

**What Is Calvinism? Can Divine
Sovereignty and Human
Responsibility be Reconciled?**

9. What is Calvinism, and How Does One Reconcile Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility/Free Will?

FIVE POINTS OF CALVINISM (The T.U.L.I.P.)

The Doctrines	An Explanation
Total Depravity (Or Inability)	As a result of Adam's fall into sin, the entire human race is born with a sin nature; all of humanity is dead in trespasses and sin. Man is unable to save himself or turn to God without the enablement of the Spirit.
Unconditional Election	Because man is dead in sin, he is unable to initiate a response to God; therefore, in eternity past God elected certain people to salvation. Election and predestination are unconditional; they are not based on man's response or foreseen faith.
Limited Atonement (Or Particular Redemption)	Because God determined that certain ones should be saved as a result of God's unconditional election, He determines that Christ should die for the elect. All whom God has elected and Christ has died for will be saved.
Irresistible Grace (Or Effectual Calling)	Those whom God elected and Christ died for, God draws to Himself through irresistible grace. God enables man to willingly come to Him. When God calls, man responds.
Perseverance Of The Saints (or the Savior)	The particular ones God has elected and drawn to Himself through the Holy Spirit will persevere in faith. None whom God has elected will be lost; they are eternally secure.

* God is the sovereign Lord of the universe. He predestines and elects persons to salvation, but does so in such a way as to not violate our free will and human responsibility to repent from sin and believe in Jesus Christ for salvation.

* Resist anything that attacks the sovereignty of God. Resist anything that lessens our passion for missions and evangelism.

* Recognize a great mystery and tension exist in this area of theology.

Recommended Sources of Additional Study:

Daniel L. Akin. "Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility." *SBC Life*. April, 2006
 J.I. Packer. *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. IVP, 1991.

Major Evangelical Views of Election

	Arminianism	Calvinism	Compatibilism
Definition	Election is the conditional choice of God by which He determined who would be saved based on His foreknowledge of who will exercise faith. Election is the result of man's faith.	The unconditional and loving choice of God by which He determined who <u>must</u> believe. Election is the cause of man's faith.	The unconditional and loving choice of God by which He determined who <u>will</u> believe. Election is the cause of man's faith and yet it is consistent with free will/human responsibility.
Notable Adherent	Jacob Arminius, John Wesley, Clark Pinnock, Methodism	John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Spurgeon, RC Sproul, Presbyterianism.	Moise Amyraut, Millard J. Erickson, A.H. Strong, Danny Akin.
Historical Roots	In the early 17 th century, the Dutch pastor Arminius became convinced that Calvin was wrong. Wesley later went beyond Arminius by emphasizing <u>prevenient grace</u> .	During the reformation, Calvin followed Augustine's emphasis on God's irresistible grace, man's sin nature, and predestination. Calvin was succeeded by Beza, who went a step further, as did the Synod of Dort.	17 th Century and the French Saumur Academy. Starts with justification by faith rather than predestination.
Pros	Emphasizes the responsibility of man to make a choice. Also acknowledge man's depravity and helplessness without God's intervention. Most attractive aspect is its allowance for man's free will to choose. Man can also resist God's grace and thus a genuine believer is capable of losing his salvation.	Emphasizes the holiness and sovereignty of God and thus His right to make such decrees as election to salvation. Rightly emphasizes the total depravity of man and his inability to choose what is right unaided. The overriding doctrine is the absolute sovereignty of God, who is not dependent on the whim or will of man. Man cannot resist God's grace. This view is supported by a substantial amount of Scriptural evidence.	Emphasizes the holiness and sovereignty of God while at the same time preserving human responsibility. God's grace is effectual but only because God has chosen to make it so appealing to the elect that they will accept it. In other words, God enables the elect to want his grace. God works his sovereign will through the will of the elect. Strikes a balanced position between traditional Calvinism and Arminianism.
Cons	Deemphasizes God's sovereignty. By putting God in a position of dependence on the decisions of a created being, this view makes it appear that God is not in control of His universe. Also, acknowledging the doctrine of total depravity required Wesley to come up with prevenient grace, which has no basis for Scripture.	Deemphasizing man's responsibility. Seems to eclipse man's free will and thus his responsibility for his sin. Critics charge that it is fatalistic and destroys motives for evangelism. Biggest problem: apparent logical contradiction with human freedom.	Borders on semantical dodging when it distinguishes between God's rendering something certain and something necessary (God's deciding that something will happen as opposed to deciding that it must happen).
Scriptural Evidence	Central Text: No logical treatises can be found to support the Arminian Position. Thus, they appeal to the universal character of God's invitation to salvation; 1 Timothy 2:3-4 is offered as evidence that God desires all people to be saved (see also is. 55:1; Ezek. 33:11; Acts 17:30-31; 2 Peter 3:9).	Central text: Romans 9:6-14; Eph. 1:3-14; 1 Pet. 1:1-2. These text demonstrates that election is based on God's just character and his sovereignty. Therefore, he will not make an unjust decision, and he is not required to explain to man why he still finds faulty with those whom he did not chose.	Central text: taking the whole of John 6:35-71 and Romans 9-11. Erickson bases his position on the strengths of the Calvinist position and the weakness of the Arminian and is motivated by the antinomy in God's sovereignty and man's free will. The Calvinist position in most passages is given the greater weight.

Why believe in eternal security: a summation

I. Positive reasons for believing in security

1. The relation of the believer to God.
 - We are elected and called by God according to His sovereign purpose (Rom. 8:28-30).
 - We are related to His sovereign power to preserve us (Jude 24, 25).
 - We are related to Him as children (John 1:12; Rom. 8).
2. We are related as believers to Christ in death, resurrection, identification, glorification and heirship (Rom. 8).
3. We are related as believers to the Spirit in sealing, baptism, union (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:13-14).
4. Central passages – John 10:27-29; Rom. 8:28-39; Eph. 1:13-14; 1 Tim. 1:12; Heb. 13:5; Jude 24-25; 1 Peter 1:3-5.

II. Reasons for lack of assurance

1. Faulty understanding of the fact that it is God who does the saving.
2. Faulty methods of assurance at the time of salvation.
3. Doubt of God's faithfulness.
4. Lack of proper teaching on the Christian life.
5. Presence of sin in one's life.

III. Practical ways to give assurance

1. Look to the cross and use God's word.
 2. Ask questions about their experience of the Christian life.
 - a. Do you believe the gospel and trust Christ?
 - b. Do you experience remorse over sin and have a desire to please God?
 - c. Do you see any evidence of fruit in your life?
 - d. Does the Holy Spirit witness to your spirit that you are a child of God?
 - e. When you sin, do you experience the discipline of the Father?
- * By his work on the cross Jesus obtained our salvation.
* By his work in heaven Jesus maintains our salvation.