

## The Deadly Flower

(T.U.L.I.P.)

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*"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—John 3:16.*

This is the Gospel message in one verse.

*"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."—I Tim. 2:3,4.*

It is God's desire that all men be saved.

*"For the grace of God that bring-eth salvation hath appeared to all men."—Titus 2:11.*

*"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."—II Pet. 3:9.*

*"And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world."—I John 2:2.*

The Bible clearly teaches that God's plan of salvation includes the whole world. In fact, in the verses we've just read, expressions like "whosoever believeth" and "all men" and "all should come" and "the whole world" are found repeatedly.

The Bible makes sense. We shouldn't try to complicate it. There is a movement, a teaching, a system of theology, that does not believe what the Bible says. The proponents of this theory explain the above verses in a different way, and their explanation does away with the all-inclusiveness of God's salvation.

Some teach that man is in a state of inability to come to the Lord unless God somehow revives or arouses him. They also say that this decision to draw the sinner or to choose him is based on God's election, God's picking him and choosing him; and since it is God's choice, it is unconditional.

They then go a step further and say that if God is only going to draw some based on His sovereign choice, His unconditional choice, then He must have only atoned for those He knew He was going to elect.

They then go a step further and say that if God chose them, if God died for them, if God is drawing them, there is absolutely nothing they can do to refuse or resist. They will have no choice but to respond to God.

They then go one step further and say that if they respond, they must endure (or they must persevere) because they have been chosen by the Lord.

This system is known in modern-day terms as Calvinism. The fathers of this system were Aurelius

Augustine and John Calvin.

At the other end of the spectrum is a movement known as Arminianism. People often ask, "Are you a Calvinist or an Arminian?" The answer is, "Neither!"

I reject both Calvinism and Arminianism because the Bible rejects them. They are systems of theology, but they are not biblical.

Are there some truths in them? Yes. But we must take the Bible at face value. Simple as they may be, we need to be sincere enough to accept plain Bible truths.

Jonathan Gordon is a missionary now in the Philippines. In a missions conference with other missionaries, he got into quite a discussion over this subject.

One fellow made a statement to Jonathan: "That's the problem with you Arminians." People like to put us in pockets: if you don't believe like this, then you must believe like this. These labels, of course, are not given in the Bible.

## **I. CALVINISM IS NOT BIBLE DOCTRINE**

Calvinism is not Bible doctrine, and neither is it Baptist doctrine. Calvinism came from Reformation theology, and it has always been at the very heart, the very core, of the denominations which came out of the Reformation.

One time I was talking to a person about Calvinism, and he asked, "What about what Aurelius Augustine said?" I thought, Who really cares? I'm more concerned about what the Apostle Paul said and what Jesus Himself said.

Augustine's salvation testimony is vague. He was an admirer of Plato. He had been called the first "real" Roman Catholic. He was wrong on baptism, wrong on the church, wrong on scriptural interpretation. He took an allegorical view of the Scriptures. He was wrong about sacraments, wrong on the Lord's Supper, wrong on merit, wrong on eternal security. Why would we think then that he would be right on this issue?

## **II. CALVINISM IS A DEADLY DOCTRINE**

I suggest further to you that Calvinism is a very deadly doctrine.

My first exposure to Calvinism came when I was a teenager. The assistant pastor of the church I attended turned out to be a Calvinist. He was teaching Calvinistic views in the adult Sunday school Bible class, and eventually he was dismissed.

I remember asking him, "What about your children? Are they elect?"

He said, "Well, I hope that God has chosen them." Can you imagine that!

Some well-meaning, very sincere people actually believe Calvinism.

A burdened church lady came to a pastor's wife about someone in her family who was not saved. The pastor's wife said something to the effect of, "Well, we're not really sure if we should pray for him to get saved. We don't know whether he's been chosen."

Sometimes during prayer time a sincere believer will pray, "Lord, sometimes we don't know how to pray, but we know that those You have chosen will come to You to be saved."

Folks, that's a wrong prayer. We do know how to pray.

*"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not*

*perish, but have everlasting life."—John 3:16.*

*"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."—I Tim. 2:3,4.*

*"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men."—Titus 2:11.*

### III. THE TULIP IS A DEADLY FLOWER

The deadly flower is the tulip—T-U-L-I-P. To form the system of philosophy or theology around this deadly flower, they've created an acrostic:

T stands for Total Depravity.

U stands for Unconditional Election.

L stand for Limited Atonement.

I stands for Irresistible Grace.

P stands for Perseverance of the Saints.

It sounds clever. It may even sound logical. Each point bases itself on the first point, then falls into a systematic order. It is supposed to magnify God. It is supposed to exalt God and His goodness. It is supposed to exalt God's grace.

I say it does just the opposite. It does not exalt the Lord. It does not exalt His goodness. And it certainly does not magnify His grace.

Some people say, "Well, I'm not a five-pointer; I just believe in four points." Some say, "Well, I'm just a two-pointer." This is clever, but it is also a fallacy!

Dr. David Cummins said in his book *This Day in Baptist History*:

**Fundamental Baptists are not two-point or five-point Calvinists any more than I would be considered a one-point Catholic because the local priest and I concur on abortion. Fundamental Baptists are biblicists. Where Calvinists or Arminians agree with the Scripture, they agree with us, but that does not mean we belong to their camp because historically Baptists have always predated both of their positions.**

Definitions are important. You ask, "Do you believe in total depravity?" Yes, but depending on your definition.

I heard a man preach a fierce and dynamic message on the radio. I thought he was really good as he talked about being born again. But toward the end of his message, he talked about how Jesus was born again when He was resurrected and how we'll be born again when we're resurrected. Come to find out this man was Herbert W. Armstrong! Did he believe in being born again? Yes, he did, but not the way I believe the Bible teaches it.

Definitions are important. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is an interesting name. It's not a church; they're not of Jesus Christ, and they're not saints. They use the King James Version of the Bible; however, they surely don't believe it the same way we believe it.

Calvinists also use terms that we may use, but they turn them in a way that is totally different in meaning.

**1. Total Depravity.** I believe in total depravity, but not in total inability. God has given all men enough light to make them responsible to choose. He holds all men responsible for their choices.

Before Jesus Christ went to the cross, He stood on the hills, looked at Jerusalem and said:

*"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."—Matt. 23:37,38.*

Jerusalem made her choice, and God held her people accountable for their choices.

God has given us enough light through preaching, through the Gospel, through creation and through revelation. The Holy Spirit is here convicting and drawing.

**2. Unconditional Election.** We reject this. Consider the Scriptures we've already read. The Bible says God wants all men everywhere to be saved. In fact, it was Jesus who said, "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (John 5:40).

The Calvinists would have us believe that men cannot come to God unless they have been drawn, picked out, chosen by the Lord.

**3. Limited Atonement.** Absolutely not! Jesus Christ died for the sins of the whole world.

*"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."—I Tim. 2:5,6.*

Jesus Christ died for all men.

*"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."—Heb. 2:9.*

Jesus Christ tasted death for every man.

*"And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."—I John 4:14.*

Jesus Christ was sent to be the Saviour of the whole world.

*"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."—Isa. 53:6.*

If all men are sinners, then Christ died for all.

**4. Irresistible Grace.** Absolutely not! Placing the word irresistible before grace is a misnomer, a paradox. It's like Christian rock music—the two just don't go together.

Grace is unmerited favor. God gives unmerited favor, and some say there are those who can do nothing to refuse it.

Many have had the opportunity to be saved. Many come into this service week after week, and they resist the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

**5. Perseverance.** Absolutely not! We do not persevere; God perseveres. We are preserved. It is Jesus our Saviour who keeps us saved.

Peter said we "are kept by the power of God" (I Pet. 1:5).

Paul said, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25).

Jesus said, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my

hand" (John 10:28).

Folks, let's embrace the Bible!

#### **IV. FIVE POINTS OF BIBLE TEACHING**

**Point 1: The lost condition of all mankind. All men are lost.**

**Point 2: The opportunity for all to repent, to trust Christ and be saved. The opportunity to be saved is available for everyone.**

**Point 3: Total atonement is available to all through the shed blood of Christ. His blood was shed for all men.**

**Point 4: The unsaved person's ability to reject Christ. All men have the ability to reject Christ (even as Adam and Eve had the ability to sin in the Garden of Eden) and turn from the Lord.**

**Point 5: The security of every believer. Someone once prayed:**

**Dear Saviour, I thank You that You were crucified with Your arms outstretched, showing You extend a welcome to everyone. I thank You that the old Devil was not allowed to tie Your hands behind Your back, nor were they just folded on Your breast, but they were outstretched wide to invite the whole world to Your heart for salvation.**

**Let's always remember: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). He didn't come to save that which was chosen but that which was lost. All men everywhere are lost, and Jesus came to save them all.**

**That's why the TULIP is such a deadly flower. An unconditional election to Heaven, a predestination to Heaven while letting others go to Hell (which simply is a predestination to Hell, even though the Calvinist doesn't like to say that), makes the God of grace a monster God. It makes God a respecter of persons, and the Bible says God is no respecter of persons.**

**In fact, there is not one biblical statement that God acts to insure salvation to a chosen few. You do find this: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish"!**

**Man is lost, and man is being reprov'd today by the Holy Spirit.**

**Some people want to pull out a theology book or see what Mr. So-and-so said on a topic, but we need to first look in the Bible. That's the only place to find the right answers.**

#### **V. THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The Bible tells us about the ministry of the Holy Spirit: "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8).

Man is lost. And God is giving him enough light to respond through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is reprov'g the world—convicting the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment that is to come.

The Holy Spirit is reprov'g, and mankind today is being drawn. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). When Jesus Christ was lifted up on that cross and died for the sins of the world, He was saying, "I am drawing all men unto Me."

*"That was the true Light [Jesus Christ], which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."—John 1:9.*

*"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."—John 6:44,45.*

The Bible says that man is lost; he is being reprov'd by the Holy Spirit; he is being drawn because Christ was lifted up. Man has enough light to respond because the Light has lightened every man that comes into the world. Since the Bible says that the Father must draw them, then God is teaching all men.

Does God have a plan for salvation? Absolutely! And His plan is found in the Bible.

*"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."—Eph. 1:11.*

God is working all things according to the counsel of His own will!

*"And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."—John 6:40.*

The will of God is for those who will believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved. He is working all things after the counsel of His own will.

God has commanded us to repent—that's a Bible command. For God to command us to do something that we don't have the ability to do would make Him a monster—like a parent who constantly forces his children to do things they can't possibly do correctly, and then laughs at them and punishes them because of it. But God has commanded all men everywhere to repent.

You say, "Has He given us the means by which we can repent?" Yes!

There are two groups of people in the world today: Jews and Gentiles. As the church age was in its beginning stages in the book of Acts, we find the apostles dealing with those two groups of people. Some were dealing with Jews only; some were dealing with Gentiles only; some were dealing with Jews and Gentiles (sometimes called Greeks).

*"Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."—Acts 5:31.*

When Jesus Christ was crucified, God gave repentance to Israel. As we move through Acts, we see more attention taken away from the Jews and given to the Gentiles.

*"When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."—Acts 11:18.*

God had granted repentance to all men through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The major problem with unconditional election is, it does not follow the Bible order. In the Bible, regeneration follows repentance; repentance does not follow regeneration. Yet those people who believe in this other system say, "Unless God quickens this person, he can't be saved!"

Wait a second. The Bible says that God never gives anybody anything until he first repents. So they do not follow the Bible order: repentance precedes regeneration.

Someone says, "That's just Universalism." No, all men everywhere are not in the family of God, not in a universal brotherhood; but all men could be saved, for it is God's plan for all to be saved!

## VI. ELECTED "IN HIM" TO SALVATION

Let's look at some crucial verses concerning election.

*"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."—Eph. 1:4.*

This verse causes a lot of trouble. The Bible does not say that He chose us before the foundation of the world, as a lot of people interpret it. It says He chose us "in him" before the foundation of the world.

The "in him" is absolutely vital and crucial. All those in Christ participate in election. "He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world."

Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." We are chosen "in him before the foundation of the world."

Someone asks, "When did we get in Christ?" When you got saved, when you trusted Christ as your Saviour.

*"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise."—Eph. 1:13.*

I was in Christ in 1967. God expands time, and He can't be bottled up in my little window of time. He transcends time. A day to the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years is as a day!

To us, but not to God, Jesus Christ was slain two thousand years ago on the cross. We date history as 1999, but Revelation 13:8 says, "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

As far as God is concerned, it was before the foundation of the world. We did not exist then, but you know what? Jesus existed before the foundation of the world. We who are saved were already in Christ—as far as the foreknowledge of God was concerned—before the foundation of the world.

When we are saved, we are in Christ. We became elect before the foundation of the world.

*"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."—I Pet. 1:2.*

It is not that God before the foundation of the world elected those who would be saved. It is that God before the foundation of the world knew who would be saved and elected them to much more than salvation.

Salvation was the beginning, but this is God before the foundation of the world knowing in His foreknowledge who would be saved. He elected us to far more than salvation. He elected us to the resurrection, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, etc.

Jesus Christ did not elect me to salvation, but He elected me at my salvation.

The fatalist will come back and say, "I was chosen." I was not; it was God's plan.

The TULIP doctrine is a deadly flower!

## **VII. MAN HAS A CHOICE**

God is drawing all men. He is extending His grace. But we still don't have to accept it. God has elected all who will repent. He wants all to repent. We live in the age of grace, and a long-suffering God is going the extra mile. His mercy is freely offered, but He will condemn all those who reject Him. And only God knows when you will have your last opportunity or when an unsaved person will have his final opportunity to be saved. Man makes the choice.

Stephen preached and got those Jewish folks so upset in Acts, chapter 7: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye" (vs. 51). Why did he rebuke them so, if they were doing what God wanted them to do by resisting Him?

Man has a choice. If he dies and goes to Hell, it's not because God has willed it but because man has rejected Christ.

The word predestination gets a lot of people nervous. It deals with God's promises to His children.

*"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."—Rom. 8:28—30.*

Notice the progression: (1) foreknowledge; (2) predestination; (3) calling; (4) justification; and (5) glorification. All of these are part of the blessing we've already talked about.

In eternity past—long before we came into being—was foreknowledge. In eternity future—somewhere out there, and only God knows when this age will conclude—is glorification.

Foreknowledge to glorification: glorification is based on justification; justification is based on calling; calling is based on predestination. But wait a second: predestination is based on foreknowledge.

God knows who will be saved. In His foreknowledge, God has predestinated all who would call upon Him to be justified and someday to be glorified. That's God plan and not difficult to understand.

Bible election is based on foreknowledge; and any modern interpretation of election that does not start with foreknowledge will lead to confusion, to misunderstanding and perhaps, though not always, to heresy.

There will be a great white throne judgment where all the unsaved dead will stand before the Lord. The books will be opened, and another book will be opened, and the unsaved will be judged from those things. God will condemn them and cast them into the lake of fire, where they will be forever and ever.

How could God condemn them if they did His will? if they weren't chosen? if they weren't elect? if they did not have the ability to be saved? God will condemn them because they have rejected His own Son. Christ settles the issue of Calvinism.

Let's not leave our great heritage. Let's intensify our fervor for souls with a compassionate heart for lost humanity.

Let's remember that we do make a difference with our parents and our families, with our friends and our neighbors. God has given us the responsibility; may we do our part in bringing others to salvation.

Let's be wary and be warned of the deadly flower, the T.U.L.I.P., of Calvinistic theology!