

# What is TULIP?

TULIP is an acronym used to present the processes involved in salvation. Included here is a brief explanation of each point with scriptural support.

## Total Depravity

Total depravity describes the spiritual condition of every human being. Original sin had a two-fold effect upon humanity. Firstly, we are born into a state of guilt by virtue of Adam acting as our federal head (representative). When he disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden he disobeyed for us all; his guilt became ours. Secondly, we are born with a sinful nature by virtue of natural generation. Adam's very nature became polluted with sin and his sinful nature is passed on from one generation to the next. This means that we have a natural desire for sin. Thus our depravity (sinfulness) is total.

The use of the word 'total' should not be understood to mean that every person is as evil as they could be. Nor does it mean that we are unable to express noble virtues such as compassion, love and mercy. It means that sin has affected us in the entirety of our being, sin has permeated the very fabric of our nature and so all that we do, say and think is tainted with sin. Thus Isaiah says that even our righteousness is like filthy rags before God.

Importantly, total depravity means that we are alienated from God and we will not of our own volition come back to Him. Total depravity equates to total inability. If we are to be restored back into fellowship with God He must take the initiative, He must bring a change that will make us willing to be restored.

A selection of verses which support the doctrine of total depravity:

### **Psalm 51:5 (NKJV)**

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.

### **Jeremiah 13:23 (NKJV)**

Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? *Then* may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil.

### **Jeremiah 17:9 (NKJV)**

"The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, And desperately wicked; who can know it?"

### **Romans 3:10-18 (NKJV)**

<sup>10</sup> As it is written: "*There is none righteous, no, not one;* <sup>11</sup> *There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.* <sup>12</sup> *They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.*" <sup>13</sup> "*Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit*"; "*The poison of asps is under their lips*"; <sup>14</sup> "*Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.*" <sup>15</sup> "*Their feet are swift to shed blood;* <sup>16</sup> *Destruction and misery are in their ways;* <sup>17</sup> *and the way of peace they have not known.*" <sup>18</sup> "*There is no fear of God before their eyes.*"

### **1 Corinthians 2:14 (NKJV)**

<sup>14</sup> But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

### **1 Corinthians 15:22 (NKJV)**

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

### **Ephesians 2:1 (NKJV)**

And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins

## Unconditional Election

Unconditional election means that God has chosen out from among the world those whom He will save. They are chosen not according to any merit of their own (unconditional), but purely on the basis of God's electing love. The doctrine of total depravity makes the doctrine of unconditional election absolutely necessary. Because of the sinful state in which we are born we will not come to God unless He first comes to us.

It is often suggested that election makes God unjust, i.e. that He chooses one and not another. To this we respond that all people actually deserve judgement and the fact that God has determined to save anyone and was prepared to sacrifice His Son to do so makes Him exceedingly gracious.

It is also suggested that election makes the Christian proud, i.e. proud that he is chosen. To this we respond that there is nothing more humbling than God extending His mercy to undeserving sinners. Salvation is all of grace from beginning to end; there is nothing to be proud of.

One final assertion made in protest against the doctrine of election is that it hinders evangelism. To this we respond God has called us to preach the Gospel to every creature and as we do so He will call the elect out of the world to Himself. We believe that election is a stimulus to evangelism and most of the great preachers throughout the ages were motivated by this belief rather than hindered by it.

A selection of verses which support the doctrine of unconditional election:

### **Deuteronomy 7:7 (NKJV)**

The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples;

### **John 15:16 (NKJV)**

You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.

### **Romans 9:11-23 (NKJV)**

(for *the children* not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), <sup>12</sup> it was said to her, "*The older shall serve the younger.*" <sup>13</sup> As it is written, "*Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.*" <sup>14</sup> What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! <sup>15</sup> For He says to Moses, "*I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.*" <sup>16</sup> So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. <sup>17</sup> For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "*For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.*" <sup>18</sup> Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. <sup>19</sup> You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?" <sup>20</sup> But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed *it*, "Why have you made me like this?" <sup>21</sup> Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honour and another for dishonour? <sup>22</sup> *What* if God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, <sup>23</sup> and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,

### **Ephesians 1:4-5 (NKJV)**

just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, <sup>5</sup> having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

### **2 Thessalonians 2:13 (NKJV)**

<sup>13</sup> But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth,

## **Limited Atonement**

Limited atonement relates to the question 'for whom did Christ die?' Critical to answering this question is understanding what Christ actually accomplished through his death. What are the options?

The first option is that Christ died for everyone. This would mean then that He paid for the sins of every single individual, including those who are presently in hell or will be in hell. The scriptures teach that Christ died as a ransom. If He was a ransom for every person upon what basis does God punish unbelievers? A ransom is after all '*in the place of*'. Christ would have therefore paid for the sins of people who will also pay for them in hell. If Christ died for everyone then God punishes sin twice – in Christ and in the individual.

The second option is that Christ died to make salvation a possibility. The question then is this: in what sense is salvation a possibility if we are dead in trespasses and sins and unable to come to God? It would be like putting a plate of food before a deceased man thus creating the opportunity for him to eat.

Furthermore, countless millions have never heard the Gospel. In Australia for example the Gospel has only been here for approximately 200 years. How can salvation be a possibility for people who don't even know there is salvation? If Christ died merely to make salvation possible He shed His blood in vain.

The third option is that Christ died to secure the salvation of some. This is consistent with the idea that He died as a penal substitute. Penal means that He died to satisfy God's law; substitute of course meaning that He died in the place of another.

In general terms Christ died for the world, a world of sinners. Specifically He died for His people, those whom God loved before the foundation of the world. The atonement is limited to the elect or in other words intended only for the elect because it is a payment by way of substitution. Once the elect come to saving faith through the Gospel the merits of Christ's life and death are imputed to them. The Gospel therefore accomplishes exactly what God intended, the redemption of those whom He loves.

A selection of verses which support the doctrine of limited atonement:

**Matthew 20:28 (NKJV)**

just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

**John 10:14-15 (NKJV)**

I am the good shepherd; and I know My *sheep*, and am known by My own. <sup>15</sup> As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

**John 10:26-28 (NKJV)**

But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. <sup>27</sup> My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. <sup>28</sup> And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

**Ephesians 5:25 (NKJV)**

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

## **Irresistible Grace**

Irresistible grace relates to the application of the atonement. Those for whom Christ died will most certainly come to saving faith because of the work of the Holy Spirit in them. This work is described in the Bible using a number of different word pictures such as 'regeneration', 'born again', 'resurrection' and others. These pictures convey the idea that the Holy Spirit enables a person to believe the Gospel through the renewing of the heart.

The doctrine of irresistible grace should not be understood to mean that people become believers against their will. Rather it means that God makes them willing to believe, He enables them to receive what they naturally resist. No sinner is converted against their will; faith and repentance are voluntary acts but only made possible through the inward, secret work of the Holy Spirit.

Irresistible grace effectively guarantees the success of the Gospel. Christ died for the elect and the Holy Spirit applies what Christ accomplished through the renewing of hearts which are otherwise 'dead in trespasses and sins'.

A selection of verses which support the doctrine of irresistible grace:

**Psalms 110:3 (NKJV)**

Your people *shall be* volunteers In the day of Your power; In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, You have the dew of Your youth.

**Isaiah 55:11 (NKJV)**

So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper *in the thing* for which I sent it.

**John 3:3 (NKJV)**

Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

**John 6:37 (NKJV)**

All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.

**Acts 13:48 (NKJV)**

Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

**Acts 16:14 (NKJV)**

Now a certain woman named Lydia heard *us*. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.

**5) Perseverance of the Saints**

Perseverance of the saints is sometimes referred to as preservation of the saints. God preserves His people in such a way that they persevere in the faith to the end and receive a heavenly reward. This does not mean that Christians can't for a time backslide. What it means is that they never finally fall away. God is always at work convicting of sin, strengthening, warning, encouraging, renewing repentance, etc and in doing so the believer perseveres in the face of trial and tribulation.

This doctrine is often rejected on the grounds that it encourages licentiousness. If a person knows that they are eternally secure they will cease from striving along the narrow way. In reality this doctrine is an encouragement to good works. It teaches us that God never ceases in the work He commenced when we were first converted. It teaches us that God never gives up on those whom He loves. The perseverance of the saints is not a deterrent to godliness but the grounds of it. Knowing that God is at work in us we have the motivation to press on, for it is through His strength that we find strength.

What about those people professing Christ who turn away? The Bible is quite clear that it is possible for a person to make a profession of faith without any real work of grace in the heart. Classic examples include Judas Iscariot and Demas. Professing faith and actually having faith are not mutually exclusive but neither are they the same thing.

If we have genuinely believed the Gospel we are possessors of eternal life, and eternal life is exactly what it claims to be – eternal not temporal.

A selection of verses which support the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints:

**Psalm 37:23-24 (NKJV)**

The steps of a *good* man are ordered by the Lord, And He delights in his way. <sup>24</sup> Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the Lord upholds *him* with His hand.

**Jeremiah 32:40 (NKJV)**

And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me.

**Malachi 3:6 (NKJV)**

"For I *am* the Lord, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.

**John 6:39 (NKJV)**

This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.

**John 10:28 (NKJV)**

And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

**Romans 8:29-30 (NKJV)**

<sup>29</sup> For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

**Ephesians 1:13-14 (NKJV)**

In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, <sup>14</sup> who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

**Philippians 1:6 (NKJV)**

<sup>6</sup> being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ;