

In Defense of Calvinism  
*A Balanced Approach to A Difficult Subject*

Stanford E. Murrell

Copyright © 2014 Stanford E. Murrell

All rights reserved.

ISBN: 1500126284

ISBN-13: 978-1500126285

All Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version.



## CONTENTS

	<i>Acknowledgments</i>	6
	<i>Introduction</i>	7
1	The Glorious Plan of Redemption	9
2	Total Depravity	46
3	Who Made the First Move?	60
4	For Whom Did Christ Die?	87
5	Irresistible Grace or Effectual Calling	106
6	The Final Perseverance of the Saints	121
7	Biblical Universalism	141
8	A Review & Correlation of the Doctrines of Grace	156



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to Mr. Fred G. Zaspel, former pastor of the Word of Life Baptist Church in Pottsville, Pa for the general content of the following information.

## Introduction

*“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. 11 For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. 12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.”*

—1 Corinthians 1:10–12

WHEN A PARTICULAR WORD has become offensive to a large group of people through distortion and misunderstanding, it becomes necessary to find other words to convey the truth that the offensive term represents. The term “*Calvinism*” has become so controversial that I have found it better to speak to people about “*the doctrines of grace*” whenever possible.

My desire is not to be sectarian, and the term Calvinism tends to invite that. Surely it must grieve our Lord that the very prohibition Paul wrote against to the church of Corinth is so prevalent in the

church today. Some say, “*I am of Augustine*” or “*I am of Calvin*” while others say, “*I am of Arminius*” or, “*I am of Christ.*”

I do think, whenever possible, it is better to contend over the ideas associated with “*the doctrines of grace*” than the merits of a man’s name, and so that is what I have tried to do in the following work, without forgetting the large debt of gratitude the church does owe to the defenders of the gospel in the persons of Augustine (AD 354-430) and John Calvin (1509-1564).

I hope that those who value the contributions of John Calvin to the church will understand and not be offended. I also hope that people who react to the term *Calvinism* will give a fair hearing, based on the new phraseology, to what this Reformer, and others, was presenting as true truth, which is the desperate plight of man, and matchless grace and power of God to rescue him from the depths of depravity. “*Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, 25 To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen*” (*Jude 24-25*).

Stanford E. Murrell  
Viera, Florida



1

The Glorious Plan of Redemption

*“I have my own opinion that there is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified unless we preach what is nowadays called Calvinism. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism. Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else. I do not believe we can preach the gospel . . . unless we preach the sovereignty of God in His dispensation of grace; not unless we exalt the electing, unchangeable, eternal, immutable conquering love of Jehovah; nor do I think we can preach the gospel unless we base it on the special, particular redemption of His elect and chosen people which Christ wrought out upon the cross; nor can I comprehend a gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called, and allows the children of God to be burned in the fires of damnation after having once believed in Jesus. Such a gospel I abhor.”*

— Charles Haddon Spurgeon

WITH THESE WORDS, THE “*Prince of Preachers*” stated very simply that the Christian gospel offers salvation freely in Jesus Christ, and that salvation is a work of God from beginning to end. God is the Active Giver in the whole process of redemption: He chooses, He draws, He saves, and He keeps. Redemption is all His doing

according to the principle of grace. Anything less is not the gospel. This idea lies on the surface of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation.

The apostle Paul contended that God saves in such a way that there is no room for men to congratulate themselves. The glorious Plan of Redemption is such, *“That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 1:29-31). Every Christian should come to understand that salvation is by grace, apart from human merit or effort. *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast”* (Ephesians 2:8-9). The ultimate purpose of God, in human salvation, is to display His own glorious grace. *“That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus”* (Ephesians 2: 7). Therefore, *“He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 1: 31). It cannot be stated enough times that salvation is a work of God, designed to bring glory to Himself. And this is precisely why the gospel is *“good news.”* All who look to Christ alone for their salvation shall live!

“See the Lord of glory dying!  
See Him gasping air! Hear Him crying!  
See His burdened bosom heave!  
Look, ye sinners, ye that hung Him;  
Look how deep your sins have stung Him;  
Dying sinners, look and live!”

It would not be very good news to hear that God would save men *if*. . . anything. The heart should shudder to think of any condition laid upon a person as a prerequisite for salvation. If God does not save freely, there would be no real hope of being saved at all. But hearing

that God has promised to save souls without condition, that He will take sinners just as they are, is precisely what gives hope and confidence. God the Son, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, has done for those who are to be the heirs of salvation everything that God has required by way of gospel obedience. By trusting in Him Who has accomplished in the place of the elect, a perfect righteousness, by believing in Him Who has paid the penalty for sin by His substitutional sacrifice on the cross, souls can have peace with God. “*Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Romans 5: 1). This is the wonderful truth of the gospel. Salvation is free, in Jesus Christ, by faith.

“My faith would lay her hand  
On that dear head of Thine;  
While like a penitent I stand,  
And there confess my sin.”

Sadly, however, well-intentioned individuals have complicated the simplicity of the gospel with a system of theology historically known as semi-*Pelagianism*, and-or *Arminianism*, named respectively after popular advocates. [Pelagius, c. AD 354-after 418; Jacobus Arminius, 1559-1609] Confusion about the terms of salvation has caused considerable debate within the Christian community. Many religious leaders now teach that man, not God, is the determining party in salvation. It is taught that the natural condition of man is one of sin, but the sinfulness is not such that man is rendered incapable of choosing God. As a result, what determines a man’s salvation is his movement towards God! If man will but turn to God, then God will choose to save him, but not until then. Moreover, whatever previous “*drawing*” of souls unto Himself that God may do, He does equally for all men, leaving the final choice to yield, or resist unto damnation, to the individual himself.

There is something else. According to Arminianism (which is widely embraced), the atonement of Christ was intended to do the very same thing for all men everywhere, and without exception. Christ on the cross did “*His part*” to save everyone. However, it is man who makes the final decision whether or not he will come to saving faith. But then, even if a person chooses to believe in God and becomes a Christian, he may again choose *not* to be a Christian, and so may eventually fall away into a fearful condemnation. Permeating the theology of Arminianism is one central tenet: man is the controlling party in salvation. His will is free to make the determinative choice concerning salvation. God leaves the whole matter of personal salvation to the individual.

As the earlier quote by Spurgeon indicates, this is not at all the case. God has not left the matter of personal salvation with individuals, for then no one would ever come to faith. It is God, and not man, who will make the difference in this most important matter. God makes the choice as to who will, or who will not be saved, not man. Indeed, man is so ruined by sin that he is unable to choose God. Therefore, it is God who does the drawing. It is God who goes before the soul and brings it to the Savior.

And the purpose of Christ’s death is established—to save those whom the Father has chosen. Having saved them, God will then keep them, and will never allow them to stray so far as to fall into ultimate condemnation. Salvation, from beginning to end, is of the Lord. From the belly of the whale the ancient prophet declared, “*I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord.*” (Jonah 2:9)

## Opinions about Calvinism (The Doctrines of Grace)

Without being unduly defensive, it is accurate to say that there are many unworthy things being taught about those who embrace the doctrines of sovereign grace commonly called Calvinism [a system of theology named after the French theologian John Calvin, 1509-1564.] The following extract from a letter received indicates how brutal the verbal assault can be. Nothing has been changed in the wording of the quote or its emphasis.

*“According to Calvinism or “Reformed” theology, it is **God’s will and His sovereign choosing** that certain people continue to sin (i.e. rape, murder, lie, steal, blaspheme, assault, get drunk, etc. etc.) It’s **His will** that they do **not** repent and believe, as He has chosen from eternity past, in His sovereign love, **not** to give them “grace.” Because of God’s sovereign choice **not** to give certain people, whom He lovingly created, this “irresistible grace” He made it impossible for them to repent and believe. God sovereignly and lovingly chose to do this, even though in His Holy Word (the Bible) He “commands **all people everywhere to repent**” [Acts 17:30] and said that He “did not want **anyone** to perish, but **everyone** to come to repentance.” [2 Peter 3:9] **This is a “mystery.”** Also, because God chose to withhold this special “grace” from certain people, they are doomed and damned to suffer excruciating pain forever in hell, by this all-loving and perfectly just and fair heavenly Father. This is God’s sovereign choice according to His good purpose and pleasure and to His honor, glory, and praise.*

*However, it was very kind of God, concerning certain other people that He **chose** them and gave them “irresistible grace.” This means that it would have been **impossible** for them **not** to believe and repent. He thus sovereignly chooses to give them eternal happiness in heaven, whereas He sovereignly chooses to doom all others to eternal suffering in hell. Again, this is the case, even though God says in His Word that **Christ Jesus** “came into the world to **save***

*sinner* (and **all** have sinned)” [1 Timothy 1:15 and Romans 3:23]; “gave Himself as a ransom for all men” [1 Timothy 2:6]; and “came from the Father full of grace and truth” [John 1:14]. God is certainly good! And He is **definitely** loving, just, upright, impartial, reasonable, honorable, fair, gracious, faithful, and true! Is He not?”

There was much more in the correspondence but what has been recorded is sufficient to reflect that people have strong feelings *against* those who embrace a high view of God and a low view of man. As a result, it is not unusual for “*straw-man*” arguments to be set forth in an attempt to discredit believers in sovereign grace.

It is said that believers in the doctrines of sovereign grace are people who believe Christians do not have to witness because individuals will be saved whether they hear the gospel or not.

It is said that advocates of the doctrines of sovereign grace believe that God is a tyrant and that He causes people to sin in order to send them to hell.

It is said that the proponents of the doctrines of sovereign grace believe that the gospel is not to be given to everyone. Some people cannot be saved, whether they wanted to be saved or not.

It is said that those who love the doctrines of sovereign grace, teach that people are saved against their wills—thereby missing the point, that God changes the will of sinners, so that they desire salvation.

These are terrible charges against God’s people, and all are totally without foundation. Those who embrace the doctrines of God’s grace *want* to witness, and they *do* witness with great confidence, believing that God will bring souls to the Savior because individuals

have been chosen. The heart of the apostle Paul was encouraged one night to stay and preach in Corinth, because the Lord told him in a vision that souls would be saved according to sovereign grace. *“Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace. For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city”* (Acts 18:10, 11).

Those who believe in the doctrines of grace, teach that the gospel is to be presented to *every* man, woman, and child on the face of the earth, without exception, as the Lord gives opportunity and for good reason. From the surging sea of humanity, God *will* rescue, or save many precious souls who are perishing in their own sins. God is not a tyrant. He does not cause people to sin in order to send them to hell.

People sin of their own volition, in accordance to their own nature. Salvation, not sin, is the Divine design, and the focus of redemptive history. The real problem is that people do not want to be saved. When the truth is told, men are wedded to their lusts. The plight of man is desperate. *Romans 1:29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.*

### **A Word About the Controversy**

Because men are so depraved that they have pleasure in sin, and care nothing for their own souls, if anyone is to be saved, then God must work in a sovereign manner to rescue souls from themselves, and the just judgment they have invited upon themselves. It is because

religious teachers do not appreciate the wretched plight of man, and the necessity of the absolute power of God in the process of salvation, that a historical debate has raged over the centuries.

## Historical Development

As the debate unfolds, those on both sides of the issue make their appeal to the Scriptures. Believing that all men can come to Christ according to their will, and believing that the intent of Christ was to save all men, those who combat the doctrines of sovereign grace quote the following *Scriptures* for support.

- *1 Timothy 2:3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*
- *Titus 2:11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,*
- *1 Timothy 4:9 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation. For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those that believe.*
- *Romans 5:18 Therefore as by the offense 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.*
- *Hebrews 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.*



IN DEFENSE OF CALVINISM

- *1 John 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*
- *Isaiah 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*
- *Matthew 11:28 Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*
- *Matthew 23:37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*
- *Luke 7:48-50 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said unto the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.*
- *John 3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up:*
- *John 12:32 And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.*

From these passages several propositions are stated. First, God wants all men to be saved. Second, the grace of God has been given freely, and equally to all men. Third, Christ is the Savior of all men, reflected in the fact that He has tasted death for all and has born the iniquity of all. Fourth, men can reject the gospel, despite all that

Christ has done on their behalf. Fifth, Christ has promised to draw all men unto Himself.

## **New Testament Principles**

In order to understand the verses appealed to, and the conclusions drawn, a different context must be considered. Also appealing to the *Scriptures*, those who believe in the doctrines of sovereign grace emphasize the total helplessness of man. The *Bible* reveals the extreme and desperate condition of man. He is in a terrible state of bondage to sin.

By nature men are dead in trespasses and sin. “*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins*” (Ephesians 2:1).

The eyes of the natural man are blinded to the truth, so that he cannot “see” spiritual truth. “*What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded*” (Romans 11:7).

The will of the natural man is enslaved to a harsh taskmaster. Satan takes men captive at his will. (2 Timothy 2:26) Therefore, Jesus was right, when he looked at a group of religious leaders one-day and pronounced judgment upon them saying, “*And you will not come to me that ye might have life*” (John 5:40). Those who do come to Christ, realize that they did not come because of their will, but because of Sovereign grace. John speaks of those who are born, “*Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*” (John 1:13).

The heart of the unregenerate is as hard as stone. “*Yea, they have made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should bear the law, and the words*

*which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets; therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts” (Zechariah 7:12).*

The thoughts of the ungodly are evil continually. *“God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5 cf. Romans 1:21).*

The emotions are depraved. *“For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet” (Romans 1:26, 27).*

Every inclination of the un-righteous is away from God. *“There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God” (Romans 3:11).*

By himself a man can do nothing to contribute to his own salvation. *“Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil” (Jeremiah 13:23).*

The natural man is saved only when God does something for him. *“But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strength in the time of trouble” (Psalm 37:39 cf. Exodus 14:13; 2 Chronicles 20:17; Lamentations 3:26).*

So the great questions remain. *“Who is to be credited with man’s salvation? God? Man? Both? Who is it that will get the glory?”* In considering these important questions, those who embrace the doctrines of sovereign grace believe that the following gospel principles should be affirmed.

No one can come to Christ except the Lord draws him. “*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*” (John 6:44).

Christ has come to call the helpless to salvation. “*I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*” (Luke 5:32). And sinners do come to Christ, by faith. They come saying:

“*Lo! I come; and Thou, blest Lamb,  
O take me to Thee as I am;  
Nothing but sin I Thee can give;  
Nothing but love may I receive.*”

The issue in salvation is not religious zeal, but a salvation according to true knowledge. Paul writes of the Israelites that they had zeal for God “*but not according to knowledge.*” (Romans 10:2)

- Salvation is according to the principle of grace. If it is mixed with works (including the will of man), then it ceases to be grace. “*And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work*” (Rom 11:6).

Because of these gospel principles, there are some challenging questions for those who oppose the doctrines of sovereign grace.

Question. “*If God wants all men to be saved, then why are not all men saved, for who can withstand the hand of God?*” (study Genesis 17:1; 18:14; Job 42:2; Isaiah 26:4; Matthew 19:26; Luke 1:37; Acts 26:8; Revelation 9:6; 21:22).

Question. *“If the grace of God has been given freely and equally to all men then why are missionaries sent out? And why is it that men still perish in their sins?”* (Luke 16:19-23 cf. Matthew 5:29).

Question. *“If Christ is the Savior of all men, if Christ has tasted death for all, and has born the iniquity of all, then why does anyone go to hell? On what basis does the Father condemn anyone? If Christ has actually done all that is alleged for all men, then logically, universalism must be true. God has no basis on which to judge anyone.”*

Question. *“What does it matter if men reject Christ, even after He has done so much for them? Is not the sin of rejecting Christ atoned for like all other heinous sins?”*

Question. *“Will Christ draw men unto Himself, only to let them fall away to eternal destruction? Will Christ draw men unto Himself, only to get a better view of a bleeding Savior—a Savior who will not save them?”*

Those who oppose the doctrines of sovereign grace cannot easily dismiss these questions—nor can they adequately answer them.

### **Pre-Reformation Period: Augustine vs. Pelagius**

Prior to the Reformation period, the issues of human depravity, the freedom of the will of man, and the sovereignty of God, were crystallized in the debate between Pelagius and Augustine. Pelagius was a British monk (c. AD 354 - after 418) who arose to deny the doctrine of original sin (that the human race had fallen in Adam). He argued that man was not born corrupt, nor was man totally depraved. Moreover, he was not predestined to heaven or hell. Babies, he said, are innocent. They become bad when they grow up and are influenced by others. Each person has a free will that determines his

eternal destiny. At the core of the theology of Pelagius was the concept that man must be able to do whatever God requires him to do. For Pelagius, responsibility necessitated ability.

In contrast, Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430), a town on the North African coast, taught that every man is conceived and born in sin, and can be saved only through the grace of God, according to His divine pleasure. Augustine was convinced that the Scriptures taught the bondage of the will, not its freedom, in order that salvation might be of grace. The commandments of Christ, to be “*perfect*”, along with the Law, were designed to show man how helpless, and hopeless his condition was. Man needs the grace of God if he will be saved. He needs a Savior. He needs a Divine Remedy from the power, pollution, and penalty of sin. In the Person of Jesus Christ, all that man needs for salvation is provided.

In AD 416, two African councils condemned the teachings of Pelagius. Pope Innocent I, who in 417 excommunicated the monk, upheld this decision. The General Council of Ephesus in 431, again officially condemned the teachings of Pelagius. In 529 the Synod of Orange (France) condemned the teachings of semi-Pelagianism, which holds that it is up to the individual to accept or refuse, the gift of God’s grace. The Church contended for God’s sovereign act of free grace, not man’s free will to choose.

### **Semi-Pelagianism vs. Gottschalk**

Though the Church councils had officially condemned the thinking of Pelagius, it would not go away. Another champion was needed to combat its implications. Such a champion was found in the ninth century. His name was Gottschalk (c. 803-869). Born into a noble family, Gottschalk was committed, by his parents, to the care of the

Benedictine abbey at Fulda (part of Germany). He was to be a child oblate (ward and pupil) of the Church. As the years passed, and Gottschalk reached maturity, he resented his confinement, and sought his freedom. Despite opposition from the abbot, Rabanus Maurus, a legislature of Mainz (829) allowed him to go free.

His freedom was short lived, for the abbot appealed the decision to the Frankish emperor Louis. Gottschalk was to return to the monastery as a priest. The following years brought much hardship, as Gottschalk embraced the doctrines of grace and exalted the sovereignty of God. His preaching in Rome and in the Balkans was condemned. He was deprived of the priesthood, physically beaten, denied communion, and was imprisoned at Hautvillers. Despite almost twenty years of suffering, he was able to write a number of poems with spiritual themes.

### **The Reformation Period**

Around noontime on October 31, 1517, Martin Luther (1483-1546) nailed his 95 theses to the old wooden door of the Castle Church at Wittenburg, Germany. Little did Luther realize that the simple act of publishing his concerns about the abuses within the established church was to launch what is now known to history as the Reformation Era. An exciting, and heroic epoch in the life of the Church had begun. The essential issue around which the Reformation would be fought was the will of man. The age-old questions still persisted: *“Is the will of man free, or is it in bondage? Does man have any part in his own salvation? Or is salvation of the Lord?”*

Martin Luther concluded, like so many before him, that salvation was the free gift of free grace, bestowed upon poor sinners by a sovereign God. Works have no part in the salvation of the soul. *“The just shall*

*live by faith*” (Habakkuk 2:4 cf. Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38), and that faith is apart from human merit, for it too is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8, 9). Such thinking was contrary to the official teaching of the Church of Rome, which insisted that faith, plus good works, merited the grace, resulting in the salvation of the soul. The church was not about to abolish a system of salvation that was financially profitable, reflected in the sale of indulgences, and the contributions received from acts of penance, and vows of poverty, taken by the nuns and priests.

### **Luther vs. Erasmus**

To challenge Luther’s thinking, Rome found a champion in the person of Desiderius Erasmus (c. 1466-1536), a Dutch scholar, a humanist, and first editor of the Greek *New Testament*. Reluctant to become involved in the controversy between Luther and the papacy, Erasmus finally succumbed to ecclesiastical pressure, and attacked Luther in *Diatribes on Free Will*. Luther responded with *Bondage of the Will* (1526). For Luther, the will was not something that was neutral. Man’s will is like a beast driven by a master, either Satan, or the Righteous God. Since the Fall, man was no longer master of himself. He was enslaved, either to the Devil (John 8:44) or to Christ (Romans 1:1).

The advocates of free will, such as Erasmus, argued that “*If a man improves his naturals, God is bound to give him spirituals*”. Yet, what is this but turning grace into debt? The advocates of free will make man the cause of his own salvation. They put grace into man’s power, not man’s will under the power of grace. They rob God of the honor of making one to differ from another (1 Corinthians 4:7) and ascribe that work to man.



Free will allows man the liberty of boasting to God, saying, “*God, I thank Thee that Thou gavest me power to will (yet Thou gavest that to Judas as well as me), but I thank myself for the act of willingness, since I receive from Thee no more than Judas did.*”

Free will exempts the creature from the power of God, as if man, spider-like, could spin a thread out of his own bowels whereon to climb to Heaven.

Free will makes man the cause why God willeth this or that; so God must attend on the will of man, and not be infallible in His decrees, nor working all things according to the counsel of His own will (Ephesians 1:11 cf. Psalm 115:3; From the writings of Christopher Ness).

A true believer is one who has been well taught his unworthiness, and his sinfulness and his weakness. A true believer, is one, who, as a sinner has to cast his all upon Christ, and cries out,

*“Nothing in my hand I bring;  
Simply to Thy cross I cling.*

*A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
On Thy kind arms I fall,  
Be Thou my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus, and my all.”*

## **Reformation Themes**

The general distinguishing principles of the Reformation may be identified.

A Fundamental Respect for the *Scriptures*. For centuries the Catholic Church had diminished the importance of *Scripture*. The *Bible* was not believed to be sufficient for life, and so the writings of men, and the authority of Church councils were given equal, or superior, weight to the *Word of God*. The *Scriptures* were virtually withheld from the people, for it was not allowed to be translated into the vernacular of the common man. Very few people had even seen a copy of the Bible, let alone held one in their hands. The Reformers restored the Scriptures to its rightful position. It was the Bible, which was to determine the Church's doctrine, regulate its practice, and guide the daily conduct of the believer.

A Religion based upon Reason. The Church of Rome had introduced, and advanced, many illogical doctrines. They had forced people to embrace them upon penalty of temporal punishment, or eternal pain. There was the mystical doctrine of transubstantiation. There was the preposterous, pompous, pretensions of papal indulgences. There was the supercilious supply of images in the hour of worship. The Reformers placed before the people of God a creed, a code of conduct, and a way of worship, which did not outrage the rational nature of the mind.

A Religion of Personal Piety. Catholicism did not encourage individuals to go directly and personally to God the Father. Between the heart of man, and the heart of the God of heaven, both popes, and councils, had interjected their own authority. Before a soul, burdened with sin could find divine forgiveness, the priest had to intervene to hear one's confession, and then render absolution. No longer could a saint come boldly before the throne of grace.

The Virgin Mary, and departed saints, was interjected, demanding needless mediation. With the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, the Reformers swept away all false barriers. They declared the right of private judgment. They proclaimed a universal priesthood of the believer, and emphasized personal responsibility. Each soul had the privilege of speaking directly to the Savior, the true source of salvation.

A Spiritual Religion. Because a multitude of outward ordinances, and ceremonies had been imposed upon the people, the true spiritual nature of the faith had become obscured. The Reformers arose to emphasize an inward religious experience over external ecclesiastical rituals, without reality. The Reformers replaced penance, with penitence, works with faith, asceticism, with self-denial, celibacy with chastity, and the mass, with spiritual communion.

The Rise of Nationalism. Desiring to subjugate the world to itself, Rome made each nation subservient to an ecclesiastical hierarchy over which it presided. The Reformers protested against papal intervention into the internal affairs of individual countries, thereby denying religious independence. At the Diet of Spires in 1526, it was decreed that in regard to religion, *“each state should live, govern, and behave itself as it should answer to God and the Emperor.”* From time to time, when he was not fighting perpetual wars outside his domain, Charles V, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, attempted to reverse the decree, and bring everyone back to the Catholic faith, but national freedom of religion was reaffirmed at the Augsburg Diet in 1555. The rise of nationalism, encouraged by the Reformers, established the principle that Rome had no right to impose its ecclesiastical discipline, ritual, or creed upon other Christians outside its sphere of influence (*A Glorious Institution: The Church in History*, Mt. Zion Publications, Pensacola, Fl.).

## **Arminius and the Remonstrance**

One person that changed the historic beliefs of many, within the Protestant Church, was James (Jacobus) Arminius. Arminius was born in the Netherlands at Oudewater, near Utrecht (1560). His father died around the time of his birth. Then, in the early years of childhood, the Spaniards came and destroyed his hometown. His family perished. Discovering he was destitute of a nuclear family, kind Dutch neighbors took Arminius into their home, and provided for his needs.

Recognized as a capable student, Arminius was enrolled as the twelfth student at the new University of Leyden (1576). Here, for the first time on public record, he used his Latinized name, Jacobus Arminius, instead of his given name at birth, Jacob Harmenszoon. As expected, Arminius enjoyed academic excellence.

After completing his studies at Leyden, Arminius continued his education at the Geneva Academy (1582), which was headed by Theodore Beza, the successor to John Calvin. In 1588, Arminius was ordained a minister of the gospel. He became a pastor of the Reformed Church in Amsterdam. In 1590, Arminius married a prosperous merchant's daughter, which gave him contact with the prominent members of society. As a minister, Jacobus was eloquent, educated, and enlightened. His sermons attracted large audiences; not only for their clear content, but for the controversy they created.

According to Arminius, a high view of the doctrines of grace was wrong. God did not extend His saving grace only to those whom He predestinates to salvation. Nor is the will of man so bound in sin that there is no freedom of thought, or ability to act, for God has elected

those whom He has foreseen will believe. Man is not totally enabled by sin to merit favor with God, nor is he fully depraved.

By 1592, Arminius had been formally accused of Pelagianism (a fifth century controversy which emphasized the freedom of the will), and departure from the two creeds setting forth the doctrines of grace, the Belgic Confession, and the Heidelberg Catechism. Accusations of departing from the faith would continue to follow him until his death in 1609. During his life, Arminius had asked for a Church council to be called to discuss afresh the concept of predestination, election, and reprobation. Nine years after his death, such a council was held.

### **The Synod of Dort**

When the Synod of Dort met, from November 13, 1618 to May 9, 1619, delegates from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, England, Germany, and Switzerland, attended. The teachings of Arminius were considered and then unanimously rejected, and condemned. The Reform doctrine was reaffirmed in the *Canons of Dort*.

Those who try to defend Jacobus Arminius from the condemnation of the Synod of Dort, make a distinction between the man, and the message his followers manifested. It is a valid point. The views of Arminius were never systematically set forth, until the year following his death, when his disciples issued a declaration called *The Remonstrance* (1610).

It is doubtful that Arminius himself would have openly endorsed all of the positions that have become associated with his name. His thinking was more subtle. His language was more cautious. The writings of Arminius himself are so carefully worded that Moses

Stuart (1831) found it possible to argue that Arminius was not an Arminian. However, in the end, the charge is valid that Arminius had an indirect way of denying accepted Protestant biblical truths, such as the depravity of man, the bondage of the will, and the election of souls to salvation, or judgment.

If Arminius was by nature a gentle man in presenting his views, if he was cautious in his comments, the implications of his thinking inflamed—with combative religious zeal—the young ministers whom he had trained for the ministry. Though only forty-five signed the Remonstrance, the whole church was soon caught up with theological controversy.

Arminius is not without historical accountability. He did plant the seed that has proven to be a great challenge to the church for the souls of men. A brief summary of the direct challenge of Arminianism to the doctrines of grace may be stated as follows.

<b>DOCTRINES OF GRACE</b>	<b>ARMINIANISM</b>
Election is unconditional.	Election and condemnation are conditioned upon the foreseen faith, or unbelief of man, not upon the sovereign choice of Almighty God.
The atonement is limited to the elect.	The atonement was made for all, but believers enjoy its benefits.
Man is depraved, so far as any ability.	Man, unaided by the Spirit, is unable to come to God, and to the merits of Christ. However, the will of man is involved in salvation.

Grace is irresistible.	Grace can be resisted.
The saints will persevere in the faith, being kept by the power of God.	Christians can backslide into sin, not only occasionally, but even habitually, and still be saved on the basis of their decision to receive Christ.

Though Arminian theology was officially condemned at the Synod of Dort, its influence did not go away. It was accepted by multitudes in the Anglican Church, by many in the dissenting denominations, including the Baptist, and the Methodist. Arminian theology continues to be widely accepted in much of Christendom.

Oddly enough, although this matter of salvation, as a work of God alone, is a rather minority opinion today, it is a point of repeated emphasis in the Scriptures. We will work it out here in the form that it has been given to us for years: TULIP.

### **The Five Points of the Doctrines of Grace: A Mnemonic Device**

**T** = Total Depravity  
Grace

**U** = Unconditional Election  
Grace

**L** = Limited Atonement  
Grace

**I** = Irresistible Grace  
Grace

**P** = Perseverance of the Saints

The Necessity of  
Salvation Required

The Foundation of  
Salvation Planned

The Provision of  
Salvation Purchased

The Revelation of  
Salvation Applied

The Victory of Grace  
Salvation Perfected

## A Brief Summary of the Various Historical Systems

- Pelagianism teaches that man is naturally good, and has no need of grace.
- Semi-Pelagianism teaches that man is good, but not good enough, so that grace is needed to complete what man begins.
- Arminianism argues that though man is not good, all are given equal and sufficient grace to exercise free will (called *prevenient grace*).
- The doctrines of sovereign grace, historically called Augustinism, or Calvinism, contends that all men are sinful and are therefore incapable of contributing anything to the process of personal salvation. Men need a Savior. Men need a Savior who is Divine, and they can find such a Savior in Jesus Christ.

*“Hail, great Immanuel, all divine!  
In Thee Thy Father’s glories shine;  
Thou brightest, sweetest, fairest One,  
That eyes have seen or angels known.”*

## A Brief Summary of the Doctrines of God, and Their Major Emphasis

Theologically, as a system of thought, the doctrines of grace may be identified by the acceptance of the supreme role of *Scripture* in revelation, and its interpretation, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. From the Scriptures flows forth the doctrine of the absolute sovereignty of God. Armed with these two emphases, or



presuppositions, the doctrines of grace logically argues for the following.

- The primary duty of man is to do the will of God.
- This was possible in Adam prior to the Fall.
- In the Fall the power to do well and to please God was lost.
- Since Adam acted as the Federal Representative of the human race, he was rightfully judged, and all of his posterity are rightfully damned.
- However, for His own good pleasure, God in Christ has decreed to save some, but not all members of Adam's race. Those who are saved by grace, through faith alone, realize that they too were worthy of eternal judgment.

*“And there should I have gone,  
But Thou dost all things well;  
Thy love was great, Thy mercy free,  
Which from the pit delivered me.”*

- That God saves some is a tribute to His mercy and grace. That He does not save all redounds to His justice.
- God, in Christ, redeems whom He wills, which are known by various names including “*the elect of God*” (Colossians 3:12).

- By faith, all of the elect receive eternal life, and will joyously dwell with Christ forever, according to the workings of grace. In heaven,

*“We’ll sing the vast unmeasured grace,  
Which, from the days of old,  
Did all His Son’s elect embrace;  
As sheep within His fold.”*

- Those who have been chosen to be the heirs of eternal life, are given a new heart, a new will, and a new mind, in order to have the renewed ability to do the will of God.
- As history unfolds, God works out His great plan of redemption in the lives of His people, who honor Him within the sphere of the Church, the ordinances (baptism and the Lord’s Supper) and the Civil Government, for Jesus has said, *If ye love me, keep my commandments*. And the heart of the Christian responds, and asks,

*“Do not I love Thee, dearest Lord?  
Behold my heart and see.”*

### **Common Denominator and Controlling Theme**

Permeating the system of theology setting forth the doctrines of sovereign grace is an emphasis upon the glory of God. What the system tries to do is to give all the glory to God that is due Him as specific questions are considered. *Who is to be credited with human salvation? Does man get any credit at all?* Those who embrace the doctrines of grace cry out, *“Sola Deo Gloria!” “To God alone be the glory!”* Salvation cannot be ascribed in any way to human activity. The

salvation of a soul is only explainable in terms of divine activity. Yes, man must believe, but the ability to express positive faith to receive God, that capacity is the gift of God.

*“Not all the outward forms on earth,  
Nor rites that God hath given,  
Not will of man, nor blood, nor birth,  
Can raise a soul to Heaven.*

*The sovereign will of God alone,  
Creates us heirs of grace:  
Both in the image of His Son,  
A new peculiar race.*

*Thus quicken’d souls awake and rise  
From the long sleep of death;  
On Heavenly things they fix their eyes,  
And praise employs their breath.”*

### **Salient Features or Distinguishing Marks of the Doctrines of Grace**

- The depravity or sinfulness of man. Man is sinful in every facet of his being. Man is not as wicked as he could be, at any given moment, because there is a form of relative righteousness. Some people are better than others. But overall, every man is totally depraved, in the sense that every facet of the soul is stained by sin. Therefore, man, by nature, is unable to respond to God in faith. Man is unable to do what God requires of him.

- The sovereignty of God. God is free, and able to do whatsoever He wants, when He wants to do it, how He wants to do it, with whomsoever He wants to do it. God is absolutely free to do as He chooses. He is accountable to no-one, and nothing, except His own perfect essence. God is sovereign in every detail of the universe, including the salvation of every lost human soul.

*“Sovereign grace o’er sin abounding,  
Ransom’d souls the tidings swell;  
’Tis a deep that knows no sounding,  
Who its breadth or length can tell?  
On its glories  
Let my soul forever dwell.”*

- The graciousness of salvation. Salvation, in every detail, is explained in terms of grace. While grace does come to relieve the heart of unlawful fears, it was grace which taught the heart to fear God in the first place.

### **An Outline of the Eternal Purpose of God**

*“Tis done! The great transaction’s done;  
I am the Lord’s, and He is mine.”*

In 1859, preaching in the Surrey Music Hall in London, England, with wisdom and eloquence C. H. Spurgeon set forth the scriptural position, and the essential features of the purpose of God in the covenant of grace. The great work of salvation involves all the members of the triune Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

*‘Now, in this covenant of grace, we must first of all observe the high contracting parties between whom it was made. The covenant of grace was made before the foundation of the world between God the Father, and God the Son; or to put it in a yet more scriptural light, it was made mutually between the three divine persons of the adorable Trinity. This covenant was not made directly between God and man. Man did not at that time exist; but Christ stood in the covenant as man’s representative. In that sense we will allow that it was a covenant between God and man, but not a covenant between God and any man personally and individually.*

*It was a covenant between God and Christ and through Christ indirectly with all the blood-bought seed that were loved of Christ from the foundation of the world. It is a noble and glorious thought, the very poetry of that old Calvinistic doctrine which we teach, that long ere the day star knew its place, before God had spoken existence out of nothing, before angel’s wing had stirred the unnavigated ether, before a solitary song had disturbed the solemnity of the silence in which God reigned supreme, He had entered into solemn counsel with Himself, with His Son, and with His Spirit, and had in that council decreed, determined, purposed and predestinated the salvation of His people.*

*My soul flies back now, winged by imagination and by faith, and looks into that mysterious council chamber, and by faith I behold the Father pledging Himself to the Son, and the Son pledging Himself to the Father, while the Spirit gives His pledge to both, and thus that divine compact, long to be hidden in darkness, is completed and settled—the covenant which in these latter days has been read in the light of heaven, and has become the joy and hope and boast of all the saints.*

*And now what were the stipulations of this covenant? They were somewhat in this wise. God had foreseen that man after creation would break the covenant of works; that however mild and gentle the tenure upon which Adam had possession of Paradise, yet that tenure would be too severe for him, and he would be sure to kick against it, and ruin himself. God had also foreseen that His elect*

*ones, whom He had chosen out of the rest of mankind, would fall by the sin of Adam, since they, as well as the rest of mankind, were represented in Adam. The covenant therefore had for its end the restoration of the chosen people. And now we may readily understand what were the stipulations. On the Father's part, thus runs the covenant. I cannot tell you it in the glorious celestial tongue in which it was written: I am fain to bring it down to the speech, which suiteth to the ear of the flesh, and to the heart of a mortal. Thus, I say, runs the covenant, in lines like these:*

*'I, the Most High Jehovah, do hereby give unto my only begotten and well beloved Son, a people, countless beyond the number of the stars, who shall be by him washed from sin, by Him preserved and kept and led, and by Him, at last, presented before my throne, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. I covenant by oath, and swear by Myself, because I can swear by no greater, that these whom I now give to Christ shall be forever the objects of My eternal love. Them will I forgive through the merit of the blood. To these will I give a perfect righteousness; these will I adopt and make my sons and daughters, and these shall reign with me through Christ eternally.'*

*Thus runs that glorious side of the covenant. The Holy Spirit also, as one of the high contracting parties on this side of the covenant, gave His declaration:*

*'I hereby covenant," saith He, "that all whom the Father giveth to the Son, I will in due time quicken. I will show them their need of redemption; I will cut off from them all groundless hope, and destroy their refuges of lies. I will bring them to the blood of sprinkling I will give them faith whereby this blood shall be applied to them; I will work in them every grace; I will keep their faith alive; I will cleanse them and drive out all depravity from them, and they shall be presented at last spotless and faultless.'*

*This was the one of the covenant, which is at this very day being fulfilled and scrupulously kept. As for the other side of the covenant this was part of it, engaged and covenanted by Christ. He thus declared and covenanted with His Father:*

*My Father, on my part I covenant that in the fullness of time I will become man. I will take upon Myself the form and nature of the fallen race. I will live in their wretched world, and for My people will I keep the law perfectly. I will work out a spotless righteousness, which shall be acceptable to the demands of Thy just and holy law. In due time I will bear the sins of all My people. Thou shalt exact their debts on Me; the chastisement of their peace I will endure, and by My stripes they shall be healed. My Father, I covenant and promise that I will be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. I will magnify Thy law and make it honourable. I will suffer all they ought to have suffered. I will endure the curse of thy law, and all the vials of Thy wrath shall be emptied and spent upon My head. I will then rise again; I will ascend into heaven; I will intercede for them at Thy right hand; and I will make myself responsible for every one of them, that not one of them Thou has given Me shall ever be lost, but I will bring all My sheep of whom, by My blood, Thou has constituted Me the Shepherd—I will bring every one safe to Thee at last.”*

By these words, the eternal purpose of God, in the salvation of souls is set forth. The Father has a peculiar people for His Son. They are chosen, redeemed, sanctified, and glorified, to show forth His glory and to praise Him for all eternity.

### **Later History: The Reformation to the Present Time**

It would not be wrong to say, speaking in broad, general terms, that the doctrines of sovereign grace dominated Christian theology for many years following the Reformation. Luther spoke about the sovereignty of God, and against free will, in favor of free grace, as did John Calvin who forcefully advocated the Presbyterian form of

church government. The Church of England initially articulated the doctrines of grace, reflected in the Thirty-nine Articles of Faith as did the Congregationalist, the Puritans, and most Baptist (Study *The London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*).

Always present, of course, during this long period of time, was Pelagianism/Arminianism. George Whitefield, along with John and Charles Wesley, established the Methodist structure. Though Whitefield was a strong advocate of the doctrines of grace, John and Charles Wesley were zealous for Arminianism. They overshadowed Whitefield as leaders of the Methodist movement, and so Methodist were from the first Arminians.

The Baptist eventually divided into two camps. There was the General Baptist, (who advocated free will), and the Regular, or Particular Baptist, who insisted on free grace. The General Baptist were Arminian, which led to heretical theological positions, advanced by Unitarians, and the Universalists.

Today, most of the major religious denominations have moved away from their historical roots and confessions of faith. Pelagianism, Semi-Pelagianism, and, or, Arminianism, now prevails in Lutheran churches, many Baptist denominations, liberal Presbyterian churches, and even the Church of England.

A news article reported that the current Archbishop of Canterbury (August 1999) said that the resurrection of Christ was not important! Most of the newer denominations, such as the Pentecostal churches, are strong Arminians.

The central doctrine that prevails in the present Church—allowing the ecumenical movement to thrive—is the lie of free will. The



scriptural truth of the bondage of the will is being denied. And so a generation has arisen that does not understand its desperate need for a Savior (Romans 1:25 cf. 2 Thess. 2:11). The unspoken question is this: *What would Christ save people from? We can help ourselves—thank you very much!*

Long ago, Martin Luther anticipated all this would happen, once the concept of the bondage of the will was surrendered. In a letter to Erasmus, Luther stated, that when all was said and done, the only difference between Roman theology, and the Protestant position, was the issue of the will. In other words, if the will is free, as most Protestants now believe, and man is able to move toward God and be saved at any time, of his own choosing, then there is no reason not to unite with the Roman Catholic Church, for Rome has consistently said that the will of man, *plus* the grace of God, equals salvation. The distinctive doctrine of the bondage of the will, which launched the Reformation and exalted the glory of God in the salvation of souls, has been abandoned. There is no logical or compelling reason, for most Protestants to stay away from Mass and the Church of Rome. Their system of theology is the same—salvation by grace through faith *plus* works, the work of the free will, choosing God as Savior when and where self-pleases.

### **The Importance of the Study of the Doctrines of Grace**

**Doctrinal Clarity.** The doctrines of sovereign grace are to be studied afresh, because doctrine is the foundation on which the church is built. The foundation must be dug deep if the superstructure is to stand. To use another analogy, the Christian is to be deeply rooted in doctrine, for it is the will of God (Ephesians 3:17; Colossians 2:7). Though doctrine is played down today, the church has no right to be lax in doctrinal clarity. The church has no right to think that it can be

unclear on certain doctrines because they are unpopular. Doctrinal clarity is very, very important. “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect thoroughly furnished unto all good works*” (2 Timothy 3:16,17). Therefore Christian, *Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all*” (1 Timothy 4:15).

**The Ministry of the Gospel.** The doctrines of sovereign grace are to be studied afresh, because it is important that the message be accurate concerning the plight of man, and the remedy of God. So, precisely, what is man’s problem? Is man merely sick, or is he dead in trespasses and sins? The difference between the two is grave, for if the church comes up with misdiagnoses of the problem, it will also give an improper remedy. Then there is the question as to how the remedy is to be administered. “*Is it to be made more palatable? Is it to be presented in selfish, attractive terms?*” Many people think so, with the result being an endless array of religious slogans, void of doctrine content, and gospel truth.

- “*Smile! God Loves You, And So Do I.*”
- “*God Loves You, And Has A Wonderful Plan For Your Life*”
- “*Try Jesus!*”
- “*Jesus Is My Co-pilot*”

Do these slogans reflect *New Testament* sentiments? No. But they do reveal the poverty of thinking by the present generation. They reveal the fact that the modern church has a wrong view of the problem of man, and a wrong remedy for it.

**The Glory of God.** The doctrines of sovereign grace are to be studied afresh, because, at stake is the glory of God. Pelagianism/Arminianism as a system of theology, gives a real measure of respectability to man, and so robs God of His essential glory that rightly belongs to Him. Those who believe in the doctrines of grace say again, “*Sola Deo Gloria!*” “*To God alone be the glory.*”

### **Authoritative Standards**

The objective standard, by which any system of theology is to be tested is the Bible, as per 2 Timothy 3:16, which declare that, “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God.*” Since the Bible is “*God-breathed*”, it must be true. God cannot lie, nor can He make a mistake. Therefore, observe three things.

**God’s Word is True.** God determines what truth is, and what is a lie, and what is false, and not public opinion—or anything else. The *Scriptures* are to be approached with the attitude of a humble learner. Men are to come to the *Bible* looking for truth. They are not to come to the *Bible*, trying to justify some popular pre-suppositional thinking.

**God’s Word is Binding.** The *Scriptures* are to be submitted to. The church has no right to pick and choose what it will, or will not teach. The whole counsel of God is to be proclaimed. (Acts 20:27) When truth is denied, it is sin. The obligation placed upon the church is to discover what the Bible says, believe it, and teach it.

**God’s Word is Profitable.** More than one person has suggested openly, that since the doctrines of grace are so controversial, they should not be openly proclaimed. But the *Bible* says that every doctrine set forth is useful, and good, and serves a holy purpose (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). The church has no right to stand above *Scripture*, and to pick, and choose which doctrines are useful and which are

not. The doctrines of grace are given for the church to learn, and by learning increase in knowledge of Christ.

To employ imagery, the church is a steward in God's employment (Titus 1:7). The Lord has given the church His Word to preach. The church and the world, is not served well until that is done. By understanding the doctrines of grace, the Christian will come to a greater appreciation of salvation. Practically, one's devotional life will be revolutionized, as an attitude of gratitude is cultivated for what God has done on behalf of those whom He has given to the Son. Witnessing will change from a man-centered presentation of the gospel, to a God-centered message. The whole Christian walk will take on a new perspective, as the glory of God is magnified. There will be more purpose and meaning in life. There will be greater love for Christ. The discovery will be made that the doctrines of sovereign grace are not only necessary, they are wonderful.

*"It is no novelty, then, that I am preaching; no new doctrine. I love to proclaim these strong old doctrines, that are called by nickname Calvinism, but which are surely and verily the revealed truth of God as it is in Christ Jesus. By this truth I make a pilgrimage into [the] past, and as I go, I see father after father, confessor after confessor, martyr after martyr, standing up to shake hands with me...taking these things to be the standard of my faith, I see the land of the ancients peopled with my brethren; I behold multitudes who confess the same as I do, and acknowledge that this is the religion of God's own church."* (C.H. Spurgeon)

While the church must always, and only, look to Christ for her truths, the spiritual wisdom of those who have gone before should not be dismissed too quickly. It is a matter of record that the faith which is contended for today was embraced by the greatest saints of old: Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, John Bunyan, Jonathan Edwards, Robert M. M'Chenny, John Gill, Charles H.

Spurgeon, William Carey and a host too innumerable to mention. We have a great cloud of witnesses who have gone before us into heaven, declaring that the doctrines of sovereign grace are true. Those who still proclaim the doctrines of grace will please the Father to whom all glory and honor is due. Amen.

2

Total Depravity

AS THE DOCTRINES OF sovereign grace exalts the glory of God, it debases the pride of man. In a day and age given to pop psychology, and self-esteem theology, it is widely assumed that a great problem for modern man is that he does not think well of himself. Whenever something goes drastically wrong in society, such as a rash of school shootings in various states, it is assumed that the root problem is lack of self-esteem. One prominent pastor in California has gleefully written that self-esteem theology will be the foundation for the next moral reformation within the church. However, the problem with self-esteem theology is not that man thinks too little of himself, but that he thinks too highly of himself! The essence of sin is not lack of pride but too much pride. (Luke 18:9-14) The gospel comes not to call the righteous—or those who are pleased with their spirituality, and morality—but sinners to repentance (Luke 5:32).

## The Importance of the Doctrine of Man's Sinfulness

Because of pride and arrogance of the natural man (Mark 7:22), who feels he is in need of no-one and nothing, (Psalm 14:1) it is important to study the doctrine of depravity, for two reasons:

(1) It is foundational to the doctrine of salvation, and;

(2) It is essential to true worship. The Christian says he believes in the doctrine of election. *But why is election necessary?* The answer is found in the doctrine of total depravity. The Christian says he believes in the divine calling. *“Why is that necessary? Why is it necessary that God must draw a person to Himself? Why is irresistible grace necessary?”*

The answer is found in the subject of total depravity. The Christian says he believes in justification, and regeneration, or that a man must be brought to spiritual life before he can believe. *“Why is regeneration necessary? What makes regeneration so important?”* The Christian believes in sanctification, which is the doctrine that a man must continue to work at removing the effects of sin. *“But what makes sanctification necessary?”* The answer is found in the subject of total depravity. Salvation will never be understood, apart from a clear view of the sinfulness of the state of the natural man.

Nor will there be proper worship, apart from an understanding of the doctrine of total depravity. If the believer is to worship God aright, and if a person is to gain the necessary appreciation of salvation, then the heart must look to the rock from which it was hewn, and to the hole from which it was dug. (Isaiah 51:1) Then, when the question arises, *“From what did God save?”* The backward look will reveal the depths of human depravity from which the heart was drawn, and there will be a true incentive to worship and to say,

*“Thank you Lord, for saving my soul,  
Thank you Lord, for making me whole.  
Thank you Lord for giving to me  
Thy great salvation so rich and free.”*

## **The Origin of Sin in Humanity**

According to the Bible (Ecclesiastes 7:29), God made man “*upright*” (lit. *straight*), but he began to seek to do all forms of evil on his own. Man was created perfect—morally, religiously, and spiritually. He was created in accordance with God’s perfect moral standards. But man was also created mutable, or with the capacity to change. And change Adam did. Though he knew what it was like to have sweet, and intimate fellowship with the Lord, though he knew what it was like to walk with God (Genesis 3: 8), Adam changed, by a sinful act of disobedience (Romans 5:12).

How Adam was able to move from a state of grace to a state of disgrace is a great mystery, for he was not created morally neutral. Adam’s original righteousness was that of positive inclination towards God. He was created in such a way that he wanted to obey the Lord. But he sinned and became conscious of that fact.

In the act of sinning, Adam was different from Eve. The apostle Paul told Timothy that Eve was deceived when she ate of the forbidden fruit, but not Adam, which makes the nature of his transgression one of apostasy. Adam’s sin was the action of a willful, deliberate decision, and the question arises as to why. “*Adam, why did you eat the forbidden fruit?*” Several possibilities come to mind.

- It may be that Adam ate of the forbidden fruit out of love for Eve. When Adam realized that Eve was under a sentence of



death, it is possible that he made a decision to desire the creature more than the Creator. Adam joined Eve in death, out of love. The problem with this view is that it makes the disobedience of Adam to appear somewhat noble, or at least romantic. But his action was not noble, it was treacherous.

- It may be that Adam ate of the forbidden fruit because he was simply curious about sin, having no regard for the known consequences. Many a person has been brought up in a religious manner, only to become curious about evil, and engaged in wicked behavior out of simple intrigue.
- It may be that Adam ate of the forbidden fruit because he believed the words of Satan as well as the words of God. There is a sense in which the things Satan said were true. The devil said that the eyes of Adam and Eve would be “*opened*”, and they were (Genesis 3:13 cf. 3:17). The devil said that they would both know “*good and evil*”, and they did—but **not** like God. That was the deceptive part of the truth. But it did not matter, for a half-truth is a whole lie. Instead of Adam and Eve knowing “*good and evil*” objectively, like God, they would know it subjectively, like the devil, who would now become their “father”, and the “father” of their offspring (cf. John 8:44).

In the final analysis, the Bible is content to say that Adam sinned willfully, and knowingly. He consciously violated the terms of the covenant imposed upon him. God had given Adam all that he would need in order to obey the gracious terms of life, God had given to Adam clear warning of the consequences of disobedience—and Adam disobeyed. He turned on God, and defied Him, and broke the terms of fellowship, and the covenant.

The consequences of the Fall of Adam were severe, and immediate, as the effects were felt on himself, and on others. With the sin of Adam, several things happened.

- Death. The Lord had warned Adam, that the day in which he ate he would die, and die Adam did. There was an immediate spiritual separation from God, and the process of physical death began. (Romans 6:23) The evidence for a state of spiritual death is reflected in Adam's awareness of evil, which is why he had to get the fig leaves to cover himself, and it is evidenced by his broken fellowship with God.
- A new vocabulary was created to define new emotions, and behavior: sin, shame, guilt, transgression, hatred, evil, remorse, and desperation.
- The descendants of Adam would be affected. The stain of sin would be passed on from one generation to the next, in the process of procreation. Since the birth of Cain, every person is born into the world physically alive but spiritually dead (Romans 5:14 cf. Ephesians 2:1). Adam acted as a Federal Representative of the human race. When he sinned, all sinned. The proof of this spiritual truth is that all die, even those who had no law (study Romans 5:12-14). Because of Adam, all men are born "*depraved*" (Isaiah 48:8; Psalm 51:5; 58:3; Ephesians 2:1). We are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners. And sin is pandemic. It is universal (Genesis 6:5). Sin forms, and transforms every thought and action of the heart of man, so that it is evil, and only evil. Man's ambitions, intentions, and desires are evil. Socially, personally, professionally man is evil—continually! There is never a moment when the thoughts and intentions of

natural man are not evil, according to the divine indictment. This natural depravity, or evil, is not something that man has learned. It is there by birth (Genesis 8:21).

- Adam and Eve tried to atone for what they had done. They tried to cover-up what they had lost—their innocence.
- Adam and Eve fled from the face of God (Genesis 3:8 cf. Psalm 139:7).

The Divine response to the situation was that of justice, mingled with mercy.

- God came looking for man (Genesis 3:9).
- God held man accountable for his attitude and actions (Genesis 3:11, 12).
- God listened to the foolish excuses that were offered by way of a defense, and then the Lord rendered a righteous judgment upon all.

The serpent was to crawl on its belly and be crushed (Genesis 3:14, 15).

The woman was to know sorrow and submission ( Genesis 3:15, 16).

The man was to work by the sweat of his brow (Genesis 3:17, 19).

The earth would “groan” (Genesis 3:18).

Both man and woman were to be cast out of the (Garden Genesis 3:23, 24).

Both man and woman were to be re-clothed (Genesis 3:21).

Both man and woman were to receive a promise (Genesis 3:15).

Though the judgment of God upon the whole situation and all that were involved was severe, there was much grace mixed with the justice of God. God's grace is always present, whether Divine wrath is manifested in the Garden, in the Flood, or at the Cross-of Calvary.

### **The Nature of Fallen Man**

In the discussion of the doctrine of total depravity, there are some denials that are worthy of special consideration.

- The doctrine of total depravity does not mean that man has not lost God's image altogether. The Bible speaks of fallen man still being made in the image of God. Because of sin, the image of God has been effaced in man, but not erased. Man still has intelligence, and he still has religion, reflected by a conscience. No matter how remote a tribe may be in the jungles of the world, no matter how primitive the people may be, no matter how far individuals live from civilization, conscience will be found. A sense of right and wrong will be manifested in the lives of the people. *"What is that but the remains of God's image being worked out?"*
- The doctrine of total depravity does not mean that all men are always as sinful as they could possibly be. Not every man is as evil as they can be. There is relative good. There is a difference between extensive depravity and intensive depravity. Nevertheless, every part of man, in his being, has been corrupted by sin.

- The doctrine of total depravity does not mean that men are not capable of relative goodness. Men can choose their acts of evil. They can choose to do acts of goodness. There are many acts of philanthropy. There have been many people who have given up riches, and status in society, to go to a place where their services are needed. That is relative good. But as to the fundamental nature of man, that is fixed in sin. The desire to murder, steal, and lust is unchangeable, apart from the regenerating grace of God.

What the doctrine of total depravity affirms, is that that judicially, in the sight of God (Isaiah 64: 6), and personally, in the sight of self, the soul of every man has been touched at the core, so that every facet of the soul—the intellect, the affections, and the will—are sinful. Man can do nothing to commend Himself to God (Genesis 6:5). God requires that man love Him with all of his heart, and mind, and soul (Matthew 22:37). But man cannot do this. He is too selfish in his motives. Because of sin, the natural man does not think as he should, love as he should, and make proper moral decisions as he should.

Why? Because his nature is such that he cannot please God, there is nothing in man that moves him psychologically towards the Lord. Sensually, man moves away from God. Every part of man intended to glorify God (1 Corinthians 10:31cf. Ephesians 4:19) has been polluted by sin.

Therefore, the only hope for any member of Adam's fallen race is to find a Savior who can deliver him from the penalty, power, and pollution of sin. Man needs a Savior who can create a new heart, a new will, and new emotions within his soul in order for there to be restored fellowship with God, and the power to respond in gospel

obedience to the will of the Father. But the problem is this. Man does not want to be saved. He does not will to be saved.

## The Question of Responsibility

If the mind of man is spiritually darkened (Ephesians 4:18), and it is; if the eyes of man are spiritually blinded (Romans 2:19 cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4), and they are; if the natural man is dead in trespasses and sin (Ephesians 2:1), and he is, then how can he be responsible for his attitude and actions? Is man responsible for his attitude and actions when he is by nature born depraved? The biblical answer is that every person is indeed responsible for his sin.

- Man is responsible for sin, because he loves sin. He loves darkness rather than light. (John 3:19,20) In his fallen nature, man wants more of sin. He cannot get enough of sin. He continues in evil because he loves it. (Romans 3:11; Isaiah 53:6) Man has a real dislike for the things of God, and a real like for sin, in his affections, and in his intellect.
- Man is responsible for sin because he gives consent to sin. The will of man cannot be separated from his affections, or his intellect, therefore, he is responsible for his attitude and actions.
- Man is responsible for sin, because there is no outside impulse compelling an individual to do wrong. However, the internal impulse to do wrong is present. Speaking on this topic, Charles Spurgeon said, *“People excuse themselves because they have bad hearts. That is the most flimsy excuse in the world. Do not robbery and thievery come from a bad heart? Suppose a thief should say to a judge, ‘I could not help it! I have a bad heart!’ What would the judge say but, ‘you rascal! Why,*

*if your heart is bad I will make the sentence heavier for you are a villain indeed. Your excuse is nothing.’ We do not preach this doctrine [of Total Depravity] to excuse you but to humble you. The possession of a bad nature is my fault as well as my terrible calamity.”*

The statements of Scripture set forth the truth, that man is helpless, and hopelessly lost, and that by his own choice. He has defied God, and is responsible for that defiance.

### **The Bondage of the Will**

Of course, it is not to be forgotten that the will of man is captive to what he is, and that is sinful. Since the Fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden, the will of man is not free, reflected by what he now chooses (Psalm 14:1ff). The will of man, and thus the nature of man, is enslaved to sin (Jeremiah 13:23).

If a leopard could change its spots, then fallen man could change his nature. But the leopard cannot change his spots and the natural man cannot change the bent of his nature—but he is still responsible for that nature because he does not seek relief. The bondage of the will is reflected in other ways. “*Can a man, on his own, choose God?*” Jesus said no (John 6:44). “*Why?*”

Paul explains in Romans 8:7. The natural mind of man is not subject to God. His will does not allow it. Man is at war with God. “*No man can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Ghost*” (1 Corinthians 12:3). No man can embrace the Lord as Savior except by the Spirit of God working a work of grace in his heart. Finally there is 2 Peter 2:14.

The Bible speaks of man being unable to cease from sin (Genesis 6:5). Man has gotten himself in a mess he cannot fix. He has defied

God. He has gotten himself into a bondage that he cannot get out of—which is why, in all of this, man is held responsible for sin. God’s estimate of man is found in Isaiah 1:2-6. Man is sinful through and through.

### **The Implications of the Doctrine of Total Depravity**

- For the Lost. The grace and mercy of God designed the words of the gospel for helpless sinners. The self-righteous and the self-sufficient have no need of a Savior. But for those who are enslaved to sin, and know it, for those who have been hardened by sin, and despair of their wickedness, there is hope. For those who have a clear sight of themselves, and see all too clearly the natural depravity of the heart, there is a message to receive, and the message is this: Christ receives sinful men.

*“Come ye sinners, poor and needy  
Weak and wounded, sick and sore,  
Jesus ready stands to save you,  
Full of pity, and love, and power.*

*Come you weary, heavy laden,  
bruised and broken by the Fall,  
If you tarry till you’re better,  
You’ll never come at all.*

*Let not conscience make you linger,  
or of fitness fondly dream;  
All the fitness He requireth  
is to feel your need of Him.*

*Come ye thirsty, Come and welcome!*



*God's free bounty glorify,  
True belief, true repentance,  
every grace that brings you nigh,  
Without money,  
come to Jesus Christ and buy."*

- On Evangelism. As the sinner, who agrees with his state of total depravity finds hope in a gracious Savior with power to save, so the saint, who shares the gospel, finds his heart encouraged to evangelize by the truth of total depravity, for he realizes just how great a Savior he has to offer. Christ can still make those who are dead in trespasses and sin to live. He can make the blind to see, and the lame to walk. Christ is mighty to save.

One of the great problems with so much modern evangelism is that people fail to realize that their God is too small. The God of contemporary theology can be resisted by the diminutive will of any person. He is a God that can be told when to operate, and when to go away. Such a God has no power to save anyone, for He is at the mercy of man. Even if He wanted to help, He can do nothing, apart from human will, or co-operation.

With such a gospel presentation the heart of many a Christian cries out in protest. The true message of the Word of God is to tell people what the Lord has declared is to be preached: man is ruined by the Fall, redeemed by the Lamb, and regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit. As an ambassador, the Christian can do no less than to tell men forcefully, and plainly, they cannot save themselves, nor can they be saved whenever they chose to be converted. Salvation is of the Lord, and He will decide the day of Divine deliverance.

*“The will of man, like the goodness of man, has nothing to do with salvation. The house that is built, partly on a rock, and, partly on the sand, will fall. And the sinner, who rests his hope of salvation, partly, on Christ, and partly on his own works, will be damned. You may as well trust in the supposed merits and pretended intercession of the virgin Mary, or other saints departed, as trust in your own good works, prayers, or anything you can do and suffer, either as a compensation to God’s justice for your sins, or as conducive toward your acceptance and salvation”* (Augustus Toplady).

- In Worship. When prideful man is humbled, when the gospel is faithfully proclaimed, then—and only then—can proper worship take place. Those who are savingly joined to Christ must look back to the hole of the pit from which they were dug. And then it will be confessed that while *“we were yet sinners Christ died for us.”* (Romans 5:8) One can wonder if those who have never felt the depths of their depravity can worship properly. *“Many of you say you have faith in Christ. Can you tell us anything about Him in whom you say you believe? Were your souls ever ready to sink into hell? Did they ever stick fast in the miry clay of corruption? Locked up in the prison of unbelief? Ice bound by impenitence? Laid lower than the beasts with lusts? Tormented as beset by devils? Did anyone come to rescue you in that state? Who is He? Is He a Savior? Mary saw the Lord: she could tell something about it. And so too, the two disciples going to Emmaus. Can you this day condescend upon a single incident, even to the extent of the twinkling of an eye? Any condition of body or soul in which you saw the Lord by faith? Can you tell what passed between Him and you?”* (*Arminianism, Another Gospel*, Rev. Jonathan R. Anderson, Glasgow, d. 1859) Those who know by personal experience the doctrine of total depravity, can testify to the mighty saving power of Christ.

## **Summary**

A great appreciation of the sinfulness of sin will result in a greater appreciation for the Savior.

3

Who Made the First Move?

*“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”*

—Genesis 6:8

*“Tis not that I did choose Thee,  
For Lord, that could not be;  
This heart would still refuse Thee,  
Hadst Thou not chosen me.*

*Thou from the sin that stained me,  
Hast cleansed and set me free;  
Of old Thou hast ordained me,  
That I should live to Thee.”*

BY WAY OF REVIEW, it has been noted that the doctrines of sovereign grace are the historic faith of the Church. In particular, during the days of the Reformation, in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, three great principles emerged to guide faith and practice of

the saints. The first rallying cry of the Reformation was *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone). The *Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689* declares that the Scriptures are the Divine, and final authority for all Christian faith and life. The Bible says that:

*“All scripture is given by inspiration of God,  
and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof,  
for correction, for instruction in righteousness:  
That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly  
furnished unto all good works.”*

—2 Timothy 3:14-17

The second rallying cry of the Reformers was *sola gratia* (grace alone). Martin Luther, like millions of others, had been taught to believe that salvation was not personal, but corporate. Salvation came to the individual through the Church structure and sacraments. A person was saved by faith in Christ, and good works, with the emphasis being on good works. As we shall see, Luther endeavored to do good works. But no matter how hard he tried, he simply could not be perfectly sinless and holy. This alarmed him, for he read that without holiness no man shall see the Lord (Deuteronomy 27:26; Galatians 3:10; 1 John 1:8). Luther wanted to see the Lord. But how?

Eventually, Luther came to understand the grace of God by studying the book of Romans (Note: Romans 1:17). It was only then that his troubled heart found peace with God, and the peace of God (Romans 4:4-8; 5:1, 2). We want you to have peace with God and others as well. If you know someone who needs salvation, invite them to come to Christ.

The third rallying cry of the Reformation was *Sola Fide* (faith alone). This term refers to the doctrine that salvation is by faith alone, apart from any human merit or works (Romans 3:20-22; Gal. 2:16). It has been observed that God is never impressed with what man can do; but He honors and respects what His Son has done at a place called Calvary. Every soul that would be saved must come to Calvary! At Calvary the heart can see, united in One, the Judge and the Father, both holiness and utter love, both justice and mercy, both pardon and penalty, both the vindicated Law, and the Flood-point of compassion. The Cross-honors the Divine Law equally, as it releases the Divine grace.

*“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ  
and thou shalt be saved!”*

—Acts 16:31

### **A Brief History Lesson**

The doctrines of grace re-affirms the greatness of God in salvation. They protest the presentation of any system of salvation that exalts the free will of man, and his inherent goodness. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, Pelagius, a well-meaning monk, reacting against the teachings of St. Augustine, argued that the Fall of man was not so complete as to render him incapable of obeying God. Following the Reformation, his thoughts were brought to fruition by the followers of Jacobus Arminius (1559-1609). An attempt was made in Holland to try and change the theology of the doctrines of grace being taught in that country. In response to five points of concern, summarized in the Remonstrance, the five points of the doctrines of grace were set forth, and the anachronism TULIP was created, standing for the total depravity of the heart, the unconditional election of those who will

be the heirs of salvation, the limited atonement, or definite redemption of Christ for those who will be saved, the irresistible grace of God, in calling the elect unto Himself, and the perseverance of the Saints in the faith as a sure sign of salvation, because of the preserving power of God in keeping His own from ultimate and final failure.

### **Total Depravity**

The debate between Augustine and Pelagius in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, and the advocates of the doctrines of grace and Arminians, in later centuries, raged—and still rages today—because of a central question concerning the will of man and his basic nature. Those who believe in the doctrines of sovereign grace are convinced that the Scriptures teach the absolute helplessness, and hopelessness of man in his natural state to be saved by one iota of human good, or will. It is argued that there is nothing good in man that commends him to God, and there is nothing in man that would move him to God. While man does have some relative righteousness, in that the image of God in his soul was effaced, not erased, the damage done to his spiritual heart was intensive and extensive. As a single drop of deadly poison in a glass of water makes all of it unfit to drink, so the soul of man extensively is unfit for fellowship with God.

*“Those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:8)* If natural man could believe in Christ on his own, then that would be pleasing to God. If man could love the Lord and respond to the gospel, based upon his own positive volition to the gospel that would be pleasing to God. But, because he is in the flesh, he cannot please God, which means that he does not have the innate capacity, or free will, to be saved. Many years ago Dr. T.T. Shields illustrated this truth in a wonderful story that he tells.

## Dr. T.T. Shields and the Doctrine of Depravity

I knew a preacher when I was in Hamilton, a very popular preacher. One day we had a discussion in a ministerial association (before Modernism had become as rampant as it is now), and there was one man who read an essay on the divine spark in man, and the development of the best that is in us—of course, entirely repudiating the doctrine of total depravity; and this popular brother took him to task. He did not agree with the speaker at all. The popular preacher was thoroughly orthodox, as I thought. He said that we are a bad lot, as Moody did, and he quoted *Scripture* to show that every faculty of the mind was biased, and that we were really totally depraved. Somebody suggested, “*Perhaps Mr. So-and-So will give us a paper on the other side of this question. At the next meeting I suggest that Mr. So-and-So address us on the subject of Total Depravity.*” This was agreed, and the brother accepted the task.

Now this man, who preached the doctrine of total depravity, was an Arminian in theology. He shrank from the doctrine of election, and could not agree with it at all. He was great on free will, but not very strong on divine sovereignty.

The next time the brethren met, there was a good attendance, and this brother read his paper—he went all the way from A to Z. Calvin himself could not have outdone him. We were a bad lot beyond all peradventure. When he had finished his paper he said he hoped the brethren would excuse him, because he had an appointment and would not be able to remain for the discussion. But we had one man there who was as keen as a razor, but who was a Modernist. He would be called a Conservative now, but we thought he was pretty far-gone then. He said, “*Just a moment. I should like to ask Mr. So-and-So a question before he leaves.*”



Turning to the brother who had delivered the address the Modernist said, *"I should like to ask you whether there is anything in man in his natural state, which can respond to the appeal of the Spirit of God from without?"*

The popular preacher thought a moment and then said, *"Certainly there is."*

*"Well,"* said the Professor *"is that thing that can respond to the Holy Spirit good or is it evil?"*

The popular preacher said, *"If it responds to the Holy Spirit it cannot be evil."*

*"I should think not,"* said the Professor. *"Then it is good?"*

*"I suppose it must be,"* came the response of the popular preacher.

*"Then your whole argument fails, sir, and we are not totally depraved,"* cried the Modernist with joy.

You see, that brother, who was the popular preacher, and sound on the doctrine of depravity, in as far as he went, had not learned to think clear through to the problem of something being relative. He had not learned that if one certain doctrine be true, another cannot be true. There cannot be an upper without a lower, an east without a west, nor a north without a south.

Now if man is totally depraved, as he was arguing, there is nothing in him that can possibly respond to the Divine Spirit. If he is dead in trespasses and sin, he has no power of himself to deliver himself, or even to assist to deliver himself out of his natural state. If he be altogether evil then he must remain forever altogether evil unless

God, in sovereign mercy, touches him into life. And if that be true, we must have the principle of election. Why? *Because those who are in the flesh cannot please God! (Romans 8:8).*

The great problem with all popular Arminian preachers, who preach the doctrine of man's depravity, but also want to exalt man's will, is that they do not see the dilemma, like the Modernist preacher did. You cannot have both total depravity, and man's will exalted to the point that he helps himself, by deciding on his own to believe in Christ. No, no. Man's will must first be freed and then he can believe! *John 1:13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

### **Unconditional Election: Points of Dispute**

Turning from the doctrine of total depravity attention can be given to the doctrine of unconditional election. Such a doctrine is needed in order to remind people that if man is to be saved, he needs a Savior. If man is going to be saved he needs God to do something for and in him that he cannot do, for or in himself. If man is held captive in his rebellion then it becomes clear that God must do something to break down man's rebellion and so save him. If man cannot do anything to commend himself to God, then God must do something to make him able and that something is grace. Unconditional election is another way of speaking of divine grace. Unconditional election is God making the first move to give individuals a new Master.

Unfortunately, like each of the major doctrines of grace, the doctrine of unconditional election is not without controversy. There are some definite points of dispute. There should not be any controversy on this subject, for the Bible plainly teaches some sort of election. *"But we are bound to give thanks always 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). "Has God chosen all to salvation?" No. "Has He chosen some to salvation?" Yes. "On what basis did God choose those who would be saved?" The debate begins.

- Liberalism. The Liberal branch of Christian theology teaches that God has chosen everyone for salvation. The mission of the Church is to tell people that God will save everyone.
- Arminianism. The Arminian teaches that God foresaw something good in man, and on the basis of that foreknowledge chose him for salvation. *Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.* (1 Peter 1:2) The argument is made that man chooses God. When God looks down the halls of time, he sees which individuals, based on their own positive volition to the presentation of the gospel, will believe in Christ, and on the basis of each person's innate faith, elects that individual to salvation.
- Doctrines of Grace. The doctrines of sovereign grace affirms that for reasons known only to Himself, God, according to His own will, and good pleasure, marked out, or choose those individuals who were to be the heirs of salvation, and the recipients of His grace. God set His love on certain people, not because of any response towards him, or good in themselves, but for His own good pleasure. Souls are saved according to free grace, not free will. God's choice of men to salvation is not due to anything in them. Election is unconditional. Souls are chosen to salvation unconditionally for there are no conditions that man could ever

meet to satisfy the justice of God. Salvation is according to grace. Illustration: Noah. *Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.* (Genesis 6:8) The thought of this passage is that God **gave** grace to Noah. *Why?* Because such is the nature of grace. Noah was no better than any other person. He was chosen **un**conditionally to be the object of redeeming grace.

## Exegetical Considerations: Overview of Biblical Statements

The theology of Paul clearly teaches the doctrine of unconditional election

- *Romans 8:28-30 “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29 For whom he did **foreknow**, he also did **predestinate** to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also **called**: and whom he called, them he also **justified**: and whom he justified, them he also **glorified**.”*

## Commentary

As this passage is read, a natural question immediately arises. “*What does it mean to be ‘called according to His purpose’?*” It seems obvious that there are certain people who are called by God in keeping with a larger plan. The “*larger plan*” is explained in five words: foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification. The five words form a golden chain of salvation that stretches from heaven to earth and back again.

- Foreknown. It is God who *foreknows* who will be saved, because He knows whom He will *call*. God already knows that “*There is none righteous, no, not one*” (Romans 3:10). God already knows that there are none that seeketh after Him, (Romans 3:11). God already knows that no man will by nature choose to love, and obey Him for the depravity of the heart does not allow righteousness (Genesis 6:5). If man is to be saved, God must save him. And the divine commentary is that God does *foreknow* whom He will save. The word “*foreknow*” is an intimate word. It means to set one’s affection upon (Amos 3:2 cf. Romans 11:2; 2 Tim. 2:19).
- Predestinate. This term means *to establish the destiny beforehand*. And what is the destiny of those who are *foreknown*? They are destined to be conformed to the image of Christ.
- Called. This word speaks of the external call of the gospel, as well as the internal call whereby God effectually brings souls to Himself.
- Justified. To be justified means to be declared righteous before the bar of Divine justice. Because of Christ’s death at Calvary, the penalty of the law has been satisfied. God is now free to justify whom He wills.
- Glorified. The act of glorification refers to the time when all the vestiges of sin are reversed, and man is restored to his original state of creation, with no more possibility of sin.

Despite this Golden Chain of Redeeming Grace, there is something about God choosing men *unconditionally* that offends many. There

is a belief that unconditional election is somehow unfair, and so the doctrines of grace become a source of embarrassment. A frantic effort is then made to ‘rescue’ God from being an ‘arbitrary’ Savior, forgetting that a **sovereign** God can do what He will with His own universe. The teaching is set forth that the *real* reason why God chose certain people, is because He foresaw that they would first choose Him—and that thought is psychologically satisfying. It is also egocentric and results in a form of auto-salvation. Anticipating the foolishness of men, the Holy Spirit had the apostle Paul write Romans 9:7-23.

*Romans 9:7-23 “Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. 8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. 9 For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. 10 And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; 11 (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;) 12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. 13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. 14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. 15 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. 16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. 17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. 18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. 19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? 20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? 21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another*

*unto dishonor? 22 What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: 23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,”*

## Commentary

To illustrate the doctrine of unconditional election, the Holy Spirit brings to mind the case of Esau and Jacob. In unmistakable terms, the truth is set forth that God determined who would serve whom. God determined who would receive the grace of the covenant. God determined whom He would love. The true difficulty is not that God would hate Esau, but that He would love Jacob. There was nothing in Jacob that merited the merits of divine favor. Jacob was a rascal. Jacob was a cheat. Jacob was a natural born swindler, and yet he is loved. Jacob is preferred to Esau. According to Divine authority, Jacob will be honored, and served by Esau. None of these things can be understood apart from **un**conditional election. The whole point of Romans 9:11 is that the election of God was according to sovereign grace.

- Those who protest sovereign grace and unconditional election argue that the life of Jacob was better than Esau, and *that* is why God choose him. Anyone who thinks Jacob was somehow better than Esau has probably never been deceived in a treacherous manner as Jacob deceived his blinded father, who was thought to be dying. The sad story is recorded in Genesis 27. While the sins of Esau were sins of the flesh, the sins of Jacob were sins of the mind and spirit. As his name indicates, Jacob was a “*supplanter*”, or “*chisler*”, from the moment of birth.

- Then, there are those who argue that God simply loved Esau less than He loved Jacob. Such a contention solves nothing, for there is the problem of inequity. *“Why did God love Esau less and Jacob more?”* The answer is, *“Because He wanted to!”*
- Another argument raised in protest against unconditional election is to teach Esau and Jacob represents nations. God loved the descendants of Jacob in the form of the nation of Israel, more than He loved the descendants of Esau, in the form of the Arabs. But the inequity still remains. Furthermore, what are nations, but groups of individuals? So nothing is resolved. Clearly, Paul is speaking of personal individuals. *So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy* (Romans 9:16).

*“So why did God choose Jacob over Esau?”* Because God is God! *“Is this fair?”* (Romans 9:14). Paul anticipated that question, because he taught unconditional election. [Special Note: Any doctrine of election that does not raise a protest like the one anticipated by Paul is not the same doctrine that the apostle taught. The very fact that Paul had to pause, and deal with the issue of unfairness, indicates that he was teaching the doctrine of unconditional election]

From Esau and Jacob, the apostle presents Moses and Pharaoh as another test case to illustrate divine sovereignty. *“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”* (Romans 9:15). This passage has no meaning whatsoever, unless it means that God decides who will be saved. He chooses unconditionally. *“So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy”* (Romans 9:16). God does **not** have mercy because men believe in a faith-decision. The originating cause of salvation is not man’s will. God did not look



ahead and say of anyone, “*He wills to believe so I will to elect him.*” No! A thousand times no! God will have mercy on whom HE will have mercy.

No man can say, “*God chose me because I chose Him. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth*” (Romans 9:17, 18).

Having set forth enough historical examples to make his point that mercy and grace is solely in the hands of the sovereign God, the apostle moves on, and anticipates another objection. “*Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory*” (Romans 9:19-23).

In these verses, and with these words, Paul demands a holy hush to fall upon the objectors who dare to tell God what is fair and what is not fair. The creature has no right to speak against the Creator, or to challenge Him for the way He does something. The soul is to be subject to the Sovereign in all matters. When the temptation comes to question God, there should be a holy hush lest there be an unholy accusation against the Divine Creator. “*God is a law unto Himself. He is not obliged in any way to explain His matters to anyone*” (A.W. Pink).

There is something else to consider. Why would anyone want God to be “*fair*” at the expense of mercy and grace? If God had let everyone in the human race go to hell He would be “*fair*.” He would also be “*just*.” But there would be no mercy in such a decision. It is far better to call upon the mercy of God, and ask, not for “fairness”, but for matchless, marvelous grace. Julia H. Johnston wanted grace, and then greater grace, as she spoke of what God does according to His mercy.

*“Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,  
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt,  
Yonder on Calvary’s mount out poured,  
There where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.*

*Grace, grace, God’s grace,  
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within;  
Grace, grace, God’s grace,  
Grace that is greater than all our sin.”*

“*Why would anyone want ‘fairness’ when they can have grace?*” Because of grace, there shall be a multitude redeemed which no man can number, from every tribe, and nation in the earth. (Revelation 5:9).

In dealing with the question of God’s sovereignty, and man’s responsibility, Paul does not try to find a harmonizing principle. Rather, the apostle argues that the difference between the Creator and the creature is so vast, that the Potter has a right to do with the clay whatsoever He pleases, and there the matter rests.

Nor does Paul try to reconcile God’s justice, with God’s sovereignty.

Those who oppose the doctrines of grace, try to reconcile the justice of God with His sovereignty, by leaving the ultimate determinative element in the free will, to man.

However, this position only compounds the problem, for that is *man's* solution to the alleged dilemma. In other words, the Christian theologian, at this point, agrees with the thinking of the natural man, who is happy to say,

*"I am the master of my fate;  
I am the captain of my soul."*

Paul resolves the whole matter by declaring the free grace of a sovereign God, and then, by telling man to put a hand over his mouth in a holy hush.

### **Christ and the Doctrine of Unconditional Election**

The reason why Paul taught the sovereignty of God in salvation is because Christ taught the doctrine of unconditional election.

- *John 10:16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.*

### **Commentary**

The plain statement here is that there are many people whom Christ shall save. Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He must—and will—bring many into the fold. This will be done apart from anyone meriting the grace of God, or fulfilling an outward task, such as keeping the Law, being baptized, or performing a particular act of human good. The elect number from the nation of Israel, in addition to the elect number of Gentile converts, will constitute the one fold, or one flock, of whom Christ is the Good Shepherd.

- *John 10:24 Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. 25 Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. 26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. 29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.*

## Commentary

Based upon John 10:26, 27 a couple of questions arise. Namely, “*Are believers sheep because they are saved? Or, Are believers saved because they are sheep?*” The answer is that those who are saved, are saved because they are sheep. “*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me*” (John 10:27). The difference in men is that some are chosen. Jesus said that the reason the disciples were His, was not because they made the primary choice, but because He made the choice. “*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you*” (John 15:16). The disciples responded to the Divine summons which called them to service, because of salvation.

## Other Selected Passages Teaching the Doctrine of Unconditional Election

- Acts 13:48 “*And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.*” Luke, in speaking of Paul’s missionary journey speaks of those who were ordained to eternal life believed. Who believed? Those, and only those, who were ordained to eternal life.

- 1 Corinthians 1:18 *“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. 20 Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. 22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: 23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; 24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: 27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; 28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: 29 That no flesh should glory in his presence. 30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: 31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”*

## **Commentary**

In this extended passage, the argument is made that the important people of this world are not the ones who usually receive the saving grace and mercy of God (1 Corinthians 1:26). *“Why?”* Because God has chosen certain individuals for salvation in order to demonstrate His own sovereignty. The whole idea behind this passage is that of God passing over some, and selecting others, unconditionally.

- *Ephesians 1:3, 4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4 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.*

## Commentary

Election is the fountain for all other blessings! And when did this election take place? Before the foundation of the world! Satan did not cast one vote for man and God cast another vote for man, and man casts the deciding vote. Besides, as someone has observed with some humor, Satan could not have cast a vote for man for he was not a qualified voter. Nor could man have cast a deciding vote, for he was not old enough yet. The election was made before man could have done anything. It was unconditional.

- *2 Thessalonians 2:12-13 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. 13 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:*

## Commentary

*“What is the difference between the people in verse 12 and the people in verse 13? What does Paul say makes the difference?”* God’s divine election! If man is the source of his own salvation, then he does not need to give God thanks, but if God is the sole source of salvation, *“we are bound to give thanks always to God.”* *“Why?”* *“Because God hath from the beginning chosen.”*

- *1 Timothy 1:16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.*

### Commentary

This verse does speak indirectly of election. Apart from God choosing Paul, he would never have chosen the Lord Jesus, for Paul hated Christ, and everyone that was associated with Christ. It was only when sovereign grace arrested, and then slew the Beast that rode the will of Saul of Tarsus, that a great transformation took place. In the words of the apostle, “*I obtained mercy.*” In a sovereign manner, unconditionally, mercy was shown to a sinner in search of souls to execute, because of religious madness.

- *2 Timothy 1:9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,*

### Commentary

**Question:** “*Why does God save and call souls unto Himself?*”

**Answer.** It is not because sinners are smart enough, and capable enough to choose Him. No. It is **not** according to any good works, or decisions, that God saves, and calls. Rather, “*according to his own purpose and grace*” does God save.

- *2 Timothy 2:10 Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.*

## Commentary

**Question:** “*Why did Paul endure so much suffering and hardships in the ministry?*”

**Answer:** Because of the elect who will come to faith as the gospel is preached.

- *Titus 1:2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;*

## Commentary

**Question.** “*When did God promise eternal life?*”

**Answer.** “*Before the world began.*” God would not have promised life, unless there were to be souls to give this gift of grace to. The pre-suppositional thought is in favor of unconditional election.

- *I John 4:10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

## Commentary

**Question.** “*Why does anyone love God?*”

**Answer.** Because God loves first. God made the first move toward man. He always has, and He always will, because man, in his natural fallen state, cannot move towards God. Only when the Lord says, “*Live!*” is the ability given to rise up and follow Christ.



- *Revelation 17:8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world.*

## Commentary

**Question:** “*When were the names of the elect written in the book of life?*”

**Answer:** Before the foundation of the world—and that is unconditional grace. Those who oppose the doctrines of sovereign grace maintain that unconditional election makes man a robot. It is argued time and again that God did not make man a robot, **and that is true**. But sin did. On this point the scriptures are plain. Sin and Satan have united to make man a robot to various lust patterns. Fallen man is a real captive to Satan. Souls are “*taken captive by him at his will*” (2 Timothy 2:26). Man is Satan’s robot to fulfill his lusts (John 8:44). But Christ has come to make the captive free (Luke 4:18). It is free grace, not free will, which abounds to the glory of God’s praise. God made man in His own image; sin remade man in a “*robot’s*” image. Now unconditional sovereign grace returns to restore the original freedom of creation. It is the devil, not the Divine Creator, who is to be charged with making man a “*robot*.”

## Theological Considerations: Correlation with Related Biblical Concepts

- Sin is enslaving. Depravity is pervasive and binding. Men are by nature the children of wrath. (Ephesians 2:3) It is the natural inclination of men to disobey, not obey (2 Timothy 3:2; Titus 3:3). Why? “*Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not*

*subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*" (Romans 8:7). Man is bound in sin, and is hopeless, unless God makes the first move to set the prisoner free. And He does. "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16).

- Salvation is undeserved. No man is better than another. No person is better off than another in the matter of being worthy of salvation. Only in grace does God bring souls to Himself. All through Scriptures the declaration is made that salvation is "*not of works, lest any man should boast*" (Ephesians 2:8, 9). If faith or any part of salvation originates with self, then a full Savior is not needed. The doctrine of conditional election borders on impiety, when considered logically, for it challenges God's plan of redemption, by contending that man *can* do something to merit the merits of Christ. Paul rejected such a concept in the most forceful way by calling it "*dung*." (Phil.3: 8, *skubalon*, that which is thrown to the dogs, *refuse*.) Salvation is something that is completely undeserved. Those who receive Divine favor, receive it unconditionally.
- Election is of God. Salvation is bestowed upon sinners because of the work of Christ at Calvary. "*The heart of Christ became like a reservoir in the midst of the mountains. All the tributary streams of iniquity, and every drop of the sins of His people, ran down and gathered into one vast lake, deep as hell and shoreless as eternity. All these me, as it were, in Christ's heart, and He endured them all*" (C.H. Spurgeon).
- Election is of grace and mercy. If God chose a soul for salvation, on the basis of anything else other than grace, it would no longer be grace. Paul argues this point in Romans 11:6. If one little area

of self is added to an ocean of grace, it ceases to be all of grace. The doctrine of election maintains that salvation is by God's grace, alone.

### Practical Implications

- Election and assurance. Some people argue that if the doctrine of election is preached, it will destroy the ground of assurance. However, just the opposite is true. When a person accepts the truth of God's unconditional love, there is no trouble at all in believing that the God who saves is the God who will sustain and sanctify. God will preserve His own to the very end. They will be glorified (Romans 8:28-30).
- Election and evangelism. The gospel of election gives freedom to witness without internal pressure, or feelings of frustration. The soul winner is responsible for disseminating the gospel, not for its results. In the act of evangelism, the one who witnesses is not obliged to talk, or coerce someone into making a "decision." God is the one who does the saving. God is the one who opens the heart (Acts 16:14).

It is argued that the motive for evangelism is lost if the doctrine of election is preached. Paul would disagree. He said that he endured all things "for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Timothy 2:10). It is because God will save the elect, that the effort is made to witness (Acts 18:10). There is real motivation for evangelism.

*"We have heard the joyful sound:  
Jesus saves! Jesus saves!  
Spread the tidings all around:*

STANFORD E. MURRELL

*Jesus saves! Jesus saves!  
Bear the news to every land,  
Climb the steeps and cross the waves;  
Onward—'tis our Lord's command;  
Jesus saves! Jesus saves!"*

It is argued that the doctrine of unconditional election discourages a person from trusting in Christ, for they might think they are not one of the elect. The proper answer is this.

*Let no sinner exclude himself from the benefit of the gospel. The question is not, "Are you an elect person or not?" Nor is it, "Are you a believer or not?" But the question is "Are you a sinner that needs a Savior?" You know that you are a sinner [through Isaiah the prophet, 45:22]. Christ as Savior is held forth to you saying, "Look unto me and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth, for I am God and beside me there is none else" (Ralph Erskine).*

Election and sanctification. Holiness is measured by love, and love is measured by gospel obedience (Matthew 22:37).

Election and Worship. The basic premise in worship is that God is King and Lord over everything—including the destiny of every individual. Those who understand the doctrine of unconditional election will find themselves on their knees in adoration and thanksgiving, realizing that had God not chosen them, they would never have chosen Him. The thoughtful heart says to Christ,

*"I love Thee, because Thou hast first loved me,  
And purchased my pardon on Calvary's tree;  
I love Thee for wearing the thorns on Thy brow:*

*If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now."*

There is a lesson of humility to be learned from the doctrine of unconditional election, for self must be abandoned in order for there to be salvation and sanctification. *"For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people; But because the LORD loved you"* (Deuteronomy 7:6-8a). *"Why did God choose Israel? Why does God choose anyone?"* Because He loves them! And if it is asked, *"On what basis does God love?"* There is only one answer: sovereign grace. *"Who made the first move in the act of salvation?"* "Man?" No. "God?" Yes. *Sola Deo Gloria.* To God alone be the glory for the great things He hath done.

### **The Issues at Stake**

Like all the doctrines of grace, in the matter of unconditional election, much is at stake.

- The condition of man's nature. Either man is enslaved to sin, or he is not. Either man has no free will, or he does. Either man is totally depraved, or he is not. Either salvation begins and ends in the sovereign grace of God, or it begins and ends in the innate ability of fallen man to receive the gospel. *"How sinful is man? Is he as sinful as God's word says he is? Or is there still some residue of the divine spark in his sin-saturated soul apart from regeneration?"*
- The sovereignty of God. *"Does the Creator have a right to do with His own creation whatsoever He pleases? Is God free to choose whom He wills*

*and to love whom He wills? How sovereign is God? Is God obliged to save man?"*

- The salvation of the soul. *"Is salvation according to free will or free grace? Is salvation in Christ undeserved? Or is salvation something that is merited because of a wise decision to believe in Christ at the point of gospel hearing? In the salvation of the soul, who will get the glory? Man? Or God?"* Heaven listens for the hearts acknowledgment of sovereign grace.

## For Whom Did Christ Die?

### **Introduction: Voices from the Past**

*“SOME PERSONS LOVE THE doctrine of universal atonement because they say, ‘It is beautiful. It is a lovely idea that Christ should have died for all men; it commends itself,’ they say, ‘to the instincts of humanity; there is something in it full of joy and beauty.’ I admit there is, but beauty may be often associated with falsehood. There is much, which I might admire in the theory of universal redemption, but I will just show what the supposition necessarily involves. If Christ on His cross intended to save every man, then He intended to save those who were lost before He died.*

*If the doctrine be true, that He [Christ] died for all men, then He died for some who were in hell before He came into this world, for doubtless there were even then myriad’s there who had been cast away because of their sins. Once again, if it was Christ’s intention to save all men, how deplorably has He been disappointed, for we have His own testimony that there is a lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, and into that pit of woe have been cast some of the very persons who, according to the theory of universal redemption, were bought with His blood. That seems to me a conception a thousand times more repulsive than any of those*

*consequences, which are said to be associated with the Calvinistic and Christian doctrine of special and particular redemption.*

*To think that my Savior died for any who were or are in hell, seems a supposition too horrible for me to entertain. To imagine for a moment that He was the Substitute for all the sons of men, and that God, having first punished the Substitute, afterwards punished the sinners themselves, seem to conflict with all my idea of Divine justice. That Christ should offer an atonement and satisfaction for the sins of all men, and that afterwards some of those very men should be punished for which Christ had already atoned, appears to me to be the most monstrous iniquity that could ever have been imputed to Saturn, to Janus, to the goddess of the Thugs, or the most diabolical heathen deities. God forbid that we should ever think thus of Jehovah, the just and wise and good” (Charles Haddon Spurgeon).*

*“What, I pray is it according to Scripture, for a man to be assured that Christ died for him in particular? Is it not the very highest improvement of faith? Doth it not include a sense of the spiritual love of God shed abroad in our hearts? Is it not the top of the apostle’s consolation, Romans 8:34, and the bottom of all his joyful assurance, Galatians 2:20?”*

*“Christ did not die for any upon condition, if they do believe; but He died for all God’s elect, that they should believe” (John Owen).*

## **Review**

Throughout history, the teaching has been advocated that man has some part in his own salvation by way of a spark of divinity or a free will. The Five Points of Calvinism, drawn up at the Synod of Dort, in response to the Remonstrance or the Five Points of Arminianism, contend that salvation is entirely of God. From beginning to end, salvation is of the Lord. Anything that is required to redeem the soul, God provides for the elect sinner.



The reason why God must provide for the sinner is because the Bible teaches the doctrine of total depravity, or the fact that man is enslaved to sin, which has left him powerless to please the Lord. Man can do nothing to initiate or contribute to salvation in any way. The doctrine of total depravity does not teach that man is as bad as he can possibly be. It simply says that man is as bad off as he can possibly be. Therefore, Jesus said, "*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him*" (John 6:44).

The truth of total depravity logically leads to (or at least necessitates) the doctrine of unconditional election. Because there are no divinely imposed conditions which the natural man would be able to meet in order to be saved, his salvation of necessity must be unconditional.

The story is told of a godly Methodist woman who was faithfully reading her Bible. She lived next door to a Baptist minister. As the woman read the Scriptures she came across the passages which dealt with election. Not having learned much in this area she thought she might ask her neighbor to help her understand the subject. The Baptist pastor when asked what election meant said, "*I think I can help you. Let me ask you three simple questions. First, 'are you saved?'*" The Methodist woman had heard the gospel often and she said, "*Yes, I am saved.*" "*Good,*" replied the minister. "*Now the second question. 'Did God save you by Himself or did you help Him?'*" The good woman thought for a moment and then said, "*Oh, no. God saved me all by Himself.*" "*He did everything?*" inquired the Baptist minister. "*He did everything,*" responded the woman with confidence. "*Then let me ask you the third and final question,*" said the minister. "*Did God save you on purpose or was it an accident?*" And the Methodist lady replied, "*Well, I guess God saved me on purpose.*" And the Baptist pastor replied, "*That is election.*"

Election is the biblical teaching that God has specifically chosen some that He would save according to the principle of grace. Grace is needed, for as Psalm 14 indicates, when “*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*” (Psalm 14:2, 3). If none seek after God, then clearly God must make the first move in the salvation of the soul. And God did make the first move in “*that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*” (John 3:16). God made the first initiative to keep souls from going to hell. He chose certain people whom He would save, not because they deserved it, but because of grace.

### **The Concept of Particularism**

In all of this there is the idea of “*particularism.*” God has not set out just to save anybody, or to make all men savable. Rather, God has set out to seek and to save certain people specifically and particularly. The concept should not be difficult to embrace, for salvation is a supernatural experience. It requires a work of God in the heart for man to be saved. God must save each soul individually. There is no sacerdotal system where salvation is administered at the hands of a priest. God works on the soul directly. He works in the hearts of individuals, and saves them supernaturally. If God must save, and if he saves men individually, then there is particularism. In His sovereignty, God chooses whom He will save. Man’s destiny is in God’s hands, and not man’s. Man has already chosen his destiny, and that is hell. Man has chosen sin. As a result of his own choosing, man has entered into a state of bondage from which he cannot be set free by his own power. He needs a Savior. If man is to be free, if man is to be saved, then it is God who must take the initiative.

## Scriptural Evidence of Particularism

The scriptural evidence for particularism is found in many precious passages.

- *Matthew 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.*
- *Acts 16:14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.*
- *Romans 8:37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*
- *Galatians 1:4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:*
- *Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*
- *Ephesians 2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,*
- *Ephesians 5:2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.*

- *2 Thessalonians 2:16* Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,
- *2 Timothy 1:9* Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,
- *1 John 4:10* Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.
- *1 John 4:11* Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.
- *1 John 4:19* We love him, because he first loved us.
- *Revelation 1:5* And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

### **The Prayers of Particularism**

As the scriptures set forth the concept of particularism, so does the prayer life of Christ and Christians. In the gospel of John (17:9) the Lord prayed for His own. *I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them, which thou hast given me; for they are thine.* In like manner, when Christians pray they naturally ask God to save a particular brother or sister, mother or father, friend or foe. Particular people are presented before the Lord to be the objects of His redeeming mercy and grace. In the matter of salvation it is pleasing to the Father for those within the Christian community to understand that God has chosen “us,” God has redeemed “us,” God is the One who has drawn “us” to Christ, God has rescued “us” from sin. That is particularism.

## The Nature of Christ's Death

The study of particularism leads to an inquiry into the nature of the death of Christ. A question arises: “*How does God save those individuals whom He has chosen to be the heirs of salvation?*” The traditional answer is that souls are saved through Jesus Christ. And that is a correct response. “*But how does the death of Christ save souls?*” The scriptural answer is twofold.

- The death of Christ was a substitutional death. Jesus said, “*I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep*” (John 10:11). The death of Christ was the death of a substitute. Jesus died instead of others. He died in the place of another. All the spiritual obligations that fell upon the elect sinner fell upon Christ. “*The soul that sinneth it shall die.*” (Ezek. 18: 4) Christ paid the wages of sin, which is death, for His own (Romans 6:23).
- The death of Christ was a sacrificial death. As the death of Christ was substitutional, so it was a sacrificial death. In the *Old Testament* economy there was an animal sacrifice to be made in atonement for sin. The worshipper was to “*put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him*” (Leviticus 1:4). Then the animal was slaughtered. In the New Testament economy Jesus Christ was the Sacrifice to be offered. He was the Lamb of God to be slain (John 1:29). Jesus was the penal (or legal) Substitute, in that by His death the penalty for sins that others committed were paid. Because of the penal sacrificial substitution of Christ, souls are saved by the Life He gave (Romans 5:10). The blood of Christ reconciles individuals (Ephesians 2:13).

STANFORD E. MURRELL

*“He took my sin and my sorrow  
And made them His own;  
He bore my burden to Calvary  
And suffered and died alone.”*

Jesus does not save men by being a Good Example, though He was, nor does the Lord save by being a source of inspiration, though He certainly provided that as well. Rather, Christ saves by His death—and the death of Christ was sufficient. There is nothing left for man to do or to contribute in his own salvation. The Lord *“bath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began”* (2 Timothy 1:9).

*“Jesus paid it all,  
All to Him I owe;  
Sin had left a crimson stain,  
He washed it white as snow.”*

### **Limited Atonement: The Area of Concern**

While most Christians would unite in agreement that any soul saved, is saved by the death of Christ, there is a severe disagreement as to what exactly was accomplished by the death of Christ. One particular theological concern is whether or not Christ died for all men *without exception*. Those who love the doctrines of sovereign grace believe that Christ died for all men *without distinction*, in the sense that Christ died for Jew and Gentile, male and female, rich and poor, educated and non-educated alike. Others say in essence, *“No, Christ died for all men without exception. Christ died for Joseph Stalin, as well as Augustine. He paid the penalty for the sins of Adolph Hitler, as well as the apostle Paul. Peter had no advantage over Judas Iscariot as far as sins being forgiven.”* Those who

uphold the doctrines of sovereign grace, contend that the death of Christ was more precise. Christ did not come just to make men savable. There was a definite price paid, for a definite people, in order for them to be saved. Christ did not die indiscriminately. The death of deaths, in the death of Christ, accomplished a perfect redemption to be applied to those who will be saved. The real question to be asked is this: “*What was the purpose of Christ in dying?*”

### **Clarification of Terminology**

In order to answer the proposed question, “*What was the purpose of Christ in dying?*” a clarification of terms would be helpful.

- The sufficiency of the death of Christ. The doctrine of grace does not say that the death of Christ was good enough only for His elect. No! No! The value of the death of Christ is immeasurable. Certainly it was sufficient to cover all sins of every man, woman and child that has been, or ever will be born. If a thousand worlds had been created and populated, the one death of Christ would be sufficient for all. The death of Jesus is of infinite value because of who He is. The death of Christ is sufficient to save everyone to be saved, and anyone to be saved.

However, the issue is not the sufficiency of the death of Christ, but the efficacy and the design of His death. In its effect, the death of Christ is applied only to the elect, because for them it was designed.

*“Christ’s death was sufficient for all—  
but efficacious for the elect.”*

- Preferred Terminology. The terminology that has emerged to crystallize the debate is “*limited atonement*” vs. an “*unlimited*

atonement”; a “definite redemption” vs. an “indefinite redemption”; and a “particular atonement” vs. a “general atonement.” For the believer in the doctrines of sovereign grace, the limit of the atonement is not in its value, but in its application. For this reason, many that hold to the position of sovereign grace are ready to concede that the terminology “limited atonement” is unfortunate, and does not represent what is trying to be said. The term “definite atonement” is more accurate. A concession can be made. There is room at the cross for all.

*“The Cross upon which Jesus died  
Is a shelter in which we can hide.  
His grace, so free is sufficient for me.  
Wide as the ocean, deep as the sea.  
There is room at the Cross-for you.”*

## **The Limits of the Atonement**

Having acknowledged the sufficiency of the death of Christ to save any, and all, that will come to the Cross, there are still limits to the death of Christ to be recognized. If Judas Iscariot went to hell (Acts 1:25), then the atonement did not avail for him. To concede this truth is to grant that either the power of the Cross is limited, or the extent is limited. The Cross is limited in scope or it is limited in advantage. Rather than deny the power of Christ to save, it must be realized that the purpose of Christ was much more definite. Jesus would save His people from their sins. Psychologically as well as technically, it is much better to speak of a definite atonement, than a “limited” atonement, for the merits of the Cross was given definitely to save souls.



## The Universal Benefits of the Death of Christ

While contending for a definite redemption, there are some universal benefits of the death of Christ that can be acknowledged.

- The redemptive nature of Calvary is not limited to the Jews. There is a universal offer of the gospel. Christ set out to save a large number of people from every nation, kindred and tribe, and He has (Revelation 5:9). In this sense, there are no boundaries to the merits of the Cross universally. The invitation to come to Christ is extended to the entire world (Matthew 28:19, 20). The good news is to be shared that Jesus has removed every legal obstacle from sinners. He has died to set men free from the power of sin. Christ has come to cleanse all that call upon the name of the Lord.
- The benefits of grace are universal. There is the privilege of hearing the gospel message, and of living in a country that has been blessed by God because of the righteous (Psalm 33:12).
- There are temporal benefits that accrue from the death of Christ. Because of Christ, God is able to continue to make the sun to shine on the just and the unjust alike. Because of Christ the wrath of God can be delayed (2 Peter 3:9).

## Theological Considerations—Biblical Doctrines

How does the doctrine of a definite redemption harmonize with other scripture? The simple answer is, “*Very well!*” For example, in John 10 the Lord declares that His death was the fulfillment of a specific mission. “*I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for*

*the sheep*” (John 10:11). The mission of Christ was to protect His sheep, not only from the harm that men would do to them, but also from the harm that sin would do to them as well. So Jesus said, *“I lay down my life, that I might take it again”* (John 10:17). In John 6:35 the teaching is again presented that the Lord was on a mission. He had come to redeem all that the Father had given to Him. *“And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day”* (John 6:39).

In John 17, just a few hours from the Cross, the Lord spoke one last time of the great mission He was on. The particular mission of the Master was to give eternal life to as many souls as the Father had given to Him (John 17:2). Eternal life includes not only duration of time, but also a quality as well. *“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent”* (John 17:3). What is life eternal? To know God and His Son, Jesus Christ. The Lord can give life eternal to all that believe, because He lives. And the Lord lives because He pleased the Father and *“finished the work which [the Father] thou gavest me to do”* (John 17:4). The Father had given His Son a people to save, and He accomplished the great mission of redemption for His own (John 17:9, 20). The Covenant of Redemption was complete.

As the death of Christ occurred because He was the Messiah on a mission (John 10:18b), so His death was a substitute. Over and over the Bible speaks of this aspect of the work of redemption.

- *Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

- *2 Corinthians 5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*
- *Galatians 3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.*
- *1 Corinthians 15:3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;*

It is the repeated and emphatic teaching of Scripture that the death of Christ was in place of all who will be saved. Christ was judged for sin so that those who are saved cannot be judged. If Christ died for all men, Judas as well as Paul, then a new definition of substitution is brought into view. He is condemned, and those who sin are condemned—and that is not right. Judgment cannot fall upon both. Therefore, it is not a Son question [as some suggest] but a Sin question. And the sin question is this: “*Did Jesus pay for the sins of all men or did He not?*” If Christ did bear all the sins, of all people, then no one should be condemned, even for unbelief, for that would be the greatest of all sins. But since men are condemned for rejecting Christ as Savior, then there must be a just basis of condemnation. If Christ died for the sins of all men, there is no basis of judicial judgment. However, if Christ did not die for the sins of the non-elect, there is a just basis of reproach. It is sinful works of sinners that separates them from God, not the Son. The Son stands and cries, “*Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest*” (Matthew 11:28).

*“Either Christ died for all the sin of all men,  
In which case all will be saved,*

Or

*He died for some of the sins of all men,  
In which case no one will be saved;*

Or

*He died for all the sins of some men  
In which case they will be saved  
and that without exception.”*

—John Owen

Finally, the death of Christ was efficacious, and so harmonizes with the doctrine of a definite redemption. The death of Christ actually saves men. He does not make men savable, but He is mighty to redeem.

- *Romans 4:25 Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.*
- *Galatians 3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:*
- *2 Corinthians 5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*
- *Romans 5:10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

- *1 John 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*
- *Hebrews 9:12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*

The *Bible* does not present these things as being potential, but actual spiritual transactions. God the Father is satisfied with all that the Son has done. By the death of Christ, men are saved and that salvation is secure, and eternal. Jesus did not die on the Cross hoping that someone, somewhere, and somehow, would be saved. Christ died with full confidence that He was redeeming a people unto Himself. Jesus died knowing that the redemption He accomplished would be applied to others. And while men must believe, his faith, purchased by Christ, is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8, 9). There is no such thing as a non-effective atonement. That would be a contradiction in terms. The work of Christ accomplished salvation, so that Paul can rejoice and say, “*He gave himself for me*” (Galatians 2:20).

### **Who Limits the Atonement?**

*“We are often told that we limit the atonement of Christ because we say that Christ has not made a satisfaction for all men, or all men would be saved. Now, our ready reply to this is that, on the other hand, our opponents limit it: we do not. The Arminians say, Christ died for all men. Ask them what they mean by it. Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of all men? They say, ‘No, certainly not.’ We ask them the next question—Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of any man in particular? They answer, ‘No.’ They are obliged to admit this, if they are consistent. They say, ‘No. Christ has died that any man may be saved if’—and then follow certain conditions of salvation. Now, who is it that*

*limits the death of Christ? Why, you. You say that Christ did not die so as infallibly to secure the salvation of anybody. We beg your pardon, when you say we limit Christ's death; we say, 'No, my dear sir, it is you that do it.' We say Christ so died that he infallibly secured the salvation of a multitude that no man can number, who through Christ's death not only may be saved, but are through Christ's death not only may be saved, but are saved, must be saved and cannot by any possibility run the hazard of being anything but saved. You are welcome to your atonement, you may keep it. We will never renounce ours for the sake of it."*

—Charles Haddon Spurgeon

### **Selected Biblical Statements on Particular Redemption**

- *Isaiah 53:4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.*
- *Isaiah 53:8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.*
- *Isaiah 53:10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.*
- *Isaiah 53:11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.*
- *Matthew 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.*

IN DEFENSE OF CALVINISM

- *Matthew 20:28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*
- *Matthew 26:28 For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*
- *Luke 1:68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,*
- *John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

**Special Note.** The death of Christ is limited to believers. He gave His only begotten Son whosoever believeth shall be saved. And other passages reveal who will believe—the elect.

- *John 11:51 And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation;*
- *John 11:52 And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.*

**Special Note.** Jesus died to secure the salvation of His people.

- *Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*
- *Rom 8:32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

- *2 Corinthians 5:14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:*
- *2 Corinthians 5:15 And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.*
- *Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

### **Practical Implications**

- For worship and devotion. Paul said in Galatians (6:14) that he gloried in the Cross. Paul looked at the Cross, and said in effect, “*There, Jesus died for me. He bore all of my sin and took them on Himself.*” When it is seen that Christ died specifically for souls, then there will be a renewed, personal, glory in the Cross.

*“Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood  
Shall never lose its power  
Till all the ransomed Church  
Be saved to sin no more.”*

- For evangelism. Preaching the doctrine of a definite atonement does not hinder evangelism. Just the opposite is true. For those who understand the doctrine of grace, there is great incentive to witness, for the promise is given that if the gospel is preached, there will be souls saved (Acts 18:10; John 4:35). There is no more glorious message in the entire universe than the gospel message that Christ died for sinners, and anyone who comes to



Him as the Sovereign Savior shall be redeemed by the power of His blood shed at Calvary. All who believe in Christ will be given life eternal. And those who believe, those who have been given spiritual mercies of Divine Majesty in this life, cannot keep from saying,

*“To Jesus, the crown of my hope,  
My soul in haste to be gone;  
Oh bear me, ye cherubim, up,  
And waft me away to his throne.”*

5

Irresistible Grace or Effectual Calling

**Introduction: Voices from the Past**

*“AND IF GOD DOES require of the sinner—dead in sin—that he should take the first step, then he requireth just that which renders salvation is impossible under the gospel as ever it was under the law, seeing man is as unable to believe as he is to obey, and is just as much without power to come to Christ as he is without power to go to heaven without Christ. The power must be given to him of the Spirit. He lieth dead in sin; the Spirit must quicken him. He is bound hand and foot, fettered by transgression; the Spirit must cut his bonds, and then he will leap to liberty. God must come and dash the iron bars out of their sockets, and then he can escape afterwards, but unless the first thing be done for him, he must perish as surely under the gospel as he would have done under the law. I would cease to preach if I believed that God, in the matter of salvation, required anything whatever of man which He Himself had not also engaged to furnish . . . I am the messenger, I tell you the master’s message; if you do not like the message quarrel with the Bible, not with me; so long as I have Scripture on my side I will dare and defy you to do anything against me. ‘Salvation is of the Lord.’ The Lord has to apply it, to make the unwilling willing, to make the ungodly godly, and bring the vile rebel to the feet of Jesus, or else salvation will never be accomplished. Leave*

*that one thing undone, and you have broken the link of the chain, the very link which was just necessary to its integrity. Take away the fact that God begins the good work, and that He sends us what the old divines call preventing grace—take that away, and you have spoilt the whole of salvation; you have just taken the key-stone out of the arch, and down it tumbles. There is nothing left then.”*

—Charles Haddon Spurgeon

## **Review**

Many times, historically, when there has been an undertaking to re-examine the doctrines of sovereign grace, it is because there has been a movement away from these scriptural truths. In the fourth century, Pelagius (c. AD 354–after 418) emerged to speak of man’s ability to co-operate with God in his own salvation. Pelagius rejected the idea that man was in need of internal grace in order to keep the commandments of God. Human nature, he insisted, was created good and was endowed by God from creation with power to live a virtuous and upright life, if a man so willed. The grace of creation is sustained by the illumination of the Law, and by the life of Christ, as a Good Example.

The thoughts of Pelagius were repudiated in Church councils, and history moved forward. In the sixteenth century, the old issues came back. Jacobus Arminius, and his followers, once more emphasized free will, instead of free grace. Attention was focused on what man can do to save himself. And there the matter rests. Over the centuries there have been any numbers of individuals, and religious organizations, which insist that man has some part to play in his own salvation. Nevertheless, others contend that salvation is of the Lord. One such person to take this position was John Calvin (1509–1564). His formalized system of theology has come to be commonly called

*Calvinism.* While John Calvin did not originate the doctrines of sovereign grace, he was able to formulate the major biblical concerns into a cohesive system of presentation through the sermons he preached, and the books he wrote, such as *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

At the heart of sovereign grace theology is the absolute dominion of God, and His rule over the affairs of His creation, including the will of man. It is argued that, “*God, whenever He wills to make way for his providence, bends and turns men’s will even in external things; nor are they so free to choose that God’s will does not rule over their freedom*” (*Institutes*, Book II, Chapter IV, p. 315). By arguing for the sovereignty of God in all matters, including salvation, God gets all the glory and the credit due His holy name.

Logically, all other systems of theology removes from God ultimate glory, by making man his own savior, or his own partial savior. The Bible declares that man contributes nothing to his own salvation. God did it all. And everything that God does require of man, He supplies, so that there is no way that man can boast. Otherwise, grace would cease to be grace (Romans 11:6). Augustine, in his *Confessions*, prayed, “*Give what Thou commandest—and command what Thou wilt.*” Because God is the One who provides all that is necessary for salvation, it is certain that the souls who are to be the heirs of salvation will come to faith. There will be an effectual calling of the sheep to the Savior. Jesus said, *my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me*” (John 10:27). Effectual calling refers to the means by which souls are actually transferred into the fold, or fellowship of Christ.

“*God, having chosen the people He would save,  
having given them to the Son, and the Son,*

*having taken them to Himself and accomplishing  
their salvation, now receives from the Father the souls  
of sinners so that the work of redemption  
may be effectively applied to their hearts.”*

In all of its simplicity, this is the essence of the doctrine of irresistible grace.

### **Irresistible Grace: The Issue Clarified**

Unfortunately, those who oppose the doctrines of grace make an issue out of this point. There are two thoughts, often repeated, which sets forth a basic misunderstanding of the doctrines of sovereign grace. The accusation is often made that God saves people even if they do not want to be saved—despite the obvious fact that people do often resist salvation, even those who are later saved. How can men “*resist*” if grace is “*irresistible*”?

What does not seem to be fully comprehended by the opponents of the doctrines of divine sovereignty, is that irresistible grace teaches that ultimately God will infallibly save all those whom He wills to be saved. While there might be some initial resistance to the gospel, none of those whom the Father has given to the Son, and none of those for whom Christ has died, will be lost. God effects in the heart all that He requires. For example

- God requires faith for salvation. Man must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ in order to be saved (Acts 16:31). But where do men get the faith that is required to believe? It is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

- God requires repentance. But can those who are dead in trespasses and sin (Ephesians 2:1) properly repent? In themselves, there is no innate ability, or desire to repent. God must grant the gift of repentance (Acts 5:31; 2 Timothy 2:25).
- God requires that men be willing to be saved. The natural man is not willing to be saved, for there is none that seeketh after God (Romans 3:11). The will of man is in bondage to sin so that he does not will to be saved (John 1:13; Romans 9:16). That is, man does not will to be saved until God regenerates Him, and makes him willing in the hour of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2).
- God requires men to draw near the Cross. And God draws men to Calvary and brings them to Christ. (John 12:32)

Because God gives men faith for salvation, repentance unto life, a new heart that is willing to be saved, and sight to see the Savior, it can be said that His grace is irresistible. God changes the nature of a person so that they want to be saved. No one has ever been saved against his or her will, or apart from repentance, and love for Christ. But because the Creator knows how to change the creature, grace can be given. When the gospel call is then heard, there is an irresistible longing to respond in a positive manner. Even though many that are later saved may initially resist the gospel, Acts 7:51) it does not matter. They will come to faith in due course, because of sovereign grace being effectively applied to their hearts. It is a secret work of a mercifully God.

## The Biblical meaning of “Calling”

- General usage. The word “called” is used in reference to the gospel appeal that is given to all men generally. The *Bible* teaches that “*many are called*” (Matthew 22:14) to salvation, for God “*commandeth all men every where to repent*” (Acts 17:30). The general call of the gospel is a sincere offer of saving grace to every man, woman, and child who hears it.
- Special usage. However, not everyone who hears the gospel believes its message. Not everyone who receives the call to follow Christ comes to faith—while others do. “*Why? Why is it that the gospel is effective in the lives of some?*” The divine answer is that there is a special meaning to the word “called”. There is a specific call to salvation that is given to individuals, which not only invites souls to the salvation, but also actually brings them to the Savior as per 1 Corinthians 1:9: “*God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*” Notice that the call is spoken of here as something more than just a call to salvation. It actually affects something. It brings souls in the fellowship of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 1:18 Paul writes that, “*the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness.*” The gospel is “*foolish*” to the natural man, for he is totally depraved. Because of natural spiritual inability to appreciate the gospel, it is of no effect. Sin blinds men without mercy to the gospel, so that he calls it foolishness. Nevertheless, “*unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God*” (1 Corinthians 1:24) is made manifest for they are gloriously saved. Souls are saved through the preaching of the gospel (1 Corinthians 1:18) because they are

called. “*Why are only certain souls saved?*” 1 Corinthians 1:26-28 explains. God has chosen some to salvation. That is the plain argument of the passage. Therefore, “*He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord*” (1 Corinthians 1:31).

## The Consistent Teaching of Scripture

- John 10:3. Speaking of himself as the Great Shepherd, Jesus said, “*To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice; and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.*” If this passage does not stress the efficacy of the call, it does stress the object of the called.

Question: “*Who are called?*”

Answer: The sheep. The Shepherd, Christ, comes and calls His sheep, and they follow Him. Christians are not sheep because they believe; they believe because they are sheep who have been given to the Father.

- Acts 2:38ff. On the great day of Pentecost, when Peter preached the power of the Holy Spirit was present. People cried out, and asked what was to be done for salvation. “*Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*”
- Romans 8:28-30. This passage teaches that individuals come to faith in keeping with a Divine and eternal plan. God has proposed to do something in accordance with the purpose of His will. God’s will is to foreknow, predestinate, call, justify, and glorify certain souls. This is seen afresh by asking a basic



question, and then following the links of the Golden Chain of Salvation in reverse. The question is this: “*Who shall be glorified?*” The answer is: “*Those who are justified.*”

Question: “*Who shall be justified?*”

Answer: Those who are called.

Question: “*Who shall be called?*”

Answer: Those who are predestinated.

Question: “*Who are predestinated?*”

Answer: Those whom God has foreknown and foreloved.

- Romans 9:23, 24ff. In context, Paul speaks of God as the potter who has power over the clay. God can make vessels of mercy, as well as vessels of wrath. Who are the vessels of mercy? Those whom He has called. (note 9:29)

Other particular passages speaking of a calling to Christ, include Galatians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; 2 Timothy 1: 9; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 Peter 5:10; 2 Peter 1:3; and Jude 1:1. The theme of a divine calling is pervasive throughout scriptures.

### **“*The Called*” Remains A Title for Christians**

In Jude 1:1, the Scriptures speak of those who are “*sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.*” Notice again, “*Who are the called?*” Those who are preserved in Christ Jesus having been sanctified, or set apart, by the Father. Observe carefully that the *called*

are *sanctified*. One of the great charges often leveled against those who believe in the doctrine of sovereign grace, is that God *wants* men to sin. Nothing could be further from the truth. Because of his fallen nature, the natural man wills to sin, and must sin, for he cannot cease from sinning. However, Christ Jesus “*gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*” (Titus 2:14). The true ministers of the gospel have always preached that “*Justification and sanctification go always hand in hand. He who is ‘made of God unto us, righteousness,’ is also ‘made sanctification’; we are ‘justified and sanctified into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God’*” (Ebenezer Erskine, sermon preached June 4, 1721).

While salvation is by grace, through faith alone, saving faith is not alone, for good works accompanies it.

### **Related Biblical Statements**

Many passages in scriptures teach that God initiates the work of salvation. His grace is manifested in those who will be saved. He does everything for us.

- *Psalms 110:3 Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.*
- *Matthew 11:25 At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.* God will reveal His truths to whom He wills. Why? Because it seems good in His sight. Every man lies in God’s hands, not their own.

- *John 3:8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, 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.* God is the one who controls the winds of life and the winds of eternal life as well.
- *John 6:37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.* Not most of them, but all who have been given to the Son will come to Him.
- *John 6:44 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. 45 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.* The same word for draw in verse 44 is used in John 18:18 of Peter drawing the sword from its scabbard, and in John 21:11 of the fish being drawn into the nets. The same word is used of the mob dragging Paul, in Acts 16:19.
- *John 17:2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.* Eternal life is given to as many as the Father has given to Jesus.
- *Acts 16:14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.* Why did Lydia listen to the gospel Paul preached? Because God opened her heart.
- *Romans 9:16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.* The ultimate cause of salvation is not the will of man but the mercy of God.

- *1 Corinthians 2:4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: The preaching of Paul was premised by faith that God would save souls through His own power, not through the techniques of man.*
- *1 Corinthians 2:9, But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.*
- *1 Corinthians 4:7 For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it? God makes the difference.*
- *Philippians 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. If you willed to come to Christ, God made you willing according to His good pleasures.*

## **Theological Considerations**

There is a general call to salvation and there is a special and particular call. While the first might be effectively resisted, the latter will not be resisted, for it is the means by which souls are brought to salvation. One clear example of the distinction between the general call of the gospel and the effectual call of the gospel being applied is found in Luke 14:15-24. In this narrative the general call goes forth, but men begin to make excuses. By nature, people want nothing to do with the gospel. They will not show respect to the Sovereign. However, the gospel goes forth again with divine compulsion, and the house of

the Lord is filled. Such compulsion is needed for “*none seek after God*” (Romans 3:11).

The gospel is foolishness to the natural man (1 Corinthians 1:18; 2:14). Because the soul of man is bound in sin, and blinded to the message of grace, of what value is there in preaching free will? It has no value, because it has no power to effectually change the soul so that it can be, or will be, saved.

There is a way for the will of man to be different, so that in the day of gospel hearing he wants to come to faith. That special way of salvation is called sovereign grace. In grace, God causes the light to shine out of the spiritual darkness of the soul. In grace God causes the glorious light of the gospel to shine in particular hearts, so that individuals can say, “*God hath given to me the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ*”.

Paul wrote of his own experience in 2 Corinthians 4:6. “*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*”. Grace not only relieves our fears, grace teaches our hearts to fear.

*“Amazing grace! How sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found;  
Was blind, but now I see.*

*’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed!”*

## The Unity of the Plan of Redemption

God shows saving grace, because it is part of the unity of the plan of redemption. God has not simply *“done His part,”* and now it is *“up to the sinner to do his part.”* No! No! The Father has not only planned salvation, the Son has not only executed the plan of the Father, and paid the price for a people, but now the Holy Spirit effectively draws souls to Christ. A redemption which has been accomplished is effectively applied, so that it can be said in eternity, as well as in time, *“Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none”* (John 18:9).

## Salvation as a Work of God

Despite the best efforts of man to formulate various systems of salvation that are synergistic, the Scriptures consistently reveal that the salvation that effectually redeems is monotheistic. God saves apart from human work, human efforts and the natural human will. *“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: (1 Corinthians 1:30). “For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.”* (John 5:21)

## The Conditions of Salvation are the Gifts of God’s Grace

- Faith. God commands men to have faith (Acts 16:31), and gives the faith that is commanded. (Matthew 16:15-17 cf. 1 John 5:1; John 6:29; Ephesians 1:19)
- Repentance. God commands men to repent (Acts 2:38; 17:30), and gives the gift of repentance. (Acts 5:31; 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25) Men oppose themselves until God grants them repentance.

- Regeneration. God commands men to be born again (John 3:7), and then regenerates them. (James 1:18; John 1:13; Ephesians 2:8,9) Salvation is given to men. God saves sinners. He manifests His sovereignty to whom He will.

### Practical Considerations

- **Worship.** Understanding the particular nature of salvation, and effectual calling, the believer should fall down in gratitude before God. Free will leads men to hell. Free grace makes certain that souls will go to heaven. When the question is raised, “*Who is on the Lord’s side?*” The heart in worship answers,

*“Jesus, Thou hast bought us,  
Not with gold or gem,  
But with Thine own life-blood,  
For Thy diadem: With Thy blessing filling  
Each who comes to Thee,  
Thou hast made us willing, Thou hast made us free.  
By Thy grand redemption,  
By Thy grace divine, We are on the Lord’s side,  
Savior, we are Thine.”*

—Frances R. Havergal

- Evangelism. A heart of worship leads naturally to evangelism. Those who know God, those who love Christ, those who honor the Holy Spirit want others to come to salvation. However, in the act of presenting the gospel it is to be realized that salvation is of the Lord and those who have been called will believe. “*Wherunto*

*be called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*' (2 Thessalonians 2:14).

- Deterrent to Discouragement in Ministry. Sometimes in the act of witnessing, discouragement sets in. The temptation comes to use extreme and novel methods in order to get people to make a “*decision*” for Christ. That is wrong. God will open the hearts when the gospel is faithfully given. The responsibility of the Christian is to sow the seed. The harvest belongs to the Lord.
- Deterrent to Both Pride and Jealousy in Ministry. Because God is the one who opens hearts, no person should boast of their spiritual accomplishments. There is no room for pride in evangelism. It is God who gives the increase. Paul said, “*I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase*” (1 Corinthians 3:6).



6

The Final Perseverance of the Saints

*“Thank you Lord, for saving my soul,  
Thank you Lord, for making me whole.  
Thank you Lord, for giving to me  
Thy great salvation so rich and free.”*

—Seth Sykes

*“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me;  
and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”*

—John 6:37

**Introduction**

*“If ever it should come to pass,  
That sheep of Christ might fall away,  
My fickle, feeble soul, alas!  
Would fail a thousand times a day.”*

*“IF ONE DEAR SAINT of God had perished, so might all; if one of the covenant ones be lost, so may all be; and then there is no gospel promise true, but the Bible is a lie, and there is nothing in it worth my acceptance. I will be an infidel at once when I can believe that a saint of God can ever fall finally. If God hath loved me once, then He will love me forever. God has a mastermind; He arranged everything in His gigantic intellect long before He did it; and once having settled it, He never alters it, ‘This shall be done,’ saith He, and the iron hand of destiny marks it down, and it is brought to pass. ‘This is My purpose,’ and it stands, nor can earth or hell alter it. ‘This is My decree,’ saith He, ‘promulgate it, ye holy angels; rend it down from the gate of Heaven, ye devils, if ye can; but ye cannot alter the decree, it shall stand for ever.’ God altereth not His plans; why should He? He is Almighty, and therefore can perform His pleasure. Why should He? He is Almighty, and therefore cannot have planned wrongly Why should He? He is the everlasting God, and therefore cannot die before His plan is accomplished. Why should He change? Ye worthless atoms of earth, ephemera of a day, ye may change your plans, but He shall never, never change His. Has He told me that His plan is to save me? If so, I am forever safe.*

*“My name from the palms of His hands  
Eternity will not erase;  
Impress’d on His heart it remains,  
It marks of indelible grace.”*

*“I do not know how some people, who believe that a Christian can fall from grace, manage to be happy. It is a very commendable thing for them to be able to get through a day without despair. If I did not believe the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, I think I should be of all men the most miserable, because I should lack any ground of comfort. I could not say, whatever state of heart I came into, that I should be like well-spring of water, whose stream fails not; I should rather have to take the comparison of an intermittent spring, that might stop on a sudden or a reservoir, which I had no reason to expect would always be full. I believe that the happiest of Christians and the truest of*

*Christians are those who never dare to doubt God but who take His Word simply as it stands, and believes it, and asks no questions, just feeling assured that if God has said it, it will be so. I bear my willing testimony that I have no reason, nor even shadow of a reason, to doubt my Lord, and I challenge Heaven and earth, and hell to bring any proof that God is untrue. From the depths of hell I call the friends, and from this earth I call the tried and afflicted believers, and to Heaven I appeal, and challenge the long experience of the blood-washed host, and there is not to be found in the realms a single person who can bear witness to one fact which can disprove the faithfulness of God, or weaken His claim to be trusted by His servants. There are many things that may or may not happen, but this I know shall happen—*

*“He shall present my soul,  
Unblemish’d and complete,  
Before the glory of His face,  
With joys divinely great.”*

—Charles Haddon Spurgeon

### **A Review of the Regeneration of the Righteous**

One of the great ironies among those who oppose the doctrines of sovereign grace is a tendency to preach, and write songs, that expresses other sentiments. For example, John and Charles Wesley were notorious for defending the major points of the Remonstrance and yet, they preached, and wrote poems, and hymns, that express so clearly the very truths which all Christians love to sing. Consider some of the stanzas from the song *Arise, My Soul Arise*.

*“Arises, my soul, arise; Shake off thy guilty fears;  
The bleeding Sacrifice, In my behalf appears.  
Before the throne my Surety stands;*

STANFORD E. MURRELL

*My name is written on His hands,  
My name is written on His hands.  
Five bleeding wounds He bears,  
Received on Calvary;  
They pour effectual prayers,  
They strongly plead for me.  
‘Forgive him, O forgive!’ they cry,  
‘Nor let that ransomed sinner die,  
Nor let that ransomed sinner die.’*

*My God is reconciled. His pard’ning voice I hear;  
He owns me for His child, I can no longer fear:  
With confidence I now draw nigh,  
And ‘Father, Abba, Father!’ cry,  
And ‘Father, Abba, Father!’ cry.”*

### **Three Systems of Salvation**

In considering the way of salvation, various systems of belief have been set forth.

- It has been taught that man is basically very good. Man is not completely fallen in Adam. Therefore, he is able to do whatever is necessary to achieve his own salvation.
- It has been taught that man is basically good, but not quite good enough. He needs some divine grace to complete in himself a form of salvation that has already begun.

- It has been taught that man is not good. However, because God is good, all men have been given sufficient grace to do whatever is necessary to be saved.

In the providence of the Lord, individuals arose over the centuries to challenge these systems of thought—variously described as Pelagianism, semi-Pelagianism, and Arminianism. Free grace was exalted over free will. One great battle ground for the debate was Holland. During one period of religious controversy, forty-five ministers, defenders of Arminian views, who signed the Remonstrance in 1610, were deposed from their ministry (1619) after five points affirming the doctrines of grace were issued. They were sentenced to banishment. A few years later, in 1630, they were granted complete liberty to live and work anywhere in Holland. The five points of the doctrines can be remembered by the word T\*U\*L\*I\*P.

- T = stands for Total Depravity, or better, Total Inability. Man is born in a sinful condition, which leaves him dead in trespasses and sin as per Ephesians 2:1. *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.* Man is unable to do anything to contribute to his own salvation (John 6:44).
- U = stands for Unconditional Election. Because of his desperate spiritual state, man needs a Savior who places no prior condition upon him for salvation. The reason for election being unconditional is because no person could ever meet a Divine condition imposed in, and of himself.
- L = limited atonement, or definite redemption. In the act of securing the salvation of the elect, Christ died for those whom

He will save. The extent of the atonement is defined by, and limited to, the intent of the atonement. Since not all are saved, then it must be that Christ did not intend to save all. Since Christ actually purchased redemption for all of God's elect, and saves them, then it is certain that He died in order to "*save His people from their sins*" (Matthew 1:21).

- I = irresistible grace. Having chosen some to be saved who were dead in trespasses and sin, having set no prior condition upon them for salvation, having secured their salvation by redemption, it is certain that those whom the Father has chosen, and Christ has died for, will come to faith by the drawing power of the Holy Spirit. The Creator knows how to sovereignly, and surely draw the objects of His affection to Himself. The Lord of glory knows how to change the unchangeable, redeem the unredeemable, love the unlovable, and convert the unregenerate.
- P = perseverance of the saints. Those who do come to faith will be kept by the power of God as they maintain good works, not in order to be saved, but because they have been saved. In the day of ultimate judgment it will be declared that salvation is of the Lord—from beginning to end. Salvation is all of grace, "*to the praise of His glory*" (Ephesians 1:12). All that the Father has given to the Son will be safe and secured at last. None of them shall be lost.

### **The Perseverance of the Saints: Definitions**

One of the logical consequences of the theology which opposes the doctrines of sovereign grace is that it teaches a person can leave a state of grace, according to their own free will. Since a person is

saved by free will, then logically a person can be lost by free will, even after being saved! To put it plainly, there is no security for the believer except what the will of man determines that security to be. Some theologians have taught that those who are saved are put on probation, like Adam before his fall in the Garden. Others suggest that only extreme acts of sin will lead to a final fall from grace. However, just what those acts of sin are that will remove salvation from the soul is not clear. In contrast, the doctrines of grace teach that since souls are saved by free grace, the Sovereign Himself will secure the salvation of the elect. While this position does not provide a license to sin, it does place the ultimate responsibility for an individual's salvation back upon God so that He gets the glory for what He has done, not only for man, but also in man. God does not save a person only to leave them in sin. God does not save souls in order to place them back on probation, for that would be a contradiction. God saves and keeps those whom He saves forever. All of God's elect will be preserved in Christ forever. They will persevere in the faith forever.

### **Two Main Ideas: Preservation and Perseverance**

In the final point of the doctrines of grace there are two main ideas: the preservation of the saint by the power of God and the perseverance of the same through the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. In the preservation, the believer perseveres.

### **Clarifications**

- This not to say that all who *profess* Christ is secure forever. There are many false professors of faith. Jesus warned, "*Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful*

*works? 23 and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:22, 23).*

- This not to say that if a man believes he is therefore free, to abandon himself to unbelief, or sin without fear of judgment. The writer of Hebrews warns the Christian community, “*Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God*” (Hebrews 3:12). Why? “*For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end*” (Hebrews 3:14). The test of the genuineness of faith is the continuance in faith. The term salvation itself indicates that those who are saved are spared, not only from sin’s judgment, but also from sin itself. In all of this, the believer is secure from sin’s dominion.
- This is not to say that truly regenerate men may not fall into sin, even for a period of time. They will, and they do. So many of those in Scripture presented as being righteous, failed at some point in their Christian experience. Noah got drunk, Abraham lied, Lot polluted his righteous soul with filthy living in a homosexual community, Moses became angry, David committed adultery and murder, Paul lashed out at John Mark, Peter cursed and denied Christ, the church at Corinth fell into gross immorality—and that is only the beginning of the sins of the saints. Gossip, greed, pettiness, slander, lust, pride, gluttony, boasting, laziness, and much more are sins with which the saints struggle. Nevertheless, there will always be a sorrow for sin, and a longing to turn from sin. There will be a continuing confessing of sins to those who have been hurt, and there will be a return to God for grace and mercy.



- This is to say that those who are brought to true faith in Jesus Christ are preserved in salvation forever and that the salvation in which they are preserved guarantees their perseverance in the faith. Salvation is not probation, but neither is it a license to sin. The soul that is saved longs to be sanctified.

*“Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole;  
I want Thee forever to live in my soul;  
Break down every idol, cast out every foe;  
Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than soul.”*

—James Nicholson

### **Biblical Statements**

- John 6:37 *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.* If there is an initial reception, there will never be an ultimate rejection. Therefore Christian, sing a song of the redeemed and shout,

*“Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!  
Oh what a foretaste of glory divine!  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,  
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.”*

- John 10:27-29 *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. 29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.* A form of “*life*”, which can be lost, is not eternal. A soul that can be “*saved*” only to be “*lost*” has not been truly saved.

Scriptural words such as “*eternal life*” and “*salvation*” become meaningless if the soul that comes to the Savior can be taken out of His hands, and the Father’s hand. No, the soul that is saved rests securely in the hands of the Father in perfect submission and delight.

*“Perfect submission, perfect delight,  
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight,  
Angels, descending, bring from above,  
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.”*

- Romans 8:28 *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called them he also justified: and whom he justified them he also glorified.* God has set His love upon some according to verse 29. He has destined them to be conformed to the image of Christ. He has decreed it so. “*Will the plan of God be frustrated?*” No. “*Those who are called by a divine summons, will they not come?*” They will come. “*Those who come to Christ, will they not be justified?*” They will be justified. “*Those who are justified, will they not be glorified?*” So sure is glorification, it is written in past tense as it is an accomplished thing.

*“Perfect submission, all is at rest,  
I in my Savior am happy and blest,  
Watching and waiting, looking above,  
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.*

*This is my story, this is my song,  
Praising my Savior all the day long;*

*This is my story, this is my song,  
Praising my Savior all the day long.”*

- Romans 8:32 *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* The argument is again from the greater to the lesser. Since God has done the most difficult thing in sparing not His Son in order to secure the salvation of souls, surely He will do the lesser things necessary to bring them home. Therefore, let the people of God be assured,

*“Tis done; the great transaction’s done!  
I am the Lord’s and He is mine;  
He drew me, and I followed on,  
Charmed to confess the voice divine.”*

—Philip Doddridge

- Philippians 1:6 *Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:* Paul is assured that what God has begun in the soul of the saved will be finished. The completion of the work of salvation includes sanctification, continuance in the faith, and glorification. *“How long will this work continue?”* Until the day of Jesus Christ or until it is done.

*“Though Satan should buffet,  
tho’ trials should come,  
Let this blest assurance control,  
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,  
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.  
It is well—with my soul*

STANFORD E. MURRELL

*It is well, it is well, with my soul*

—H.G. Spafford

- 1 Thessalonians 5:23 *And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* The prayer of Paul, like the prayer of Christ, will be answered.

*“Some day the silver cord will break,  
And I no more as now shall sing;  
But O, the joy when I shall wake  
Within the palace of the King!  
And I shall see Him face to face,*

*And tell the story—Saved by grace;  
And I shall see Him face to face,  
And tell the story—Saved by grace.”*

—Fanny J. Crosby

- 1 Thessalonians 5:24 *Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.* The character of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit is at stake in the matter of salvation. The attribute of divine faithfulness is vindicated in the preservation of the soul.

*“There’s a peace in my heart that the world never gave,  
A peace it cannot take away,  
Tho’ the trials of life may surround like a cloud,  
I’ve a peace that has come there to stay!  
Constantly abiding, Jesus is mine;*

*Constantly abiding, rapture, divine;  
He never leaves me lonely, whispers, oh, so kind,  
“I will never leave thee,” Jesus is mine.”*

- 1 Peter 1:3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

There are three basic facts according to verse 5. First, the Christian is kept. Second, the believer is kept through faith. Third, the believer is kept through faith forever. The concepts of preservation and perseverance are brought together. The believer is not kept regardless of faith, but in the sphere of faith. The power of God is such that it keeps the soul in the faith, and thus saved, forever.

*“Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,  
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt,  
Yonder on Calvary’s mount outpoured,  
There where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.  
Grace, grace, God’s grace,  
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within;  
Grace, grace, God’s grace,  
Grace that is greater than all our sin.”*

- 2 Timothy 1:12 *“For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”*

STANFORD E. MURRELL

*“I know not why God’s wondrous grace  
To me He hath made known,  
Nor why, unworthy Christ in love  
Redeemed for His own.*

*But “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded  
That He is able To keep that which I’ve committed  
Unto Him against that day.”*

—El Nathan

- Jude 24 *“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, 25 To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”* God is not only able to keep a soul from falling; He will keep the soul that is relying upon Him, for that is the intention of the passage.

*“Rock of Ages cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee;  
Let the water and the blood,  
From thy wounded side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure,  
Save from wrath and make me pure.”*

—Augustus M. Toplady

## **Biblical Explanations**

From an abundance of scriptural passages it is clear that the doctrine of the final preservation and perseverance of the saints is a great theme of the Word of God. Now, another question arises. *“Why are*

*Christians not merely saved, but saved forever? What is the purpose of being given everlasting life?"*

- God’s Eternal Plan. According to Romans 8:28ff God has an immutable plan, which is to conform men to the image of His Son. That plan will not, and cannot change. If a soul whom Christ has saved could be lost, then the plan of God, and the promises of God, would be broken. Paul speaks of this truth when writing to Titus. The apostle speaks of the “*hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;*” (Titus 1:2). Before time began, God promised eternal life to all that would believe. The gift of life is not given to those who are “worthy” of salvation. Before the world began, God decreed the gifts of grace He would bestow. In John 6, Jesus comforted Himself with the promises of the Father. His death would have value. The sheep would be saved.
- Union with Christ. There is an essential unity between Christ and the believer. In scriptural imagery, the bond that exists between Christ and His own is inseparable.

<b>Christ</b>	<b>Believers</b>	<b>Scripture</b>
Vine	Branches	John 15:5
Sheep	Shepherd	John 10:11
Chief corner stone	Building blocks	1 Peter 2:5
Head	Body	1Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:30
Husband	Wife	Ephesians5:32; John 3:2

High Priest	Kingdom of priest	Exodus 19:6; Hebrews 8:1; 1 Peter 2:9
King	A royal nation	1 Peter 2:9

In light of the vital union between Christ and those who are saved, *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Romans 8:35-39) *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them, which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit”* (Romans 8:1).

- The Nature of Christ’s Atonement. When Christ died, He paid the penalty for sin. *“For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified”* (Hebrews 10:14). Because of Christ being punished, there is no sin which can be charged to the account of those who are saved.

*“And when, before the throne,  
I stand in Him complete,  
“Jesus died my soul to save,”*

*My lips shall still repeat.  
Jesus, paid it all,  
All to Him I owe;  
Sin had left a crimson stain,  
He washed it white as snow.”*



- The Nature of Reconciliation. If God says that the soul is justified, then what charge can be leveled against the soul to make it lose its salvation? *“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. 34 who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us”* (Romans 8:33,34). There is something else. *“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life”* (Romans 5:10). The argument is from the greater to the lesser. If God saved the soul which was His enemy, how much more will He do for His friend? He will not do less; He will do more.
- The Intercession of Christ. The believer is secure because of the immutable plan of God, because of a vital union with Christ, because of the nature of the atonement, because of the act of justification, and also because of the prayer of Jesus, that those for whom He has died will be saved. The Son has never asked anything of the Father that was not granted (John 11:42)—and Christ has asked for the souls that He will save. *“And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are”* (John 17:11). Not only has Christ prayed for His own, but also the Lord keeps on interceding for those who are the objects of His affection. As a great High Priest, Christ continues to represent souls before the Father, thereby securing their salvation. *“But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. 25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them”* (Hebrews 7:24,25). As Christ, as the Great High Priest interceding on behalf of His own, so He is also the

Defense Attorney, representing His clients so that they will be saved. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:* (1 John 2:1).

- The Indwelling Holy Spirit. The believer is secure because of the sealing of the Holy Spirit. *“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, 14 Which is the earnest [down payment, earnest money] of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory”* (Ephesians 1:13,14). The sealing of the Holy Spirit is the divine stamp of approval, and mark of authenticity. It is the guarantee that the believer belongs to Christ.

### **Practical Implications**

- Obedience. The doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints does not leave people comfortable in their sins, for there are the warnings of scripture to take seriously. Those who willfully sin, those who apostatize, those who turn away from the faith, those who show no regard for holiness, reveals that the true nature of the soul as being that of a religious hypocrite. While salvation is by grace through faith alone, the faith that saves is not alone, for good works, and holiness of life, always accompany it. For those who are saved, the commands of God are not a burden. The will of the Father is loved and honored.
- Worship. The doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints leads to worship for the great things He has done. There would be no reason to worship a God who saves, only to allow a final

destruction of the soul. The Lord does not toy with individuals. He does not save from sin only to condemn individuals for the same. No, no! God graciously provides all that is necessary to secure the salvation of the soul unto the hour of glorification. God has purposed to keep the elect safe from that which would bring them into judgment. Therefore people of God, lift up your voices in worship and say,

*“Praise ye the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!  
O my soul, Praise Him, for He is thy health and salvation!  
All ye who bear, Now to His temple draw near;  
Join me in glad adoration!”*

—Joachim Neander

- Assurance and Comfort. The doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints leads to assurance and comfort.

*“I know not how this saving faith,  
To me He did impart,  
Nor how believing in His Word,  
Wrought peace within my heart.*

*But “I know whom I have believed in,  
And am persuaded that He is able  
To keep that which I’ve committed  
Unto Him against that day.”*

—El Nathan

*Soul, that on Jesus has leaned for repose,  
I will not, I will not desert to His foes,*

STANFORD E. MURRELL

*That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,  
I'll never, no never, no never forsake."*

## Biblical Universalism

*(How far does the gospel reach?  
And to whom is it offered?)*

### **Introduction: Jewish Priority and First Century Bigotry**

#### **Christ the Savior of the World**

- John 12:32 *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.*” One of the great questions that faced the early church was the extent of the gospel. “*Was the death of Christ only for the Jews and national Israel, or did His death anticipate the salvation and encompass the coming of the Gentiles to faith?*” The gospel of John answers that question. While there was no question of the Jewish priority to the claims of Christ, while the Jews had many advantages over the Gentiles (Romans 3:1ff), the Gentiles were also part of the redemptive plan of God. The words of Christ make that plain. However, to read into the text that Christ would draw every single person, without exception, to the Cross, is without foundation. Many babies die without coming to Christ, and many

cultures have never heard about the Lord so it is obvious that not every single person without exception will be drawn to Christ. In context, because of the Greeks who had come to Philip looking for the Master, (John 12:20-31) the universal dimensions of the Cross could be announced in verse 32. The “all”, of this verse, refers to all types of men, Jew and Gentiles.

- Genesis 12:1 *Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: 2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: **and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.***

Over the centuries many Jews had become enamored with the idea that they, and they alone, were the chosen people of God, and that He could never love any other. As a result, many Jews were bigots, in the sense that they believed God did not love any other. For a Jew to discover that the grace and mercy of the Messiah would extend to the Gentiles, well, that was an astonishing concept. However, the Jews should not have been surprised for it was to Abraham that the promise was made that he would be a source of blessing to many nations.

- Isaiah 52:13 *Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.* As Abraham anticipated the coming of the Gentiles to faith, so did the prophet Isaiah. The Messiah was to be lifted *very high* above the nations of the earth.
- John 3:16 *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 27*

*For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.* With these words, it is evident that the global nature of redemption is in view here. The world, as a unit, is in view, so that it can be said that Christ came to reclaim the planet. In verse 18, salvation is brought down to a personal level. But it is clear that the work of redemption goes beyond Israel.

- John 4:42 *And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.* Jesus spoke to the woman of Samaria, and she in turn spoke to the men of the city. The men respond by recognizing that Christ is the Savior of the world. A deeper understanding of the gospel becomes clear. The Jews did not think that the Samaritans could be saved. But here was a woman who had met the Master. Here was a woman who had been honored by the Messiah. Why? Because Jesus was the Savior of the world! The Messiah's work extended beyond Israel.
- John 11:50 *Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. 51 And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; 52 And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.* Caiaphas spoke prophetically—without knowing it—about the universal nature of the atonement. The high priest spoke about the cosmic dimension of the atonement. The people of God are found not only in the nation of Israel; they are found scattered abroad in all the nations. And Jesus will die for them.

The language of Caiaphas is not unusual. Universal language is still used today to convey a comprehensive thought. Even Christians talk about “*winning the world to Christ*,” all the while knowing that not every single person will be saved. But there is no false hope, and there is no misunderstanding. People know what is meant, is that a large number of people will be saved from every nation, every tribe, and every tongue.

- John 1:29 *The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.* The universal terms of Scripture are often used to indicate the global dimensions of Christ’ work at Calvary. His work is intended to save, and reclaim the entire world, and not just Israel. In context, John is speaking of expiation or atonement. Jesus came to die for sinners. Christ died to satisfy the wrath of God against sin. What John is not teaching, is that Christ removed the basis of condemnation for all men, for in the *Revelation of Jesus* the books are opened, and men are judged for their works. Their works are found to be sinful, and not worthy of salvation and on that basis there is a just condemnation (Revelation 20). While Christ did not die for every sin of every man, His work of redemption is global in scope, for Jews and Gentiles, who come to faith, know what it is to have the remission of sins through the blood of Christ (Acts 10:43).
- 1 John 2:2 *And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*” It would not be wrong to ask, “*In what sense did Christ satisfy the wrath of God against the sins of the whole world? Is God no longer angry with the wicked? Do people no longer go to hell?*” Clearly John cannot be implying that God is satisfied toward every man individually, so that no man is accountable for



his sins anymore. What John does emphasize is that the death of Christ extended beyond the Jewish borders of Israel. The world is viewed as a unit, and Christ died for it.

- 1 John 4:14 *And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world . . .*
- 1 Timothy 2:6 *Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.* Here are two more universal passages that are appealed to in order to teach universal salvation. The problem is that universal terms are always used for various kinds of meanings. Sometimes the word “*all*” means a whole lot of people. Sometimes “*all*”, means a specific group of people. Sometimes “*all*”, means “*all without distinction.*” Here the term speaks of the fact that Christ died for souls, other than the Jews. And while there is nothing in the context to limit the world to the church, or to the world of the elect, there are many other passages that speak of a particular redemption.

For example, there is the teaching of Romans 11:26. “*And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.*” What does it mean, “*all Israel shall be saved*”? No one believes that every last Israelite shall come to faith, including Caiaphas, who executed Christ. So what does “*all*” mean? It means that all of the elect remnant shall be saved. “*And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*” (Romans 5:11) If “*all*” of Israel is saved because an elect remnant will be saved, then “*all*” of the world can be saved, because there is an elect remnant coming to Christ.

## Common Objects

- 2 Peter 3:9 *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

Question. Who are the “us” referring to?

Answer. In context of chapter 3, Peter has been dealing with mocking false teachers, who were mocking the doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ by saying that God has never intervened in human history, so why should He return? *Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation”* (2 Peter 3:3, 4). That was too much for Peter, who responded with a historical illustration, that God has intervened in history. *For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: 6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:* (2 Peter 3:5, 6).

Because God has broken into the flow of human history once, there is no reason to doubt that He will not do so again. Therefore, the Church is to keep the faith, all the while being assured that God “*is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*” (2 Peter 3:9). Christ will come again. In the Divine economy, it was only day before yesterday that He went away. He is long-suffering towards usward, the church, not willing that any of us should perish. The Lord is

waiting to accomplish His plan. He will not return till all the sheep are within the fold.

- 2 Peter 2:1 *But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.*

Question: “*Did the Lord pay the price of redemption for the lost? Are there souls in hell for whom the blood of Christ was spilt and His death atoned?*”

Answer: Some people, based upon this verse, would answer in the affirmative. Many of those who believe in the security of the believer affirm there are souls in hell for whom Christ has died. It is a chilling thought that Christ has died for a people who can still perish.

Perhaps there is another understanding to this passage. Justice can be done to this verse if it is treated as viewing men according to their *profession*. False teachers are not hesitant to claim that Jesus died for them. The Mormons, the Jehovah Witnesses, and many other cults all claim that Christ died for them. They insist their sins too have been atoned for by the death of Christ. “*But is it true? Are they blood bought? Did Christ purchase their redemption at Calvary? Will they be part of the redeemed who give the Lamb praise? Is their profession of faith enough to secure a place in heaven?*” The problem, in the context of 2 Peter 1:1, was that these people professed faith in Christ, while denying Him.

Elsewhere the Bible addresses those who profess one thing, while denying the very thing professed by life, and by lip. Paul addresses the churches of the New Testament as saints, knowing

that there were false professors. Still professing believers are treated according to their confession of faith. Notice what happened in 2 Chronicles 28. The story is told that Ahaz offered sacrifices to the gods of Damascus, which slew him! “*For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel*” (2 Chronicles 28:23). The gods of Damascus slew him! The gods of Damascus, who are they? They are nothing! The gods, so-called, do not exist. The God of Israel slew Ahaz, but it was attributed to the gods he professed. So in the days of Peter false teachers denied Christ, though they professed faith in him.

### **Christ is offered to Every Man: Biblical Statements**

- Isaiah 45:22 *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.* As the work of Christ is universal, so the offer of the gospel is universal. Based upon this text, Charles Spurgeon was saved. It is a thrilling story, which he tells so well in his autobiography, *The Early Years*.

### **January 6, 1850**

*“I sometimes think I might have been in darkness and despair until now had it not been for the goodness of God in sending a snowstorm, one Sunday morning, while I was going to a certain place of worship. When I could go no further, I turned down a side street, and came to a little Primitive Methodist Chapel. In that chapel there may have been a dozen or fifteen people. I had heard of the Primitive Methodists, how they sang so loudly that they made people’s heads ache; but that did not matter to me. I wanted to know how I might be saved, and if they could tell me that, I did not care how much they made my head ache. The minister did not come that morning; he was snowed up, I suppose. At last, a very*

*thin-looking man, a shoemaker, or tailor, or something of that sort, went up into the pulpit to preach. Now, it is well that preachers should be instructed, but this man was really stupid. He was obliged to stick to his text, for the simple reason that he had little else to say. The text was —Look unto Me, and Be Ye Saved, All the ends of the Earth. He did not even pronounce the words rightly, but that did not matter. There was, I thought, a glimpse of hope for me in that text.*

*The preacher began thus: “My dear friends, this is a very simple text indeed. It says, ‘Look.’ Now lookin’ don’t take a deal of pain. It ain’t liftin’ your foot or your finger; it is just, ‘Look.’ Well, a man needn’t go to College to learn to look. You may be the biggest fool, and yet you can look. A man needn’t be worth a thousand a year to be able to look. Anyone can look; even a child can look. But then the text says, ‘Look unto Me.’ Ay!” said he, in broad Essex, “many on ye are lookin’ to yourselves, but it’s no use looken’ there. You’ll never find any comfort in yourselves. Some look to God the Father. No, look to Him by-and-by. Jesus Christ says, ‘Look unto Me.’ Some on ye say, ‘We must wait for the Spirit’s workin’.’ You have no business with that just now. Look to Christ. The text says, ‘Look unto Me.’”*

*Then the good man followed up his text in this way: “Look unto Me; I am sweatin’ great drops of blood. Look unto Me; I am hangin’ on the cross. Look unto Me; I am dead and buried. Look unto Me; I rise again. Look unto Me; I ascend to Heaven. Look unto Me; I am sittin’ at the Father’s right hand. O poor sinner, look unto Me! Look unto Me!”*

*When he had gone to about that length, and managed to spin out ten minutes or so, he was at the end of his tether. Then he looked at me under the gallery, and I daresay, with so few present, he knew me to be a stranger. Just fixing his eyes on me, as if he knew all my heart, he said, “Young man, you look very miserable.” Well, I did, but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made from the pulpit on my personal appearance before. However, it was a good blow, struck right home. He continued, “and you always will be miserable—miserable in life, and*

*miserable in death—if you don't obey my text; but if you obey now, this moment, you will be saved.” Then, lifting up his hands, he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist could do, “Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothin' to do but to look and live.”*

*I saw at once the way of salvation. I know not what else he said—I did not take much notice of it—I was so possessed with that one thought. Like as when the brazen serpent was lifted up, the people only looked and were healed, so it was with me. I had been waiting to do fifty things, but when I heard that word, “Look!” what a charming word it seemed to me! Oh! I looked until I could almost have looked my eyes away. There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun; and I could have risen that instant, and sung with the most enthusiastic of them, of the precious blood of Christ, and the simple faith which looks alone to Him. Oh, that somebody had told me this before, “Trust Christ, and you shall be saved.” Yet it was, no doubt, all wisely ordered, and now I can say—*

*“E'er since by faith I saw the stream  
Thy flowing wounds supply,  
Redeeming love has been my theme,  
And shall be till I die.”*

Returning to Isaiah 45, the prophet emphasizes that God alone is the Lord. Because He is God, and He is the only God, then men must look to Him. He is the only Savior. And it is in that capacity that all men are commanded to look to Him. That is man's responsibility. So it is that God extends the offer of salvation to every last person every to live. The sincere offer of salvation is made again in Isaiah 55.

- *Isaiah 55:1 Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. 2 Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is*

*not bread? And your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. 3 Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. 4 Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. 5 Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee. 6 Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: 7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

With infinite humility, God condescends to offer the gospel much like a street vendor hawking his wares. It is an awesome and touching picture of the graciousness of God. “Come to me! He says, “There is no price!” But what happened? Men turned away! They went and spent their money on things that cannot satisfy. They still do. Nevertheless, anyone who does come, anyone who turns to the Lord shall receive life everlasting. Here then is the free offer of the free grace of God indiscriminately.

- *Matthew 23:37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*
- *Luke 19:41 And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept [sobbing hysterically, passionately] over it.*

Commenting on these verses Christopher Ness argues that, *“This gathering does not design a gathering of Jews to Christ internally, by the Spirit and grace of God; but a gathering of them externally, to hear Him preach, so that they might be brought to an assent unto Him as the Messiah. This reception of Christ would not have been saving faith, but it would have preserved them from that temporal ruin threatened in the following verse (Matthew 23:38). This scripture therefore, as Acts 7:51, only respects a resistance to Christ’s outward ministry. Jerusalem, i.e., her rulers, received Him not (John 7:48), therefore their house is to be desolated (Matthew 23:38); the city is one thing and her children another. Here is temporal destruction threatened for neglecting temporal visitations (Luke 19:44). Nationally considered, Jerusalem would have been preserved in its peace had the people, upon the rational opportunity afforded them for receiving the Messiah, accepted Christ under that character.”*

In all of this, the fault is not that a universal appeal to come to Christ was not given; the Lord called but few answered the gospel call. They did not come, not because they were not elect, but because they did not want to come to Christ, no matter how much He humbled Himself. Even to the death of the Cross. Once more the point is made, *“There is none that seeketh after God.”* (Romans 3:11). The *“free will”* of the natural man consistently leads him to sin, not the Savior.

- *Romans 10:21 But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people. Imagine a loving and good father being spurned by his children. He holds his arms out saying, “Come back! Come back!” All day long the father stands there begging and it is all to no avail.*



- Matthew 22:1 And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, 2 The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son 3 And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. 4 Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. 5 But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: 6 And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. 7 But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. 8 Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. 9 Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. 10 So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. 11 And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: 12 And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. 13 Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

In this parable of the wedding feast, the graciousness of God is set forth. Once more an invitation was extended, but those invited would not come. They made excuses. They reject the goodness of the King. They made light of it. And they even hurt those who were messengers of good news. Such is the depravity of the human heart when confronted with the goodness of God.

- Matthew 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:*

- *Luke 24:47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.* Despite the treachery of man, the gospel is still to be preached to all men, in all nations. The King has authorized the saints to go to every person and to tell them that they have in Christ all that is necessary for salvation. There is a time and place of fellowship. Come to Christ. As Christians, we go in gospel obedience to do the will of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **Is There a Harmony Between Particularism and Universalism?**

The teaching of universalism, that the gospel appeal is given to all, is not out of harmony with the doctrine of particularism, that God works in the hearts of individuals. The unifying principle is that election is inclusive, not exclusive. However, it must be realized that those who are not saved do not want to be saved and that because of the hardness of their hearts. God sees the hardness of hearts, and is both distressed, and angered by it. In His anger He will judge everyone; in His mercy He will save someone. In the final analysis, God is determined that some souls will come to faith. With divine majesty He compels particular souls to come, and, in the divine compelling does all that is necessary to make men willing to come to Christ. God regenerates, He sends the Holy Spirit to call the dead to life and to convict of sin. He shows men a dying bleeding Savior, even His own Son, and then He calls upon them to live. And by the renewing of the Holy Ghost men do live, and are saved.

### **Biblical Characterizations of the Offer of Salvation**

According to gospel terms, the offer of salvation is unrestricted. *“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of*

*life freely*” (Revelation 22:17). According to gospel terms, the offer of salvation is unconditional. “*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light*” (Matthew 11:28-30).

## **Summary**

The work of Jesus Christ is not limited by boundaries of nationality, tradition, heritage, social class, or any such thing. He has come to reclaim the whole world—people from every nation and class, and walk of life—and so He shall! Moreover, His work is perfectly suited to the needs of every sinner. We are to offer Christ to all men, for He is available to everyone who will come. Jesus Christ is willing to save you—if you but have Him.

***Sola Deo Gloria!***

8

A Review and Correlation of the Doctrines of Grace

John 6:3 5-45

**The Issue of Praise: Who Gets the Glory?**

- **The Wisdom of Man.** All men have sufficient power to come to Christ by a choice of their own free will.

The Word of God. *“No man can come to me except the Father, which sent me, draw him”* (John 6:44).

- **The Wisdom of Man.** God chooses those whom He foresaw would choose Him.

The Word of God. *“You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you”* (John 15:16).

THE BASIC PROBLEM WITH believing that salvation is based upon divine foreknowledge is the secondary assumption that when God looks down the corridors of time to see where the faith of man will turn, there is a faith to be seen. But there isn't.

The Scriptures reveal that when God looks down the corridors of time, and tries to find faith in man there is no faith to be found for there is none that seeketh after God! (Psalm 10:4; Romans 3:11). If someone were seeking after God, the Lord would certainly be the first to see it, and give honor where honor was due, but the whole problem of the natural man, is that he has no faith that pleases God, or even seeks after the true God. The natural man either does not know that God exists (atheism), is not sure of God's existence (agnosticism), confuses God with creation (pantheism), believes God is an animal, or believes that man himself is God—he just does not know it! Whatever sort of *“faith”* God might foresee in natural man, it would still not be saving faith for such faith is a gift of divine grace (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

- **The Wisdom of Man.** Christ died to render all men savable.

The Word of God. *“I lay down my life for the sheep”* (John 10:15).

- **The Wisdom of Man.** God draws all men equally; the ultimate decision is ours

The Word of God. *“All that the Father gives me shall come to me. Unto them which are the called [the gospel is] the power of God”* (John 6:37; Romans 1:16).

- **The Wisdom of Man.** We may keep ourselves in the sphere of saving grace by holy living.

The Word of God. *“We are kept by the power of God through faith. No man can pluck them out of my hand”* (1 Peter 1:5; John 10:28).

## **The Doctrines of Grace and Practical Theology: Ramifications of Total Depravity**

*“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”* (Jeremiah 17:9). The heart of man is corrupt. And even after salvation, the residue of sin is still present. (Romans 7) So what are the ramifications of this truth? Practically, the doctrines of grace will have a tremendous influence over the life of a person. They will affect the way Christians counsel others. In the presentation of the gospel, in helping people to understand why they are in the “mess” they are in personally, the problem of sin must come forth. The depravity of the soul must be stressed, for man must take responsibility for his attitude and actions. If there is one thing that modern man does not want to do, it is to be responsible for his state of affairs. But the Bible is clear. Man has chosen to be in bondage to sin.

The situation is like a person who jumps off a fifteen-story building. He may freely decide to jump but once that decision is made, and the action is taken, the person is not free to reverse his course or stop in mid-air. Why not? Because another law of the universe takes over, the law of gravity. And so it is with man. He made a decision, first in Adam, and then personally, to leap into the bondage of sin. Now the power of sin, the strength of Satan, and the judicial system of God, unite to enslave the soul, so that every expression of his heart is only evil continually (Genesis 6:5) apart from redeeming grace. Once all of this is realized, once personal responsibility is accepted, and self-esteem is forsaken for the reality of sin, there is hope for change through Jesus Christ the Lord. Man’s basic problem is not that he thinks too little of himself, but that he still thinks too highly of himself!

The doctrines of grace have impacted not only man's view of himself, but also man's view of the world. In particular, there has been the recognition that if a person is told that they will receive a certain wage, regardless of their productivity, which is communism, the productivity will not be high. The doctrine of total depravity teaches that such a system will not work. Man is too selfish. Man is too lazy. Man by nature does not have the best interest of others in mind, but his own interest. There is no incentive for him to do honest labor for a fair wage.

In other areas, the doctrine of total depravity guides the practical thinking of the Christian community. Because of the nature of man, church discipline is seen to be needed, and strong laws against criminal behavior are essential. A strong national defense is realized to be vital to the security of the nation. Knowing the nature of mankind, discipline is appreciated as being fundamental in child rearing, and value clarification can be challenged when the public schools teach that man is not depraved.

Now, it does not matter that the majority of people believe that man is basically good. The truth of the matter is that the biblical doctrine of total depravity is correct. When the depravity of man is realized, a more careful look will be taken at the moral issues facing a nation. It will not be assumed that legislators will pass good laws, and judges will make the right decisions, regarding life—to offer but one example. Each year in America over a million unwanted babies die because the depravity of the human heart says that citizens in this country can kill their children, and even charge the abortion procedure to a credit card! When the doctrine of depravity is appreciated, the moral pronouncements of religious denominations will not be passively accepted on matters such as homosexuality. Perversion in the name of Christian love will be protested.

## The Doctrines of Grace and Evangelism

- The Message. The doctrines of grace are a great motivate for evangelism. They clarify the task of the church. The church is to witness. Why? Because God has decreed that souls will come to the Savior. *“For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city”* (Acts 18:10).
- The Method. The doctrines of grace do not allow Christians to cheapen the gospel through silly and unbiblical slogans. The method of evangelism is loving confrontation, as the Church calls upon men to repent. Decisions are not the objective, but changed lives. Belief, not repeating certain words is the goal. Salvation is the work of God. Therefore, the preaching of Christ is the method of true evangelism.
- The Motive. Because the Lord will judge the motives of the heart, because God will examine not only what is done in His name, but also why things are done in His name, it is important to have the proper motive in evangelism. We go to witness, not because we think God needs us, but because we are instruments in the hands of God, which He uses to fulfill His eternal purposes.

## Life under a Sovereign God

The scriptures say it all, in a very simple manner: God is sovereign. *“And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?”* (Daniel 4:35). Because God is sovereign, because God rules in the affairs of



man, for good or bad, there is the ability to live with confidence. God is in control!

## Conclusion

The doctrines of the Sovereign's grace are rich, warm, wonderful, and filled with practical truth. They are loved dearly, not out of pride, or party spirit, but because of what can be learned by them about God, and about the heart of man. *"We believe in the five great points commonly known as Calvinistic; but we do not regard these five points as being barbed shafts, which we are to thrust between the ribs of our fellow-Christians. We look upon them as being five great lamps which help to irradiate the cross; or, rather, five bright emanations springing from the glorious covenant of our Triune God, and illustrating the great doctrine of Jesus Crucified"* (Charles H. Spurgeon).

*"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"*

—Romans 11:33

***Sola Deo Gloria!***

*For additional writings of Stan  
Murrell and to follow him at his blog,  
log onto:*

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