

WHAT IS CALVINISM?

My sermon, “Paul Prays You’d Be a Calvinist” (Ephesians 1:18-19a), didn’t give much detail about the term. It was said that Calvinism covers the ideas in Ephesians about God’s power and sovereignty in salvation, such as predestination, election, redemption, substitutionary atonement, and that we were dead, but God made us alive. Also mentioned was that Ephesians tells us that faith is a gift from God. Those things are actually a pretty good summary of Calvinism. However, a more systematic definition would be as follows: Calvinism is the teaching that God is sovereign in all things, including especially salvation. God’s sovereignty in salvation is the main focus of Calvinism, which is broken down into the Five Points of Calvinism (TULIP). Another name for Calvinism is “the doctrines of grace”. In response to the erroneous Five Articles of Remonstrance (1610), these Five Heads of Doctrine (now known as the Five Points of Calvinism) were formalized at the Synod of Dort (1618-19), well after John Calvin’s death in 1564:

1. **Total Depravity** – The fall of man resulted in spiritual death, which affects all of man, including his will. Without decisive action from God, no one will believe in Christ and be saved.
(Eph 2:1,5,8-10)
2. **Unconditional Election** – God’s choice of whom He will save was determined by God before creation, apart from seeing any good in any person whom he chooses.
(Eph 1:4-6; 2:8-9)
3. **Limited Atonement** (Particular Redemption) – Christ died as a substitute for the elect, so that they will certainly be saved.
(Eph 5:2,25)
4. **Irresistible Grace** – God brings the elect to Himself in such a way that, although a person may resist, he will ultimately be saved, by regeneration of the Spirit. The regenerate person is given the gift of faith and thru faith is justified.
(Eph 1:5; 2:5,8-10)
5. **Perseverance of the Saints** – Those saved will be preserved safely by God until the Day of Judgment and they will persevere by the Holy Spirit. (Eph 1:11-13,19-23; 2:7,10,22; 5:27)