

T.U.L.I.P.*

(The Doctrines of Sovereign Grace)

Unconditional Election

Last time in this mailer we looked at the doctrine of Total Depravity (the “T” in T.U.L.I.P.). By total depravity, we mean the Scriptural truth that the natural man, outside of Jesus Christ, is evil. He is born in sin; he is unable to do any good; he only wants to do that which is evil. By nature, man hates God to such an extent that he cannot even want to be saved, except God first work it in his heart. And this is true of all men, to the exact same degree. We are all the same when it comes to total depravity. (Romans 3:9-19; John 3:27; 1 Corinthians 4:7; Titus 3:3-7; Romans 5:8-10)

Well, the question comes: Has God left man in this condition? Is there no one, then, that is saved?

This is exactly where the gospel comes – the *gospel* of Unconditional Election (The “U” in T.U.L.I.P.).

What is unconditional election? Unconditional election is the Scriptural truth that though man has rebelled against God, and has made himself the enemy of God, God has freely chosen to save some, not based on anything He sees in us, but only out of His own good pleasure and eternal decree.

God chooses whom He saves. And God’s choice is not based on any difference He sees in us, or in any conditions we have met. It is purely of grace, purely “unmerited.”

Unconditional Election is the clear teaching of the Scriptures.

In Ephesians 1:4-5 we read this: “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.” (See also Ephesians 1:11.) In Romans 9:13-16 we read, “As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated... For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”

There are many other passages in Scripture which teach this (Deut. 7:6-8; Isaiah 45:4; John 17:9; and especially Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 2:1-10). From these passages we can see that election is of *specific*, particular persons; election took place in *eternity*; God elected individuals so that they might *actually* be saved, not just given the *possibility*.

Along with the Scriptural truth of Unconditional Election, there comes the solemn but clear Scriptural truth of Unconditional Reprobation. Unconditional Reprobation is the truth that just as God has chosen some individuals unto everlasting life, so God has chosen some individuals unto everlasting death. This is the logical outcome of the truth of election: If God has chosen some, then He quite clearly has also NOT chosen others.

Scripture is very clear when it comes to reprobation. In 1 Peter 2:8 we read: “And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.” In Romans 9:21-22: “Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.”

There are many other passages in Scripture which teach this (Proverbs 16:4; John 10:26; 1 Thessalonians 5:9; Jude 4; Revelation 13:8; Matthew 11:25-26).

Now, just as it was with the doctrine of Total Depravity, the doctrine of Unconditional Election (and Reprobation) is offensive to the natural man. It is offensive to the natural man because the natural man says, “That’s not fair!” “How is it fair of God to choose some men to save, and to choose not to save other men? And what about my freedom to choose for myself?”

Well, there are really three parts to the answer:

- First, if God were only “fair” or “just,” then NOBODY would be saved. It is only because God is also merciful that He has chosen to save some.
- Second, if God actually only “offered” salvation to men, then still NOBODY would be saved. For man by nature, as the enemy of God, would never choose this salvation for himself. It is because of God’s mercy that He doesn’t leave salvation to man’s choice, but takes care of it Himself.
- Third, in all things, we must always remember to say this: “Let God be God.” God is free to do as He pleases. As Romans 9:20 says, “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?”

What we see is that Unconditional Election is a doctrine of Sovereign Grace – it shows just how gracious God is. God didn’t have to save anyone. But in grace, He chose to send His Only-Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to die for the sins of His elect.

Now the question comes: How does God save His people?

Through the gift of faith! “And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48)

* T.U.L.I.P. is an acronym for what is commonly called the five points of Calvinism. We will be going through these doctrines topic by topic in this mailer.

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