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The Five Points of Calvinism Considered

By David Servant

Introduction

Calvinistic theology is usually explained by focusing on the five major Calvinistic doctrines, which are: (1) Total Depravity, (2) Unconditional Election, (3) Limited Atonement, (4) Irresistible Grace and (5) Perseverance of the Saints. All five points are more or less related to each other, so that one has a hard time accepting or rejecting one point without doing the same with the other four. They are easily remembered by using the acronym TULIP.

This particular study is a refutation of the five points of Calvinism. More specifically, it is a response to a booklet titled, *TULIP: What We Believe about the Five Points of Calvinism* by John Piper.

My purpose in writing is to clearly show where Calvinism contradicts Scripture and logic, and to challenge Calvinists to consider a different position. Calvinism is flawed on at least three levels: (1) by the focus on certain “supportive” scriptures and the ignoring of scores of scriptures that clearly contradict Calvinistic interpretation of the “supportive” ones (2) by unnatural and forced interpretations of certain scriptures and (3) by faulty logic that often contradicts itself. When we take the whole balance of Scripture, accept the most natural interpretation of what is written, and maintain a logic that is consistent, we do not arrive at the five points of Calvinism.

I hope that my comments are not taken to be against Calvinists, but against the doctrines of Calvinism, because I love and respect any Calvinist whose Lord is Jesus. I have enjoyed other writings by John Piper as well as other Calvinists, and I often serve in ministry along side of Calvinistic Christians who are devoted servants of Christ. I have, however, written rather passionately on some points, because I am passionate for God’s glory. If those passionate points seem harsh, please forgive me.

Near the end of his booklet, Piper quotes legendary Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon, who said that he began as an Arminian (Arminians disagree with all five points of Calvinism), like everyone else. This is a telling remark because it is so true. No one begins as a Calvinist. They only become Calvinists as they are taught Calvinism. Piper’s own testimony is no different. He admits “many years of struggle” (p. 1, prgh. 4) before he was able to accept Calvinism. Perhaps even more difficult than the struggle to accept Calvinism is the struggle to reject it after one has struggled so hard to accept it. But it can, and has, been done.

John Piper writes, “We are open to changing any of our ideas which can be shown to contradict the truth of Scripture.” I’m glad to know that, because I am about to show how Piper’s ideas contradict the truth of Scripture. May I say that I am also open to scrutiny of

my comments by anyone who presents a logical and scriptural argument, as I too, like so many Calvinists, am sincerely desirous of understanding God's truth. Although I have given this paper to a number of Calvinists, I'm still waiting for any refutation. If you are a Calvinist who can't refute what I've written, you are not a Calvinist at all. If you cannot defend what you say you believe, you don't really believe it.

How difficult it is to truly be open to truth that challenges our long-held beliefs! May God help us all, by His grace, to comprehend His great plan of salvation.