

(cont.) completely false according to the Scriptures.

### **IRRESISTIBLE GRACE**

As with Martin Luther, Calvin believed that it was by faith only that one is saved. Yet Calvin saw that faith requires a choice; therefore, he changed this to a salvation by grace only. Grace from God saves men, and it is irresistible.

The Bible does tell us we are saved by grace (Eph. 2:8). However, it does not ever say that we are saved by faith only; consider James 2:24, Philippians 2:12, or Mark 16:16 for other things which save us. As well, the Bible is clear that the grace of God can be resisted, as seen in Luke 7:30 and Hebrews 3:8-13.

### **PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS**

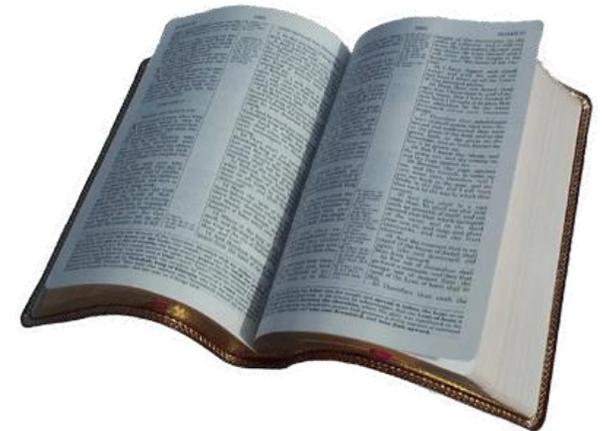
Many today are comforted by this doctrine, more commonly called "once saved, always saved". It says that once one is saved by God, they cannot lose this salvation. They point to Jesus in John 10:28-29 declaring that none could snatch those who were His from His hand. One Baptist preacher stated *"If I killed my wife and mother and debauched a thousand women I couldn't go to hell--in fact, I couldn't go to hell if I wanted to."* Such security means that those who are

saved have no need for endurance.

Yet few false doctrines have more testimony against them than this. In one book alone there are multiple admonitions warning Christians to be careful not to lose their salvation (Hebrews 3:12, 4:1, 11, 6:4-6, 10:26). In fact, in every book in the New Testament (except Philemon) warn us to "take heed lest you fall" (I Cor. 10:12), because any of us can "fall from Grace" (Galatians 5:4).

The only reason for the necessity of this doctrine is the failed concept of a salvation by grace only. If there is nothing one can do to be saved, then the reverse must be true, that there is nothing one can do to be lost.

# Understanding Calvinism



**John Calvin** (1509-1564) was a reformation theologian who created a system of theology that bears his name (Calvinism), and is still in use today. Protestant churches that use Calvinistic doctrine include many Baptist churches, Presbyterian churches, Reformed churches and Protestant reformed churches, and congregational churches (such as the United Church of Christ).

Calvinism holds to five major tenants, often identified with the acronym TULIP.

- T. Total Depravity
- U. Unconditional Election
- L. Limited Atonement
- I. Irresistible Grace
- P. Perseverance of the Saints

### **TOTAL DEPRAVITY**

Calvinism teaches that man has an inherited sinful nature (referred to by many as Original Sin) that renders him totally depraved. This depravity prevents man from ever acting righteously (apart from God's intervention). This means that even children are born evil before God.

Yet if one were to scour the Bible for the terms "Total Depravity", "Sinful Nature" or "Original Sin", they would not find them. This does not necessarily mean they are untrue (the

word "Bible" is not in the Bible), but it is evidence of a problem.

Is man totally depraved so that he is completely unable to do anything good? Not according to the Bible in Romans 2:14 and Acts 14:15. Does man have a sinful nature? Again, not according to the Bible, which teaches that man is made in God's image (Genesis 2:26-27) even now (Ecclesiastes 7:29). In fact, Scripture reveal that Jesus had our nature (Hebrews 2:17-18), yet had no sin. Can man inherit the sins of others, as established by Original Sin? Not according to the Bible, as seen in Ezekiel 18 or Romans 6:23.

### **UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION**

Calvinism's teaching of Unconditional Election is often mis-identified as predestination. In Calvinism, this means that *"before God created the world, He chose to save some people according to His own purposes and apart from any conditions related to those persons"*.

The term "predestined" is in the Bible; it refers to the quality of Jesus that God determined men would be saved within. Like a sports team chosen to participate in a sporting event, it refers not to the players but to the team being chosen; thus the Bible

uses predestination to describe the idea that God purposed that Christians would be the ones saved. He did not predestine who would be a Christian.

Calvinistic predestination completely contradicts the Bible. Scriptures state often that God desires to save all men (1 Timothy 2:4, Titus 2:11, 2 Peter 3:9, John 3:16). Yet men may choose whom they serve and where they spend their destiny. Calvinistic predestination teaches that God is a respecter of persons (1 Pet. 1:17, Col. 3:25) and an unfair judge (James 2:9).

### **LIMITED ATONEMENT**

According to Calvinism, since men could not choose to obey God because of their depravity, and God decided ahead of time whom He would save, Jesus did not die for everyone, but only for those whom the Father purposed to save. Rather than coming to save the whole world (John 3:16), He only died to save those particularly chosen by God.

Yet Scripture repeatedly states that salvation is for all. Simply stated, *"He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world"* (1 John 2:2). The doctrine of a limited atonement is necessary for Calvinism, but is (cont. over)