

## REDISCOVERING TULIP



### 1. T = TOTAL DEPRAVITY

1.1. What this doctrine teaches = We are born with every aspect of our natures (mind, will and emotions) corrupted by sin (Psa 51:5). The “total” refers to the fact that it is more than just our will and emotions which have been affected by sin (a position with Thomas Aquinas and the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church). It is instead our entire “heart” (Jer 17:9) – a term used in Scripture to refer to our entire nature (Gen 6:5 = thoughts, Gen 6:6 = emotions, Gen 8:21 = will).

Incorrect understandings of this doctrine (and their erroneous interpretations of selected Scripture):

1.1.1. People are as bad as they could be (Isa 64:6) Correct Interpretation?

1.1.2. People are incapable of doing anything good or turning from sin (Jer 13:23; Mat 7:17-18; Rom 3:10-18 ) Correct Interpretation?

1.1.3. People are incapable of expressing faith in Christ/God (“Dead men can’t have faith” - Eph 2:1-3 w/8-9; 1Co 12:3) Correct Interpretation?

1.1.4. People cannot discern/understand/value spiritual truth (1Co 2:14-16) Correct Interpretation?

Total Depravity DOES NOT therefore teach that all people are as bad as they could be or totally incapable of doing anything for God. They instead know what is right and have the ability to turn from their sin and submit to God (Deu 30:11-14 w/Rom 10:5-13; also Rom 2:14-15). This is what establishes our culpability/responsibility before God. We *have* the ability, but we refuse to act on it (Rom 1:19-21, 2:4-11). It is the difference between “will not” versus “cannot” (e.g. demanding sobriety from a person addicted to alcohol versus demanding pushups from a person born without arms).

1.2. For anyone therefore to be saved, requires an intervention – or violation of their will by God. Herein is where we see the amazing mercy/grace of God in salvation. He doesn’t help people who can’t help themselves, but who can – but refuse. This is the point Paul makes in Romans when referring to the sacrifice of Christ (Rom 5:7-8).

How God helps us get to the place of coming to Christ = by granting to us the gift of repentance (2Ti 2:24-26; Act 11:18).

Other terms used to express this:

1.2.1. Calling (Rom 1:6-7, 11:29; 1Co 1:18-31; Gal 1:6, 15; Eph 1:18, 4:1; 1Ti 6:12; 2Ti 1:9; 1Pe 2:9, 5:10; 2Pe 1:3)

1.2.2. Opening their heart (Act 16:14)

1.2.3. Cut to the heart (Act 2:36-37)

1.2.4. Grace (2Co 6:1)

1.2.5. Being drawn (by the Father) (Joh 6:44)

### 2. U = UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

2.1. What the doctrine teaches = Before God created, He chose those who would go to heaven (and by default, Hell) based on nothing worthy He perceived about those individuals, no obligation He possessed to those individuals (or others), but based instead solely on His free and sovereign mercy.

2.2. The Biblical problem with this doctrine = This is NOT how the term “election” or “chosen” is used when speaking about God’s saving activity among people. IOW: Though the doctrine teaches what is true, the Bible’s use of such terms do not support it. This doctrine is instead supported by the fact that the Bible teaches God’s comprehensive/exhaustive sovereignty – including eternal destinies (Pro 16:4; Psa 139:16; Mat 25:34, 41).

2.3. How this word “election” (or “chosen”) is used in Scripture = To refer to those that God has called into a saving relationship w/Himself. This however does NOT necessarily refer to all those God has chosen to someday be in heaven.

2.4. Biblical support:

2.4.1. Scripture uses these terms (elect/chosen) to refer to the unbelieving/rebellious Jewish people (e.g. Isa 43:20-28)

2.4.2. Calling *is* used synonymously with election (2Pe 1:10)

2.4.3. Our “election” unto heaven (Scriptural use of the term) is said to be contingent upon our actions (versus the eternal decree of God) (2Pe 1:10-11)

2.4.4. Those called the “elect” or “chosen” are still in danger of going to Hell (1Th 1:4 w/3:5)

\*A text where we see all of the above (Rom 9:1-24 and 11:20-24, also 28-29)

2.5. Election in Scripture is therefore NOT synonymous w/God’s heavenly decree regarding who will be in heaven (i.e. not the term used to communicate that particular eternal decree of God). It again simply refers to those God has called to Himself by bringing them into saving covenant relationship (see Matt 22:1-14).

### **3. L = LIMITED ATONEMENT**

3.1. What this doctrine teaches = Christ died only for those the Father decreed would one day be in heaven (the doctrine of election). IOW: His atoning work (its efficacy) is limited/particular to them (exclusively).

3.2. The Biblical problem with this doctrine = The Bible teaches that Christ died for the Church (Act 20:28). The Church includes all the called (or “elect” according to the Bible’s use of the term). However, since it is true that those in the Church can lose their justification, it is equally true that Christ’s atoning work/death was shed for more than just those who end up in heaven (e.g. the apostate; Consider - Heb 6:6 = Cannot speak of re-crucifying Christ if His death was never for such individuals to begin with; Heb 10:26-30 = Cannot say Christ’s blood has been “treated as an unclean thing” if we never possessed it – i.e. its atoning efficacy).

### **4. I = IRRESISTIBLE GRACE**

4.1. What the doctrine teaches = The calling of God cannot be resisted. All He calls into saving relationship with Himself will come (Joh 6:37).

#### 4.2. Problems w/this doctrine:

4.2.1. It is oftentimes understood to mean that God’s grace continues to be irresistible. The Bible however teaches that though this is true as it relates to our initial conversion (i.e. it is monergistic); after conversion we must cooperate w/God’s grace (i.e. it is synergistic). IOW: we *can* resist/fail in re: to God’s grace and fall away (Heb 4:1-6, 10:29, 12:15; Act 7:51; Luk 7:30; Mat 21:42-43 w/Act 4:11 – “the builders” = God’s people, the builders of His kingdom, those who have rec’d His initial grace and come into covenant relationship w/Him).

4.2.2. It oftentimes is associated w/the new birth since it is believed this is necessary to put faith in Christ (i.e. the new birth precedes faith). The Bible however teaches the opposite order (Joh 3:1-5; Eph 2:5 w/8; Tit 3:5). Not only that but if people *were* born again prior to faith, this would mean that they were also (justified prior to faith) since the new birth is afforded only after justification (Act 2:38).

### **5. P = PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS**

5.1. What this doctrine teaches = Those who are the elect (the doctrine of election) will be preserved by God in this life unto eternity in heaven.

#### 5.2. Problem w/this doctrine:

5.2.1. Though the Bible DOES teach that all those God has decreed unto eternal glory will never be diminished, the Bible DOES NOT teach “once saved always saved.” As seen under pts. 2 thru 4, it is possible for those saved (i.e. in saving covenant relationship w/God) to fall away or apostasize (i.e. lose their justified/saved status). As such, a better understanding of this doctrine would be as it relates to our responsibility (in perseverance). We must persevere in faithfulness if we are to realize heaven as our future home (Mat 10:22). Additionally, we must understand that God only protects (or preserves) those who are faithful (2Ti 2:11-12; Jud 21 w/24; Heb 10:24-39; Jam 4:5-7; 1Pe 5:6-10).

5.2.2. It oftentimes views sanctification as qualitative (becoming more righteous) rather than quantitative (i.e. increased perseverance in Christ-likeness/righteousness). According to the Bible, justification produces real righteousness in us (versus simply something that is declared- or forensic, 1Co 6:11, Rev 7:14). As such, sanctification is a process of learning to persevere in the maintaining of that righteous state through a pattern of sustained faithfulness.