

The Sovereignty of God and Salvation

TULIP: The Doctrines of Sovereign Grace

New Life Alliance Church 2007

Salvation is accomplished by the almighty power of the triune God. The Father chose a people, the Son died for them, the Holy Spirit makes Christ's death effective by bringing the elect to faith and repentance, thereby causing them to willingly obey the Gospel. The entire process (election, redemption, regeneration) is the work of God and is by grace alone (even though God has given man the responsibility to believe). Thus God, not man, determines who will be the recipients of the gift of salvation. Salvation is all of God from beginning to end. To God be the glory!

Total Depravity (No one seeks after God)

Genesis 6:5; 8:21; Romans 1:18, 21-22, 25; 3:10-12; 8:7; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; *Ephesians 2:1-10*

The effect of the fall upon man is that sin has extended to every part of his personality -- his thinking, his emotions, and his will. The unregenerate man is dead in his sins. He is spiritually blind and deaf and stubbornly rebellious. He is deceived. He has believed lies. His will is not free, but is in bondage to sin. He loves darkness. He refuses to come to the light. His soul is thirsty, but he digs broken cisterns instead of drinking from the Spring of Living Water. He is a rebel who refuses to submit to the King.

Unconditional Election (God's choice is not based on any kind of foreseen faith)

Ephesians 1:3-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; Romans 9:10-24; Matthew 11:25-30; Acts 13:48

God chose those whom He was pleased to bring to the knowledge of Himself, not based upon any merit shown by the object of His grace and not (as some teach) based upon His looking forward to discover who would "accept" the offer of the gospel. God has elected, based solely upon the counsel of his own will, men and women for his glory (Romans 9:15, 16, 21; John 1:13). He has done this act before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4-8).

This doctrine does not rule out, however, man's responsibility to believe in Christ. Scripture presents a tension between God's sovereignty in salvation, and man's responsibility to believe which it does not try to resolve. Both are true -- to deny man's responsibility is unbiblical and to deny God's sovereignty in salvation is also unbiblical. God uses means (ie., prayer, evangelism, preaching, etc.) and we are commanded to faithfully carry out our responsibilities (2 Timothy 2:10). However, God is the one who saves. The elect are saved by grace through faith alone. They are not saved by good works, but they are saved to do good works (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Scripture teaches two aspects to God's will. It is God's will for "all men to be saved" (1 Tim. 2:4) and, at the same time, it is his will to elect unconditionally those who will actually be saved. Unconditional election does not contradict biblical expressions of God's compassion for all people, and does not nullify sincere offers of salvation to everyone who is lost among all the peoples of the world. 1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9, and Ezekiel 18:23 are the primary texts that people use to try to prove that sovereign grace is wrong -- that the biblical doctrine that God has only chosen some for salvation is wrong. Even though we believe in unconditional, individual election, we also affirm that God does not delight in the perishing of the unrepentant, and that he has compassion on all people. Affirming the will of God to save all, while also affirming the unconditional election of some, implies that there are at least "two wills" in God, or two ways of willing. It implies that God decrees one state of affairs while also willing and teaching that a different state of affairs should come to pass (Scriptural examples of the two wills of God: Acts 2:23; Acts 4:27-28; Revelation 17:16-17). On one hand there is the revealed will of God (His commands, His will of desire, or that in which He delights). On the other hand there is the sovereign will of God (His sovereign, foreordained will or His will of decree). God calls all unto Himself with a sincere desire, but

He has sovereignly, unconditionally selected some to effectively call unto Himself. God genuinely offers eternal life to all, but all refuse to repent except the elect.

Limited or Particular Atonement (Sufficient For All, But Especially Intended For The Elect)

1 Timothy 4:10; 1 John 2:2; John 10:11, 14-15; 17:6, 9; Ephesians 5:25

Jesus died to save the elect. He died in a general sense for the sins of all mankind, but his accomplishment is only applied to the elect. In other words, Jesus died for everyone (elect and non-elect, 2 Peter 2:1). The price was paid for all. His shed blood (his wrath-removing sacrifice) was sufficient for all of mankind. However, the purchase price is not put on the account of any, but the elect. Because of God's general love for all of mankind (common grace) Jesus died for all and the offer of salvation through Christ is made to all. However, because of God's special love for His chosen ones, Jesus died so that the elect would actually experience salvation. According to the Bible, God does not love everyone the same way; He does not act toward all with the same amount of grace; He shows mercy and compassion to some, but not in the same degree to all. Most will experience his wrath. (John 17:9; Romans 9:10-24; Matthew 7:13-14) Only those who believe have Christ's righteousness credited to them (and of course only the elect will believe). No one (not even one of the elect) is saved until he is justified. Christ's redemption is credited to the account of a sinner when that sinner repents and not until.

Irresistible Grace (the Efficacious Call of God)

John 6:35-40, 44-45, 65; 2 Timothy 1:9; 2:25-26; Acts 9:1-6; 16:14

This is also referred to by theologians as the efficacious call or inward call of God. When the outward call or invitation is given by the evangelist the elect respond. They respond because of the inward call of the Holy Spirit. God works in the stubborn hearts of the elect until they repent. He doesn't stop until they respond in surrender and faith. It is in that sense irresistible. God does not drag people into something they do not choose. He causes them to want to choose Him. He moves in their hearts until they surrender. He makes them want to come to Him. He influences their wills unto repentance. He supernaturally draws them unto Himself. Apart from the irresistible grace of God, no one would be saved. All the "whosoever wills" in the Bible must be understood in light of total depravity. Only those who are graciously drawn unto repentance will be saved. When tempted to question the fairness of this truth, ask yourself this question: "What could God possibly do to sinners who deserve hell that would be unfair?" Rather than ask why God doesn't choose to save all, ask why He chooses to save any. It's only because of His grace. We deserve wrath. Praise the Lord for irresistible, efficacious grace.

Perseverance of the Saints (Eternal Security)

Philippians 1:6; John 10:27-29; 1 Peter 1:3-5; Romans 8:28-39; 9:16; 11:6, 29; Jude 1, 24

Perseverance of the saints is a doctrine which states that the saints (those whom God has set apart unto salvation) will remain in God's hands until they are glorified. God won't stop until He has His own in heaven with Him. The elect cannot lose their salvation. The saints are eternally secure. However, the way the saints know they are saints is that they see the obvious signs of God's grace in their lives. The reality of their salvation is demonstrated by fruit of the Spirit in their lives (Colossians 1:21-23; 2 Peter 1:5-11). What God began in eternity past will most certainly be completed – our salvation.

Conclusion:

The doctrines of sovereign grace put all the credit where it belongs. We can take no credit for our salvation. We don't deserve it. We can't merit it. We would have died in our sins if God had not intervened in His grace. We chose God because God first chose us. We are truly the chosen ones or the elect. We are the recipients of God's sovereign grace. We will be forever grateful and will glorify God for all of eternity for our salvation totally by His grace. All the glory goes to God!