

Southern Reformed and TULIP

As children's of the Reformation, we believe in salvation by grace alone through faith alone. Historically, Calvinists have summarized this truth with TULIP. Unfortunately, there are some Calvinists who adhere to an unbalanced view of TULIP. As a result, there are also those who, having been troubled by such an impersonal and hyper-rationalistic view, seem to be misunderstanding the classic Reformed view on TULIP. Therefore, we, at Southern Reformed, advocate a more balanced and compassionate understanding of TULIP as the Reformers did.

T**otal Depravity** – It does not mean that man is without anything good (totally evil like the devil). Rather, this biblical teaching points out that man's every aspect has been tainted by sin (like an ink drop in a cup of water). Therefore, man is unable to save himself on his own. (Col 2:13; Gen 6:5; Eph 2:1, 5)

U**nconditional Election** - This does not mean we don't have to do anything to be saved. We must believe. Truly Reformed will always balance human responsibility with divine sovereignty. However, the basis of God's grace to save us is God's goodness, not human goodness. God's grace is unconditional. That is, we are saved by God's grace, period. Even our faith is of God. (Eph 1:4-5; Deut 7:6-8; Rom 9:11-13; 2 Tim 1:9)

L**imited Atonement** - We prefer *Definite Atonement*. *Limited Atonement* sounds like Jesus' death is good only for the Elect and has limited power, unable to save all. But the doctrine's intent is that while the atonement of Jesus can save the whole humanity, his primary purpose was to die for his sheep. (John 10:11, 14, 26-29; John 17:9)

I**rresistible Grace** – We prefer *Efficacious Grace* because the word “irresistible” sounds like God forces man to receive his grace and man can't resist. The truth is that man can try to resist but when God quickens the heart of man, the natural outcome is for man to desire to receive God's grace. This doctrine teaches that God enables His children to turn back even after turning away from God because of God's relentless, undying love. (John 6:37, 44; John 11:14, 15, 25, 38-44; Acts 13:48)

P**erseverance of Saints** - It's actually the *Perseverance of God* that guarantees our salvation, not man's ability to persevere on his own. However, in the process of sanctification, man partners with God to grow in godliness. Man must cooperate with God to work out his salvation with fear and trembling but in the end, it's God's patience that wins. (Phil 2:12-13; Rom 8:35-39; Phil 1:6)

On a final note, we affirm that TULIP is beneficial for assurance of salvation and edification of the church, but not for evangelism. When sharing the gospel, we recognize that we are to be practical Arminians by proclaiming that everyone must make a decision to follow Christ, just as Arminians need to be practical Calvinists when praying for the salvation of an unbeliever, asking the Sovereign God to work faith in the sinner to embrace Christ.

