out at the last ALL, I must believe that all my sins were laid on Christ, that He took my place and paid for my sins. And, if I rely upon that, I will be saved. That's what the preacher meant." He then trusted Christ and was saved. He believed that he was a sinner, and that all his sins had been laid on Christ.

IV. Irresistible Grace

The fourth point of Calvinism is irresistible grace. By irresistible grace, John Calvin meant that God simply forces people to be saved. Meaning that God the Father elected some to be saved, and that He sent His Son Jesus Christ to die for that elect group alone. And now, by irresistible grace, He forces those He elected, and those for whom Jesus Christ died, to be saved. The truth of the matter is, there is no such thing as irresistible grace. Nowhere in the Bible does the word "irresistible" appear before the word "grace". That terminology is simply not in the Bible. It is the philosophy of John Calvin, not a Bible doctrine. The word *irresistible* doesn't even sound right in front of the word *grace*.

Grace means "God's unmerited favor." Somebody said G-R-A-C-E means: **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**. Grace is an attitude, not a power. If Calvin had talked about the irresistible drawing power of God, it would have made more sense. But, instead, he represents grace as the irresistible act of God compelling a man to be saved who does not want to be saved, so that a man has no choice in the matter at all, except as God forcibly puts a choice in his mind. Calvinism teaches that man has no part in salvation, and cannot possibly cooperate with God in the matter and in no sense of the word and at no stage of the work does salvation depend upon the will or work of man or wait for the determination of his will.

Does the Bible say anything about irresistible grace? Absolutely not! The Scriptures show that men do resist and reject God. Proverbs 29:1 states, "*He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.*" Notice the word "*often*" in this verse. If God only gave one opportunity to be saved, then man could not complain. But here the Bible says, "*He, that being often reproveth...*" This means the man was reproveth over and over again. Not only was he reproveth many times, but he was reproveth often. But the Bible says he "*...hardeneth his neck*" and "*...shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.*"

That certainly doesn't sound like irresistible grace. The Bible teaches that a man can be reprov'd over and over again, and that he can harden his heart against God, and as a result will be destroyed without remedy. Again Proverbs 1:24-26 says: "*Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh.*"

Here the Bible plainly says, "*I have called, and ye have refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof.*" That doesn't sound like irresistible grace. God calls, and men refuse. Is that irresistible? God stretches out His hand and no man regards it? Is that irresistible grace? No, the Bible makes it plain that some men choose to reject Christ, that they refuse His call. John 5:40 says, "*Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life.*" That verse plainly teaches that men can and do resist God and refuse to come to Him.

In Acts chapter 7, we find Stephen preaching. He says in verse 51, "*Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.*" To these Jewish leaders, Stephen said, "*Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.*" So, here were people; some of whom had seen Jesus and heard Him preach; others who had heard Peter at Pentecost; others who had heard Stephen and other Spirit-filled men preaching with great power. And, what had they done? They were stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears. That is, they were stubborn and rebellious against God. The Bible plainly says, "*They resisted the Holy Ghost.*"

Notice the words of Stephen in verse 51, "*Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.*" Here the Bible teaches that not only were these Jewish leaders resisting the Holy Ghost, but that their fathers before them had also resisted the Holy Spirit. Stephen says that all the way from Abraham, through the history of the Jewish nation, down to the time of Christ, unconverted Jews had resisted the Holy Spirit. There is absolutely no such thing as a "can't-help-it-religion." God doesn't just force men to be saved with His so-called *irresistible* grace.

God offers salvation to all men. Titus 1:11 says, "*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.*" But, man must make his own choice. He must either receive or reject Christ. John 1:12 says, "*But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.*"

When Jesus wept over Jerusalem, He said, "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*" Here again the Bible clearly indicates that God would have gathered them together as a hen gather her chickens, but they would not. That certainly shows that they could reject and resist Christ. "*...I would, but ye would not*" does not fit the teaching of irresistible grace. So it is that people *do resist* the Holy Ghost. They *do refuse* to come to Christ. They *do harden* their necks. They *do refuse* when God calls.

That means that those who are not saved *could have* been saved. Those who rejected Christ *could have* accepted Him. God offers salvation to those who will have it, but does not force it upon anyone who doesn't want it.

V. Perseverance of the Saints

The Bible teaches, and I believe in, the eternal security of the born-again believer. The man who has trusted Jesus Christ *has* everlasting life and will *never* perish. But, the eternal security of the believer does not depend upon his own perseverance.

I do not know a single Bible verse that says anything about the saints' persevering, but there are several Bible verses that mention the fact that the saints have been preserved. *Perseverance* is one thing. *Preservation* is another. No. The saints do not persevere; they are preserved.

The Bible states in Jude 1, "*Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ...*" First Thessalonians 5:23 says, "*And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" The other morning, I opened a jar of peach preserves. I don't know how long those peaches had been in that jar. But the jar had been sealed some time ago, and the peaches were preserved. When I took the preserves out and ate them with a good hot biscuit, they were as good as they were the day they were placed in the jar. But, wait a minute! The peaches had nothing to do with it. They were not fresh and good because they had persevered. They were fresh and good because they had been preserved.

The Bible makes it plain that the believer is kept. He does not keep himself. First Peter 1:4-5 states: "*To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*"

The Bible says in John 10:27-29: "*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.*" Now that doesn't sound like the persevering of the sheep or the saints. Here the sheep are in the Father's hand, and they are safe--not because they persevere, but because they are in the Father's hand. Charles Spurgeon once said, "I do not believe in the perseverance of the *saints*. I believe in the perseverance of the *Saviour*."

To be sure, the Bible teaches the eternal security of the believer. But, the believer's security has nothing to do with his persevering. We are secure because we are kept by God. We are held in the Father's hand. And, according to Ephesians 4:30, we have been sealed by the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption.

So, I disagree with all five points of Calvinism as John Calvin taught it. There is a belief that if one does not teach universal salvation, he must either be a *Calvinist* or an *Arminian*. In his book, THE REFORMED DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION, Dr. Loraine Boettner says on page 47: "*There are really only three systems which claim to set forth the way of salvation through Christ... [And he names them]: "*

(1) *Universalism, that all will be saved,*

(2) *Arminianism, which holds that Christ died equally and indiscriminately for every individual... that saving grace is not necessarily permanent, but that those who are loved of God, ransomed by God, and born of the Holy Spirit may (let God wish and strive ever so much to the contrary) throw away all and perish eternally—become lost again by one's own volition.*

(3) *Calvinism.*"

He continues: *"Only two are held by Christians."* That is, Calvin's position, and Arminius' position. Calvinists would like to make people believe that if one does not teach universal salvation, he must either be a Calvinist or an Arminian. And, since the Arminian position does such violence to the grace of God, many have preferred to call themselves Calvinists. But a person doesn't have to take either position.

I am neither Arminian nor Calvinist! I believe in salvation by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ! I believe in the eternal security of the believer! I believe that Jesus Christ died for all men, and I believe what the Bible says, *"That whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

But I disagree with all five points of Calvinism as John Calvin taught it! In conclusion, let me say that Calvin and those who followed him claimed to believe and follow the Bible. They claimed to find at least a germ of the Calvinist doctrine in the Scriptures. But a careful student will find that again and again adherents go beyond Scripture, and that Calvinism is a philosophy developed by man and depending on fallible logic and frail, human reasoning, with the perversion of some Scriptures, the misuse of others, and the total ignoring of many clear Scriptures. Calvin did teach many wonderful, true doctrines of Scripture.

It is true that God foreknows everything that will happen in the world. It is true that God definitely ordained and determined some events ahead of time and selected some individuals for His purposes. It is certain that people are saved by grace, and are kept by the power of God. That far, Calvinists may well prove their doctrines by the Scriptures. But beyond that, Calvinism goes into a realm of human philosophy.

No, Calvinism is *not* a bona fide Bible doctrine, but a system of human philosophy! It is especially appealing to the scholarly intellect, the self-sufficient and proud mind. Brilliant, philosophical, scholarly preachers are apt to be misled on this matter more than the humble-hearted, Bible-believing Christian.