

**BE WARNED AND BEWARE OF THE FALSE TEACHINGS  
CONCERNING THE ATONEMENT OF CHRIST**

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**A. THE ERROR WHICH HAS BEEN PREACHED AND PROPAGATED CONCERNING  
THE ATONEMENT OF CHRIST.**

1. This error originated with a man named John Calvin who taught that the sovereignty of God was the central attribute of God and that all beliefs and teachings were therefore predicted upon that attribute. The Scriptures point out that the central attribute of God is His Holiness. However, from his premise Calvin contrived a belief system which came to be known as the five points of Calvinism. These teachings can be summarized by using the word “tulip” as an acronym: “T” for total depravity, “U” for unconditional election, “L” for limited atonement, “I” for irresistible grace, and “P” for perseverance of the saints.

a. Calvin’s view of “total depravity” defined the state of all mankind as a result of Adam’s fall in Genesis 3:

All men are conceived in sin, and born the children of wrath, indisposed to all saving good, propense to evil, dead in sins, and the slaves of sins, and without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, they neither are willing or able to return to God, to correct their depraved nature, or to dispose themselves to the correction of it (qtd. by Enns, 482).

b. Calvin’s view of “unconditional election” is summarized by Paul Enns:

If the Scriptures teach that man is totally depraved, dead in trespasses and sin, then man is unable to initiate a response toward God for salvation. God must act. Calvinism teaches that from eternity past, God has unconditionally elected certain ones to salvation regardless of any merit on their part (Enns, 482).

c. Calvin’s view of “limited atonement” can be stated in this way:

If some are not saved because they were not chosen or elected according to God’s all-sovereign plan, then, Christ only died to secure the salvation of those in God’s plan and not others. In this sense, Christ’s atonement is “limited” (Jones 63).

d. Paul Enns states how logical Calvin’s view of “irresistible grace” appears:

In the logic of Calvinism, God through His Holy Spirit, draws precisely those whom God unconditionally elected from eternity past and Christ died for. Thus, the purpose of God is accomplished. He elected certain ones, and now through the Holy Spirit, God dispenses His irresistible grace to them to make them willing to come. They do not want to resist (Enns, 484).

- e. Calvin's doctrine of "perseverance of the saints" has been stated as follows:

...God has irresistibly drawn the elect to put their faith in himself for salvation by regenerating their hearts and convincing them of their need. Therefore, they continue, since God has made satisfaction for the sins of the elect, they can no longer be condemned for them, and through the help of the Holy Spirit they must necessarily persevere as Christians and in the end be saved ("Perseverance of the Saints," Wikipedia 20 July 2010).

2. This error taught by John Calvin and perpetrated by his followers can be summarized in this way:

So what, in a nut-shell, does Calvinism teach? Simply stated, Calvinism says that God is absolutely sovereign over all His creation and creatures so that nothing happens unless it is a part of God's all-sovereign plan. It follows then logically, based upon that "faulty, if not qualified, assumption - if a person is not saved, then he must not have been predestinated and included in God's sovereign plan to save him. Granted that assumption, if some are not saved because they were not included in God's plan to save them, then Christ didn't die for everyone or for those who were not a part of God's sovereign plan. This means Christ's atonement for sinners is then, "limited" to only those who are a part of God's sovereign plan. It then goes a step further, logically, that God must seek out and save, by His irresistible grace, all those who were predestinated to be saved because they are included in God's sovereign plan. And finally, those sought out and saved by His irresistible grace will be kept for God's glory to complete God's plan in providing salvation for them. The "elected ones" will evidence their election by their own perseverance (Jones, 47, 48).

## **B. THE EVIDENCE WHICH IS PRESENTED AND THE SCRIPTURAL EXAMINATION WHICH NEEDS TO BE MADE.**

1. The evidence presented to support Calvin's view of **total depravity**.

- a. Calvin's premise

According to Calvin's teachings on total depravity, no man has the ability to come to Christ and be saved unless God gives him that ability. Calvin saw man, not only spiritually dead after the fall in Genesis three, but also in a state of "total inability." To Calvin, men were like dead Lazarus in the tomb - they have no capacity to respond to God's Word, or to respond to God, unless God over-powers them and gives them that ability (Jones: online article: "Doctrinal Critique," 2).

- b. Advocates of Calvin's premise

John MacArthur has stated that unbelievers are "no more able to respond to God, than a cadaver and are incapable of any spiritual activity..." (qtd. in Hunt, 224). He goes on to say, "How can a person who is dead in sin, blinded by Satan, unable to understand the things of God, continually

filled with evil suddenly exercise saving faith? A corpse could no sooner come out of a grave and walk” (qtd in Hunt, 224).

R.C. Sproul, another outspoken Calvinist, has stated:

Our condition before we are quickened is one of spiritual death... there is not an ounce of spiritual life in us until God makes us alive. Without rebirth no one will come to Christ. All who are reborn do come to Christ. Those who are dead to the things of God stay dead to the things of God unless God makes them alive. (Sproul, 125, 126).

c. Arguments to the contrary

(1) What is the meaning of spiritual death?

Spiritual death is that “standing” whereby man is “separated as a sinner” from God, who is holy, and therefore stands in need of regeneration and reconciliation before he can know God and fellowship with Him. This need can be met when a person believes in the Lord Jesus Christ and accepts Him by faith (Romans 5:10,11). To say that man is “volitionally” dead so that he cannot exercise his own “free will” is a misrepresentation of the truth (Jones, 51).

It should be seen that the proponents of Calvinism misrepresent the meaning of “spiritual death” in order to fit man’s state of moral depravity into Calvin’s system of belief.

(2) What non-Calvinists have to say

(a) Lawrence Vance commented on the problem with comparing a “spiritually” dead man with a “physically” dead man and said:

... if you make an exact parallel between a physical dead man... then you likewise have to say... if he can’t accept Christ because he is dead then he can’t reject Christ either. A physically dead man cannot believe on Jesus Christ, but a spiritually dead man can (qtd. in Hunt, 224).

(b) Dave Hunt refers to the Calvinist’s view of comparing a “spiritually” dead man to a “physically” dead man as “distorting a metaphor.” He stated:

The physically dead can do nothing, not even commit sin, so they could hardly present a proper analogy of spiritual death. The spiritually “dead,” however, are able to live active lives, get an education, earn a living, defy God and continue to sin or submit to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus

Christ as their Saviour (Hunt, 224).

(3) What the Scriptures have to say

- (a) The Word of God states that the Holy Spirit gives totally - depraved men the capacity to choose between God's Word and their own sinful and selfish ways. Man then, is both "capable" and "responsible" before God. John Calvin taught that man cannot do anything unless God gives him the capacity to do so, but numerous times in the Scriptures Gods calls upon men to seek the Lord, to find Him, to believe in Him, and to repent Isa. 55:6; Acts 2:40, 17:30).
- (b) The Scriptures make it quite clear that man's condemnation is predicated upon the exercise of "one's own free will" and not some God-given ability to believe (Matt. 23:37; Jn. 5:40; Rev. 22:17).
- (c) Those who follow the teachings of Calvinism about man's "total depravity" fall into the error of believing that God must regenerate men "**before**" they believe. The Scriptures teach that men are regenerated "**after**" they believe (Acts 16:31; Rom. 1:16; Eph. 2:8).
- (d) The Bible teaches that the work of the Holy Spirit is to draw men to the Saviour and this is done in connection with the proclamation of the gospel and not apart from it (Rom. 1:16; I Cor. 1:18, 21; Jn. 16:7-11). It should be noted that the "sin" in Jn. 16:9 is the "sin of unbelief" which is failure on man's part to trust Christ. If God had to give man the faith to believe how could He charge man with the sin of not believing?

2. The evidence presented to support Calvin's view of unconditional election

a. Calvin's premise

Paul Enns stated how Calvin tied his belief of "total depravity" with "unconditional election." He stated"

If the Scriptures teach that man is totally depraved, dead in trespasses and sin, then man is unable to initiate a response toward God for salvation. God must act. Calvinism teaches that from eternity past, God has unconditionally elected certain ones to salvation regardless of any merit on their part (Enns, 482).

b. Advocates of Calvin's premise

- (1) John Piper, another leading proponent of Calvinism has subscribed to Calvin's teachings and makes the same connection of Calvin's

view of total depravity and unconditional election. He stated:

Election refers to God's choosing whom to save. It is unconditional in that there is no condition man must meet before God chooses to save him. Man is dead in trespasses and sin. So there is no condition he can meet... (qtd. in Hunt, 224).

- (2) Another source defined unconditional election as viewed by Calvinists in the very same way:

God's act of saving is not based on what man can do or choose to will, but man is loved by God without any conditions or man's actions or deeds but solely by God's grace, thus unconditional election. ("Unconditional Election." Wikipedia, 22 July 2010).

- (3) John Piper, once again, stated his belief how that God chose those whom He had elected to salvation:

It is an unspeakable precious grace that God has chosen for Himself before the foundation of the world: a people to be saved from their sins and who will glorify and enjoy Him forever. This choosing was absolutely unconditional... when His call awakens a sinner from death, overcomes all resistance, and makes the glory of Christ irresistibly compelling. When this happens, faith is created and a person believes in Christ freely from a new heart ... This calling is the gracious act by which God grants repentance (II Tim. 2:25; Acts 5:31; 11:18) and brings about faith (Eph. 2:8,9; Phil. 1:29). (Piper: Future Grace, 232, 233) writer's emphasis.

c. Arguments to the contrary

- (1) What is wrong with Calvin's view of "unconditional election."

Calvin's view of "unconditional election" stems from his erroneous belief concerning "total depravity." His view was built upon his false premise and points out a simple truth: "when one begins with a wrong premise he can never come out with a right conclusion."

- (2) What non-Calvinists have to say

James Crumpton said:

This is one of the most horrible things I have ever heard. You know, beloved, they are saying that when a little baby is conceived in this mother's womb and another is conceived in that mother's womb, then God hates one and loves the other. For nine months, while those two mothers carry those babies, God hates one of them and loves the other. When those precious little babies are born, God hates

one and loves the other. When they get to be young married folks, God hates one and loves the other. When they get to be old gray-headed folks, God hates one and loves the other. And He will hate that one through all eternity and He will love the other one through all eternity. Friend, the Bible knows nothing of such a thesis. It is not in here - not from Genesis to Revelation. In fact, if the tulip theologians are honest about it, they would go further back than that and say, “back before the foundation of the world, God knew what mothers would have a little baby, even back there He started loving one and hating the other, and He will love one and hate the other through all eternity to come. How absurd! Beloved, that is close to blasphemy against our God (Crumpton, 3).

This writer has this to say about Calvin’s teaching concerning “unconditional election”:

Calvin believed some were God’s chosen whom He elected to salvation. This means that salvation or damnation is by God’s own choice to elect some for heaven and elect others for hell. So based upon God’s choice before the foundation of the world, He now initiates an unconditional process... to bring to Himself those who were elected. If such a premise were true, why is man called upon repeatedly by the Lord to turn in repentance, to believe in Christ, and to receive Him as Saviour if his choice makes no difference. Where do such teachings leave an individual? It leaves one with only a “hope so” salvation that God has elected him to heaven and not hell.

(3) What the Scriptures have to say.

- (a) The Bible teaches that God would have all men to be saved (I Tim. 2:4).
- (b) The Bible teaches since Christ died for the sin of the whole world, the offer of salvation is extended to the whole world (Jn. 1:29; 3:16; I Jn. 2:2).
- (c) Jesus said, “suffer (allow) little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for such is the Kingdom of God (Lk. 18:16). Who would dare hinder a little child from coming to Christ and telling one of them that the may not be one whom God has chosen?

3. The evidence presented to support Calvin’s view of **limited atonement**

a. Calvin’s premise

Calvin’s view of the atonement of Christ follows a logical conclusion and premise. Simply stated, if some are not saved because they were not chosen or elected according to God’s all-sovereign plan, then Christ only died to secure the salvation of those who were in God’s plan and not for others. In this sense, Christ’s atonement is “limited.”

b. Advocates of Calvin's premise

Duane Spencer, a proponent of Calvinism has stated the following:

Christ did not die for all men. Atonement was limited! Redemption was particular! Only the elect bride of Christ was the object of His love ... When Christ gave His life on the cross of Calvary, He laid it down for His sheep, the elect ones of the Father! Not all men are included in that term "My sheep." Therefore Christ did not lay down His life for all men (Spencer, 51, 52).

c. Arguments to the contrary

(1) What is wrong with Calvin's view of "limited atonement."

Calvinists view the atonement of Christ as fulfilling God's purpose to save only those whom He intended to save. In order to support this premise they must redefine certain words such as "world" in John 3:16 to mean the "world of the elect." Other passages must be viewed in a restrictive sense and applied to only God's elect. In Matt. 1:21 "Christ will save His people from their sins." In Jn. 17:9 "those whom thou has given to me." In both these redefinitions to apply those to only an elect group is to take them out of context which is poor interpretation to say the least.

(2) What non-Calvinists have to say

This pastor sees many instances of faulty interpretation: In their attempt to use the Scriptures to support Calvin's belief system on limited atonement, the Calvinists must bend and redefine certain words to mean something other than their literal and normal usage and they must "overlook" many other passages which teach otherwise.

Dr. Hoyle Bowman, professor of theology at Piedmont Baptist College back in the 1970's argued against the teachings of limited atonement by saying: "Universal offer argues for universal provision." This writer had no problem understanding what his little (then two years old) great-granddaughter, Shiloh Grace Gallant, who lived on PEI with her missionary grand parents Rusty and Vanessa Fulp was saying when she would speak to us via the web cam and tell me and her great-grandmother how much she loved us. She would simply stretch out her arms wide open and say, "Papa and Nanny, love you, whole world." By the same token, this writer has no problem understanding what Jesus provided, and what he meant, when He stretched out His arms on Calvary's cross and died for the sins of the "whole"

world.

(3) What the Scriptures have to say

- (a) The Bible teaches in II Pet. 2:1 that Christ's atonement even paid the "redemptive price" for the false teachers who would deny Him.
- (b) In Heb. 2:9 the Scripture teaches that Christ "tasted death" or died for every man.
- (c) I Tim. 2:5, 6 states that Christ's death was a ransom for all men so they could be saved.
- (d) Other Scriptures teach that Christ's blood was shed for the "whole" world and not just for the "world of the elect" as Calvinists redefine (I Jn. 2:1, 2)

4. The evidence presented to support Calvin's view of **irresistible grace**.

a. Calvin's premise

Paul Enns explained Calvin's view of "irresistible grace" and how it is fitted into Calvin's belief system:

In the logic of Calvinism, God, through His Spirit, draws precisely those whom God unconditionally elected from eternity past and Christ died for. Thus the purpose of God is accomplished. He elected certain ones, Christ died for those ones, and now through the Holy Spirit, God dispenses His irresistible grace to them to make them willing to come. They do not want to resist. (Enns, 484)

b. Advocates of Calvin's premise

According to the proponents of Calvinism, man obtains salvation by the sovereign grace of God and not by "their own free will." John Gill, a Calvinist said the following concerning irresistible grace:

This act of drawing is an act of power, yet not of force; God in drawing of unwilling, makes willing in the day of power: He enlightens the understanding, bends the will, gives an heart of flesh, sweetly allures by the power of His grace, and engages the soul to come to Christ, and gives up itself to Him; He draws with hands of love. (John Gill, "Irresistible Grace." Wikipedia, 20 July 2010).

c. Arguments to the contrary

(1) What is wrong with Calvin's view of irresistible grace.

It should be noted that such teachings violate the "free will"

of man and renders him no more than a mere robot through whom God must work to bring him to salvation. Therefore, man has no choice in the matter, it is a matter of God choosing certain ones and this is contrary to God's Word which argues for a "whosoever will" gospel.

(2) What non-Calvinists have to say:

As stated earlier, Calvinists, like John Piper, have asserted that God must grant man repentance in this process and give him the faith to believe the gospel. Such teachings not only violate and take away man's "free will" to choose, they also purport that a sinner must be regenerated or given spiritual life before he believes. This is contrary to numerous passages of Scripture

which reveal that a sinner must believe before he can be regenerated. (Jones, 67, 68)

(3) What the Scriptures have to say:

- (a) The Bible teaches that man has a "free moral will" and he is held responsible for the manner in which he exercises his will. It is choosing "individually" what God has provided "corporately" for all (Jn. 3:16, 17, 18, 36).
- (b) As far as God's grace being irresistible, the Bible teaches that men can and do resist the Holy Spirit. Those who withstood Stephen certainly resisted the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51).
- (c) The Bible gives a number of examples where men had the opportunity to be saved but they resisted the Holy Spirit's conviction and rejected Christ. One example is shown in how Felix, the governor of Caesarea, resisted the Spirit's convicting power (Acts 24:24, 25).
- (d) King Agrippa is another example of how a person can resist God's Spirit (Acts 26:28).
- (e) The Bible points out how people get saved as illustrated in Paul preaching the gospel at Athens and what the results were. Some mocked, some procrastinated, but some believed and were saved (Acts 17:32, 34).

5. The evidence presented to support Calvin's view of **perseverance of the saints**:

a. Calvin's premise

Berkhof, a Calvinist, has defined Calvin's premise on perseverance

in this way:

That continuous operation of the Holy Spirit in the believer, by which the work of divine grace, that is begun in the heart, is continued and brought to completion. (qtd. in Enns, 485)

b. Advocates of Calvin's premise

Calvinists have explained this process of perseverance in this way:

... God has irresistibly drawn the elect to put their faith in Himself for salvation by regenerating their heart and convincing them of their need. Therefore, they continue, since God has made satisfaction for the sins of the elect, they can no longer be condemned for them, and through the help of the Holy Spirit they must necessarily persevere as Christians and in the end be saved. ("Perseverance of the Saints," Wikipedia - 20 July 2010)

c. Arguments to the contrary

(1) What is wrong with Calvin's view of perseverance of the saints.

John Calvin's teachings on the perseverance of the saints runs contrary to several specific areas concerning God's people. One should note there's a big difference between "positional" sanctification and "practical" sanctification. A Christian can be "in Christ" and have the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ reckoned to his account and as a result be set aside and "perfected" forever in Him (II Cor. 5:17; Heb. 10:10, 14). The same Christian, however, can become backslidden and carnal as far as "practical" sanctification is concerned. This is, no doubt, evidenced in the case with the Corinthian believers. They were all baptized into the body of Christ and were "positionally" sanctified or set apart eternally but their lives were far from God's will for them (I Cor. 1, 2; 12:13; I Cor. 5:5).

(2) What non-Calvinists have to say

Notice, while it is true Scripturally that a person who is saved will evidence his faith through good works (Eph. 2:8 - 10), the basis of assurance, for the Calvinist is predicated upon his life of "good works" which determines the genuineness of his faith. Dave Hunt has stated: "When our assurance of salvation is based at all on our works, we can never have absolute assurance" (Hunt, 378).

(3) What the Scriptures have to say

(a) The Bible teaches that the believer in Christ is eternally secure in Christ and kept by the power of God (Jn. 5:24; 10:27-29;

Rom. 8:29, 30; Phil. 1:6; I Pet. 1:3, 5).

- (b) The Scriptures teach that a Christian can become carnal and be chastened by the Lord for his sins or that some can even commit “sin unto death” but it has nothing to do with his “standing” before God (Heb. 12:6, I Cor. 3:1-3; I Jn. 5:16).
- (c) The Scriptures point out numerous examples of God’s people who got into a backslidden condition - Noah, (Gen. 9:20-24), Lot, (Gen. 14 - 19), Jacob, (Gen. 27:36), David, (II Sam. 11:2-5) and Samson (Jud 14,15). According to Calvin’s teachings, if a person doesn’t come to sanctification, then he evidences that he is not one of God’s elect.

### **C. THE EFFECTS WHICH THIS ERRONEOUS TEACHING HAS HAD UPON MULTITUDES OF PEOPLE.**

1. False teachings concerning the atonement of Christ have led many to develop a closed mind and heart to the gospel message and adopt a mindset of irresponsibility. This condition is often expressed like:

“If God is going to save His elect ones, there’s nothing I can do about it if I am not one of them.”

2. False teaching concerning the atonement of Christ has been used as a tool of the devil to hinder and hamper evangelistic efforts to reach the lost masses of this world. This is seen in the failure of certain groups who hold to Calvin’s teaching and make no efforts to reach others.
3. False teachings about the atonement of Christ have taken away the hopes and desires of multitudes who would be saved and serving the Lord, but the devil has them ensnared. According to Calvinism if a man has not been predestinated to salvation and included in God’s sovereign plan, he has no hope for salvation and there’s absolutely nothing he can do about it.
4. False teachings on the atonement of Christ have given multitudes a perverted view of God’s love, God’s mercy, God’s will, God’s plan of salvation and the reason why Christ came and died for a world of sinners.

The Calvinist, R.C. Sproul said:

It was certainly loving of God to predestinate the salvation of His people, those the Bible calls His “elect” or chosen ones... If it pleases God to save some and not all, there is nothing wrong with that. God is not under obligation to save anybody. If He chooses to save some, that in no way obligates Him to save the rest (Sproul, 37).

God on the other hand has said:

He is...”not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (II Pet. 3:9).

“For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the LordGod: therefore turn yourselves, and live ye” (Ezek. 18:32).

#### **D. THE EXHORTATIONS TO PREVENT PEOPLE FROM BEING ENSNARED IN THIS FALSE TEACHING**

1. First of all, beware of those who would preach or teach anything that limit’s the atonement of Christ and have nothing to do with them (Rom. 16:17; Titus 3:10,11).
2. Jesus said concerning false teachers, we would know them by their fruits (Matt. 7:15-20). Missionary Henry Pike who served the Lord for half of his life on two mission fields painted a picture of what to look for in these people who are ensnared by the devil:

Gradually, they are transformed into adamantly high-headed persons, who move about in the aurora of doctrinal superiority. Their arrogance is obvious. The world is now measured by their reformed faith. Their cause, goals and beliefs are superior and always the will of God. Everything they do is “of God.” This is a chief hallmark of any false cult. These poor souls view all men by their towering knowledge of the “election” or the decrees of the sovereign God. All things are squeezed through their “predestinated” mold in order to determine their spiritual worth (qtd. in Pike, 89).

3. Keep this study, absorb the truth in it and keep in mind some simple truths;
  - a. Keep in mind why God gave His son and why Christ came into this world (Jn. 3:16, 17; Lk. 19:10; I Tim. 1:15; I Jn. 2:1, 2; 4:10; John 1:7).
  - b. Keep in mind what Christ’s atonement on the cross involved (I Tim. 2:5, 6; Heb. 2:9; II Pet. 2:1).
  - c. Keep in mind what the Lord’s will is for all men (II Pet. 3:9; I Tim. 2:4; 4:10).
  - d. Keep in mind how a person can be saved (Rom. 10:13; Jn. 1:12; 5:24; I jn. 5:13; Acts 16:30, 31).