

WEEDS and TULIPS

Is salvation the work of God alone, or of man cooperating with God? Is salvation bestowed by God's grace alone, or does man merit it through an act of self-righteousness performed by his own free will?

Church history is highlighted by confrontations on this doctrine. Those who preach salvation involves man's free will and works have ever opposed those who preach salvation by God's grace alone. Scribes and Pharisees opposed Jesus Christ and the apostles. In the fifth century, disciples of Pelagius opposed disciples of Augustine. During the Middle Ages, Roman Catholics opposed Anabaptists and, from 1517, Protestants. And from 1611, Arminians have opposed Calvinists.

The areas of disagreement in this controversy are set forth below.

SALVATION INVOLVES MAN'S "FREE WILL"

Will of Man Is Free

Mankind is influenced by sin, but not under its dominion, as all yet have free will and the ability to determine their own destiny. Anyone can of his own free will come to Christ for salvation. All men have faith, but not all will to exercise it.

Election Is Conditional

Election to salvation involves both the sinner choosing God and God choosing the sinner. God's choice was conditioned upon man's choice, as God chose in eternity past those whom He foresaw in time believing in Jesus Christ for salvation.

Every Man Is Redeemed

Jesus Christ died for every one, paying the price of redemption for them all; yet this does not guarantee their forgiveness, as many of His "redeemed" will be eventually damned because of unbelief.

Denial Confounds Grace

The sovereignty of God does not extend to His salvation, as man's will can here thwart God's purpose. God is trying to save every sinner, but He is helpless to save any sinner who will not let Him.

Some Will Lose Salvation

God cannot preserve in salvation those who of their own free will refuse to be preserved. Those believers who do not remain faithful to the very end will lose their salvation, "fall from grace," and eventually perish.

SALVATION IS BY GOD'S GRACE ALONE

Total Depravity

Mankind is spiritually dead and under the dominion of sin (Ephesians 2:1-3; John 8:34). None can of his own will come to Christ for salvation (John 5:40; 6:65). None has faith unless God graciously bestows it (Ephesians 2:8).

Unconditional Election

God the Father has graciously chosen and predestined to salvation some of our fallen (2 Thessalonians 2:13; Ephesians 1:3-6). His choice was in no way conditioned upon foreseen good or merit in the chosen ones. (John 15:16).

Limited Atonement

Jesus Christ died as the substitute of God's elect, forever redeeming and forgiving them (Isaiah 53:4-6,8b; Ephesians 1:7). He did not die for any who will die in unbelief (John 10:11,26).

Irresistible Grace

God will not be thwarted in His purpose of salvation (Daniel 4:35). Every one of His chosen and redeemed sinners shall willingly be brought to saving faith in Jesus Christ (John 6:37,45; Romans 8:29f; Psalm 110:3).

Perseverance of the Saints

God preserves in salvation all believers in Christ, and none will ever perish (John 3:16; 10:28f). He enables them to persevere to the end, so none will be lost (Jeremiah 32:40; Romans 8:35-39).

These two beliefs are identified by the acronyms WEEDS and TULIP (see underlinings above). Are you a TULIP basking in God's sovereign grace? Or are you among WEEDS boasting of self-righteousness?

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