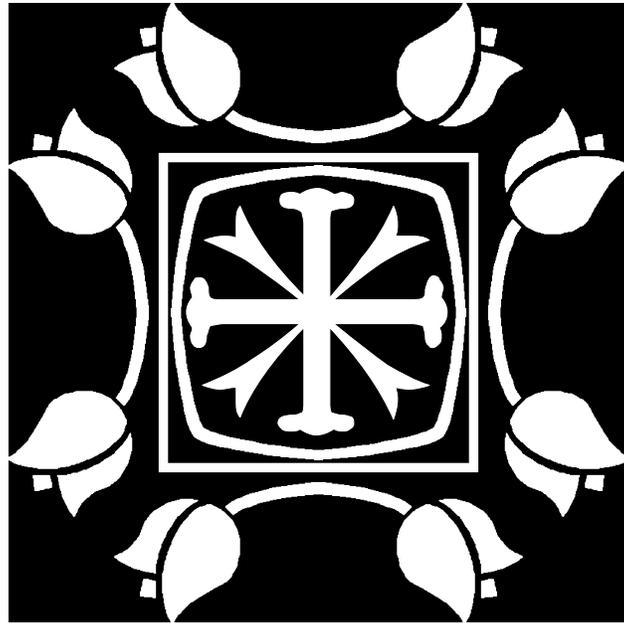


**Man's Sinfulness,  
God's Sovereignty,  
and the New Birth**



**Book T**

**TULIP SERIES**

# THE WORD OF HIS GRACE

1197 Polk Road 23

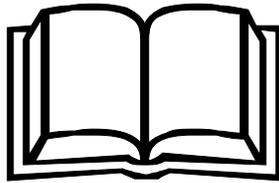
Cove, AR 71937

[www.wordofhisgrace.org](http://www.wordofhisgrace.org)

[gracealone@wordofhisgrace.org](mailto:gracealone@wordofhisgrace.org)

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

--Acts 20:32--



*Copyright © 2001, 2009 Peter Ditzel*

You may reproduce this book provided that you reproduce it in its entirety, including this copyright and permission notice, without modification of any kind; and that you receive no fee whatsoever. Also, you may link to the electronic file of this book on our website from your website, but if you wish to put the electronic file on your website, you must include on your website a prominent link back to our website.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the  
KING JAMES VERSION of the Bible.

THE LORD LOOKED DOWN FROM HEAVEN UPON THE CHILDREN OF MEN, TO SEE IF THERE WERE ANY THAT DID UNDERSTAND, AND SEEK GOD. THEY ARE ALL GONE ASIDE, THEY ARE ALL TOGETHER BECOME FILTHY: THERE IS NONE THAT DOETH GOOD, NO, NOT ONE.

These two sentences, penned by David in Psalm 14:2–3, contain some powerful ideas. They say that none of the “children of men”—no one in all of humanity—does good, not even one. Now, if you read or watch the news you might be willing to admit that there are some bad characters in the world. But can it possibly be that no one does good? that everyone has “all together become filthy”? If this is true, if additional Scriptures support it, it might revolutionize your understanding of sin and salvation and even your entire worldview!

You might react very strongly to someone who says no one does good and all are filthy or no good. After all, if someone falls in the street and a passerby helps him up, that is a good act. And we can all think of acts of kindness and charity by people of all faiths and even people of no faith.

To understand Psalm 14, we must grasp its perspective: Its perspective is that of the sinless, absolutely and perfectly righteous God looking to see if there are any who seek God. What does He see? No one does good in seeking God. They all sin. Even those who try to seek God do not meet His perfect standards of righteousness and are therefore unsuccessful.

Chances are, even though the Word of God says this (and I will cite many supporting Scriptures), this is not what is taught in churches you have attended and is, therefore, a new concept to you. I can say “chances are”

because this is not what is taught in the majority of churches today. Contrary to what was usually taught until relatively recently in the history of the church, most churches teach that people have enough goodness in them that, if stirred up by the right evangelical message, anyone can and will seek after God. This is reflected in a number of teachings and practices of various churches, most visibly in altar calls.

In churches that have altar calls, the minister delivering the message believes it is his duty to so stir the unsaved among his listeners that he will persuade them to choose Jesus Christ as their Savior (seek after God). But the Bible, as we have seen, says that no one does good in seeking God. Therefore, if no one can successfully seek God, no one can choose Jesus Christ.

You might be thinking that Psalm 14:2–3 is an obscure Scripture from the Old Testament. But, in fact, in the New Testament the apostle Paul cites this same Scripture: “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Romans 3:10–12). But how has this come about? If no one can choose Jesus Christ as Savior, how does He become one’s Savior?

### **In the Beginning**

To answer the first question as to how this has all come about, we must look back to the Creation. The Scriptures teach us that God gave Adam a command and warned of the punishment for breaking the command: “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:16–17).

Were Adam and Eve to eat of this tree, they would die. Apparently, if they did not eat of this tree, they would not die. The Serpent, Satan, lied to Eve by telling her she would not die if she ate from the tree (Genesis 3:4). Eve was taken in by Satan’s lie and ate. Adam was not deceived, but, perhaps seeing that if he did not also eat the fruit he would be alienated from his wife, he also ate (1 Timothy 2:14). So Adam and Eve ate the fruit that God had forbidden to them (Genesis 3:6). This resulted in several things.

The most obvious are: 1) they realized their nakedness (verse 7), indicating that they had lost an innocence they possessed before their disobedience; and 2) they brought the death sentence on themselves. This gives some insight into Adam and Eve’s state before their Fall—that is, their state before they ate the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Before their Fall, Adam and Eve were without sin. Not having ever sinned, they were in a state of innocence. After the Fall, Adam and Eve’s nature changed. They became sinful. This can be seen by their trying to hide their nakedness with fig leaves (verse 7). Doing so was a type of trying to cover their sins through human works. This was not effective. God had to cover their nakedness with animal skins that required the shedding of blood (verse 21), typifying the sacrifice of Christ. Adam and Eve’s sinful nature can also be seen in their hiding from God and in their not giving God a straightforward answer to His questions while blaming others for their sin (verses 8–13).

Also, before the Fall, Adam and Eve did not yet have the death sentence on them; if they had remained in their state of innocence, they would not have died.

God told Adam that he would die “in the day” he ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. But, while the sentence for physical death occurred “in the day” they sinned, did they also experience death that day?

In Matthew 8:22, Jesus calls people who are physically alive “dead.” Paul also writes:

And you hath he quickened [made alive], who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation [conduct] in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;).

Ephesians 2:1–5

So we see that, because of their sin, Adam and Eve spiritually died on the day they disobeyed. And this spiritual death is passed on to all of their descendents.

### **Spiritual Death**

Sin results in a death that reigns even while we are physically alive. In Isaiah 59:2, we find that sin separates us from God. This separation is spiritual death. When Adam and Eve sinned, they were separated from God. God sent them out of the Garden of Eden and prevented their access to the Tree of Life (Genesis 3:22–24).

Now we must ask one of the key questions in this book, a question the answer to which has tremendous significance for all humanity: Was this spiritual death that occurred in the Garden of Eden passed to Adam’s descendants? The answer is, Yes. Adam’s sin is put on the account of—imputed to—everyone, and everyone enters into physical life already spiritually dead.

King David wrote: “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psalm 51:5). If David was sinful at birth—even at conception—then that sin could not have been the

result of his own actions. Adam was the father and representative of the human race. His sin fell upon all of us. Also, because we were, so to speak, in Adam's loins when he sinned, we also sinned with him (this principle of being in someone's loins can be found in Hebrews 7:10).

This is what Paul meant when he wrote, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). Everyone was made a sinner and was condemned through Adam's sin: "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (verses 18–19). Therefore, all humans are from birth—or even conception—spiritually dead. They are spiritually separated from God and in need of being restored to spiritual fellowship with Him. This restoration of spiritual fellowship with God is often called reconciliation.

Adam and Eve had and lost immortality. All of their descendants who have not been saved through Jesus Christ possess only physical, biological life (1 John 3:15; 5:12). They are spiritually dead now—separated from God—and with their biological death their chance for salvation is gone (Ephesians 2:1, 12; Colossians 1:21; 2 Corinthians 6:2; Hebrews 3:13; 4:7; Luke 13:23–28; Matthew 13:41–43; 2 Peter 2:17; Jude 13). Therefore, with their death, they become eternally dead. This does not mean they do not have existence. Existence is not life. Life is either biological life or spiritual life (fellowship with God). The unsaved dead have neither. Although they exist in torment, they are dead because they are separated from God (Matthew 25:30–46; Mark 9:43–48; Revelation 20:15; 21:8, 27; 22:14–15). These biblical definitions of life and death help us to understand the hopeless, dead state of the natural man and thus the necessity for God's sovereign grace in man's salvation.

Saved Christians have physical life as do all people. Additionally, they have eternal life because their fellowship with God is restored; they cannot suffer eternal death, which is separation from God for eternity (John 17:3; 1 John 1:3; 5:11; Ephesians 2:13; 2 Corinthians 5:18; Colossians 1:21–22; 1 Thessalonians 4:17; 5:10; Romans 8:38–39).

### **Total Depravity**

Until someone is reconciled to God, he or she is dead in trespasses and sins, spiritually dead, separated from God, and unable to seek Him. Such a person is unable to reconcile him- or herself to God. As we

have already seen, he or she cannot even accept Jesus Christ as Savior to bring about this reconciliation. This is called inability. We are unable to save ourselves; we are even unable on our own to accept Jesus Christ as Savior.

The corruption that causes this inability is called total depravity. Total depravity means every aspect of man's nature is corrupt, and because of corruption there is nothing man can do to win or earn saving favor with God. Like physical death and spiritual death, total depravity is a part of the penalty for sin. Depravity does not cause death, but goes hand-in-hand with death as part of sin's wages.

You may have noticed that this book is called Book T. The T stands for total depravity. Total depravity is the first of the five points of Calvinism, also called the five doctrines of grace. These five points or doctrines are: Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance (sometimes called Preservation) of the Saints. The first letters of these points form the acronym TULIP, and this little book is the first in our TULIP series covering these five points.

Total depravity corrupts the image of God in man, that part of man that sets him apart from animals—his mind and rationality. Because of this corruption, we are sinners. Many people who answer altar calls are sorrowful for one or a number of sins they have committed. But they are unaware, because they have not been told, that they should be repentant of what they are—sinners. Any biblically based dictionary should contain the following definition: "Human—a sinner." We do not just commit some sins. On our own, ever since Adam sinned, we are by nature sinners.

Please don't mistake me for saying that we are not responsible for our sin. Everyone sins willingly, and is, therefore, responsible. What I am saying is that this willingness to sin is a part of our nature. But this fact that we sin by nature does not make us less culpable. Adam's choosing to sin was, in effect, the entire human race's choosing to sin. Thus, our responsibility remains even though we are unable to do anything that God would consider good. Ever since Adam, humanity is in bondage to sin, no one has any inherent righteousness, and we are to blame.

By nature, a beaver gnaws down trees, builds dams and lodges, etc. It can do nothing that is contrary to its nature as that would be contrary to its very being. Likewise, an ant does only what it can do by nature. It is unable to do what a beaver does or what a firefly does. In the same way, unless first reborn into new creatures, humans can only do what humans do by nature; and from the standpoint of the perfectly righteous God, what they do is sin. None of the things people do that from a human point of view seem to be good measure up to

God's perfect standard of righteousness. So, while someone may do good things, the doing of those things will never win him or her favor with God. Because all are sinners, everything everyone does is tainted in some way or other by sinfulness.

The natural man does not glorify God. For all his good works, his motive is wrong. Paul exhorts, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31), and, "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Romans 11:36). All that we do should be done for His glory, and if it is not—however good a work it may seem—it is sin.

In Isaiah 64:6–7 we read, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy [literally menstruous] rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities."

We have already seen that David said he was conceived in sin and born in sin. One can hardly think of any more passive actions than being conceived and born; yet David said these were sin. And such sin, even the imputed sin of Adam, causes spiritual death. I want to emphasize that this is a death, not just a sickness. Sinners are not, as some say, sick and in need of a cure. They are dead and in need of new life. More about this later.

### **Election and Calling**

Earlier, I asked, "If no one can choose Jesus Christ as Savior, how does He become one's Savior?" Briefly, the answer is, we don't choose Him, He chooses us.

We have no part in this choosing or election. It does not depend on our goodness, our cooperation, or our faith. In Romans 9, Paul is writing of God's calling or choosing or election of Jacob and rejecting of Esau before they were even born: "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth" (verse 11).

To His disciples, Jesus said, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you...I have chosen you out of the world" (John 15:16, 19). In his second letter to the Thessalonian Christians, Paul writes, "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:13). This choosing was from the beginning, even

before the foundation of the world: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4).

We can see that because of our total depravity, we are unable to choose God, but He chooses us. Book U, which covers unconditional election and is the second book in this TULIP series, has much more about God's sovereign calling of His saints.

Besides choosing us from before the foundation of the world, God also calls us. How? One aspect of our calling is being called through the Gospel. Reading 2 Thessalonians 2:13 again, along with verse 14, we see Paul telling the Thessalonian Christians that they were called by the Gospel Paul preached: "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). So God chooses us before the foundation of the world, and God makes sure that sometime in our lifetime we are exposed to the Gospel.

Let me take a moment to quote a place in the Bible where the Gospel is summarized. It is 1 Corinthians 15:1-4: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you,... For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." This is, of course, only a brief statement, and the phrase "according to the scriptures" invites us to search for more detail.

The hearing of the Gospel is a call to repent of our sinfulness (not just some of our sins) and to believe that Jesus Christ is our Savior. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16). Notice that it is "the power of God unto salvation" only to those who believe. Not everyone has the same reaction to the Gospel: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18). In other words, to those chosen before the foundation of the world to be saved, the call of the Gospel is the power of God; to the rest, it is foolishness. This is what Jesus meant when He declared, "For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14). (More about this in Book L of this series.)

But how is it that God's chosen, who are sinners like everyone else, can exercise faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior?

Remember, the sin of Adam is imputed to everyone, resulting in physical death and spiritual death for all. Without salvation, spiritual death will result in eternal death—eternal separation from God (the

second death). Also, all humans are depraved. As Jeremiah observed, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). Depraved humanity stands guilty before God, everyone a condemned sinner. Humans are incapable of righteousness. Because of this corruption from conception, no one can contribute anything to his or her own salvation. If we are to be saved, we need a Savior who can do it for us.

We have inherited a nature that causes us to add our own sins to that of Adam and Eve. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Besides Adam's sin that is imputed to us, we commit our own sins. The result of these sins is also death: "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). We must not, however, forget the second half of the latter verse: "But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Nevertheless, those chosen for salvation from eternity and called by the Gospel must have a change of their sinful minds before they can believe in Jesus Christ as Savior.

The human dilemma is bleak. We can have no hope of life with God after our mortal bodies cease to function. We need to be saved from the eternal separation from God—eternal death or damnation—that awaits us. Yet due to the sinful nature, the depravity that we inherit from birth, we are utterly unable to contribute anything to our own salvation. What are we to do?

Nothing. Sovereign God must act to save us. He chose His people in eternity. He sent His Son to live a perfectly righteous life for His people and to die for His people. He makes sure this Good News or Gospel is preached and that His people are among those who hear it. And He gives a new mind to His people, actually giving them the faith to accept Jesus Christ as Savior.

### **Regeneration, the New Birth**

One of the facts of salvation is that nothing initiates from the man or woman. The death of Jesus Christ did not give the world wholesale spiritual understanding. All remain dead in their sins, spiritually blind, and unable to receive the Gospel (1 Corinthians 2:14; 1:18) until God initiates contact with the individual. Paul, writing of Isaiah's prophecy of God's opening salvation to the Gentiles, demonstrates that those who find God do not do so because of their own seeking: "But Esaias [Isaiah] is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me" (Romans 10:20). In John 6:44–45, Jesus explains, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they

shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."

How can this occur? "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). This becoming a new creature is called regeneration. God regenerates those whom He is saving. The regenerated Christian is no longer spiritually dead. He or she has new spiritual life and is a new creation. This is why Jesus referred to regeneration as being born again (John 3:3, 7). It is a spiritual birth that imparts eternal life (John 3:8, 15; Romans 6:22-23).

Those who are born again are the children of God: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13). The regenerated Christian actually becomes a member of the family of God with all the rights and privileges of sonship (Romans 8:15-17; 2 Corinthians 6:18; Galatians 3:26; 4:5-7). This concept of sonship is what theologians refer to under the term adoption.

Many churches understand that we must be born again. But what many today wrongly teach is that the sinner is born again after he or she in faith accepts Jesus Christ as Savior. But as we have seen, this is impossible. Believing in Jesus Christ as Savior is a good work, pleasing to God. But the natural, sinful human mind cannot please God; it cannot seek after Him.

Going back to John 1:12-13, notice that one of the three listed ways that we cannot be born again is by "the will of man." This means the individual does not have the free will to choose to be born again.

God regenerates His people as a sovereign act of His will quite apart from their wills. Prior to regeneration, their wills are totally corrupt because of their depravity. Before one can believe in Jesus as Savior, one must be born again as a new creature with a regenerated mind imparted with faith from God.

When we exercise this God-given faith in the atoning death of Jesus, God justifies us, declaring us "not guilty" and "righteous." Because of our new legal standing before God, we have peace with Him (Romans 3:28; 5:1; Galatians 2:16; 3:24).

It is important to know that being born again is a change that takes place in us: justification, on the other hand, is a judicial act that takes place outside of us whereby God judges us not guilty because Jesus has paid the penalty for our sins and His righteousness is counted as ours (imputed to us).

In John 3:3, Jesus tells Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Some people who think we

can choose to be born again seem to have forgotten that a baby is entirely passive in its birth—it cannot choose to be born.

In verse 8, likening the Holy Spirit to the wind, Jesus speaks of God's sovereignty in this matter: "The wind bloweth where it listeth [or desires (of course, if Jesus is really talking about the wind here, we must understand that since the wind has no mind of its own, it blows where God desires)], and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Notice that "the wind bloweth where it listeth," not where people exercising some kind of human-originated faith want it to blow. (A literal translation of the Greek, found in *The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*, 3rd and rev. ed. [Lafayette, Ind.: Sovereign Grace Publishers, 1996] translates John 3:8 as follows: "The Spirit breathes where He desires, and you hear His voice; but you do not know from where He comes, and where He goes; so is everyone who has been generated from the Spirit." This translation, which still conveys the idea of God's sovereignty and man's inability, may very well more closely convey Jesus' idea. The words for wind and Spirit are the same in the original Greek, as are the words for blow and breathe.)

In Acts 16:14, we read of Lydia, "whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." God first opened her mind so that she could receive the Gospel.

In Romans 9:15–16, Paul writes, "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 [man] that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." Neither willing nor running (that is, neither the will of man nor the works of man) determines who will receive God's mercy. It is the sovereign act of the sovereign God.

God's sovereignty in the Holy Spirit's work in regeneration is seen in the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:3–23. A farmer or gardener knows that although some seed may fall on the footpath and be eaten by birds, and some may fall on stony ground where it cannot take root, and some may fall among weeds where it will be choked out and die, only the seed that falls on soil prepared before sowing by plowing to remove the weeds and soften the soil will take root, grow, and produce fruit. The Holy Spirit prepares God's chosen people so that when they hear the Gospel, it falls on deeply worked "earth" and takes root.

Regeneration does not rid us of our depravity. Upon regeneration, we have new spiritual life that was not there before; where we were once dead spiritually and wholly given over to carnality, we now have life. But while there is no partial regeneration—

we are either regenerated or we are not—we will, as long as we are in this flesh, find ourselves at war against our sinful flesh.

Yet, through regeneration, the Holy Spirit immediately imparts new habits that God will develop in our Christian life. The late Christian philosopher and theologian, Gordon H. Clark, wrote of this:

Now, then, unregenerate humanity sins habitually. Not only are the overt actions sinful, but even those acts which most people would not call sinful, are so because of evil motivation.... Then the Holy Spirit comes upon this individual and instills into him different habits. These new habits, though they may and will develop by practice, are not produced by practice. The Spirit immediately forms the habit for him. Such is regeneration.... The regenerated sinner now has desires and thoughts he never had before.... The Holy Spirit has regenerated us and changed our mind.

Gordon H. Clark, *The Holy Spirit*  
(Hobbs, N. Mex.: The Trinity Foundation, 1993), 34

What I have said in this booklet about man's total depravity might sound new to some readers. But it is not new. It is the teaching of the Bible. It was taught by the early church. It has been believed by Christians for centuries, and was one of the foundations of the Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther's book, *The Bondage of the Will*, is a rebuttal of the error that man's will is free to choose good. Luther, who lived in the sixteenth century, understood that man's will, apart from the liberating grace of God, is in bondage to sin.

Also in the sixteenth century, John Calvin wrote in his *Commentary on Romans*, "But let us observe here, that the will of man is in all things opposed to the divine will; for as much as what is crooked differs from what is straight, so much must be the difference between us and God." He also described all humans not regenerated by God as "abominable before God" and "without any spiritual life." In his *Commentary on Titus*, he wrote, "It is therefore the Spirit of God who regenerates us, and makes us new creatures...the Spirit is bestowed on none but those who are the members of Christ." Such teachings were emphasized for centuries by churches that now rarely if ever mention them.

In the nineteenth century, the well-loved Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon, in a sermon titled "All of Grace," said, "The man believes, but that belief is only one result among many of the implantation of divine life within the man's soul by God Himself. Even

the very will thus to be saved by grace is not of ourselves, but it is the gift of God.”

I wonder how many people in our Christian churches who believe they have been born again have only had a fleshly reaction to an emotional message. Churches with altar calls (which, by the way, have no biblical precedent and seem to have been invented in the nineteenth century by the evangelist Charles G. Finney) especially can produce this reaction as they usually hold to the belief that the decision to be saved is up to the individual. Thus the preachers give emotion-laden messages to try to persuade their listeners to make a decision for Christ “today” or “tonight” and wind up “saving” many people who are as unregenerate when they leave church as when they walked in. (If the Gospel is preached as a part of the message, some may truly be saved, but this would have occurred without the pleading and the altar call with their consequent cost of so many false conversions.)

Contrary to this mistaken belief, being born again or regenerated is a sovereign act of God through the Holy Spirit that takes place in our minds before we even know it. The realization of our being born again may be an emotional experience, but that is only an effect of what has already taken place.

If he were not regenerated by God before believing in Jesus Christ as Savior, man would have a part in causing his salvation. Someone could say, I was good enough or smart enough to accept Jesus Christ as my Savior. But the Bible says no one can make such a boast:

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.... But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;).... For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works [any human work, including exercising human faith], lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto [not “by” or “through,” but “to” or “for”] good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:1, 4-5, 8-10

All humans are totally depraved and unable to earn any merit with God by seeking Him. He chose us (those who are His elect) from before the foundation of the world, He gave His only begotten Son for us, He makes sure we are presented with the Gospel, and He—through

a regeneration of our minds that makes us a new creature or creation—gives us the faith to accept the Gospel.

We are truly His workmanship because our salvation is all of His sovereign grace.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 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, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Ephesians 1:3–6

## Some Important Points Concerning Total Depravity\*

1. The “total” in total depravity does not mean that everyone is as corrupt as possible or that everyone is destitute of all moral virtues. It means that sin affects all of our thought, faculties, and activities to some extent so that no one is pure or righteous in anything (Genesis 6:5; Matthew 15:19).
2. Total depravity began when Adam and Eve sinned; it can be seen in their changed nature—e.g., blaming others for their sin, deteriorating from friend of God to hiding from Him, and deviating from innocence regarding their nakedness to shame (Genesis 3:6–13); and it has been conveyed to all of their descendants (Job 15:14; Psalm 51:5; Ecclesiastes 9:3; Isaiah 53:6).
3. Total depravity is seen in the prevalence of every kind of sin in the world (Galatians 5:17–21).
4. Total depravity is seen in the early manifestation of sin in children (Genesis 8:21; Psalm 58:3; Proverbs 22:15).
5. Total depravity is evidenced by unregenerate humanity's total and universal disregard for God's claims on everyone's supreme reverence, love, and obedience (Romans 1:18–32; 8:5–8).
6. Total depravity is seen in humanity's general rejection of Jesus Christ (John 1:11; Isaiah 53:3).
7. Total depravity is incurable by man, and it leaves him completely dependent on God's grace for salvation (Isaiah 64:6–7; Jeremiah 17:9; John 3:3; Romans 1:17; 3:23–24; Galatians 2:21; Ephesians 2:4–9).
8. God's people in every age have given witness to their own depravity (Job 40:4; 42:6; Psalm 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Romans 7:23–24; Ephesians 2:3; 1 Timothy 1:15).

\*Adapted from various sources, especially Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993), 2:233–238.

## Some Important Points Concerning Regeneration\*

1. It is expressed as being born or begotten again (John 3:3, 7; 1 Peter 1:3, 23).
2. It is called being born from above (the phrase "born again" in John 3:3 and 7 may be rendered "born from above"; see the marginal rendering in many Bibles).
3. Those who are regenerated or born again the Bible calls newborn babes (1 Peter 2:2).
4. Regeneration is expressed as being quickened (made alive) (Ephesians 2:1, 5; Colossians 2:13).
5. Regeneration is signified by Christ being formed in the heart (Galatians 2:20; 4:6, 19; Colossians 3:10).
6. Regeneration is said to be a partaking of the divine nature (not of the essential nature of God, but a resemblance to the divine nature in spirituality, holiness, goodness, kindness, etc.) (2 Peter 1:4).
7. Depraved, unregenerate man cannot regenerate himself (Romans 8:5–9; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1, 5; Colossians 2:13).
8. Man cannot regenerate himself because regeneration is a creation and, therefore, not in the power of men to do it (2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 1:16).
9. Regeneration is expressly denied to be of men (John 1:12–13).
10. The efficient cause of regeneration is God only (John 1:12–13; 1 John 3:1–2, 9; 5:1)
  - God the Father (John 6:44, 65; James 1:17–18; 1 Peter 1:3)
  - God the Son (Galatians 4:6–7; 1 John 2:28–29)
  - God the Holy Spirit (John 3:5–6; 1 Corinthians 12:3; Titus 3:5).
11. The impulsive, or moving cause, of regeneration is the free grace, love, and mercy of God (Ephesians 2:4–5; James 1:17–18; 1 Peter 1:3).
12. The resurrection of Christ from the dead is the virtual or procuring cause of regeneration (1 Peter 1:3).

13. The instrumental cause of regeneration is the Word of God (Romans 10:13–21; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23–25).

14. Regenerate ones have the grace of life given them; they live a new life, and walk in newness of life; where before their understanding was darkened, they now are enlightened by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of divine things (Romans 6:4; Ephesians 4:24; 5:8; Colossians 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:4–5; 1 Peter 2:9; 3:7).

15. Knowledge and actual enjoyment of the several blessings of grace follow upon regeneration (Ephesians 3:16–19).

16. Regenerate ones are made fit and capable for the performance of good works (Ephesians 2:10; 2 Timothy 2:21; Philippians 2:13; 4:13).

17. Regenerate ones are made fit for the kingdom of God (John 3:3, 5).

18. Humans are passive in regeneration (John 1:13; Romans 9:16).

19. Regeneration is of the will of God and cannot be resisted (John 6:37; Romans 8:29–30; 2 Timothy 1:9).

20. Regeneration is an act that is instantaneously done—there is never a middle state between life and death; regeneration is perfect—one can be partly regenerate no more than one can be partly dead and partly alive; yet regeneration always results in spiritual warfare between the old and new man with the new man winning in the end (Romans 6–8; 1 John 5:4).

21. The grace of regeneration can never be lost; one who is born in a spiritual sense can never be unborn (John 10:27–29; Romans 8:38–39; Philippians 1:6; 2 Thessalonians 3:3).

\*Adapted from John Gill, *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity* (1809; reprint, Paris, Ark.: The Baptist Standard Bearer, 1995), 528–538.

# THE LEGAL SPIRIT SLAIN

by William Romaine  
(1714–1795)

The legal spirit reigns over all men in their natural state, but does not discover its tyranny until it be opposed; and then so soon as the soul is quickened from a death in trespasses and sins, it begins to fight, trying to keep the poor sinner in bondage by its legal workings and strivings, and putting him upon seeking for some good disposition or qualification in himself, on account of which God should love him. Thus the awakened soul, under the spirit of bondage, always seeks deliverance by the works of that law, which can do nothing more than bring him to the knowledge of sin, discover to him the exceeding sinfulness of it, and the exceeding great punishment which it deserves; by which means it is always nourishing the doubts and fears of unbelief. And after the Lord has in a measure removed them by a clear discovery of the salvation that is in Jesus, and by the gift of faith, yet still this legal spirit will be trying to bring the soul into bondage again to fear, and it too often prevails. Young believers find it the worst enemy they have to deal with! It is a sly, subtle foe, that seems to intend them a kindness, while it is always on the side of the devil and unbelief. It would appear to them to be actuated by a zeal for God, but it is to eclipse the glory of the Lord Christ, to take away the all-sufficiency of His salvation, and to rob them of their great joy and peace in believing. If anyone should ask how this legal spirit comes to have such power over mankind, the Scripture informs us.

First, that all men, being God's creatures, are under the law to Him, bound to keep it; or bound, if they transgress, to suffer the threatened pains and penalties. In this state man was created, and in it all men are by nature; and therefore there is in us all a continual leaning to the law, and a desire to attain righteousness by the works of it. We are all wedded to this way of gaining God's favour. The Apostle says there is a marriage union between us as long as he liveth; so that we cannot be married to Christ until that be dead wherein we were held. You may see this in the Jews. How does Moses labour to bring them off from an opinion of their own righteousness! And a greater than Moses has done the same in His discourses against the Scribes and Pharisees; yea, the apostles of our Lord were forced to write and preach against this leaning to the law, it gave such disturbance to the true disciples of Christ. And notwithstanding the Scripture arguments against it, yet we have great numbers among us who seek for a justifying righteousness by the works of the law. And they are put upon seeking this,

Secondly, from their ignorance of the law. They are not acquainted with its nature; for it demands what they cannot pay. It insists upon an obedience, spiritual, perfect, and uninterrupted; for the least offence, if but in thought, it comes with its fearful sentence. "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." On him who does not continue in all things, and not one man ever did, this sentence takes place; and if he was to live a thousand years, he could not do anything to repeal it. The law will always be to him the ministration of condemnation, and the ministration of death, and that is all it can do for him. It provides no remedy, and gives him no hope, but leaves him condemned to the first and to the second death; and yet, such is the blindness of the sinner, that he will be still leaning to the law, and afraid to trust wholly to the righteousness of Christ; and this arises,

Thirdly, from his ignorance of Christ's righteousness, which is infinitely perfect, and wants no works of the law to be joined with it, in the justifying of a sinner; because it is the righteousness of God, wrought out by the God-man for His people, and it is the righteousness of faith. They receive it by faith, without works, so that it is directly opposite to the righteousness of a legal spirit. Hence we have many among us, great professors too, who are ignorant of God's righteousness; they have not been entirely brought off from a legal bottom, and therefore they talk of being justified without a justifying righteousness; which if God was to do, He would be unrighteous; and which, as He has declared He will not do, their fancied justification leaves them still in their sins. They dare not put their whole trust and confidence in the righteousness of Christ imputed into sinners, and made theirs by faith. They have many fears about imputed righteousness, although the apostle has not scrupled to mention it eleven times in one chapter, Romans 4, and these fears make them read the Scripture with such prejudice, that they say they cannot find the expression, "faith in the righteousness of Christ," in all the Bible. They may find the sense of the expression in Moses, and in all the prophets, and the very words in II Peter 1:1. "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them who have obtained like precious faith with us in the righteousness of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Here is faith in the righteousness of Christ, with several glorious titles to recommend it, namely, it is the righteousness of God, of God our Saviour, of Jesus Christ. From whence can men's opposition to this way of justification arise, but from their not being convinced by the Spirit of God of the necessity of Christ's righteousness? It is His peculiar office to convince us of this truth. No teaching but His can do it. O, that He may do it in the hearts of those, who out of a zeal for God though not according to knowledge, eclipse the glory of the Lord,

and rob afflicted consciences of their comfort, by opposing imputed righteousness! It is a righteousness of so high and heavenly a nature, wrought out by another, and so wonderful a Person is bestowed as a free gift upon the chief of sinners, whereby alone they obtain remission of their sins, and are made partakers of the kingdom of heaven; and they receive it by faith only, without works, which a legal spirit always wants to mix with it, that not one could ever believe in it, unless it were given him from above. May it be given to those professors who cannot yet submit to the righteousness of Christ, to see their want of it, and with the heart to believe in it unto salvation.

## Who We Are

I hope this little booklet has been a blessing to you. I was a member of and writer for the Worldwide Church of God until 1991. My wife, Mary, was also a member and a production assistant in the church's television department. But then God began revealing to us the truth of His glorious Gospel of the free gift of grace by Jesus Christ. So, in 1991, we left the Worldwide Church of God, our friends, our worldview, and our employment.

In the mid-1990s, I began writing articles that exposed the heresies and spiritual abuses that were continuing in the Worldwide Church of God even after the death of its founder, Herbert W. Armstrong. These articles appeared in *The Quarterly Journal of the Personal Freedom Outreach*, a well-respected Christian apologetics journal. Many people who read the articles wrote asking for help for themselves or loved ones exiting Armstrongism, to ask doctrinal questions, or to share their experiences in Armstrong-type sects.

I soon came to see that cults and unbiblical teachings are flourishing because too many people are ignorant of the basics of biblical Christianity and only give lip service to following the Bible alone. Toward the end of 2000, I launched *Word of His Grace* to address these issues through both print and our website, [wordofhisgrace.org](http://wordofhisgrace.org).

The website has since grown in impact and respect. Our increasing number of articles are reproduced and favorably cited on websites around the world. We publish Gospel tracts and small books that have been widely requested and used by a number of missionaries and other Christian teachers. We also publish an email newsletter. Everything we write is centered on Jesus Christ and our commitment to take the Bible alone for our doctrine.

We are family-based. Mary and I are truly a team and always thank God for having given us to each other. We try to be good stewards of the resources God provides. To this end, we have recently put all of our literature on our website. This has enabled us to scale-back our print publishing, which had been growing increasingly expensive as costs rise. We now send printed materials only to those who do not have access to the internet.

We trust that as long as we continue to please God in what we teach, and we remain good stewards of what He supplies, He will provide everything needed to continue these activities. We do not ask humans for money, or anything, but bring our needs in prayer to God.

This does not mean that God has not used people to provide our needs. He has. It means that we make our needs known to God, and if He then makes them known to you, well, that is between you and Him. This is a lesson in faith. You can trust in God's promises found in Scripture: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). If you are like-minded with us, we would love to fellowship with you. Email us.

By His grace alone,

Peter Ditzel

The Word of His Grace

1197 Polk Road 23

Cove, AR 71937-9628

USA

[gracealone@wordofhisgrace.org](mailto:gracealone@wordofhisgrace.org)

[www.wordofhisgrace.org](http://www.wordofhisgrace.org)

Our TULIP series of booklets have been read by Christians around the world and have been used by missionaries and other teachers to disciple their brothers and sisters in Christ.

### **TULIP SERIES**

#### **Man's Sinfulness, God's Sovereignty, and the New Birth (Book T)**

How sinful is mankind? Are unsaved people sick and in need of a cure? Or is their condition far worse? Can the natural, sinful man accept Jesus Christ as Savior?

#### **What Must You Do to Be Saved? (Book U)**

Is God looking for a few good men or women? Did He look ahead from eternity to see who would respond to the Gospel? What does God want you to do before He will save you?

#### **If Jesus Died for All, Why Are Some Not Saved? (Book L)**

If "God so loved the [whole] world," if He "will have all men to be saved," if He is "not willing that any should perish," why every day do people die unsaved?

#### **Can Anyone Refuse God's Grace? (Book I)**

Is God pleading with and crying over stubborn sinners who won't accept His grace? Can man thwart God's will?

#### **Once Saved, Always Saved? (Book P)**

Can you lose your salvation? Is it arrogant to think you can't? Can you have both security and assurance?

### **OTHER BOOKLETS**

#### **What Is the Gospel?**

Paul warned the Galatians, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." But what is the Gospel? And what are some of the false gospels being promoted?

#### **Is Salvation for You?**

This Gospel tract emphasizes God's sovereignty, man's inability, and Jesus Christ's totally effectual atonement in salvation. It gives enough information to avoid the pitfall of briefer tracts of being so general they either mislead or leave the reader with more questions than answers.

WORD OF HIS GRACE

1197 Polk Road 23

Cove, AR 71937

USA

[gracealone@wordofhisgrace.org](mailto:gracealone@wordofhisgrace.org)

We have many more article, sermons, and other resources online at  
[www.wordofhisgrace.org](http://www.wordofhisgrace.org)