**T.U.L.I.P.** dkm July 2023

If you think this message is about growing tulips you are mistaken! My title is an acronym, a word made up from the five points of Calvinism. If you are drawing a blank let me start at the Reformation which we date from the time Luther posted his 95 thesis on the church door in Wittenberg (1517). In Paris a priest (trainee) called John Calvin was touched by Reformation teaching. He went to Geneva where he got involved in the ‘second phase’ or further development of reformation teaching. Both Luther and Calvin put Scripture above the traditions of the church but Calvin developed further the doctrines of grace re-discovered by Luther, and the application of these doctrines to the individual and the church. The sovereignty of God in all things was a major focus of Calvin, along with the basic preaching of the reformers namely, justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

Calvin died in 1564 but his teaching continued in churches particularly in Scotland and The Netherlands. But in the Netherlands a preacher called Jacobus Arminius, born just before Calvin died, did not like the doctrine of the sovereignty of God and predestination as taught by Calvin and his fellow reformers. While Calvin taught the sovereignty of God in election, Arminius taught that God simply foresees that some will choose him. While salvation is by grace through faith he taught that man can resist God’s grace, and a true believer cannot be assured of ultimate salvation. These doctrines were formulated into the Remonstrance Articles of 1610 as a challenge to the teaching of Calvin accepted by the reformed church. The reformers responded in the Synod of Dort (1618-19), which concluded with five points countering the five points of the Remonstrance. They are commonly called the five points of Calvinism or the doctrines of grace which are held in Reformed churches like ours. These doctrines go under the names

**T-Total depravity**

**U-Unconditional election**

**L-Limited atonement**

**I-Irresistible grace**

**P-Perseverance of the saints**

**1. Total Depravity**

This term refers to every human being, but it does not mean that we should all be locked up, or that we are all like Hitler! It does not mean that everything we do is bad, or that every human being is a bad as they can possibly be. The ‘total’ refers to every part of our being, and the very core of our being, which means that we cannot do anything to please God (Heb 11:6). ‘The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately corrupt’ (Jer 17:9); we may do things that seem good to us but such things are of no account to God because he sees our hearts. We can be educated but this makes no difference before God; educated sinners are just as much sinners as uneducated sinners.

We are born in sin and we commit sin, which cuts us off from God who is holy. We are slaves to sin. ‘There is none that seeks after God’. ‘All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God’ (Rom 3:11, 23). ‘You are not willing to come to me that you may have life’ said Jesus (John 5:40). Everyone is dead in their sin from birth and cannot help themselves in terms of salvation. Only when the Father draws us can we come to Jesus (John 6:44). The good news is that God the Father in his grace chooses to draw some. He has dealt with their sin on the cross, and by his word and Spirit he quickens dead hearts in regeneration.

**2. Unconditional election**

It follows that because man is ‘totally depraved’ he will not and cannot come to God unless God draws him or her. This God does in his grace, without any necessity of good works; his call is unconditional: ‘While we were still sinners, Christ died for us’ (Rom 5:8). In fact, before God calls he predestines or elects some for salvation and others to damnation (Rom 8:15-17). His election is not based on something man does; he chose Jacob over Esau before they were born (Rom 9:11). Why God chooses some and not others is for his eternal purpose and glory. His is sovereign and he is not being unfair in anyway; no one deserves his grace.

God does not elect anyone because he foresees they will believe in him; they cannot believe unless and until God calls them! And he calls them according to his election. ‘He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world’ (Eph 1:4). God is doing the electing not man: ‘You did not choose me but I chose you’ (John 15:16). The doctrine of election brings with it the doctrine of assurance. We belong to God because he chose us and called us, and ‘those whom the Father gives to me… I will by no means cast out’ said Jesus (John 6:37, 10:29).

*3,4,5 to be continued*