Calvinism Fact Sheet by Joel Barnes

Below are explanations of TULIP (an acronym representing Calvinism's main tenets) followed by supporting biblical texts. Remember that not all supporting texts will explicitly teach a given tenet. In such instances, the tenet of Calvinism in question will be, to borrow from an old confession, "by good and necessary consequence deduced from" the supporting texts.

Total Depravity (or Total Inability)

When Calvinists speak of man as being totally depraved, they mean that man's nature is corrupt, perverse, and sinful throughout. The adjective "total" does not mean that each sinner is as totally or completely corrupt in his actions and thoughts as it is possible for him to be. Instead, the word "total" is used to indicate that the whole of man's being has been affected by sin. The corruption extends to every part of man, his body and soul; sin has affected all (the totality) of man's faculties - his mind, his will, etc.

As a result of this inborn corruption, the natural man is totally unable to do anything spiritually good; thus, Calvinists speak of man's "total inability." The inability intended by this terminology is spiritual inability; it means that the sinner is so spiritually bankrupt that he can do nothing pertaining to his salvation. The natural man is enslaved to sin; he is a child of Satan, rebellious toward God, blind to truth, corrupt, and unable to save himself or to prepare himself for salvation.

Spiritual Deadness

Genesis 2:16-17; Psalm 51:5; Psalm 58:3; John 3:5-7; Romans 5:12; Ephesians 2:1-3; Colossians 2:13.

Darkened Minds and Corrupt Hearts

Genesis 6:5; Genesis 8:21; Ecclesiastes 9:3; Jeremiah 17:9; Mark 7:21-23; John 3:19; Romans 8:7-8; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 4:17-19; Ephesians 5:8; Titus 1:15.

Bondage to Sin and Satan

John 8:34; John 8:44; Romans 6:20; Ephesians 2:1-2; 2 Timothy 2:25-26; Titus 3:3; 1 John 3:10; 1 John 5:19.

Universal Bondage

1 Kings 8:46; 2 Chronicles 6:36; Job 15:14-16; Psalm 130:3; Psalm 143:2; Proverbs 20:9; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Ecclesiastes 7:29; Isaiah 53:6; Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:9-12; James 3:2; James 3:8; 1 John 1:8; 1 John 1:10.

Inability to Change

Job 14:4; Jeremiah 23:13; Matthew 7:16-18; Matthew 12:33; John 6:44; John 6:65; Romans 11:35-36; 1 Corinthians 2:14; 1 Corinthians 4:7; 2 Corinthians 3:5.

Unconditional Election

It would have been perfectly just for God to have left all men in their sin and misery and to have shown mercy to none. God was under no obligation whatsoever to provide salvation for anyone. It is in this context that the Bible sets forth the doctrine of election.

The doctrine of election declares that God, before the foundation of the world, chose certain individuals from among the fallen members of Adam's race to be the objects of his undeserved favor. These, and these only, he purposed to save. God could have chosen to save all men (for he had the power and

authority to do so) or he could have chosen to save none (for he was under no obligation to show mercy to any) - but he did neither. Instead, he chose to save some and to exclude others. His eternal choice of particular sinners for salvation was not based upon any foreseen act or response on the part of those selected, but was based solely on his own good pleasure and sovereign will. Thus, election was not determined by, or conditioned upon, anything that men would do, but resulted entirely from God's self-determined purpose.

Those who were not chosen for salvation were passed by and left to their own evil devices and choices. It is not within the creature's jurisdiction to call into question the justice of the creator for not choosing everyone for salvation. It is enough to know that the judge of the earth has done right. It should, however, be kept in mind that if God had not graciously chosen a people for himself and sovereignly determined to provide salvation for them and apply it to them, none would be saved. The fact that he did this for some, to the exclusion of others, is in no way unfair to the latter group, unless of course one maintains that God was under obligation to provide salvation for sinners - a position which the Bible utterly rejects.

The act of election itself saved no one; what it did was to mark out certain individuals for salvation. Consequently, the doctrine of election must not be divorced from the doctrines of human guilt, redemption, and regeneration, or else it will be distorted and misrepresented. In other words, if the Father's act of election is to be kept in its proper biblical balance and correctly understood, it must be related to the redeeming work of the Son, who gave himself to save the elect, and to the renewing work of the Spirit, who brings the elect to faith in Christ.

A Chosen People

Deuteronomy 10:14-15; Psalm 33:12; Psalm 65:4; Psalm 106:5; Haggai 2:23; Matthew 11:27; Matthew 22:14; Matthew 22:22; Matthew 22:24; Matthew 24:31; Luke 18:7; Romans 8:28-30; Romans 8:33; Romans 11:28; Colossians 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:9; Titus 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1-2; 1 Peter 2:8-9; Revelation 17:14.

Election Not Based on Foreseen Responses

Mark 13:20; John 15:16; Acts 13:48; Acts 18:27; Romans 9:11-13; Romans 9:16; Romans 10:20; 1 Corinthians 1:27-29; Philippians 1:29; Philippians 2:12-13; Ephesians 1:4; Ephesians 2:10; 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:9; James 2:5; Revelation 13:8; Revelation 17:8.

Election Precedes Salvation

Acts 13:48; Romans 11:7; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 2:10.

Election Based on Sovereign Mercy

Exodus 33:19; Deuteronomy 7:6-7; Matthew 20:15; Romans 9:10-24; Romans 11:4-6; Romans 11:33-36; Ephesians 1:5.

Limited Atonement (or Particular Redemption)

Historical or mainline Calvinism has consistently maintained that Christ's redeeming work was definite in design and accomplishment - that it was intended to render complete satisfaction for certain specified sinners, and that it actually secured salvation for these individuals and for no one else. The salvation which Christ earned for his people includes everything involved in bringing them into a right relationship with God, including the gifts of faith and repentance. Christ did not die simply to make it possible for God to pardon sinners. Neither does God leave it up to sinners to decide whether or not Christ's work will be effective. On the contrary, all for whom Christ sacrificed himself will be saved infallibly. Redemption, therefore, was designed to bring to pass God's purpose of election.

All Calvinists agree that Christ's obedience and suffering were of infinite value, and that if God had so willed, the satisfaction rendered by Christ would have saved every member of the human race. It would have required no more obedience nor any greater suffering for Christ to have secured salvation for every man, woman, and child who ever lived than it did for him to secure salvation for the elect only. But he came into the world to represent and save only those given to him by the Father. Thus, Christ's saving work was limited in that it was designed to save some and not others, but it was not limited in value, for it was of infinite worth and would have secured salvation for everyone if this had been God's intention.

The Arminians also place a limitation on the atoning work of Christ, but one of a much different nature. They hold that Christ's saving work was designed to make possible the salvation of all men on the condition that they believe, but that Christ's death in itself did not actually secure or guarantee salvation for anyone.

Since not all men will be saved as the result of Christ's redeeming work, a limitation must be admitted. Either the atonement was limited in that it was designed to secure salvation for certain sinners, but not for others, or it was limited in that it was not intended to secure salvation for any, but was designed only to make it possible for God to pardon sinners on the condition that they believe. In other words, one must limit its design either in extent (it was not intended for all) or in effectiveness (it did not secure salvation for any). As Boettner so aptly observes, for the Calvinist, the atonement "is like a narrow bridge which goes all the way across the stream; for the Arminian it is like a great wide bridge that goes only half-way across."

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Jesus Actually Saves

Matthew 1:21; Luke 19:10; Acts 5:31; Romans 3:24-25; Romans 5:8-9; Romans 5:10; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 1:3-4; Galatians 3:13; Ephesians 1:3-4; Ephesians 2:15-16; Ephesians 5:25-26; Philippians 1:29; Colossians 1:13-14; Colossians 1:21-22; 1 Timothy 1:15; Titus 2:14; Titus 3:5-6; Hebrews 9:12; Hebrews 9:14; Hebrews 13:12; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 John 1:7.

Jesus Fulfills the Eternal Covenant

John 6:35-40; John 10:11; John 10:14-18; John 10:24-29; John 17:1-11; John 17:20; John 17:24-26; Romans 5:12; Romans 5:17-19; Ephesians 1:3-12.

How Jesus Died for "All" and Yet for a Particular People)

These texts speak of Christ's saving work in general terms: John 1:9; John 1:29; John 3:16-17; John 4:42; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; 1 Timothy 2:4-6; Hebrews 2:9; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 2:1-2; 1 John 4:14.

One reason for the use of these expressions was to correct the false notion that salvation was for the Jews alone. Such phrases as "the world," "all men," "all nations," and "every creature" were used by the New Testament writers to emphatically correct this mistake. These expressions are intended to show that Christ died for all men without distinction (i.e., he died for Jews and Gentiles alike), but they are not intended to indicate that Christ died for all men without exception (i.e., he did not die for the purpose of saving each and every lost sinner).

These texts speak of Christ'ss saving work in definite terms and show that it was intended to infallibly save a particular people, namely, those given to him by the Father: Matthew 1:21; Matthew 20:28; Matthew 26:28; John 10:11; John 11:50-53; Acts 20:28; Romans 8:32-34; Ephesians 5:25-27; Hebrews 2:17; Hebrews 3:1; Hebrews 9:15; Hebrews 9:28; Revelation 5:9.

Irresistible Grace (or the Efficacious Call of the Spirit)

Although the general outward call of the gospel can be, and often is, rejected, the special inward call of the Spirit never fails

to result in the conversion of those to whom it is made. This special call is not made to all sinners, but is issued to the elect only. The Spirit is in no way dependent upon their help or cooperation for success in his work of bringing them to Christ. It is for this reason that Calvinists speak of the Spirit's call and of God's grace in saving sinners as being "efficacious," "invincible," or "irresistible." The grace which the Holy Spirit extends to the elect cannot be thwarted or refused; it never fails to bring them to true faith in Christ.

The Spirit Saves

Romans 8:14; 1 Corinthians 2:10-13; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Corinthians 3:6; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; 1 Peter 1:1-2.

The Spirit Gives New Birth

Deuteronomy 30:6; Ezekiel 11:19; Ezekiel 36:26-27; John 1:12-13; John 3:3-8; John 5:21; 2 Corinthians 5:17-18; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 2:5; Ephesians 2:10; Colossians 2:13; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:3; 1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 5:4.

The Spirit Reveals the Secrets of God

Matthew 11:25-27; Matthew 13:10-11; Matthew 13:16; Matthew 16:15-17; Luke 8:10; Luke 10:21; John 6:37; John 6:44-45; John 6:64-65; John 10:3-6; John 10:16; John 10:26-29; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 1:17-18.

The Spirit Gives Faith and Repentance

Acts 5:31; Acts 11:18; Acts 13:48; Acts 16:14; Acts 18:27; Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 1:29; 2 Timothy 2:25-26.

The Spirit Effectually Calls

Romans 1:6-7; Romans 8:30; Romans 9:23-24; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 Corinthians 1:23-31; Galatians 1:15-16; Ephesians 4:4; 2 Timothy 1:9; Hebrews 9:15; Jude 1:1; 1 Peter 1:15; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 Peter 5:10; 2 Peter 1:3; Revelation 17:14.

Salvation Given by a Sovereign God

Isaiah 55:11; John 3:27; John 17:2; Romans 9:16; 1 Corinthians 3:6-7; 1 Corinthians 4:7; Philippians 2:12-13; James 1:18; 1 John 5:20.

The Perseverance of the Saints (or the Security of Believers)

The elect are not only redeemed by Christ and renewed by the Spirit, but also kept in faith by the almighty power of God. All those who are spiritually united to Christ through regeneration are eternally secure in him. Nothing can separate them from the eternal and unchangeable love of God. They have been predestined to eternal glory and are therefore assured of heaven.

Isaiah 43:1-3; Isaiah 54:10; Jeremiah 32:40; Matthew 18:12-14; John 3:16; John 3:36; John 5:24; John 6:35-40; John 6:47; John 10:27-30; John 17:11-12; John 17:15; Romans 5:8-10; Romans 8:1; Romans 8:35-39; 1 Corinthians 1:7-9; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 2 Corinthians 4:14; 2 Corinthians 4:17; Ephesians 1:5; Ephesians 1:13-14; Ephesians 4:30; Colossians 3:3-4; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 4:18; Hebrews 9:12; Hebrews 9:15; Hebrews 10:14; Hebrews 12:28; 1 Peter 1:3-5; 1 John 2:19; 1 John 2:25; 1 John 5:4; 1 John 5:11-13; 1 John 5:20; Jude 1:1; Jude 1:24-25.

Footnotes

(1) From this point onward, unless stated otherwise, the explanations of TULIP and corresponding biblical text arrangements have been adapted from David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, and S. Lance Quinn, *The Five Points of Calvinism* (Second Edition), P and R Publishing, 2004, pp. 17-71.

(2) Further explanation adapted from James R. White, *The Potter's Freedom*, Calvary Press Publishing, 2000, pp. 135-151:

A set of three verses is often used as evidence that God wants to save all men without exception, but is unable to do so outside of their freely willing it. The three verses - the Arminian "big three" - are: Matthew 23:37; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9.

Matthew 23:37

This passage comes in the midst of the proclamation of judgment upon the leaders of the Jews. Matthew 23 contains the strongest denunciations of the scribes and Pharisees in all of the gospels.

Who, then, is "Jerusalem"? It is assumed by Arminian writers that "Jerusalem" represents individual Jews who are, therefore, capable of resisting the work and will of Christ. But upon what warrant do we leap from "Jerusalem" to "individual Jews"? The context would not lead us to conclude that this is to be taken in a universal sense. Jesus is condemning the Jewish leaders, and it is to them that he refers here. This is clearly seen in that:

1. It is to the leaders that God sent prophets.
2. It was the Jewish leaders who killed the prophets and those sent to them.
3. Jesus speaks of "your children," differentiating those to whom he is speaking from those that the Lord desired to gather together.
4. The context refers to the Jewish leaders, scribes, and Pharisees.

A vitally important point to make here is that the ones the Lord desired to gather are not the ones who were not willing! Jesus speaks to the leaders about their children that they, the leaders, would not allow him to gather. Jesus was not seeking to gather the leaders, but their children. This one consideration alone renders the passage useless for the Arminian seeking to establish freewillism. The children of the leaders would be Jews who were hindered by the Jewish leaders from hearing Christ. The "you would not" then is referring to the same men indicated by the context: The Jewish leaders who were unwilling to allow those under their authority to hear the proclamation of the Christ. This verse, then, is speaking to the same issues raised earlier in Matthew 23:13.

1 Timothy 2:4

The key to this passage, again, is the context: 1 Timothy 2:1-6.

The first appearance of the phrase "all men" comes at the end of 1 Timothy 2:1, and its meaning is unambiguous. Paul is not instructing Timothy to initiate never-ending prayer meetings where the Ephesian phone book would be opened and every single person listed therein would become the object of prayer. The very next phrase of the sentence explains Paul's meaning: "...for kings and all who are in authority." Why would Paul have to given such instructions?

We must remember that the early Christians were a persecuted people, and normally the persecution came from those in positions of power and authority. It is easy to understand why there would have to be apostolic commandments given to pray for the very ones who were using their power and authority to persecute these Christians.

Who are kings and all who are in authority? They are kinds of men, classes of men. Paul often spoke of "all men" in this fashion. For example, in Titus 2:11, when Paul speaks of the grace of God which brings salvation appearing to "all men," he clearly means all kinds of men, for the context, both before and after, speaks of kinds of men. In the previous verses Paul addresses such groups as older men (Titus 2:2), older women (Titus 2:3), younger women (Titus 2:2), older women (Titus 2:3), younger women (Titus 2:4), young men (Titus 2:6), bondslaves (Titus 2:9-10), and rulers and authorities (Titus 3:1). No one would suggest that in fact Paul is speaking of every single older man, older woman, etc.; he speaks of kinds of people within a particular group, that being the fellowship of the church. Likewise, "rulers" and "authorities" are obviously generic classifications that everyone would understand needs to be applied to specific locations in specific times.

The same kind of usage (all kinds of mean being in view) is found elsewhere in Paul, such as Titus 3:2. This should be connected to the fact that in the very commissioning of Paul, this phrase is used in a way that cannot be made universal in scope (Acts 22:15). Of course, Paul would not think that these words meant that he would witness of Christ to every single individual human being on the planet. Instead, he would have surely understood this to mean all kinds and races of men. Likewise, the allegation against Paul was that he preached to all men everywhere against the Jews and the Law and the

Temple (Acts 21:28). Paul speaks of kinds of people in other places as well (Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11). So it is perfectly consistent with the immediate and broader context of Paul's writings to recognize this use of "all men" in a generic fashion.

Returning to 1 Timothy 2, Paul then states that such prayers for all kinds of men is good and acceptable "in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." If we are consistent with the preceding context we will see "all men" here in the same manner as "all men" of the preceding verses: All kinds of men, whether rulers or kings (yes, God even saves people who used to persecute Christians, a fact Paul knew all too well). But thereis much more reason to understand Paul's statement in this way.

Almost invariably, proponents of Arminianism isolate this passage from the two verses that follow. This must happen of necessity for the questions that can be asked of the non-Reformed position based upon 1 Timothy 2:5-6 are weighty indeed. 1 Timothy 2:5 begins with the word "for," indicating the connection between the statement made in 1 Timothy 2:3-4 and the explanation in 1 Timothy 2:5-6. Why should Christians pray that all men, including kings and rulers, be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth? Because there is only one way of salvation, and without a knowledge of that truth, no man can be saved. Paul says, "...there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all." This immediately takes us into the meat of the discussion of the atonement, but for now just a few points should be made.

First, if one takes "all men" in 1 Timothy 2:4 to mean "all men individually," does it not follow that Christ of necessity must be mediator for all men as well? If one says, "Yes, Christ mediates for every single human being," does it not follow that Christ fails as mediator every times a person negates his work by their all-powerful act of free will? One could hope that no biblical scholar would ever promote such an idea, for anyone familiar with the relationship between atonement, mediation, and intercession in the book of Hebrews knows well that to make such an assertion puts the entire argument of Hebrews 7-10 on its head. For the moment, we simply point out that it is far more consistent with biblical theology to recognize that Christ mediates in behalf of the elect and perfectly saves them than it is to assert that Christ mediates for all (but fails to save all).

The second point is closely related to the first: The ransom that Christ gives in his self-sacrifice is either a saving ransom or a non-saving ransom. If it is actual and really made in behalf of all men, then inevitably all men would be saved. But we again see that it is far more consistent to recognize that the same meaning for "all men" and "all" flows through the entire passage, and when we look at the inarguably clear statements of Scripture regarding the actual intention and result of Christ's cross-work, we will see that there is no other consistent means of interpreting these words in 1 Timothy.

2 Peter 3:9

This is surely the most popular passage cited (almost never with any reference to the context) to "prove" that God could not possibly desire to save a specific people but instead desires to save every single individual person, thereby denying election and predestination.The text seems inarguably clear. But it is always good to see a text in its own context: 2 Peter 3:3-13.
Immediately one sees that unlike such passages as Ephesians 1, Romans 8-9, or John 6, this passage is not speaking about salvation as its topic. The reference to "coming to repentance" in 2 Peter 3:9 is made in passing. The topic is the coming of Christ. In the last days mockers will question the validity of his promise. Peter is explaining the reason why the coming of Christ has been delayed as long as it has. The day of the Lord, he says, will come like a thief, and it will come at God's own time.

But the next thing that stands out upon the reading of the passage is the clear identification of the audience to whom Peter is speaking. When speaking of the mockers he refers to them in the third person as "them." But everywhere else he speaks directly to his audience as the "beloved" and "you." He speaks of how his audience should behave "in holy conduct and godliness," and says that they look for the day of the Lord. He includes himself in this group in 2 Peter 3:13, where "we are looking for a new heaven and a new earth." This is vitally important, for the assumption made by the Arminian is that when 2 Peter 3:9 says the Lord is "patient toward you" that this "you" refers to everyone. Likewise, then, when it says "not wishing for any to perish" but "all to come to repentance," it is assumed that the "any" and "all" refers to anyone at all of the human race. Yet, the context indicates that the audience is quite specific. In any other passage of Scripture the interpreter would realize that we must decide who the "you" refers to and use this to limit the "any" and "all" of 2 Peter 3:9. For some reason, that simple and fundamental necessity is overlooked when this passage is cited.

2 Peter 1:1-3 tells us the specific identity of the audience to whom Peter is writing. Peter writes to a specific group, not to all of mankind. “To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours.” This surely limits the context to the saved, for they have received this faith “by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ”. There is nothing in 2 Peter 3 that indicates a change in audience, and much to tell us the audience remains exactly the same.

Since this is so, it becomes quite clear that the Arminian is badly misusing this passage by ignoring what Peter is really saying. The patience of the Lord is displayed toward his elect people (the “you” of 2 Peter 3:9). Therefore, the “not wishing any to perish” must be limited to the same group already in view: The elect. In the same way, the “all to come to repentance” must be the very same group. In essence Peter is saying the coming of the Lord has been delayed so that all the elect of God can be gathered in. Any modern Christian lives and knows Christ solely because God’s purpose has been to gather in his election down throughthe ages to this present day. There is no reason to expand the context of the passage into a universal proclamation of a desire on God’s part that every single person come to repentance. Instead, it is clearly his plan and his will that all the elect come to repentance, and they most assuredly will do so.

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