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A Defense of the Five Points of Calvinism



God's Sovereignty and Man's Salvation - Steve Gregg

In this presentation, Steve Gregg defends the five points of Calvinism. The first point of Calvinism is the total depravity of man. Gregg cites scriptural testimony to emphasize that salvation is entirely in God's hands as humans, being in rebellion against God, cannot contribute to their relationship with him. Gregg argues that God regenerates the elect when they hear the gospel, and those who wholeheartedly receive it know that they are among the chosen ones.

Transcript

This is lecture three. It's actually session four, because we took a couple of sessions on lecture two. In your notes, this is lecture three, and we're going to talk about A Defense of the Five Points of Calvinism.

The purpose of this lecture is to defend Calvinism. I'm not a Calvinist, obviously, and most of the lectures that remain of this series will be re-examining these same five points with a more critical approach. But it needs to be seen that the Calvinists are not just making stuff up and ignoring the Bible.

I don't believe that any serious Calvinist ignores the Bible. I think that Christians want to believe what the Bible says, and Calvinists are no exception. They believe the Bible teaches Calvinism.

You might say, well, I can think of a lot of verses that don't sound very Calvinistic, so why would they think that? The reason is because there's a lot of verses that do sound Calvinistic. This is something we just have to be aware of right at the very beginning. Some Bible verses sound like they support Calvinism.

Prima facie, on the surface, they appear to support Calvinistic ideas. Other Bible verses sound like they would refute Calvinism. Some people feel like I guess what we have to do is just decide which group of verses we're going to believe and hope the other ones will just go away.

Because there's a group of verses you can collect that support Calvinism. I count about

50 in Calvinist literature. That's a pretty large number of verses.

When you consider how many thousands of verses are in the Bible, 50 isn't a very large percentage, but it's still something. If you've got 50 proof texts for something, you've got some basis for thinking you're on the right track, if you're understanding those proof texts properly. Some people, hopefully not very many, but some people feel like, okay, I'm a Calvinist, so I'm going to pay attention to these Calvinist proof texts.

These other texts that don't sound Calvinistic, I'm just going to kind of just assume I don't understand those and ignore them for the most part because they rattle my cage too much. And it's possible to do that on the other side. There's people who decide, I don't want to be a Calvinist, I don't like Calvinism.

And when they find Calvinistic sounding proof texts, they just say, I'm not going to think about that one. And you can't study the Bible that way. You can't say, okay, here's a group of verses that sound Calvinistic, here's a group that sound that's not.

I like these ones better, so I'm going to pretend these ones aren't there. If you're going to be a responsible Bible student, you have to make sense of all, the whole counsel of God. Everything God said has got to fit a particular paradigm that is in fact the truth.

And if you find two divergent viewpoints that all have Bible verses in their support, somebody's just not understanding some verses the right way. In my opinion, since I'm not a Calvinist, I think that these Calvinist proof texts are not being properly interpreted by the Calvinists. They would say the opposite and say that I'm not doing so.

So our task is to look at these verses, see what is being claimed about them by the Calvinists, and then find out if this is really what those verses are saying. And see other verses and see if they give us some insight into these and so forth. Comparing scripture to scripture is always going to be the best way to decide what the scripture is intending to get across.

And that's what we hope to do. Now if you'll even just before we start lecturing here, look at the pages of this lecture. You can see Roman numeral 1, Total Depravity.

Roman numeral 2, Unconditional Election. Roman numeral 3, Limited Atonement. You can see we're going through the five points of Calvinism.

And you can see that under each one there's quite a few Bible verses. I not only gave the references, but I printed out the verses as a whole, partly because it takes time to look them up and we are limited on time. So that instead of taking that, okay, turn to this verse, turn to that verse, which will slow us down by about 50% or so, I've just put the verses in the New King James right on the sheet for you.

Obviously you might want to look them up while we're talking about them. Look at

context if you feel the need to. I'm going to try to call attention to context where it's relevant to the understanding of a verse.

But for the most part, I've just given you the verses as a list that I find in the Calvinist literature. I've read a lot of Calvinist literature and I've debated a number of Calvinists and I know what verses they use for these points. And you can see there are not a few, there's a lot.

And so what I want to do in this lecture is go through this. I'm going to put on a Calvinist hat and be a Calvinist for one lecture and prove Calvinism to be true from these verses. Then in later lectures, we're going to look at these same verses and cross-examine them.

So in this lecture, I'm Steve the Calvinist. The first point of Calvinism is total depravity. This is the effect that has come on the human race because of the fall.

Man was free to do good or evil before the fall, but because of the fall, man's nature has been corrupted to the degree that he is an enemy of God at his core. He's a hater of God. He can only desire evil and not good.

To say anything less is to give man too much credit. And Christians are not right to give man much credit. In Christianity, God should have all the credit, man should get none.

Therefore, the more evil man can be painted in our theology, the more humble we're being and the more likely we are on the right track because the Bible is very unflattering toward man because man is a sinner and God hates sin. Man sins from his youth. It's in man's nature to sin.

This is so much so that man is incapable of doing even the slightest thing that would bring him closer to God. He can't repent, he can't believe, he can't do good works that are truly good in the sight of God. Therefore, he's helpless, he's dead, and he's got no hope unless God intervenes in some unilateral way.

How do we know that man is this bad? Well, we've got scriptures. As Calvinist Douglas Wilson said in *Back to Basics*, he said, Paul tells the Ephesian believers that before God made them alive, they were dead. They were not sick, not infected, not ailing, but dead.

And James White says the unregenerate are incapable of even the first move toward God, filled with enmity and hatred toward his holy standards. Now, this is not just talking about the most wicked of men. It's the unregenerate, he says.

All unregenerate, that's everyone who's not born again. Everyone who's not one of the elect is full of hatred toward God, full of enmity toward God, can't make the first step toward God. This is Calvinism.

Why would someone say that? Well, Genesis 6, 5 says, 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. That sounds like it totally confirms James White's statement. Men have hatred toward God.

Every thought in the imagination of their hearts is only evil continually. In Jeremiah 13, 23, Jeremiah asks this question, Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard change his spots? Then may you also do good, who are accustomed to evil. It is as impossible for an unregenerate person to do good as it is for a leopard to change his coat of spots or for a man to change the color of his skin, says Jeremiah the prophet.

Jeremiah 17, 9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Who can know it? This is the state of an unregenerate man, desperately wicked at heart. Romans 7, 18, Paul says, Because the carnal mind, by that he means the fleshly mind, by that he means the unregenerate mind, is enmity, that's hostility, against God.

Enmity means he's in a state of being an enemy of God. For it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Now notice, those who are in the flesh, this is Paul saying those who are not regenerated, those who are not born again, they cannot please God. Faith is pleasing to God. Remember Hebrews 11, 4 Without faith it's impossible to please Him.

Faith pleases God, but an unregenerate person, it's impossible, they can't please God. So they obviously can't have faith, they can't do anything that pleases God. They're incapable because, as Ephesians says, they are dead.

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, which is Satan, 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. So, if you're dead, how could you hope possibly to make any kind of decision or move toward God? Dead people can't do that. Also in Ephesians 4, 17-19 Paul says, This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart, who being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness to work all uncleanness with greediness.

So, he describes sinners as being past feeling, that is, they're desensitized to God. They've got blindness and darkness in their heart. It doesn't sound very hopeful to expect anything good out of these people.

Romans 3, 9-12 is very important. Paul says, What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged, both Jews and Greeks, that they are all under sin.

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 altogether become unprofitable. There is none who does good, no, not one.

Now, this is quite a negative laundry list describing the unbeliever. One of the significant phrases in it is, There is none who seeks after God. So, if there is none who seeks after God, then it must be God who must change them before they will seek after Him.

This is, of course, a very important passage for total depravity. John 6, 44, and also in the same chapter, verse 65. John 6, 44 and John 6, 65 says, No one can come to me, Jesus said, unless the Father who sent me draws him.

So, unless God draws you, you can't come. The unbeliever cannot get saved, cannot come to Christ, unless he is drawn by God. And I will raise him up at the last day.

And he said, Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to me unless it has been granted to him by my Father. So, it seems that it's clearly saying that a person is incapable of turning to Christ, coming to the Lord in any way, unless God is the one who's decided to draw them to Him. And it's granted to them by God, the Father.

In John 8, 44, it says, You are of your father the devil, Jesus speaking to the Pharisees, or of the Jews who are opposing him. And the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him.

When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. Okay? If they're of their father the devil, and they want what their father wants, well, they're not going to want to repent. They're not going to want to believe.

As long as they're children of the devil instead of children of God, they can't come to Christ. God has to regenerate them. They have to be born again and become children of God before they can have the desires and the emotions toward God that would be required.

John 15, 5. When Jesus is talking about the vine and the branches, he says, I'm the vine, you're the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit. Without me, you can do nothing.

Human nature is not capable of doing anything, at least anything worthwhile, without Christ. Man is totally, by his sinful fallen condition, he's incapable. This is not just total

depravity, it's total inability.

He's dead. How can he be expected to do anything? 1 Corinthians 2.14. Paul said, but the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God. Now, the natural man would be the unregenerate man.

He doesn't receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they're foolishness to him, nor can he know them, because they're spiritually discerned. Well, isn't the Gospel a spiritual thing? Then a natural man cannot receive the Gospel. An unbeliever is incapable of receiving the Gospel.

It's foolishness to him. And so, here we have this multitude of scriptural testimony to the fallen condition of man, totally corrupt, totally alienated from God, blinded. No one seeks God.

No one does good. They can't change their behavior any more than a leopard can change the spots on his skin. And what is that? That's total depravity.

And part of that, of course, is the doctrine that a person would have to be regenerated before they could have faith, because of total depravity. A person cannot do something so good as to believe in Christ or repent unless they have something added that is not in their fallen nature. Because by their fallen nature, they have all the imaginations of the heart is only evil, continually.

How can they have a good thought, a good intention, unless God intervenes, regenerates them, brings them out of darkness and light, from death into life, regenerates them, and then they can have these motions toward God, faith and repentance and so forth. And that's, you know, R.C. Sproul, for example, in Chosen by God, said the Reformed view is that before a person can choose Christ, he must be born again. And R.C. Sproul is quite correct.

That's exactly what the Reformed view is. The Arminian view is you can't be born again without faith, that you're born again because of faith. The Reformed view is no, you can't have faith without being born again.

You have to be born again first. So regeneration has to precede faith as far as the Reformed Calvinistic view is concerned. For example, look at Acts 16, 14.

Luke is telling us about Paul's ministry in Philippi, and he says, Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.

Now here she's hearing the gospel for the first time, and she heeds it. But why? Because God opened her heart. God regenerated her so that she could heed what Paul was saying.

And 1 John 5, 1, you might not see this meaning in it immediately, but if you think about it, it says, Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. And everyone who loves him who begot also loves him who has begotten him. That first line, whoever believes that Christ is the Son of God is born of God.

This suggests that you can't believe unless you are born of God. You're born of God first, and then you believe. So this is the first point, and it has abundant scriptural testimony.

Man is hopelessly sinful, hopelessly stuck in the mire of his own depravity, hopeless, incapable of changing anything about his status with God. God has to unilaterally choose to regenerate him, and then he has the possibility of becoming a believer. In fact, not only the possibility, but the inevitability.

Because God will only do this if God has chosen him. If God has chosen him, we know from one of the later points, irresistible grace will guarantee that he will be converted. So a person will either be converted guaranteed because God will unilaterally and sovereignly regenerate them, and then they'll necessarily become a Christian, or they will inevitably never become a Christian because if God doesn't choose them and doesn't regenerate them, there's no possibility of them turning to God.

Man is not at all in control in this situation. Salvation of the individual is entirely seen as God's prerogative. Man has nothing like genuine free will about the matter.

Although sometimes as a Calvinist, a person will say, well, man has compatibilist free will. He can do what he wants to within a certain range of limitations, but does not have free will about salvation. Man does not have free will about whether he will follow Christ or not.

God makes that decision. If God doesn't make the decision that he will make them do that, then he leaves them into the default condition where they can't ever possibly do that. So if you're saved or not, it's entirely God's decision.

And that brings us to the second point, election. The word election means being chosen. To elect means to choose.

And it's not just that God chooses, but he does so unconditionally. That's very important because Arminians don't deny that God chooses people. Arminians believe that people are chosen, but they believe that they're chosen conditionally upon faith.

Arminians believe that people can believe in God without first being regenerated, that the ball really is in the sinner's court. When the gospel is preached to the sinner and God commands all men everywhere to repent, the next move is for the sinner to make. Will he? Will he not? And if the sinner does repent and does believe, God includes him.

That person becomes one of the elect, but conditioned on his choices. But clearly

Calvinism doesn't allow that the man can make any such choices. He can't meet any conditions, be they ever so simple, because he's totally given over to rebellion against God and a hater of God.

God could simply say, in order to be saved, I want you to just walk across the room. Well, if that's a good work, the man wouldn't be able to do it because he's such a rebel against God. Just his rebellion, say, I would have done it, but I won't.

Now that you've asked me to, you know, because the man is so much against God that he couldn't meet any possible condition that God would lay out. And faith and repentance are not that difficult. I mean, I should say they are difficult, but they're not that complex.

You know, something can be simple and not be easy. Simple in that it's not a complex thing, but not easy because it might go against our grain. Salvation is a simple matter in a sense.

A person just has to turn around. Instead of having their back to God, turn their face to God. Instead of following this way, they need to take that fork in the road and follow God.

Simple, but not easy. In fact, Calvin says not possible even for the person who's not regenerated. God has to choose to make it happen.

But for some reason, he doesn't really want it to happen for everybody. He wants it to happen for some. And he doesn't want it to happen to everybody, partly so that the ones he chooses can really appreciate their salvation.

By contrast, it's sometimes said that if God would elect everybody, then none of us would appreciate our salvation because there wouldn't be any people in hell to contrast ourselves with. So God chooses some, but how does he decide which ones? Well, we don't really know. That's in the secret councils of his sovereign decrees.

We don't know why God chooses one and another. Reformed faith does not teach that the ones who are chosen are better people than the ones that aren't chosen. In fact, it's very clearly declared by Reformed theology that God considers nothing in the individual when he chooses.

It's unconditional. Now, they don't like it to be said that it's arbitrary because arbitrary sounds irresponsible. Like God arbitrarily chooses this one and not that one.

They say it's not arbitrary. God has his purposes. He has his reasons.

We don't know what his reasons are. It's a secret in the secret councils of God why he chose this one, not that one. But it had nothing to do with anything he saw in them.

He didn't choose this person because they were leaning his way a little more than somebody else was, or because they were humbler than somebody else was, or because they were a seeker more than someone else. None seek God. There are none that seek God.

Whatever he chooses has got to be unrelated to any good thing that he sees in the person. So those of us who see ourselves as elect are not in any way better people than people who are reprobate and doomed to go to hell. God chose some, but he considered nothing in them.

This is unconditional choice, unconditional election. Douglas Wilson said, Perhaps nothing brings our true starting point and stopping point into sharper focus than the question of who gets the credit for our conversion. Does it go to God alone, or does man in some way share the spotlight with God? Now this is how the Calvinist understands the conflict between Arminianism and Calvinism.

If Arminians say that man has something to do, like believe or repent, then man is sharing the spotlight with God. Man is sharing the credit for his own salvation. If man has anything to contribute to the relationship between himself and God, then man can boast.

He can boast that he has done something to save himself that someone else didn't do, and is therefore a better person for it. And Calvinists are very convinced that if you believe that you can or must do anything to be regenerated, then you are giving man credit. This is a humanist religion.

You are puffed up and arrogant because you think that you did something that someone else didn't do, and that's why you're saved. And so this is what Douglas Wilson is pointing out, and Calvinists in their writings do all the time, that Arminianism exalts man because it says man has free will. But Calvinism exalts God because God alone is involved in the salvation of the sinner.

The man can give no credit to himself. It's all of God. And here's some verses.

John 1.13. This is right after it says in verse 12, It then says, These people became sons of God. They were born again by being born not of the will of man, but of God. So right there, human free will is just considered and ruled out as an option.

John 6.37-40 Perhaps we shouldn't have read that last verse because it sounds like there's a condition there. But the point here is at the beginning of this passage, it says that all that the Father gives him will come to him. Notice prior to coming to him is God's giving.

It's not all who come to me, God will give to me. But rather, those who come to me will only be the ones that God has given to me. It's been God's will, not man's, that decided if we would come to him.

It's God's choice. It's God's gift to Christ. John 15.16 That certainly sounds like God did all the choosing.

This is God's unilateral choice. This is a really strong one. Acts 13.48 Notice the wording.

As many as were appointed to eternal life believed. It's not as many as believed were appointed to eternal life, as an Arminian might say. But these people who believed were ones who were appointed to believe.

This is a very, to my mind, one of the very strongest proof texts of unconditional election. In Romans 8.28-30, another strong one. Paul says, Now notice, 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.

Now notice, before the people are called or justified, they are predestined. Whom he predestined, he called. And whom he called, he justified.

This is called the golden chain of redemption. And it goes all the way to glorification. In the end, those that he justified, he also glorified.

Looking forward to the resurrection. Looking forward to the ultimate glorification when Jesus comes back. The same people that he predestined and who he called and justified are the ones that are glorified.

This is an unbroken chain from the beginning of God's predestination to the ultimate glorification of all that he predestined. That's an extremely strong Calvinistic proof text. As is Romans 9. Now this is a long bit of material here because I think this is when it comes to the specific element of unconditionalness in election, this is the strongest text.

Some of these other texts tell us there was election and predestination, but they don't say if it was entirely unconditional. They might imply it, but they don't talk about that part. Just to say that God chose some people, it leaves open well, why? And it doesn't answer that question.

It could be that there were conditions, but Romans 9 is the text above all texts that would support the notion of unconditional. There's nothing man does to influence God's choice. This is talking about Jacob and Esau in the womb of their mother, Rebekah.

It says for the children not yet being born nor having done any good or evil that the purpose of God according to election might stand not of works, but of him who calls it was said to her, the older shall serve the younger. Now the older son, they were twins, but the older firstborn was Esau. And so there's a reversal in a sense of the status in

birth order.

Usually the older would rule over the younger in the Middle Eastern family. He says the older will serve the younger. The younger will be the more prominent.

As it is written, Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated. Now this is what they were in the womb. They had not done any good or bad.

And Paul makes it very clear this is so that it might be unconditional. So that it couldn't be said that they did anything to influence God in this. It was while they're not yet born, God said the older shall serve the younger.

And he also said Jacob I have loved, Esau I have hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Is God being unequal here? Is God being unjust? Certainly not. For he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy.

And I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion. That sounds unconditional. That sounds like God's sovereign choice of who he wants to have mercy to.

And apparently not to everybody. So then, verse 16, it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. That's very similar to John 1.13, which was the first verse in this category we looked at.

They're born not of the will of man, but of God. Paul says it's not of him who wills. It's a matter of God deciding to show mercy.

You can see how these verses bolster the case for unconditional election. It says, For the scripture says to Pharaoh for this very purpose I have raised you up that I may show my power in you, that my name may be declared in all the earth. Therefore he has mercy on whom he wills, and whom he wills he hardens.

Generally what's understood here is that those he has mercy on are the elect. And the others, the ones he hardens, that's the reprobate. You will say to me then, why does he still find fault? For who has resisted his will? Now this is one of the questions we raised in our last lecture when we were talking about the Calvinist understanding of sovereignty.

If God, in fact, is involved in meticulous providence, why is man held responsible for anything? If everything I do was forenamed by God before I was born, why would he hold me accountable? Why would he reward me for doing good or punish me for doing evil? That's exactly the question Paul anticipates. He says, someone's going to say then, why does God still find fault for who has resisted his will? Everyone just does God's will after all. Why would he find fault with us? 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 long suffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy whom he had prepared beforehand for glory.

I'll tell you what, there's hardly a line in Paul that sounds more like the Westminster Confession of Faith than this passage. And the idea here is that Paul's laying out a doctrine of God's unconditional election of some. He'll have mercy on whoever he wants to have mercy on.

Others he'll harden just because he wants to. And some would say, well then that doesn't sound very fair. And Paul answers, who are you to answer against God? Just sit down and shut up.

You've got no business answering against God like this. Just deal with it. Like it or lump it, essentially.

God has the right to do what he wants to. He's like a potter in the clay. Who can complain that the potter makes from the clay what he wants to make? It's his.

That's, you can see. I'm sure if you don't believe in Calvinism your heartbeats start to go a little fast. Like, ooh, what are we going to do with that? We'll talk about that.

But let's look at Ephesians 1 verses 4-6 and also 11. Very important verses on this. Just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world.

Now I hadn't done anything before the foundation of the world, by the way. I didn't even exist yet. I didn't believe or repent or do anything, make any motions toward God before the foundation of the world.

I didn't do a thing. And yet God chose us in him before the foundation of the world. Doesn't that mean that he chose me to be saved before I did anything? Isn't that unconditional? Doesn't it have to be? 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 to the praise of the glory of his grace by which he made us accepted in the beloved and then verse 11 says 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. Now that last line is the most often quoted verse in the Bible to prove meticulous providence. God works all things according to the counsel of his own will.

Doesn't that mean that everything, isn't all things doesn't God manipulate all things according to his purposes? Isn't that meticulous? Very Calvinistic passage. First

Thessalonians 1 verses 4 through 5 Paul says knowing beloved brethren your election by God this is he's writing to the Christians I know you have been elected by God know you're chosen by God for our gospel did not come to you in word only but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and much assurance as you know what kind of men we were for your sake. Now notice we know that you are elect because we see the effects the gospel had on you.

Since God regenerates the elect when they hear the gospel and we've seen that the gospel came to you not in word only but in power and assurance and so forth and you've received it wholly wholeheartedly we know you're among the elect. You're receiving the gospel is proof that you are among those that God elected and then James I'm sorry second 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 now here's an interesting wording God from the beginning chose you for salvation through belief God chose you to believe God chose you to get saved by believing doesn't that mean that your God's choice of you was not because you believed but he chose you to believe your believing is the result of his choice his election then James 1.18 James says of his own will that is God's will he brought us forth presumably meaning regenerated us caused us to be born again of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth that we might be a kind of first fruits of his creatures the emphasis here is of his own will not man's will God's will we're born again because of God's will well if you were starting to think last night that Calvinism sounded pretty hokey you're going to have to start thinking different aren't you starts to sound pretty realistic starts to sound kind of scriptural let's look at limited atonement by the way limited atonement is the the most controversial probably of the Calvinist doctrines and there are many people who regard themselves to be four-point Calvinists and the one point they're hesitant about or reject outright is the third point limited atonement and that's because limited atonement sounds demeaning of what God accomplished through Christ when Jesus died we don't want to demean that that was an infinitely great price paid I mean that's the that's the most marvelous thing in our religion is that God died for us and we don't want to water that down we don't want to diminish it we want to give that all the glory possible and so just talk about limited atonement that Jesus didn't die for everybody he only died for the elect we always have a instinctive revulsion to the thought that's not giving enough credit to Jesus to say his atonement was limited he's eternal it's an unlimited atonement but you see as the Calvinist points out everybody believes that the atonement is limited in one way or another it's either limited in its range of persons included that is it's either just for the elect or it's limited in its power because if Arminians are correct and Jesus died for everybody well it had no effect on most people the Calvinist believes the atonement is not just a legal payment made that makes it possible for people to come and cash in their ticket and be saved it's something God did to redeem to sanctify to recover the lost and the ones who are recovered are the ones that were redeemed the ones who aren't

recovered weren't because if they were then God tried to redeem people and failed and the sovereign omnipotent God can't be such a failure he can't try to save people and fail that would make people it's God more powerful than God himself therefore it is argued the atonement does not simply provide a possibility of salvation for everybody but it provides the reality of salvation for the ones for whom it was intended and so they say it's the Arminians who have a limited view of the atonement the Arminians believe that God tried to save everybody but the atonement wasn't powerful enough didn't work for most people but Calvinist says no we give full weight to the atonement it's limited in terms of it's scope but not in terms of it's effectiveness all those for whom Christ died are redeemed and are saved that's what the Calvinist reformed view is of the limited atonement they also called it particular redemption particular redemption sounds less negative limited has sort of a negative kind of put down kind of a feeling to it but particular redemption just means that God particularly redeemed the individuals he had chosen and why die for anyone else he doesn't want them he only wants the elect if he wanted the reprobate he would have elected them too he only wants the elect why die for the others he paid the price only for those that he wanted that's the limited atonement doctrine and by the way when people say they are four point Calvinist they are just being inconsistent because once you have really bought into the first point of total depravity the others fall in a seamless logic you really can't get a razor blade between two of them because they just flow together if man is depraved in the Calvinist sense of the word then election must be of course unconditional it can't be any other way if God is unconditionally elected to save some and not others there is no sense in Jesus dying for anyone but them so limited atonement then the irresistible grace and perseverance are of course another out working of the sovereign saving purposes of God on those that he has elected the whole system stands or falls together you can't say I like point 1, 2 and 5 but points 3 and 4 no you can do that there are people who do that there are people who say they are three point Calvinist and four point Calvinist they are inconsistent R.C. Sproul likes to say you know what I call a four point Calvinist an Armenian and he's got a point he's got five five points because you can't really have any of them without having all of them now is there any scripture to support Douglas Wilson sort of lays out and by the way in the quote that's in your notes there there's a lot of references he gives in parenthesis I'm not going to read all those of course there's so many that we'd spend the rest of our time just looking all those up but I'll read what he said and of course he's got proof text references for each statement he says he died to redeem to purchase his people as his own he did not die for the possibility of justification he died to justify to put us right with God he did not die for the possibility of making propitiation he died to make propitiation to turn away the wrath of an all holy and all just God he did not die for the possibility of expiation he died to expiate to cleanse us from the guilt and pollution of our sin he did not die for the possibility of reconciliation he died to reconcile to restore our fellowship with God which had been severed by sin. Here's verses 2nd Corinthians 5:19 Paul says that is God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself not imputing their trespasses to them and has committed to us the word of

reconciliation you might say that sounds like an Arminian text he was reconciling the world to himself that sounds universal but what they point out is well the world doesn't always mean all people certainly in scripture the word the world has its various context in which it means different things and here they believe it is the world of the elect the world not just Israel but Jews and Gentiles the elect from all categories this is how the world is generally understood by the Calvinist that when Paul says he reconciled the world to himself he means not just Jewish people but Jews and Gentiles people from every nation are elect not every person not every last one but one from all some from each category and so his redemption encompassed the world not just Israel but it was only really the elect that he's talking about and notice it says he didn't die so that they could possibly be reconciled he was reconciling the world to himself in other words his death did reconcile them all that he died for therefore are reconciled and since not all people are reconciled Paul said he didn't die for everybody Hebrews 9.12 says not with the blood of goats and calves but with his own blood he entered the most holy place once for all having obtained eternal redemption not made available the possible redemption but he obtained the redemption of the elect so this is these are verses there's another one in Hebrews where it says that he with one offering himself sanctified forever those who are being perfected his death sanctified redeemed reconciled a group of people to God since not all people are redeemed and reconciled and sanctified obviously his death wasn't intended for them and there's many verses that where Jesus tells us who he died for and where Paul tells us who Jesus died for John 10.11 and in the same chapter verses 15 and 26-27 I'm going to skip around through the chapter but in John 10.11 Jesus said I'm the good shepherd the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep verse 15 as the father knows me even so I know the father and I lay down my life for the sheep but you do not believe because you are not my sheep as I said to you my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me he didn't die for the wolves he didn't even die for the goats he died for his sheep who are his sheep? the elect he died for the elect he didn't die for the bad guys he died for those that he considers to be his sheep in John 15.13 Jesus said greater love has no one than this that he laid on his life for who? his friends he died for his friends John 17.9 he's praying he says I pray for them I do not and he's talking about his disciples I do not pray for the world but for those whom you gave me for they are yours now there's no reference to the atonement here but to Christ's intercession and the argument is that Christ's high priestly role involves both his offering of the sacrifice of himself and his intercessory ministry that's what priests did and as a high priest he's a priest not for the whole world but for those that God has given him and therefore his death why would Jesus die for people he wouldn't even pray for if he's not praying for the separate why would he die for them this is what is argued Acts 20.28 Paul says to the elders of Ephesus therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the church of God which he purchased with his own blood what did he purchase with his blood the church how about Ephesians 1.7 in him we Paul's writing to Christians we have redemption through his blood the forgiveness of sins according to the

riches of his grace as we have been redeemed by his blood Ephesians 5.25 husbands love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for her for the church you see again and again the scripture says that Jesus died for his bride he died for his sheep he died for his church he died for his friends yes occasionally it says he died for the world but it's possible to understand the world not to mean every individual in the world but essentially representatives of the whole planet as opposed to just Israel see the assumption of the Old Testament is that Israel was God's chosen people and Paul's emphasizing well God's chosen don't just come from Israel they're from all over the world and so this is the scriptural support for limited atonement impressive let's look at irresistible grace or what's sometimes called the efficacious call you remember we read from Calvin that God has two calls there's the outward general call which is through the preaching of the gospel made to all people all people are called through the gospel to God but most don't respond there's another inward call that only the elect hear and when God calls them inwardly this is an effective call it's not just generic it's effective it gets the results it activates his irresistible grace it is his irresistible grace the effectual call in the elect guarantees that they will come the Westminster Confession of Faith speaking about this says all those whom God hath predestined 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 mind spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God taking away their hearts of stone and giving 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 so we have this word effectually a couple of times in this quote God's effectual call Calvin himself in the Institute to the Christian religion he wrote this there is a universal call by which God through the external preaching of the word invites all men alike even those for whom he designs the call to be a savor of death and the ground of a severe condemnation that is to say he doesn't only call the elect he outwardly calls everybody even those that he is elected to go to hell he still wants the call to go to them why they'll receive a severe condemnation for having heard it they're they're inevitably going to reject it and they would inevitably be condemned because they're sinners but their condemnation be made worse which is what God wants he wants their condemnation to be worse not not enough that they go to hell he wants them to go to hell and burn hotter because they had heard the gospel and didn't accept it of course they didn't have any opportunity accepted because they were unable to they're born that way but nonetheless it's God's desire to increase their condemnation by them knowing what he wanted from them by them hearing the gospel but that's the outward call he says there is the general call by which God invites all equally to himself through an outward preaching of the word even those whom he holds to be a savor of death I think I got a duplicate there in that quotation and as the occasion of severe condition yeah that is a duplication but then the next line says the other kind of call is special which he designs for the most part to give to the believer alone now this is interesting for the most part he

makes an exception modern Calvinist will not make this exception and Calvin makes what seems to be almost an embarrassing exception here he says God gives this effectual call usually just to the elect but not entirely no sometimes he effectually calls those who are not elect now no no modern Calvinist I know would accept this this is just what Calvin said he was working through this he's 27 years old when he wrote this after all can't have thought everything through he says this is for the most part he gives the effectual call only to the believer which by the inward illumination of his spirit he causes the preaching of the word to dwell in their hearts yet sometimes this is the exception he also causes those whom he illumines only for a time to partake of it then he justly forsakes them on account of their ungratefulness and strikes them with even greater blindness in other words there's a group out there that he actually effectually calls they really come to him genuinely because he called them through this irresistible grace but they turn out to be ungrateful and so he strikes them with greater blindness so this kind of raises questions about the perseverance thing you know well if they weren't elect why did he effectually call them and if they are elect why do they fall away you know basically what this ends up saying is there are some people who seem to really get saved by God's grace but he really hasn't elected them to be saved which raises questions well what if I'm one of those I've responded to this effectual call am I possibly one of those ones that God only does that temporarily for but he really plans to condemn me the worse because somewhere down the line I'm going to be ungrateful and be cast away a really strange line in Calvin one that I think most Calvinist would just be glad to expunge from his writings because that's just not the way Calvinism teaches today Douglas Wilson said this call is efficacious it is an effectual call all who hear it and there are many are saved so this is the irresistible grace the effectual call let's see what the scripture might say about that in favor of the Calvinist doctrine John 6.37 and also in the same chapter verses 44 and 45 Jesus said all that the father gives me will come to me sounds rather inevitable the father has elected some people and they will inevitably come to Jesus the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out no one can come to me unless the father who sent me draws him we read that before and I'll raise him up in the last day and he says it's written in the law and the prophets and they shall all be taught by God therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the father comes to me so the father has certainly elect ones that will inevitably come to him they'll be taught and learn from the father and they'll come to Christ effectually we also looked at Acts 13.48 when we're talking about unconditional election I'll bring it to your attention again when the Gentiles heard this they were glad and glorified the word of order and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed how many as many as many as were elect came to faith not one less not one more God effectually brought about faith and salvation in those that have been appointed to that Romans 8.30 moreover whom he predestined these he also called whom he called these he also justified whom he justified these he glorified now notice he predestined those that he called this is not a general call this must be the effectual call because those that he called he glorified are actually justified and then glorified notice the same number of people that are called are

the number of people that are justified so this isn't the outward call that everyone hears because not everyone is justified this has got to be the inward effectual call because they are the ones you know all that he called he justified and glorified and then you've got Philippians 2.13 for it is God who works in you to will and to do of his good pleasure that's why you come to Christ because God works in you to will and do of his good pleasure now a corollary of this irresistible grace doctrine is of course that repentance and faith are gifts from God it's not something we bring to the table there's something God gives to the elect in Acts 5.31 it says God him God has exalted to his right hand to be a prince and a savior to give repentance to Israel and the forgiveness of sins Acts 11.18 when they heard these things they became silent and they glorified God saying then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life 2 Timothy 2.25 says that the servant of the Lord must not strive but in humility he should be correcting those who are in opposition if God perhaps will grant them repentance so that they may know the truth again and again we read it God grants repentance God gives repentance likewise faith Ephesians 2.8-9 for by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God not of works lest anyone should boast faith is the gift of God Philippians 1.29 for to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him but also to suffer for his sake it has been given to you believing in him is a gift from God Hebrews 12.2 looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith 2 Peter 1.1 Peter says to those who have obtained like precious faith with us faith is something we've obtained we've received Acts 16.14 now a certain woman named Lydia we read this before heard us she was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira who worshipped God the Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul the Lord gave her the faith to become a believer and to hear what Paul had to say Acts 18.27 and when he desired to cross to Achaia that is Paul the brethren wrote I'm sorry this is actually not Paul this is Apollos the brethren wrote exhorting the disciples to receive him and when he arrived he greatly helped those who had believed through grace they believed yes but it was through grace by the grace of God that they believed God had granted them that through his grace to believe 1 Corinthians 1.30 and 31 but of him that is of God this is from God a gift you are in Christ who became for us wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification and redemption that it is written he that glories let him glory in the Lord that is we are in Christ from God if we believe in Christ and it's made us believe we are in Christ it's something that is a gift from God now I want to quickly go over the scriptures for the perseverance of the saints and then we're going to be taking a break perseverance of the saints must be distinguished from the expression eternal security not because it has to be different but it can be lots of people use eternal security to simply mean once saved always saved and that's not what Calvinism teaches I mean a Calvinist would indeed say once saved always saved unless it's Calvin having a weak moment saying well some people have the effectual call but they're end up lost with greater condemnation because of their ungratefulness but in fact many people believe in once saved always saved that don't believe what Calvinism teaches you see I was raised in a church that taught once saved always saved or eternal security but the

impression we had and I even remember questioning my youth pastor about this who was a seminary student at the time and he didn't give a good answer because this was not something that they had really worked out very well the idea was what if I'm saved now but I backslide and I hate God the rest of my life and die an unbeliever maybe even as an atheist or a satanist what if I'm a Christian when I'm young and I die an enemy of God they say well you're still saved you die saved because once you're saved you're always saved no matter what you do no matter what happens I tell this story sometimes because it illustrates how I was thinking as a Baptist when I was younger when Jimi Hendrix died another guy in the ministry and I were driving in a car in Southern California and Jimi Hendrix the news came over the radio Jimi Hendrix is dead and we were stunned because Jimi Hendrix was a young man in his 20s died of a drug overdose and we were just kind of silent for a while and I said I said wow it's hard to think that Jimi Hendrix was alive and famous and rich and powerful that was yesterday and now he's in hell and my friend was driving and he said yeah well maybe not maybe he accepted Jesus when he was a little kid I remember saying oh yeah maybe Jimi Hendrix is actually in heaven though he died a hedonist and a satanist and a man who was rejecting God maybe he accepted Jesus when he was a kid maybe he's in heaven now that's the eternal security view that Calvinists would not accept and Arminians would not accept that's the view that you just get your ticket to heaven by saying a sinner's prayer sometime anytime and then you carry that in your back pocket and no one can take that away from you no matter what you do you can become an apostate you can become a satanist doesn't matter what you do you've got your ticket and no one can take that away you're going to heaven you're in once saved you're always saved now that's not what perseverance of the saints is perseverance of the saints is if you are one of the elect God has elected you to live holy and unblameably before him in his sight your election will be demonstrated by your perseverance not only in believing but in living for Christ there's some real good quotes from various Calvinists on this point Douglas Wilson for example says if someone claims to have eternal security but lives like the devil then let him make all the claims he wants such claims do not save the Lord Jesus Christ saves and he transforms those whom he saves John Owen another Calvinist writer said our own diligent endeavor is an indispensable means of securing our salvation unless we use our diligent endeavors we cannot be saved A.W. Pink said those who persevere not in faith and holiness love and obedience will assuredly perish as if you don't persevere in faith and holiness and love and obedience you're not elect you'll perish John Piper said our final salvation is made contingent upon the subsequent obedience which comes from faith Charles Hodge famous Calvinist commentator of an earlier generation said the only evidence of our election and perseverance is a patient continuance in well doing and John Murray in his redemption accomplished and applied said we may entertain the faith of our security in Christ only as we persevere in faith and holiness to the end so you can see this is standard Calvinist doctrine a lot of people who are kind of quasi Calvinist they don't understand that they just believe Calvinism teaches once saved always saved and therefore if you're Calvinist you can live like the devil it's ok you're going to go to heaven

if you're elect Calvinism doesn't teach that Calvinism teaches that if you're saved it'll show and it'll show for the rest of your life if you live for God for a while a year, a decade, five decades, six decades and then you fall away and you don't persist in holiness and so forth you'll just show you never were elect no matter how elect you looked during those decades you were never saved because you prove it by falling away true perseverance has this irresistible grace of God working in the believer who irresistibly holds that person in Christ's under the lordship of Christ by the way I appreciate this about Calvinism because it doesn't allow people to be sloppy about obedience and holiness Armenians feel the same way there's only one small difference Armenians and Calvinists both believe that if you reject Christ later in life though you seem to serve him earlier and you die you go to hell now Calvinists say that and Armenians say that the difference is that Calvinists will say you never were saved in such a case and Armenians will say you probably were or may well have been but you lost it, you left you abandoned the faith, you apostatized and you surrendered your salvation status so Calvinists and Armenians are really pretty much the same when it comes to people who die in unbelief doesn't matter what they did when they were younger they could have been an ever so wonderful Christian or seemingly so when they were younger but if they turn against God and die in that rebellion they don't go to heaven neither the Armenian nor the Calvinist would allow that they just have a different interpretation of what that period of time really was that looked like you were really a Christian now here's some scriptures Matthew 7, 21-23 now if he had said I don't know you then we could assume these people who did wonders and practiced exorcism and prophesied in his name were truly saved at one time but had fallen away in the meantime so he says I don't know you anymore but he says I never knew you which means these people never were saved likewise 1 John 2, 19 speaking about some false teachers in the church John says they went out from us but they were not of us for if they had been of us they would have continued with us but they went out that they might be made manifest that none of them were of us apparently saying that if they were the real deal they would have stuck it out they would have persevered they didn't persevere and that proved that they weren't the real deal John 3, 16 for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life what's that got to do with perseverance well if you have everlasting life there's a certain quality of that it's divine life, it's Christ life it's going to show up in your life and it's eternal so you can't lose it how can a person say you can lose your salvation if you once had eternal life, isn't that eternal isn't that forever, how could you someday not have it then John 5, 24 Jesus said most assuredly I say to you he who hears my word and believes in him who sent me has everlasting life shall not come into judgment but has passed from death into life again if you've got it you can't lose it because it's everlasting won't come into judgment John 6, 35 Jesus said I'm the bread of life he who comes to me shall never hunger he who believes in me shall never thirst have you come to Christ and believed in him then you will never hunger or thirst ever it's eternal it's once saved always saved but in the best sense of the word you'll stay a Christian if you ever were

one and that's seemingly guaranteed John 6, 37 the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out so you come to Christ you're in for keeps he's not going to cast you out John 8, 51 most assuredly I say to you if anyone keeps my word he shall never see death John 10, 28-30 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 how could you ever lose it if God's holding you in his hand and he's greatest he's the strongest no one can snatch you from his hand John 11, 26 Jesus said whoever lives and believes in me shall never die you see there's a lot of statements about whoever believes whoever comes whoever you know eats will never be hungry will never die will never perish will never come into condemnation there's statements that are appealed to by not only Calvinists but also those who hold a more altered view of once saved always saved if you got saved once you're always saved because these verses say so Romans 8, 35-39 who shall separate us from the love of Christ shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword 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 sounds pretty secure there 1 Corinthians 1, 8 and 9 God's going to confirm you Christians to the end and he's faithful he's not going to break his promise Ephesians 4, 30 sealed? it sounds like you're hemmed in, you're sealed in there's no way out Philippians 1, 6 and 2 Timothy 2, 13 if we are faithless he remains faithful he cannot deny himself this seems to answer the question, what if we give up the faith this would almost even contradict Calvinism it would almost seem to be more the unconditional once saved always saved if we lose our faith, if we're faithless, he's still faithful it would almost sound like both Arminians and Calvinists are wrong because both Arminians and Calvinists say you have to persevere in faith to the end and Paul says if we don't have faith God's still faithful and then of course there's 1 Peter 1, 5 that we are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time the power of God, that's pretty powerful we are kept, the word kept here is a Greek word that's used elsewhere in Scripture to refer to guarding a city with an army in 2 Corinthians I think it's the last verse in chapter 10 if I'm not mistaken Paul said that when he was in Damascus Aratus the king of the Damascus kept the city trying to capture him, means he put armies around the city to not let Paul escape it's being kept as if you've got a garrison of soldiers around but we're kept by the power of God who could overcome that, we've got to be secure so now you're a Calvinist how could you not be, with such a barrage of scriptural testimony, how could you doubt any of these 5 points you can see that the Calvinist is not being careless or you know, ignoring the scripture they think they've got all the scriptures on their side and when you look at these verses, kind of sounds like they got a point, they got 5 points and they all seem to have strong scriptural support or do they of course every one of these verses has a context and context almost always is necessary to gain the correct understanding of what is being

affirmed and what is not being affirmed, anything can be taken by itself and given a variety of possible meanings now most of these verses we read, you can't really even imagine a different possible meaning probably well you know, the way Paul said it, the way Jesus said it, what can you do but just take it in the Calvinist way well that's a good question to ask, it's also a possible question to answer and that's what we're going to be doing in our remaining sessions of this series I've got one lecture each on each of the 5 points I don't know how long each lecture will take some could conceivably take more than one session, I hope not because we don't have that much time allotted but we've got a lot to cover but in each of the following sessions we're going to take one of the 5 points we're going to re-look at all the verses for that view look at them, do what we can within the time limits of course we can't really thoroughly and deeply exegete all these passages because it would just take more time than we have but we're going to do what we can to see what they are affirming and what they are not affirming in their context and then we'll look at some other verses on the same subject that seem to contradict what the Calvinist thinks on these subjects, so this is going to be interesting we'll take a break right now and keep you in suspense