

*The Five Points of Calvinism*  
*A Study of Our Great Salvation*

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Developed as a small group study for the youth group of New Life Presbyterian Church, Winder, GA

Based on the book: The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended, Documented by David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, Phillipsburg, NJ. 1963

## Introduction

This study is about a Christian doctrine called the Five Points of Calvinism. The five points of Calvinism are a response made in 1618-1619 by the Synod of Dort to the five points of Arminianism. The five points of Calvinism form an acrostic, TULIP, and are:

- **T**otal Depravity
- **U**nconditional Election
- **L**imited Atonement
- **I**rresistible Grace
- **P**erseverance of the Saints

Why are we studying these? The five points of Calvinism give us a deeper understanding of what the author of the book of Hebrews refers to as “such a great salvation” (Hebrews 2:3). The five points show us the great need produced by our sin in the T, and then show us God’s merciful, particular, powerful, and faithful grace in the U, L, I, and P.

The book on which the material for this study was largely based is referenced on the first page. It contains a brief history of the development of the five points of Calvinism, a large section containing the scripture proofs for the five points, a very lengthy annotated bibliography of other works related to the five points, and an essay on the meaning of “foreknew” in Romans 8:29. This book is recommended for those who wish to further study the origin of the five points and their biblical support.

### *Note to Leaders:*

This study was designed so that the teacher isn’t just preaching to those in the study, but to encourage the entire study group to be engaged in searching the scriptures for God’s truth concerning the nature of our salvation. The study was originally conducted by cutting strips of paper, each with a single line (number, scripture, and question) from the study. These were then handed out to the students, who read the scripture and answered the question in order of the numbers, with discussion led by the study leader. Each lesson began with a brief introduction and definition to the point under study, and sometimes referred to practical application.

## **Total Depravity**

All of man is spiritually corrupt, dead, and affected by sin. An unsaved man can do nothing good nor anything to aid his salvation.

### **I. Adam's sin results in sin and spiritual death (and physical death) for us all**

1. Genesis 2:16, 17                      What is the "death" talked about here?
2. Romans 5:12                              Who was affected by Adam's sin?
3. Colossians 2:13                         What is the "death" talked about here?
4. Psalm 58:3                                When does sin begin?

### **II. Every part of us is affected by the fall**

5. Genesis 6:5                                What part of man is described as sinful?
6. Genesis 8:21                                What part of man is described as sinful?
7. Jeremiah 17:9                             What part of man is described as sinful?
8. Mark 7:21-23                                What sins come from the heart?
9. John 3:19                                    What does man love?
10. Romans 8:7-8                                What part of man is described as sinful? How sinful is it?
11. Ephesians 4:17-19                         What parts of man are described as sinful?
12. Titus 1:15                                  What parts of man are described as sinful?

### **III. The unregenerate are slaves to sin**

13. II Timothy 2:25-26                        Is man free to choose good or evil?
14. Titus 3:3                                    Is man free to choose good or evil?

#### **IV. All are under sin**

15. Psalm 143:2                      How many people are considered sinful?
16. Ecclesiastes 7:20                How many people are considered sinful?
17. Romans 3:9-12                    How many people are considered sinful?

#### **V. Sinful man cannot do good**

18. Jeremiah 13:23                  Can a sinner do any good works?
19. Matthew 7:16-18                Can a sinner do any good works?
20. John 6:44                         Can a sinner choose to be saved?





## **Irresistible Grace**

The Holy Spirit makes a special “inward” call to those who are elect and renews them so they will choose Christ to be saved.

Question: Who is the Holy Spirit? (Perhaps the least understood of the persons of God. He and his work are studied here)

### **I. The Holy Spirit has a hand in salvation along with the Father and Son**

1. I Peter 1:1-2                      Which persons of God do work for our salvation?

### **II. The Spirit’s work in salvation is to regenerate**

2. John 3:3-6                      What is the Holy Spirit’s work in our salvation?
3. Titus 3:5                      What is the Holy Spirit’s work in our salvation?
4. Ezekiel 36: 26-27              What is the Holy Spirit’s work in our salvation?
5. Colossians 2:13                What is your spiritual state before salvation? after?
6. John 16: 12-13                How is the Spirit described? What does this mean?

### **III. The Call of the Spirit is effective**

7. Romans 8:30                    Is there a difference between those the Spirit calls and those he saves?
8. Acts 13:48                    Is there a difference between those the Spirit calls and those he saves?
9. Romans 8:38-39                What can keep us from God’s love once we are saved?

## **Perseverance of the Saints**

The elect are kept securely in the faith by the power of God and are assured of heaven.

Question: Have you ever heard of someone who became a Christian but then decided not to be or drifted away later? Were they ever really a Christian? (No, they cannot have been a Christian)

Isaiah 43:1-3

Isaiah 54:10

Matthew 18:12-14

John 10:27-30

Romans 8:1

Romans 8:35-39

## **Application – What do the Five Points mean for me?**

Evangelism

Doubt

Understanding Evil.

Others?



## Leader's Notes

### I. Total Depravity

1. Spiritual death – we know this since Adam and Eve didn't immediately die (see 3)
2. All of mankind
3. Spiritual death
4. at conception
5. thoughts and heart
6. imagination of hearts
7. the heart
8. (long list – note “evil thoughts” and the ones that match the ten commandments)
9. darkness or evil
10. the mind – so evil it can do nothing to please God
11. mind and heart
12. minds and consciences
13. no – the picture here is of slavery and bondage, being trapped in this way
14. no – again the picture of slavery
- 15-17. all
- 18-19. no
20. no – being reconciled to God is good and needed, but we can't!

### II. Unconditional Election

- 1-3. Point out how God has a group of people he has chosen to be his people.
4. before creation
5. individuals are chosen – each in particular, not vague groups (“name” in verse)
6. God's mercy – not man's strength – particularly because he chose before creation
7. chosen so we would bear fruit – not the other way around
8. according to this passage, to make our election “sure” in the sense of confirmation
9. God
10. God, for his will
11. everything – he does whatever he pleases
12. everything – whatever he purposes he can do
13. all things

### **III. Limited Atonement**

Note that this is generally the most difficult of the five points to accept. Briefly discuss my struggle – mention Putting Amazing Back into Grace, Michael Horton as another source for info on this (and my initial anger with the book!)

1. Christ – he saves his people (the elect)
2. Christ died (note the “all” refers to the elect)
3. Reconciliation – mending a broken “estranged” relationship – we have the sense of a previous fight in the relationship
4. By Christ – from the “T” we see we need to be reconciled to God, and the elect are reconciled to God through Christ (also God!)
5. by grace through Christ – being made right in a legal sense, wiping our crimes – RUF definition: “just-as-if-I’d-never sinned and lived a perfect life”
6. redeem = buying back/away from. Christ redeems us, buys us back from our sin
7. redeem and purify (sanctify)
8. no, only some are his sheep
9. not everyone, but only the elect
10. to be with him – Christ only prays for the elect to be with him
11. Many passages mention “all” or “the world” and these must be interpreted in context and in light of other scriptures pointing to a limited atonement. Here, “world” is used to show that God loves his creation, but he still only saves those that believe in Christ. And we understand from other scripture how God works in us to make us believe in Christ.

### **IV. Irresistible Grace**

Note that the Holy Spirit is probably the least understood person of God. In this point, we learn about the Holy Spirit’s work in salvation.

1. All three are mentioned – note their different works
2. make us born again
3. regeneration and renewal
4. giving a new heart and spirit (the old heart was dead, like stone)
5. were dead, made alive - again, the old dead heart and spirit replaced with a new one, explaining further our state in total depravity and then in salvation
6. truth – he teaches us truth today
7. no, it is all one sequence and one elect people from calling to glorification
8. no, all who were supposed to be saved and predestined were effectively called and saved
9. absolutely nothing, note the things mentioned: death, supernatural beings (besides God), earthly power, physical location, nothing in creation – not even ourselves!

## **V. Perseverance of the Saints**

Note how all these passages show we cannot be taken out of God's hand once we are saved. The point is that even if we try to struggle away, we cannot get away. Nor can anything else, even later sins separate us from God since we are fully forgiven (Romans 8:1)

End by showing how these five points and understanding our salvation apply to our everyday lives.

Evangelism – we must call, but God does the work of saving not us. We cannot convince someone in our own power to be a Christian.

Doubt – we often struggle with doubt of whether God loves us. Understanding the perseverance of the saints should work to eliminate this doubting of God's love and forgiveness.

Understanding why evil exists – Hitler came from somewhere, and in total depravity, we understand how the mind, heart, and conscience are all fallen into evil.

Others?