



The Five Points of Calvinism

“Reformed Theology” is commonly associated with the doctrinal views held and taught by John Calvin, a 16th century leader of the Protestant Reformation. For this reason, “Reformed theology” is often called “Calvinism.” This is misleading because John Calvin derived his views from the Scriptures. He also demonstrated that these doctrinal positions were also believed and expressed by the best teachers in the history of the Christian Church, e.g. Augustine. The so-called “Five Points of Calvinism” were, in fact, a refutation of five major doctrinal errors held by Jacob Arminius (popularly called “Arminianism”). These errors were dealt with by the Synod of Dort (1618-19), some 70 years after Calvin’s death. They certainly do not represent *all* that Reformed theology teaches, but they *do* give a good representation of the Reformed doctrine of salvation. We may sum up all that is given below by simply saying: “*Reformed theology teaches that God saves sinners. A person does not and cannot save himself.*” The “Five Points of Calvinism” (popularly presently by the acrostic “TULIP”) show why this is true and how God does, indeed, save sinners by His grace alone.” Keep in mind that the great center of these teachings is the sovereignty of God.

T: Total Depravity

U: Unconditional Election

L: Limited Atonement

I: Irresistible Grace

P: Perseverance of the Saints

Total depravity

“Man, by his fall into a state of sin, has wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as, a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.”
(Westminster Confession of Faith, IX:3)

Scripture Proof:

1 Corinthians 2:14:

“...the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

Genesis 2:17:

“but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Genesis 6:5:

“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

Romans 5:12:

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.”

Ephesians 2:1-3:

“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”

Romans 3:10-12:

“As it is written: There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.”

John 3:19:

“And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

Unconditional election

By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.

These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, has chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving Him thereunto; and all to the praise of His glorious grace.

As God has appointed the elect unto glory, so has He, by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore, they who are elected being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ; are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power, through faith, unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.

The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extends or withholds mercy, as He pleases, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice.

(Westminster Confession of Faith 3:3-7)

Scripture Proof:**2 Thessalonians 2:13:**

“But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth...”

Acts 13:48:

“...as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.”

John 6:65:

“...no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.”

John 15:16:

“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit.”

Romans 9:20-24:

“But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?” Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?”

Ephesians 1:3-5, 11:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will...In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will...”

See also: Romans 9:11-13, 8:28-30, etc.

Limited atonement

Wherefore, they who are elected being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ; are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power, through faith, unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.

(Westminster Confession of Faith 3:6)

Scripture Proof:

Isaiah 53:11:

“He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied.

Matthew 1:21:

“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”

Matthew 20:28:

“...the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

John 10:14,15:

“I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.”

John 17:2,

“as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.”

Acts 20:28:

“...the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

Ephesians 5:25:

“Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her...”

John 15:13:

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.”

Irresistible grace

All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, He is pleased, in His appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by His Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and, by His almighty power determining them to that which is good; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace.

(Westminster Confession of Faith 10:1)

Scripture Proof:

John 3:3

“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’”

Titus 3:5:

“...not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.”

Ephesians 1:19, 20:

“...and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places”

1 Peter 2:9:

“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

John 5:24:

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”

Colossians 2:13:

“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses...”

Ezekiel 11:19:

“Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh...”

2 Corinthians 5:17:

“ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

Acts 16:14:

“Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.”

John 5:21:

“For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.”

Perseverance of the saints

They, whom God has accepted in His Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.

(Westminster Confession of Faith 18:1)

Scripture Proof:

John 6:37:

“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.”

John 6:47:

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.”

John 10:25-30:

“Jesus answered them, I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one.”

Romans 8:28-39:

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 11:29:

“For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.”

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