

THE SOVEREIGNTY SERIES

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God is Sovereign

Day One

Opening comments on proper hermeneutics.

Sovereign Grace

That's the name we wear to identify the overarching theology we espouse. God is sovereign and salvation is the result of grace.

But, if God is in charge of all things and the end is going to work out according to His predetermined will, why do we pray? Why evangelize? Why does He allow suffering? And to what degree is His sovereign over salvation itself?

“God is indeed Sovereign”

He is both identified as “the sovereign,” the Almighty, the king. His actions and revelation of Himself demonstrate His control and power over all things.

He gave Himself the proper name “God Almighty.” (Not: Mostly mighty)

- LORD is YHWH.
- Lord is Adonai (Sproul says, “The sovereign”)
- Together: Jehova

Gen. 17:1 - Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless.

- Hebrew: El Shaddai.
- Latin: Omnipotent.

He has all the power. He spoke and what He declared happened. No other power than by and through Him.

1Cor. 8:5 For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is *but* one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we *exist* for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we *exist* through Him.

Col. 1:16-17 For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

We, here in America, have lost the sense of what it is to live under a sovereign (a monarch with the power of life and death).

To get our thinking correct, we have to let God's word define who God is. The Bible is God revealing Himself to us. What He's like, His character, how He acts and thinks – what He's LIKE.

Sovereign Verses

Psalm 33:8-15 - Let all the earth fear the LORD; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast. The LORD nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart from generation to generation. Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, The people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance. The LORD looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men; From His dwelling place He looks out On all the inhabitants of the earth, He who fashions the hearts of them all, He who understands all their works.

Psalm 115:1-3 Not to us, O LORD, not to us, But to Your name give glory Because of Your lovingkindness, because of Your truth. Why should the nations say, "Where, now, is their God?" But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.

Psalm 135:5-6 For I know that the LORD is great And that our Lord is above all gods. Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.

Proverbs 16:33 - The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD.

Matthew 10:29-31 "Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows."

Proverbs 19:20-21 Listen to counsel and accept discipline, That you may be wise the rest of your days. Many plans are in a man's heart, But the counsel of the LORD will stand.

Proverbs 20:24 Man's steps are (ordained) by the Lord; how then can man understand his way?

Proverbs 21:1 The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes. Every man's way is right in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the hearts.

Job 14:1-5 "Man, who is born of woman, Is short-lived and full of turmoil. Like a flower he comes forth and withers. He also flees like a shadow and does not remain. You also open Your eyes on him and bring him into judgment with Yourself. Who can make the clean out of the unclean? No one! Since his days are determined, the number of his months is with You; And his limits You have set so that he cannot pass.

Job 40:6-14 Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm and said, "Now gird up your loins like a man; I will ask you, and you instruct Me. Will you really annul My judgment? Will you condemn Me that you may be justified? Or do you have an arm like God, And can you thunder with a voice like His? Adorn yourself with eminence and dignity, And clothe yourself with honor and majesty. Pour out the overflowings of your anger, And look on everyone who is proud, and make him low. Look on everyone who is proud, and humble him, And tread down the wicked where they stand. Hide them in the dust together; Bind them in the hidden place. Then I will also confess to you, That your own right hand can save you."

Isaiah 43:10-13 "You are My witnesses," declares the LORD, "And My servant whom I have chosen, So that you may know and believe Me And understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, And there will be none after Me. I, even I, am the LORD, And there is no savior besides Me. It is I who have declared and saved and proclaimed, And there was no strange god among you; So you are My witnesses," declares the LORD, "And I am God. Even from eternity I am He, And there is none who can deliver out of My hand; I act and who can reverse it?"

Isaiah 45:1-7 Thus says the LORD to Cyrus His anointed, Whom I have taken by the right hand, To subdue nations before him And to loose the loins of kings; To open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: I will go before you and make the rough places smooth; I will shatter the doors of bronze and cut through their iron bars. I will give you the treasures of darkness And hidden wealth of secret places, So that you may know that it is I, The LORD, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name. For the sake of Jacob My servant, And Israel My chosen one, I have also called you by your name; I have given you a title of honor Though you have not known Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me; That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun That there is no one besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other, The One forming light and creating darkness, Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these."

Isaiah 46:8-11 "Remember this, and be assured; Recall it to mind, you transgressors. Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure'; calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it.

Lamentations 3:37-38 Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass, Unless the Lord has commanded it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both good and ill go forth?

Daniel 4:34-35 "But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?'

Acts 4:24-28 And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM, who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, 'WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS? THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST. For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.

Romans 8:28-31 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

Romans 9:10-18 And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER." Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED." What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses,

"I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION." So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH." So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

Romans 11:33-36 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

2Timothy 1:8-12 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher. For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.

Ephesians 1:3-12 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.

Ephesians 2:1-10 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh,

indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

2Thes. 2:11-13 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

Philippians 1:29 For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.

Sovereignty and Prayer

Day Two

Opening Question in order to gain perspective:

Did God send Jonah to Nineveh with the intention of destroying them, or with the intention of bringing them to repentance?

There was an unrevealed condition: destruction would be averted by repentance. God was not lying, He was simply not revealing the whole plan – and He is under any obligation to reveal anything He chooses not to reveal. In Jonah's case, it was a "need to know" situation.

Sovereignty is not contradictory to prayer

Prayer is based in the knowledge of God's sovereignty. We are not bringing Him new information. God sovereignly uses the means of prayer in the accomplishment of those things He is determined to do.

The Bible declares God's sovereignty AND it commands us to pray.

1Thes. 5:17 says, "Pray without ceasing."

The Bible does not contradict itself and God is not of confusion, so the two concepts must work cooperatively.

Definitions:

- *proseuche* is the noun "prayer."
- *proseuchomai* is the verb "pray"

"*pros*" is a preposition of direction, meaning "toward, to, forward"
"*euchomai*" is to "ask, wish, supplicate"

Together, the word means to "ask toward" and is therefore the act of asking toward someone. In Greek it can mean any act of asking someone for something. In English, we maintain the idea in the phrase "pray tell."

But, biblically it means to ask toward God.

Jesus taught His apostles how to pray in Luke 11. John the Baptist had taught his disciples, so they asked for Christ's instruction. He gave them the model prayer. But, they did not know how to pray instinctively. They needed to be taught how to properly ask.

The key to proper prayer is asking toward God and doing so in Christ's authority, in His name. The opportunity to approach the throne of grace and tell God what is on our minds is available through Christ. Yet, this privilege is all-too-often ignored, under-used, or utterly neglected.

Prayer is not dependent on your bodily position. Head bowed, on your knees, hands folded – or arms outstretched toward Heaven in a standing position (like Jesus). The key is committing to speaking to the Father about every aspect of your life.

In the book of Revelation, prayer is described as a sweet odor, or incense, brought before God. So it is pleasing to Him. If you want to please the Father, bring your prayers, your supplications, your requests, and your thanksgiving before Him.

Rev. 5:8 And when He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

Rev. 8:3-4 And another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand.

Prayer should always involve thanksgiving. As we grow in our knowledge of God, who He is, who we are, and what He does for us, we are driven to be thankful.

Philippians 4:6-7 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Knowledge of God's sovereign control gives us the ability not to worry or be anxious. (No one ever had a nervous breakdown worrying about today.)

This is a directive – take your prayers and requests to God “in everything.”

So, what do we pray about? Everything.

We are not giving God new information. But, we are commanded to pray, ask, give thanks, and not worry. And, if He is sovereign, then you can rest knowing that He has it handled.

Again, sovereignty and prayer are not contradictory. True, genuine, effective prayer is based in the knowledge that He is sovereign. He is working out His sovereign will for His glory, and your ultimate good. (Rom. 8:28)

Colossians 4:2 - Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.

God is not of confusion, so these two things cannot be contradictory: God is sovereign, you're not going to change His mind, and you're not giving Him new information, yet you commanded to pray.

Prayer is our agreement with God and His word

God is faithful to His own word, yet we have multiple examples of His people praying to Him that He would do what He said He would do.

And, if you belong to Him, you want what He wants. If He is sovereign and on your side, then His sovereign will is exactly what you desire.

He is going to do what He is going to do because He knows what the right thing to do is.

In **Daniel 9:1-20**, the prophet fervently prays for the very thing that he is positive the sovereign God is going to accomplish. It was prophesied in Jeremiah and was going to happen; yet Daniel prayed that God would do what God said He would do.

Elijah did the same thing -- although God had told Israel that He was going to withhold rain, it was not until Elijah prayed for God to that very thing that the rain was withheld.

James 5:17-18 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

Acts 4:24-29 And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM, who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, 'WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS? THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST. For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do

whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur. And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Thy bond-servants may speak Thy word with all confidence.

In **Matthew 26:39** Jesus did the same thing. He knew what Isaiah had prophesied that He would be crushed and killed (Isaiah 53). Yet, He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane “if it were possible, let this cup pass from me.” That was His supplication. But, He then conformed His will to the sovereign will of everything God had prepared in advance for Him.

Prayer is a method by which God conforms our will to His.

If you pray to Him about everything, then you know for certain that whatever befalls you is exactly what He intends for you. What you have is what He has given you. Say thank you.

Prayer does change things: It changes you. It makes you the people He is determined you're going to be.

The Lord's Prayer - Matthew 6:9-13

This is the model prayer, not technically the Lord's Prayer. His prayer was expressed in His agony at Gethsemane. There are elements of the model prayer that He instructed us to repeat, but which He could not actually pray.

This prayer is predicated on the reality that God knows what we need; yet we are instructed to ask. Therefore, prayer conforms us to the reality that He is the source of everything we have and need.

Start here:

Matthew 6:31-33 “Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

Then, continue at the top of Chapter 6

The Petitions

“Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name.”

Which God? Our Father who is holy.

God is holy, not "God is love."

"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven." This is the outbreak of sovereign dominance over the world. We are praying that God will keep His word and do exactly what the prophets have predicted. But, it's yet another example of us praying that God will do what He has said He will do.

"Give us today our daily bread." God knows we need food, it's His good pleasure to give us food, but we are to go ask Him for food. That would seem counter-intuitive. But, I conclude that the reason Jesus positioned things that way was to help us understand that, although God is the source of all our sustenance, we still have to go ask Him for those things we know He is pleased to give us. That way, we recognize Him as the source of all our blessings.

"And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Same deal with sin. We know that He has forgiven us in Christ. And we know that He ever lives to make intercession for us. So, if He is always interceding, it must be because we are always in need of such intercession. And if we need His continual intercession, then we need to bring our repentance and prayer for forgiveness to Him in the constant recognition that He is the source of our forgiveness and reconciliation, despite our constant failure. It's an admission of guilt and equally a grateful realization that He is the source of our food, our life, our breath, and our cleansing from sin.

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

Don't lead us into trials of the soul. That is confidence in His sovereign control over evil itself.

1Cor. 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.

A.W. Pink (The Sovereignty of God) --

First and foremost, prayer has been appointed that the Lord God Himself should be honored. God requires we should recognize that He is, indeed, "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity" (Isa. 57:15). God requires that we shall own His universal dominion: in petitioning God for rain Elijah did but confess His control over the elements; in praying to God to deliver a poor sinner from the wrath to come we acknowledge that

"salvation is of the LORD" (Jonah 2:9); in supplicating His blessing on the Gospel unto the uttermost parts of the earth we declare His rulership over the whole world.

Again; God requires that we shall worship Him, and prayer, real prayer, is an act of worship. Prayer is an act of worship inasmuch as it is the prostrating of the soul before Him; inasmuch as it is a calling upon His great and holy name; inasmuch as it is the owning of His goodness, His power, His immutability, His grace, and inasmuch as it is the recognition of His Sovereignty, owned by a submission to His will. It is highly significant to notice in this connection that the Temple wasn't termed by Christ the House of Sacrifice, but instead, the House of Prayer.

Again; prayer redounds to God's glory, for in prayer we do but acknowledge dependency upon Him. When we humbly supplicate the Divine Being we cast ourselves upon His power and mercy. In seeking blessings from God we own that He is the Author and Fountain of every good and perfect gift. That prayer brings glory to God is further seen from the fact that prayer calls faith into exercise, and nothing from us is so honoring and pleasing to Him as the confidence of our hearts.

In the second place, prayer is appointed by God for our spiritual blessing, as a means for our growth in grace. When seeking to learn the design of prayer, this should ever occupy us before we regard prayer as a means for obtaining the supply of our need. Prayer is designed by God for our humbling. Prayer, real prayer, is a coming into the Presence of God, and a sense of His awful majesty produces a realization of our nothingness and unworthiness. Again; prayer is designed by God for the exercise of our faith.

Does prayer change things?

Yes. It changes us from self-sufficient, or from self-justifying, to recognizing Him as the source of everything necessary for our full, complete redemption, justification, sanctification, and ultimate glorification. He does it all and our job is to recognize that fact by the way we pray, even asking for His forgiveness — which He has already accomplished and secured on our behalf.

It's perfectly fine to pray for what you want, but in the end, God's purposes will win out.

II Sam 12:13-21

Prayer is not giving God advice and telling Him what to do, when to do it, and who to use to accomplish it. All of this is to treat God as if He had no plan of His own to resolve the problem.

Prayer is not giving God information that He did not have before we prayed and gave it to Him. It is the height of conceit to think that the omniscient One is dependent on us for facts and details that had escaped His notice.

No bargaining

Once God had made up his mind, Moses could not convince Him to let him into the Promised Land.

Jeremish 15:1 "Then said the LORD unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, yet My mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of My sight, and let them go forth."

Paul prayed three times to have the thorn in his flesh removed, but God's answer was "My grace is sufficient for you."

2Cor. 12:7-10 And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me — to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Prayer is essential because God has ordained it as one of the means to accomplish His decrees. Prayer begins with God and grows out of His decrees or purposes.

A.W. Pink again --

Real prayer is communion with God so that there will be common thoughts between His mind and ours. What is needed is for Him to fill our hearts with His thoughts and then His desires will become our desires flowing back to Him. Here then is the meeting-place between God's Sovereignty and Christian prayer: If we ask anything according to His will He heareth us, and if we do not so ask He does not hear us; as saith the Apostle James, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" or desires (4:3).

Sovereignty and evangelism

Day Three

Our English word “evangelical” is derived from the Greek word “*euaggelion*” -- which is most often translated “gospel” in the NT.

To preach the gospel is to “*euaggelizo*” translated “evangelize.”

And if you are one who preaches the gospel, you are an “*euaggelistes*”— translated “evangelist.”

The words all share a common root that has to do with preaching the good news.

It is often assumed that Reformed Theology is antithetical to evangelism. After all, if God’s going to sovereignly save those whom He has chosen, then why bother to evangelize at all? The critics of Calvinism claim that it undermines the necessity and zeal to spread the gospel.

But, we preach and evangelize because we instructed to. God, in His sovereignty, uses means. And the history of Calvinism itself disproves the characterization of what we believe and how we behave in response.

He COULD have accomplished His will in any manner He decided. But He chose to use people to talk to people about the things of God.

Compare/contrast Arminian versus Sovereign Grace evangelism.

Removing the Doctrinal Obstacles to Calvinistic Evangelism by Mitch Cervinka

Is Calvinism incompatible with evangelistic zeal? This is one of the objections that is often raised against Calvinism.

One needs only examine Protestant history to see that Calvinists have been on the forefront of evangelism and missions. George Whitefield was outspoken in affirming all five points of Calvinism, yet he was one of the most zealous and effective evangelists of the Great Awakening. Wherever he traveled, both in England and America, people would turn out by the thousands to hear him preach in the open fields. The modern missionary movement began in 1792 when the Calvinistic Baptist, William Carey, left England to minister the gospel in India. With the help of William Ward and Joshua Marshman, he founded 26 churches and 126 schools, and

translated the Bible into 44 languages including Sanskrit. In 1812, Adoniram Judson, another Calvinistic Baptist, sailed to Burma, becoming the first American to depart for the overseas mission field. He ministered there for many years, enduring warfare, imprisonment, and the death of his wife. During this time, he was diligent to produce a Burmese Bible and dictionary, and to personally train men for the pastorate. Other Calvinistic evangelists and missionaries of note include Jonathan Edwards, Asahel Nettleton and Charles H. Spurgeon. More than this, the Protestant Reformation was perhaps the greatest evangelistic movement of modern history. The Lord brought it about through the evangelistic zeal and unflinching courage of men who believed that God is fully sovereign in salvation — men such as Martin Luther, William Tyndale, John Calvin and John Knox, as well as lesser known men such as William Farel, George Wishart, Martin Bucer, Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley and countless others.

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Historic Calvinism teaches that the gospel is to be proclaimed indiscriminately to all men, that all men are responsible to believe the gospel, and that God promises salvation to all who come in faith to Christ to receive it. For this reason, the term "Evangelical Calvinism" is an apt description of the historic Calvinistic position regarding the gospel. Historic Calvinists believe in proclaiming the gospel to all men indiscriminately, and calling all without exception to come to Christ and be saved. Some of the most prominent evangelists and missionaries of history were evangelical Calvinists, including George Whitefield, Charles H. Spurgeon, Jonathan Edwards, Samuel Davies, William Carey, Adoniram Judson, Asahel Nettleton, John Knox, John Calvin, and many others.

Calvinism in America By Loraine Boettner

When we come to study the influence of Calvinism as a political force in the history of the United States we come to one of the brightest pages of all Calvinistic history. Calvinism came to America in the Mayflower, and Bancroft, the greatest of American historians, pronounces the Pilgrim Fathers "Calvinists in their faith according to the straightest system."¹ John Endicott, the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony; John Winthrop, the second governor of that Colony; Thomas Hooker, the founder of Connecticut; John Davenport, the founder of the New Haven Colony; and Roger Williams, the founder of the Rhode Island Colony, were all Calvinists. William Penn was a disciple of the Huguenots. It is estimated that of the 3,000,000 Americans at the time of the American Revolution, 900,000 were of Scotch or Scotch-Irish origin, 600,000 were

Puritan English, and 400,000 were German or Dutch Reformed. In addition to this the Episcopalians had a Calvinistic confession in their Thirty-nine Articles; and many French Huguenots also had come to this western world. Thus we see that about two-thirds of the colonial population had been trained in the school of Calvin. Never in the world's history had a nation been founded by such people as these. Furthermore these people came to America not primarily for commercial gain or advantage, but because of deep religious convictions. It seems that the religious persecutions in various European countries had been providentially used to select out the most progressive and enlightened people for the colonization of America. At any rate it is quite generally admitted that the English, Scotch, Germans, and Dutch have been the most masterful people of Europe. Let it be especially remembered that the Puritans, who formed the great bulk of the settlers in New England, brought with them a Calvinistic Protestantism, that they were truly devoted to the doctrines of the great Reformers, that they had an aversion for formalism and oppression whether in the Church or in the State, and that in New England Calvinism remained the ruling theology throughout the entire Colonial period.

With this background we shall not be surprised to find that the Presbyterians took a very prominent part in the American Revolution. Our own historian Bancroft says: "The Revolution of 1776, so far as it was affected by religion, was a Presbyterian measure. It was the natural outgrowth of the principles which the Presbyterianism of the Old World planted in her sons, the English Puritans, the Scotch Covenanters, the French Huguenots, the Dutch Calvinists, and the Presbyterians of Ulster." So intense, universal, and aggressive were the Presbyterians in their zeal for liberty that the war was spoken of in England as "The Presbyterian Rebellion." An ardent colonial supporter of King George III wrote home: "I fix all the blame for these extraordinary proceedings upon the Presbyterians. They have been the chief and principal instruments in all these flaming measures. They always do and ever will act against government from that restless and turbulent anti-monarchical spirit which has always distinguished them everywhere."² When the news of "these extraordinary proceedings" reached England, Prime Minister Horace Walpole said in Parliament, "Cousin America has run off with a Presbyterian parson" (John Witherspoon, president of Princeton, signer of Declaration of Independence).

History is eloquent in declaring that American democracy was born of Christianity and that that Christianity was Calvinism. The great Revolutionary conflict which resulted in the formation of the American nation, was carried out mainly by Calvinists, many of whom had been trained in the rigidly Presbyterian College at Princeton, and this nation is their gift to all liberty loving people.

As long as there have been people who are convinced of God's utter sovereignty, those selfsame people have been committed to evangelization.

The earliest sermons

The earliest Christian sermons are found in the book of Acts. Modern evangelization assumes that we should tell people that God loves them. But nowhere in the book of Acts do you find any evangelist telling people that God loves them – in fact, the word “love” does not appear in the book of Acts. There is no “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.”

It's true that God is love, but God is also a consuming fire. And, when John wrote, “God is love,” he was not explaining the characteristics of God; he was writing about how Christians are supposed to behave – be loving because God is love. And John also described God as holy and righteous, so we are to be righteous. But, it's not a theological statement about the nature and love of God. It's about how Christians are supposed to be.

The earliest sermons do not emphasize, “God is love.” They emphasize “God is holy.”

God is indeed love; He just doesn't love everybody.

The Pauline Approach

The apostle Paul, who wrote the great NT treatises about God's sovereignty (to say nothing his overwhelming conversion), nevertheless worked himself to imprisonment and death evangelizing. He saw no conflict between those two aspects of fully orb'd Christianity. If anyone had good reason to turn it all over to sovereign God, it was the NT evangelists who paid a remarkably high price for their preachment of God's sovereign rule.

Paul spoke to two groups: Jews / Gentiles

The Jews had God-language and terminology, but were steeped in their tradition.

Gentiles had no terminology or common ground/history.

So, to both groups, the message starts with whom God is and that He is in control.

Acts 6 – Stephen's sermon to a Jewish audience is based in the common history and religion, giving him a starting point when dealing with the Jews.

Stephen's message is very similar to the message Peter preached at Pentecost. When Peter preached, they replied, "What must we do to be saved?" In Stephen's case, they gnashed their teeth and picked up stones to kill him. What was the determining factor between the two responses? (Notice that God's righteous, sovereign judgment was a vital part of both messages.)

By contrast, **Acts 17:22** - Gentile Greek philosophers on Mars Hill where there is no common language or history. So, where does he start?

Paul starts by defining God, identifying which God he was talking about, defining God as sovereign Creator, and THEN introduces Christ – but, as a Judge.

The day and age in which we live, is very much like the pluralistic Greco/Roman society into which Paul ventured as he preached. So when we talk to people, we have to recognize that they don't know the Biblical/Christian language. So we have to start with the fundamentals.

When Paul dealt with Jews, he often started with the fundamentals – the God who created all things. We need to start with the declaration that we are talking about the God of eternity and creation. To the Jews, that was common teaching, to the Gentiles it was a new idea.

Acts 13:46-48 is a perfect example of sovereignty at work in evangelization.

Acts 13:46-48 And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For thus the Lord has commanded us, 'I HAVE PLACED YOU AS A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES, THAT YOU SHOULD BRING SALVATION TO THE END OF THE EARTH.' And when the Gentiles heard this, they *began* rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

What did Jesus do for three and half years?

He taught, He evangelized.

To understand the Word of God, He Himself must enlighten you.

Matt. 11:25-27 At that time Jesus answered and said, "I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from *the* wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to babes. Yes, Father, for thus it was well-pleasing in Thy sight. All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son, except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."

And, in fact, He spoke in parables in order to hide the truth from those who did have the eyes and ears to understand.

Matt. 13:10-17 And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?” And He answered and said to them, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. For whoever has, to him shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, ‘YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; AND YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE; FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, AND WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES LEST THEY SHOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES, AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I SHOULD HEAL THEM.’

But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. For truly I say to you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it; and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.”

1Cor. 2:1-13 And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom*, which God predestined before the *ages* to our glory; *the wisdom* which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; but just as it is written, “THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND *which* HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.”

For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the *thoughts* of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have

received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*.

Col. 4:3 - praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned;

The Macedonian Call

Acts 16:6-10 And they passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; and when they had come to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a certain man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

I have many in this city

Acts 18:9-11 And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid *any longer*, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city." And he settled *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

I am with you always.

Matthew 28:18-20 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

How can they preach except they are sent?

Romans 10: 14-16 How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD

THINGS!” However, they did not all heed the glad tidings; for Isaiah says, “LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?”

The preaching of the gospel is the means by which the elect are called out of the world and called to follow Christ. First they must hear about God. If they hear, they will believe. If they believe, they will call on God. And if they call, they will be saved. The message must be preached, but those who are able to hear will respond.

The Biblical method is the antithesis of the common “decisional regeneration” methodology that is so common in the modern church.

Ephesians 6:18-20 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

2Thess. 3:1 Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified, just as *it did* also with you;

Sovereignty and suffering

Day Four

If God is sovereign and good, then why do bad things happen to good people?

Suffering: trials, troubles, pain, sorrow

1Cor. 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.

Trouble and suffering are universally part of the human experience. But, to those who belong to God, the trials and struggles have purpose. It creates faith, confidence, and trust in God's provision. Suffering results in a reassessment of what's truly important in life.

How many of you thought you'd die in your trial?

Do you pray more earnestly in trouble or in comfort? Comfort creates self-sufficiency. (Think: Israel) But, suffering is a means by which God will drive us back to Himself.

It's a crime that some churches equate suffering with evil/devil and success in life with godliness. (If the Bible was indeed teaching health, wealth, and prosperity, then at least one of the apostles would have accomplished it. But they didn't. They suffered.

But, in the Bible, plenty of very spiritual, faithful people suffer greatly. (Think: Job, the man born blind, or the apostles)

Jeremiah, for instance, preached for 30 years, never had a convert, but was completely right in his prophecies and condemnations of the behavior of Israel. Yet, he wrote the Lamentations. Jeremiah 15:10 says, "Woe to me, my mother, that you have borne me as a man of strife and a man of contention to all the land! I have not lent, nor have men lent money to me, yet everyone curses me."

Here's a principle: God is too holy not to do that which brings Him the greatest glory. And He loves us too much not to do that which is for our greatest good. But sometimes, our greatest good and His greatest glory is accomplished through our suffering.

So, the Bible equally describes God as sovereign AND explains that we, as strangers and pilgrims in this world, will suffer because the captain of our salvation also suffered. And trouble is going to grow and increase in this world until the ultimate time of trouble "such as never was nor ever will be again."

Human history is not winding upward toward greater civility and Godliness, it is winding down toward increasing corruptness and Godlessness.

Here is Paul's example of how suffering helps a person prioritize what is valuable in life versus what's not –

Philippians 3:2-12 Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:2-12)

In fact, Paul's ministry began with the announcement of future suffering --

Acts 9:15-16 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."

Suffering is not an indication that you are out of the will of God – and doing well in this life is not an indication that you are more spiritual.

Luke 13:1-5 Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

And He (Jesus) answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered this fate? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, were worse culprits than all the men who live

in Jerusalem? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

If nobody is good, then when trouble comes, it's not because they were worse than others, it's because God is sovereignly working His will. We may not always understand His actions or purposes, but He knows and He understands.

Job did not suffer because he was unrighteous. Just the opposite.

Ecclesiastes 7:13 Consider the work of God, For who is able to straighten what He has bent?

So, what is the proper response? Get on your face in front of the sovereign who does all things in accordance with His own will and purpose.

In **Mark 4:35-41**, the apostles moved from fear to fear. But, what were they afraid of? First they feared the storm. But, when He demonstrated His authority, they feared Him. When they came face-to-face with actual sovereignty, they realized that He was in charge and HE was the answer to their problem.

Suffering forms us into the people God has intended for us to be. We are not better than our Master and He suffered, so we must expect to also suffer.

Luke 17:22-25 And He said to the disciples, “The days shall come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. And they will say to you, ‘Look there! Look here!’ Do not go away, and do not run after them. For just as the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day. But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.”

Luke 24:25-27 And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

Heb. 5:7-8 In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.

In fact, our suffering is proof positive that God is working in our lives.

Heb. 12:4-11 You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; and you have forgotten the exhortation which is

addressed to you as sons, "MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES." It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Acts 3:18 "But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled.

We are no better than our Master

Acts 5:40-42 And they took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them to speak no more in the name of Jesus, and then released them. So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

Rom. 8:16-18 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Phil. 1:27-30 Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; in no way alarmed by your opponents — which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God. For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

2Tim. 2:7-13 Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. Remember Jesus Christ, arisen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel, for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned. For this

reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory. It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him; If we endure, we shall also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself.

1Pet. 4:17-19 For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER? (Prov. 11:31) Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

1Pet. 2:18-24 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

1Pet. 5:5-11 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you. Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.

1Cor. 12:26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

Rev. 2:10 'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

James 5:13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises.

Sovereignty and Salvation

Day Five

Salvation is the result of one of two catalysts: either man chose or God chose. Either way, someone chose.

Either salvation is by works or by grace.

Either salvation lies in the power of the human or in the power of God.

Either salvation is the result of man's ability or God's ability.

From *By Grace Alone*:

It was Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD) who reintroduced into the collective public knowledge the fact that the Bible emphasizes man's fallen state, election without conditions and salvation by grace.

Augustine began systematizing Biblical theology to refute the teaching of Pelagius (360?-420?), who left Rome permanently in 411 AD and disappears from the historic record around 418. Pelagius taught that, contrary to the Biblical record, the fall of Adam was an individual failure that had no bearing on mankind as a whole. He taught that Christ's death was merely an example of martyrdom and that a man in his natural state had the ability to work out his own personal salvation by force of will and determination.

So, Augustine developed systematic teaching of the very opposite.

He taught:

- That the entire human race fell in Adam.
- That all men, by nature, are depraved and spiritually dead.
- That the individual will is free to sin, but not free to do good toward God.
- That Christ suffered as a substitute for a particular group of people.
- That God elects whom He will irrespective of merit.
- That saving grace is efficaciously applied to those elect individuals by the Holy Spirit.

Augustine was the first true interpreter of the Apostle Paul and was successful in securing the acceptance of this teaching by the early Church. Soon after that, however, the Roman Catholic Church increased in power and prominence. Over time, Rome promoted a reliance on superstition and increased Scriptural ignorance. The Popes gained tremendous political and ecclesiastical power and eventually most of Europe fell under Rome's dominion. The morals of the church leadership grew increasingly wicked, as the priesthood became more corrupt, culminating in the selling of

indulgences: payments made to reduce temporal punishment for sin, either in this life or on behalf of souls in Purgatory. The Church at Rome basked in practices derived from the mysterious religions of ancient Babylon, preferring ecclesiastical tradition over Christian doctrine. The Scriptures were effectively hidden from common people, being considered too “holy” and difficult for any but the high initiates of the clergy to read.

To understand our Renaissance roots, we must recall that in the Fifth Century the barbarians of northern Europe shattered the Roman Empire – its political institutions, its learning, and its arts. This wholesale destruction of Roman culture plunged Europe into a thousand year period sometimes known as “The Dark Ages.” That period was “dark” because the light of learning, for the most part, had gone out. Ignorance prevailed on almost every hand.

Spiritual life for most Europeans in that period was dominated by two themes: superstition and dependence. With learning almost eclipsed, and with reliable instruction in Scripture and theology almost non-existent, the common people indulged their imaginations in countless superstitions. The average person envisioned the world as filled with angels, devils, and other supernatural beings which controlled life and determined destiny.

The Roman Catholic Church came to dominate both European politics and culture, and virtually every person depended on the church for eternal salvation. On the one hand, the church controlled and administered the seven sacraments which, it maintained, were the only means by which the saving grace of God might be dispensed. On the other hand, the church held the immense power of excommunication, which barred heretics and sinners from the saving grace of the sacraments, and the power of the interdict by which the Pope might bar from the sacraments an entire nation or people. These powerful tools rendered an entire European populace dependent on a wrathful God who expressed the divine will solely through the Roman church.

It was out of this morass that Martin Luther (1483-1546), an Augustinian monk, led the German reformation of the Church. Luther was a full-fledged predestinarian. In his writing *Bondage of the Will*, he states the doctrine of predestination clearly.

John Calvin (1509-1564) built on the foundations laid by Martin Luther. The followers of men such as John Calvin, Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531), and John Knox (1513-1572) became known as “the Reformers.” Their goal was the denial of Rome’s dogma and tradition while defining and restoring Biblical doctrine. The Church of Rome, determined to stop this outgrowth of anti-Catholic theology, created “articles of faith” granting themselves the right to hang or burn anyone with whom they disagreed. So, the church of the

Reformation, the Protestants, who protested against the heresy of the Catholic Church, often risked life and limb in order to profess what they believed.

“Arminianism”

Jacob (or John) Arminius (1560-1609) was a student of John Calvin’s successor, Theodore Beza, who taught at the University of Geneva in Switzerland. In 1588, Arminius read the writings of the Pelagian theologian Dorc Coornhert (1522-1591) and he found the argument to be stronger than his own conviction. He became a convert to the doctrines of universal grace and freedom of the will .

Arminius applied to the government of Holland to organize a synod, or meeting of churches, to establish the official position of the Church in respect to doctrine. He had two primary disagreements with the widespread Augustinian/Calvinistic view:

1. Was election by God to salvation conditional or unconditional?

In other words, did God elect men for no good reason other than His sovereign pleasure? Or was there some good or attractive feature—like a confession or faithfulness—that obligated God to choose a person?

2. Was the grace of God resistible or irresistible?

In other words, if God chose a person with the intent to save them, could that person resist God if they wanted to? Or, were they simply bound for Heaven regardless of their individual will and choice?

On November 13, 1618, a national Synod was held at Dort, Holland. In attendance were representatives from nearly all the Reformed Churches of Europe, including the Church of England. The Synod lasted until May 9, 1619. The Arminian contingency argued their claim for the following five points as the basis of Biblical doctrine:

1. God elects or reproveth men on the basis of foreseen faith or unbelief.

In other words, God in His infinite wisdom looks down the long telescope of human history and sees in advance who will believe and who will not. God “chooses” or rejects them based on that knowledge.

2. Christ died for all men and for every man, although only believers are saved.

3. Man is so depraved that divine grace is necessary - leading to faith.

4. However, an individual may resist this grace.

5. Truly regenerate believers may lose their faith and thus lose their

salvation.

The synod of Dort compared the Arminian doctrines but failed to reconcile them with the clear word of Scripture. As a result, they were wholly rejected. Because they advance the superiority of man's will over God's rulership, these theories appeal to man's desire to rule his own destiny, and continue to be taught in churches all over the world. Over the years, Arminian teaching has become characterized by increasing differences from the orthodox and historical Pauline faith. For instance, here are some of the theological tenets currently held by churches that espouse Arminian doctrine:

- Sin consists in acts of the will, as opposed to being an inherent nature.
- Pollution is inherited from Adam's fall, but his guilt is not imputed to any of his descendants.
- Man's depravity as a result of the fall should not be considered as total.
 - Man has not lost the faculty of self-determination nor the ability to incline his will toward good ends.
- The atonement of Christ is intended equally for all men and for every man, and it merely makes salvation possible. Salvation becomes effectual only when the repentant believer accepts it.
- Repentance and faith precede regeneration.
- The human will is one of the causes of regeneration.
- Faith is a good work of man and a ground of acceptance with God.
- Christ's own personal righteousness is not imputed to the believer.
- It is possible that the believer is able to attain in this life a state of such conformity to the divine will that he may be called "perfect".
- Love is the supreme attribute of God, the very essence of His being.
- Man is never so completely corrupted by sin that he cannot savingly believe the Gospel when it is presented to him, nor is he ever so completely controlled by God that he cannot reject it.
- It rests with the believer to keep himself in a state of grace by sustaining his own faith. Those who fail in this regard are lost as a result of their own lack of will power.

The "Doctrines of Grace"

As a result of the determination that the five points of Arminianism were wholly unscriptural, the Synod developed a system of theology that has ever since been known as "The Five Points of Calvinism." This system is built upon the foundation of the Sovereignty of God in all things.

These are the fundamental doctrines of salvation taught by Paul and handed down to us in Scripture. Over time, these doctrines have come to be known as the Doctrines of Grace, differentiating them from John Calvin, the person, and putting the emphasis where it belongs - on God, Himself.

Some people like to remember the five points by using an acrostic, utilizing the word TULIP:

- T. . . . Total Depravity or Total Inability
- U. . . . Unconditional Election
- L. . . . Limited Atonement
- I. . . . Irresistible Grace
- P. . . . Perseverance of the Saints

These doctrines have also been represented in an acrostic using the word GRACE:

- G. . . . Gracious Election
- R. . . . Ruined Sinners
- A. . . . Accomplished Redemption
- C. . . . Compelling Love
- E. . . . Everlasting Life

Here is one more presentation of the five doctrines, emphasizing the stages of Grace and Salvation:

The Necessity of Grace.....Total Depravity..... Salvation Required
The Fountain of Grace.....Unconditional Election.....Salvation Planned
The Provision of Grace.....Particular Redemption.....Salvation Purchased
The Revelation of Grace.....Effectual Calling.....Salvation Applied
The Victory of Grace.....Perseverance of the Saints.....Salvation Perfected

Given our depraved nature, if God did not secure us and left it up to us to choose, we would not only fail to choose, we would run as far from God as we could get. So, God did the choosing.

Everywhere in the Bible where the topic is salvation, God is always the actor. Men react. Never once do we read that man acts and God reacts savingly to the man's choice, actions, will, or works.

Job 40:6-14 Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm and said, "Now gird up your loins like a man; I will ask you, and you instruct Me. Will you really annul My judgment? Will you condemn Me that you may be justified? Or do you have an arm like God, and can you thunder with a voice like His? Adorn yourself with eminence and dignity, and clothe yourself with honor and majesty. Pour out the overflowings of your anger, and look on everyone who is proud, and make him low. Look on everyone who is proud, and humble him, And tread down the wicked where they stand. Hide them in the dust together; Bind them in the hidden place. Then I will also confess to you, that your own right hand can save you."

Throughout the Bible, you'll read of man's inability and God's utter, complete ability to save whomever He'd like.

And you WANT God to be sovereign in salvation.

Election:

Election begins right away in the Bible and permeates the Word. Whether it's His favor toward Abel's gift over Cain's, or Noah finding grace in the eyes of the Lord, or God's choice of Abraham while he's still in Ur of the Chaldees, you cannot escape God's constant picking and choosing of particular people. God choose Israel just as Jesus chose His twelve apostles. And the language of the NT is that God chooses those whom He is going to save.

Romans 9:10-18 And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER." Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED." What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION." So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH." So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.

When did this election occur? God wrote names in a book before the foundation of the world.

Rev 13:7-9 And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them; and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, *everyone* whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. If anyone has an ear, let him hear.

God also actively prohibits some people from understanding the truth and making sure they follow after the false leader.

2Thes. 2:11-13 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding

influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness. But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

2Timothy 1:8-12 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher. For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.

Ephesians 1:3-12 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.

Ephesians 2:1-10 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him

in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Romans 8:28-31 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

Philippians 1:29 For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.

Acts 13:48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they *began* rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

Acts 2:46-47 And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

John 6:37-40 "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

John 10:25-30 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one."

So then, what should our response to all of this be?

Rom. 11:33-36 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen.