

## Why I am not a 5 Point Calvinist Dr. Normal Geisler

Total depravity  
Unconditional election  
Limited atonement  
Irresistible grace  
Preservation of the saints

Ephesians 2:1-5

Man is so totally depraved and he cannot even understand the gospel or receive the gospel. He is dead.

### **T- Total depravity**

The Calvinist believes that faith follows salvation. Salvation is a means of our getting faith. Romans 5:1, says we are justified by faith. It is faith then justification.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

Death can be explained in two ways, annihilation and separation. Death in the Bible means separation. "your sins have separated you from your God" in the OT.

Man was created in the image of God. Even the lost are created in God's image. After the flood Noah referred to the fact that man is made in the image of God. Don't kill an unsaved person because he is made in the image of God. James 3:9 says it is wrong to curse another person because he is created in the image of God. The image of God in the lost man is defaced but not erased. The 5 point Calvinist says the image of God is erased, not there. There is no capacity left to receive or understand the message of God's grace.

Genesis 3, Adam and Eve sinned. They became dead in trespasses and sins. If the moment he took the forbidden fruit (Gen 2) and Eve took it they died, they were spiritually dead.

Gen 3:9 they had already sinned. God said, "Where are you?" Adam said he heard God's voice in the garden and was afraid and hid himself. Even though Adam was spiritually dead he could still hear God. He could understand for he understood what God was saying. So, even in our fallen state the image of God is still in us, our ability to hear God is still there, our ability to respond to God is still there both, both positively and negatively, both rejecting it and accepting it. Romans 1:18, 19, unsaved people can understand and perceive the truth of God. They suppress the truth. Unsaved people can clearly see the truth of God revealed in general revelation. It is so clear in verse 20, they are without excuse. Whatever the Bible means by dead in sins, it does not mean they do not perceive the truth, it does not mean they cannot understand what God is saying to them, Adam understood what God was saying even though he was dead. Death doesn't mean annihilation, it means separation. The image of God is not erased, it is defaced. Death doesn't mean they cannot perceive the truth, they are unwilling to receive the truth. I Cor. 2:14, the natural man does not receive (DeComai Greek). It means welcome. He perceives it, but is eternally condemned for rejecting it. He understands it in his mind, he rejects it in his heart.

### **U- Unconditional election**

God has elected us. Eph 1, Paul writes to the church at Ephesus in verses 3-4 "chose us in him before the foundation of the world."

Romans 8:29, I Peter 1:2. Even Christ was set aside as the Lamb (Rev 13:8) before the foundation of world (Acts 2). The Bible teaches election and predestination.

Calvinists says it is unconditional on God's part. There is no condition for giving it. and on man's part, there is no condition for receiving it. The moderate view is there is no condition for God's giving it, it is given by grace.

There is one condition for receiving it and it is called faith. The 5 pt. view says that God from all eternity decided who would be saved and he selected

only some even though they were unwilling and rebellious and he regenerated independent of their faith. They couldn't believe and they wouldn't believe. He

regenerated them and saved them apart from and in spite of their act of rejecting this message.

Romans 8:29 "predestined" God foreknew the people that were predestined. I Peter 1:2 "elect according to the foreknowledge of God." The extreme few says

that God chooses some people to be saved apart from his foreknowledge of who will believe.

The moderate view says that God chooses in accordance with his

foreknowledge of who would believe. In other words, does God just pick out people in spite of the fact that they are going to believe or disbelieve?

Or does he choose people knowing that they will receive the message of salvation?

The reason I am not a 5 point Calvinist is I don't believe that unconditional election is unconditional from the standpoint of the receiver. It is only

unconditional from the standpoint of the giver. For example, if I decide to give you a million dollars out of the goodness of my heart without any strings

attached because you worked for me, but because I just want to out of the generosity of my heart give you that money, that's an unconditional gift. But you

do have to do one thing to get it, you have to receive the gift. I can offer the million dollars and you still don't have it. You have to reach out and get it.

The gift is unconditional from the standpoint of the giver but it is conditioned on the reception of the receiver. You must receive it to get the gift.

Unconditional election from the viewpoint of the extreme Calvinist there is not even any condition for you receiving it. You don't have to believe to receive it.

In fact, you can't believe you're so totally depraved you can't understand it and you can't receive it. It is something God has to impart in you and then once

he gives you salvation then you are able to believe after that. The Bible doesn't teach this for you must "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."

(Acts 16:31). Constantly Jesus said, he who believes on the Son shall be saved the wrath of God shall not abide on him.

Romans 6:23, the result of sin is death but salvation is a gift of God, and a gift must be received.

And if we don't receive the gift it doesn't matter how

unconditional the giver was, it doesn't matter how gracious he was, you're not going to be saved.

John 1:10-12. How do you get salvation, you must receive it, you must accept it, you must make an act of faith to receive the gift. John 1:13 points out this did

not come out of your will, this came out of God's gracious will, for it came through your will.

For by grace are you saved through faith (Eph 2:8). While salvation

doesn't proceed out of the will of God, I didn't seek him first. I love him because he loved me. I seek him because he first sought me. But it is a mistake to

say that while that is true, it is a mistake to say that we didn't receive the gift that he gave. The Calvinist says well then who gets credit for salvation. If it's depending on you receiving it, then you get credit for receiving it. That is like saying someone gave you 10 million dollars and you get credit because you took the gift. I would think that the person who gave the gift would get credit for the gift. The person who received it was just impoverished, he was incapable of making that, of attaining that, he was only capable of receiving it. We bless the giver for the gift, not the receiver. The receiver is the beggar who takes the handout from God saying I am poor, I am impoverished in myself and I am dependent on God's grace, thank you for this gracious gift of salvation.

### **L - Limited Atonement.**

Christ did not die for and pay the penalty for the sins of all mankind. Christ died only for some people called the elect, those who will be saved, those whom God chose from the foundation of the world. John Calvin did not hold this extreme view. See the book by Dr. Geisler "Chosen But Free." We believe Jesus died for the whole world. When the extreme Calvinist looks at the following verses, he takes the word "all" or "world" always to mean "some." An example is John 3:16. On face value you would say God loves everybody. For the Calvinist, God only loves the elect world. He only loves the saved world.

Romans 5:6, Christ died for the ungodly. How many people are ungodly? Just the elect or the whole world? If the whole world is ungodly and Christ died for the ungodly, then does it not follow logically that Christ died for the whole world?

2 Corinthians 5:14, Christ died for all. How can anyone look at this text and say that Christ died only for some? Yet a Calvinist can look at the word "all" and say it means "some."

1 Timothy 2:4, the Calvinist says Christ died only for some people. The Bible says he died for all. There is one rule for interpreting the Bible, it is a very simple one. All means all, and that's all, all means all. If God desires some to be saved he would have said "some."

2 Peter 3:9, God wants everybody to be saved. How many people does God want to be saved? Some, just the elect, or everybody? He wants everybody in the world. If they are not saved what is the reason? They perceived but not received. Jesus came unto his own but they refused to receive.

1 John 2:1-2. Whose sins did Christ die for? Just the elect? The Calvinist says he died for the Christian world.

How do you interpret what someone means by a word? You look at the context. You look at the broader context. 1 John 2:15. John defines what he means by world. He couldn't possibly mean Christian world. John says we are not to love the world. Does that mean we are not to love the elect? He defines world in verse 16. He couldn't mean the elect because he puts the world as opposed to God. The elect are not those opposed to God. The whole Bible teaches that God so loved the world. For the Calvinist to say that Christ died only for some people (Limited Atonement), that Christ did not die for all people is contrary to the Bible and is contrary to the nature of God as love. The Bible teaches that God is all-loving. Even the

5 point Calvinist believes that God is all just, that he is so just he cannot look on sin, it is impossible for God to lie. Habakkuk 1:13 says that he cannot look with approval on sin. Hebrews 6:18 says it is impossible for him to utter falsehood. Titus 1:2 he cannot lie. Romans 3:4, let God be true and every man a liar. The Bible says there are some things that God just can't do. His nature will not allow him. His nature will not allow him to overlook sin. The Bible also says that by nature God is love. If God is by nature all just, because he is just, then he must be all just, then God by nature must be all loving because he is love. I John 4:16, God is love. Not that he has love, or has love for some, he is love. If he is all loving, he must love all. You cannot be all-loving and just love some. You cannot be all loving and not love all people. Here is what a five point Calvinist really believes. A farmer had a pond and the neighborhood boys wanted to swim there and the farmer did not want them to drown. So he put up a fence and put up a sign, "Don't swim." One day he was driving back in his field and three neighborhood boys were in the pond and drowning. The farmer pulled up to the pond on his tractor, folded his arms, pointed up to the sign says don't swim here. You're swimming here and you deserve to drown. He folded his arms and watched all three boys drown. Would anyone say that was a loving person? That is precisely what the five point Calvinist believes God can and would have done. Because God gave his law, we disobeyed his law and we all deserve to go to hell, and God didn't have to try to save anyone. They are half right. God is just, God has a law, we disobey his law, and we justly take the consequences of our sin. But the other half is a tragic error. The Calvinist is half right in saying that God is just and we are justly condemned, they are totally wrong in saying that God is not so loving he does not want to do anything about it and try and rescue those people. Any farmer who had a fence and a sign like that and would stand there and watch three people drown, may be all just but he is not all-loving. The God of the Bible is both. The extreme Calvinist says what actually happened was this. Everything in the story is the same up to the point he sees the three boys, you saw the sign, you are justly drowning, but you in the blue suit, he throws a rope to one of the three, pulls him in, and folds his arms and watches the other two drown.

A God not all loving is not worthy of all of our love. A God who only loves some people and would not even try to rescue the other two boys is not an all loving God.

Dr. Geisler says here is what really happened. Everything in the story is the same up to the point where the farmer saw the sign and said you disobeyed it and you're drowning. But the farmer throws a rope to all three boys and he does everything he can to rescue them. One person accepts the rope and two say no thank you I can do it myself and drown. The Bible says that God is longsuffering and not willing that any should perish. God sent Christ to die for all of mankind. God sent a rope to everybody, but there are some people who refuse to accept. Because God is loving he won't force himself on anyone who will not accept his love.

## **I—Irresistible Grace**

God can use so much power on people that he can save them even against their will. He exercises his power on some in spite of the fact that they are dead and in rebellion against him.

He uses his power and irresistible grace to save them some people. Two things are wrong with this argument. One, he only uses it on some people. This is why the early church in America eventually paved the way for Unitarianism and Universalism in America. Because if you put these two premises together you have these. God can save anyone he wants to save, even against their will. The other is God loves everybody and wants to save everybody. The conclusion of these two premises is that everybody is going to be saved. If God can save anyone he wants even against their will and he is all loving and he wants to save everyone, then everybody is going to get saved. Extreme Calvinism leads to Universalism. The Bible says Universalism is false for not everybody is going to get saved.

Matthew 23:37, Jesus is pleading with Jerusalem. "But you were not willing." Jesus said I love all of you and I wanted to save all of you but you wouldn't let me. There is a loving God and there are free creatures. Love can never force someone to do something against their free choice. The Calvinist says God will force you to do things against your will. C. S. Lewis in his book "The Great Divorce" said this about heaven and hell. In the end there are only two kinds of people in the world. One says "thy will be done, O God." The other one God says to them "thy will be done." God says have it your way. That's the way it is in a free universe with a loving God. Love can't force someone against their will, it has to respect them. In Milton's Paradise Lost, Milton puts some profound words in the mouth of Satan. Satan says, "I would rather reign in hell than serve in heaven." You have the same choice that Satan had. Do you want to reign in hell and have it your way? God says, "You got it." Irresistible grace is contrary to the nature of God as love. It is contrary to the nature of human beings as free. Acts 7:51 says the grace of God can be resisted. Stephen the first Christian martyr spoke to the people who were hard-hearted. God allows us to resist his will for if he didn't he couldn't be loving, he would have to force it down our throats.

There is a passage used by Calvinists in Romans 9:13, 20, 22. It is their stronghold. This is the verse they fall back on when they say that God's grace is irresistible.

Verse 13 says Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated. It sounds like a strong Calvinistic God. It sounds like God loves some people and hates some people. He is talking about Malachi 1:2. He is not talking about the individual Jacob and the individual Esau before they were born, and that he hated one and loved the other. I've predestined one to heaven and one to hell. He is talking about the nation Jacob, Israel, and the nation Esau, which was Edom. He is talking after they had lived and after Edom had done all those things to try and kill and detour God's people from their redemptive purpose. God says "I hate that." He doesn't hate the individual person, the person of Jacob. He hated the nation of Edom for their evil deeds against Israel. He is not talking about predestination of an individual. In the second place he is talking about predestination or choice for an earthly purpose not a heavenly destination. He is talking about why did God set apart his people, Israel, and then is going to re-graft them back in. He is not talking about individual predestination, he is talking about corporate election of a nation for a temporal purpose of bringing in the Savior. The phrase "Esau have I hated" is used in the Bible to mean "love less." It doesn't mean hate. Jesus said unless a man hates his father and mother he cannot be his disciple. Love more and love less and hate seem to be two different things to us. That is not so in the Hebrew idiom. To hate meant to love less. Genesis 29:30 the context is about Jacob loving Rachael. Jacob loved Rachael more than Leah. Jacob loved one of these sisters more than the other. Verse 31 says she was hated. It is used in parallel with loved more.

The word hate means to love less. Why did God love Edom less? Because of their evil deeds. He didn't love them less because he did not want them to be saved. Hate in the context of Romans 9 means to love less to a corporate group of people, a nation, and not to an individual.

Romans 9:22. "vessels of wrath" Why is somebody a vessel of wrath or a vessel of mercy? Because of their own free choice. God endured with longsuffering, waiting for what? Waiting for them to repent (2 Peter 3:9). God is not making them a vessel of wrath, they are choosing to be a vessel of wrath.

Romans 9:15. Why does it say that God hardened Pharaoh's heart? Exodus 7:13, 14, God predicted that Pharaoh would harden his heart. Every passage after this except for a few it says that Pharaoh hardened his own heart before God hardened Pharaoh's heart. Exodus 8:19, 32. Four times it says Pharaoh hardened his heart. Then it says God hardened Pharaoh's heart. If you harden your heart against God even his loving overtures to reach you will make you more hard. You become hard because you keep rejecting him. The same sun that melts wax hardens clay. What's different, the sun or the agent receiving the rays of the sun? If you are receptive like wax to God's love it will soften your heart. If you are hard, the same love will turn you the other way. If you have ever rubbed a kitten and you were giving it loving strokes on his fur, and you looked away and kept rubbing, the kitten turned around and you were rubbing against his fur. The kitten turned the wrong way but you kept rubbing. The love of God will make some people purr but when they are turned in the wrong direction will rub their fur in the wrong way.

### **P—Perseverance of the Saints**

The Calvinist believes that if you are the elect you will persevere until the end. Whomever God regenerates will ultimately be saved. The way you will know if you are his elect is if you are faithful to his law until the end. If you are unfaithful to his law and you slip into sin, that's a proof that you were not one of the elect. All of the elect are secure but really nobody has full assurance that they are one of the elect. Two prominent Calvinist gave the illustration that they were afraid to fly on Sunday for it is a violation of God's Sabbath law. The plane might crash and they would die, this would prove they were not one of the elect. There is no assurance of salvation. For the Calvinist there is no assurance of salvation. There is security for the elect but there is no assurance that they are one of the elect. Many of the great Puritans trembled as they approached death because they weren't sure that they had been faithful enough.

There is not a Calvinist who can consistently look at unsaved people and say that God loves you and Jesus died for you, because the Calvinist does not know if he is one of the elect. A Calvinist cannot go up to an unsaved person and say I have great news for you for Christ died for you.