

God's Sovereign Grace in Salvation | Week 1

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[0 : 00] We thank you as we look to you for being our God and King. You are the one that we come to and pray because we're needy now asking you by the power of your spirit to help us.

Enlighten the eyes of our understanding, God, as we look into your word. Father, our desire tonight as each time when we gather as your people here at Grace Church is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, to glorify the Holy Spirit as our counselor and teacher, and to glorify you, Father, as our King, as our Savior, and as the one who gave His Son to redeem us by His blood, by His cross, from the penalty and power of our sins.

So as we look into these doctrines that you, you have created for our lives and for our faith, help us to be faithful to you in the way that we deal with them and look into them.

And we pray that you would enlarge and enlighten our understanding in the way that would help us to love you more deeply and follow you more faithfully. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

To God be the glory, brothers and sisters. I am so glad to see you. Greg and I are very excited about bringing this material to you this evening. So let me just say this now.

[1 : 40] Again, this is in the way of getting kicked off for our first session together. So this will be in the way of an ongoing series that we're going to do on the doctrines of grace and each Wednesday night, God willing.

And we will finish this out and then take a break over some of the summer. How many sessions will we do? I'm not exactly sure. We're moving through what we're preparing in the way of a student manual.

And this is what I suggest to you. As we give you the handouts each week for you to follow in the fill-in-the-blank stuff, we'll have slides corresponding. You can take each one of those sheets, hole-punch them, and put them in a notebook.

That's what I do. And then you've got it. You've got all that material over the next couple of months to put in one place, and you can go back and refer to it, and you have your text.

All right, does everybody have a book that wants a book? We need to get Randy a book. You got one, brother? Okay. Everybody got one. Okay, good. I think we have some left, Greg.

[2 : 44] Yep. Okay, good. There's a few. All right. Now, as we begin tonight, please know when we give you the student handouts, on any given Wednesday night, depending on which one of us is teaching, because both of us have this problem, we may not get to the end of the handout.

Don't worry about that. If we don't finish your handout and fill in all the blanks, that's where we'll pick up next time. This thing is designed to roll like that. The important thing is we'll be covering the content.

Now, the first thing I want to share with you is something that I think you'll all relate to at one level or another. This is an email that I received back in 2004.

I was in a pastorate then, New Church Start, very similar to this one. And one of the members wrote to me, gave me this email saying, in essence, Jeff, help me out over the things we've been learning about called Calvinism over the last few weeks.

I've been trying to talk with my parents who are Christians about, and they aren't having it. In fact, they are very upset with me. That's the intro. And she got a response from her mom on some things that she had shared with her mom about these doctrines.

[4 : 11] And here is the way that it went. I'm going to put these up here for you. This is what her mom wrote. This is a quote. I just reproduced this for you.

If Calvinism is true, her mom said, it renders all preaching vain and needless to both classes. Suzanne was of the mind that classes here, she's probably thinking about what she understands about the elect and the non-elect.

That's probably more accurate. I wasn't sure she was talking about, I don't know, but I think that's probably true. Number two, it destroys holiness by removing motives of hope and fear. However, it destroys zeal for good works, for they avail nothing. If Calvinism is true, it makes Christian revelation unnecessary.

It makes Christian revelation contradict itself. And then here's the whammy at the end of it. Mom wrote that to her daughter.

[5 : 21] Are you even going to heaven? If you believe that. Well, so I'm going to ask you. We're Calvinists here at this church in terms of our doctrine.

Is that what we believe? Is that what our faith and belief leads us to? Now this email goes on and she says this.

Calvinism maintains that the death of Christ is a penalty for man's sins. Now you have to read these things carefully. Because on the front end of it, that might sound correct.

Calvinism maintains that the death of Christ is a penalty for man's sins. It is the payment to take care of the penalty for man's sins.

First, the guilt of Adam's sin is the payment. So that it is possible for God to forgive and save. God had to do this to make it possible for him to forgive and save.

[6 : 23] But you are saying that these saving benefits are reserved for the, all in big caps, elect only. She calls her daughter by name and says, I'm so sorry you feel the way that you do and that you feel what I believe is incorrect.

Then she says this. I want to give you some things to think about. Are you sure that you're not being deceived? Why are you preaching the good word to all creation?

Why would you even do that if this is true? According to Calvinism, there's no possibility to offer a sincere salvation to all, either by God or the Calvinistic pulpit.

Pulpit. And she did pulpit in bold with exclamation point. That was that aimed at me. This woman's mother didn't like me. Don't forget that the good word is that whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.

Now, do we believe that here at Grace? That whoever believes and is baptized in the Lord will be saved. Do we believe that? Yes, we do. Where do we get it from? What's one text that's classic for that?

[7 : 39] Where would you go? Romans would be one. Romans 10 would be one. What about Matthew 28 and the Great Commission? Teaching them to observe.

Baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. So we believe that whoever believes will be saved. Romans 10, 9 and 10, as my brother mentioned.

We believe that. Whoever does not believe and be baptized will be condemned. So how can faith be preached to those who God has made faith impossible?

That's a good question. How can you preach to those whom God has made faith impossible? How sticky.

Oh, we'll never resolve that. I'm sure the Bible has no answer for that. It does. But these are the kinds of things that people throw at us, that people who believe what we believe, what we're going to be teaching you over the next weeks.

[8 : 46] This is the kind of stuff they throw at us. Think about this. What an awful sinner the preacher is who stands up to oppose and defeat God's decree.

That whoever believes. So I guess that's what I do each Sunday as I stand up here and preach against God's decree that whoever believes can be saved.

Now you may not believe as I do, but if your doctrine is true, it would not make a difference to the salvation, that is the deliverance from sin and damnation, of a single soul.

Because you are saying right belief and genuine faith have nothing to do with salvation. That's what we believe. Right?

That's what she thinks. Calvinist belief. Right belief and genuine faith have nothing to do with salvation. If the fate of Calvinism is true, I would rather die with a hope of heaven instead of the torture of never really knowing if I were one of the lucky ones that Jesus died for.

[9 : 58] No. I'm supposed to respond to that. And help her with her mom, whom she loves. And her mom has said, I love you with all my heart, honey.

And there's no way I want mom and daughter to war about this. No way. I'm not going to tell you what I said.

I did respond and we did talk. And it didn't end well. And it rarely does. And I wish I could tell you differently.

Not to dump on anybody's parade. This is a very, very volatile issue. In our circles.

And as you study with us, and as you read this book, and as we talk about this, you're going to see examples from history going back centuries where this has been the case and continues to be the case.

[11:08] This is not new and novel. This controversy and division and all has been going on for a long time.

It's what made these points necessary that we call Calvinism. All right? Now, I want to get into this with you. I know that many of you, because I've talked to you, many of you have stories of your own that you have shared with me about trouble that you've had with this or encounters that you've had with this with other well-meaning Christians.

I'm sure that this woman's mom was well-meaning. I don't mean to ridicule her mom. What I'm astounded about throughout my ministry is that I'll get stuff like this and people are telling me this is what I believe as a Calvinist.

And I look at them and I go, No, I don't. Yes, you do. And they tell me that. They do that. Oh, yes, you do. No, I really don't. You believe that all babies die and go to hell because you're a Calvinist. I don't believe that. Yes, you do. I had a woman do that with me. Yes, you do. You believe that. If you say you're a Calvinist, that's what you believe because that's what you sign up for when you take that label.

[12:25] This is the kind of volatile stuff that people can get super emotional about this. The reason is, in many cases, when they get emotional about it is because they come to the place where they think that what you believe is denying people the offer and potential to be saved from their sins.

They think you're keeping people from that. And nothing could be further from the truth in these doctrines. And I'm not at all confused about where this comes from. All right.

Let me share this with you because this is a quote we're going to hang on to if we end up reviewing it every single week. Everything about the gospel is designed to glorify Christ, but at the same time, abase or reduce lower man.

Therefore, because that's true, anything that diminishes Christ's glory is either directly or indirectly inconsistent with the gospel.

Now, we need to hang on to that. Now, that's a fantastic quote from Pastor Steve Fernandez in his book, Free Justification. It's a little... I'll bring it in next time and show you.

[13:37] It's a great book. If you don't have that for your library, I would strongly recommend it. I know, but that's not on there, is it? Oh, is it? Okay, good.

All right. So I'm almost there where we're going to give you the handout. So when we talk about the biblical doctrines of God's sovereign grace, we're talking about the gospel.

Okay? I want that to be really clear. We're talking about God's work to save us from our sins. God's work to do that. So the five doctrines that we're going to talk about detail scriptures, teachings about God forgiving us for our sins and about how God frees us from the power and penalty of those sins against Him.

Moreover, though, they focus our attention on the love of God for sinners and His amazing grace to save us against all odds and to the uttermost.

First, these doctrines glorify the amazing grace of God in saving sinners. It doesn't diminish the Lord. It diminishes man.

[14:55] And that's what makes them so glorious for us. All right? This is what we do. Okay, let's... Where are they, hon? Okay. Let's hand out these.

Now, what we did was we made 30 copies of these. Will you help me with this, bro? Ben, will you do this other section? And I'll give some to Matt, too, and he can now help.

So there's 30 copies, so there may be enough for everybody to have one. If not, let me know. We'll go run off some more. All right.

So I need to give you a quick caveat that will carry over for each time we meet, Lord willing. This is mainly for Matt. Oh, did I say it?

I said a name, didn't I? And my wife. Please don't read ahead and fill in the blanks. Too late, Matt said.

[15:57] Because this is... I sit next to this woman, and when we have these, she's sitting there, and she's like five steps ahead, and she wants to figure out what that blank is. And she's...

I'm telling on you. It's the truth. She's like, whatever. See? Whatever. Okay. No. Try to stay with me, and don't read ahead if you can help it.

Stay with me, because we're going to talk about these things as we go. Now, I'm going to motor through some of this, not because I don't want you to get it or anything like that, but because I want you to have this material under your belt for what we're doing for next week.

Okay? All right. So where we're going to start is I want to let you know, first of all, now hear this carefully, what we're talking about in studying the doctrines of grace is not a second or third tier issue to our matter of believing.

This is not a second or third priority theological issue that we can just kind of set aside a little bit. I'll say more about that in a minute. Set aside a little bit, and move on to bigger and better things.

[17:07] That is not what this is. We're not resurrecting something that we want to be nitpicky about. That's not this at all. Okay? What we believe then, I'm going to throw it up here for you.

What we believe about these doctrines is not an issue concerning, number one, peripheral matters to our walk of faith.

You see that? So that first blank there, peripheral matters to our walk of faith. What do I mean by that? Marginal. These are not marginalized, unimportant, intrusive issues that we would be better off just to let stay in the dust, the theological dust.

No. And I hope you're going to see that as we go along. Another thing these are not. They're not personal preferences. In other words, these are not, please hear this, these are not pet doctrines that we just like to throw around to get everybody wound up.

And then finally, these are not primitive arguments. What do I mean by that? These are not ancient disputes relegated better to a time way back in the history of the church and they would be better left there.

[18:28] That's not what this is. It's not that these are irrelevant to our time. No way. These are the doctrines that surround the way God saves sinners.

God's work in saving sinners. Now the reason that these three things are true is this. The doctrines of grace describe God's activity in the gospel whereby we are saved by God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

That's a big amen, isn't it? Amen. Amen. All right. Now, there are essentially two main views that you see there on your sheet from the context of the historical controversy surrounding these doctrines just after the Protestant Reformation.

If you don't know what that is, we'll be talking about that more next time. In one view of these doctrines, God gets all the glory for the salvation of souls.

In the other view, that glory is shared with mankind or with each individual person brought to salvation. Okay? This is what we're dealing with.

[19:38] Now, let's go back to the quote. Everything about the gospel, that includes these five doctrines that one day we will get to.

We may take two or three sessions before we actually unpack them. I've got to give you some other stuff first to help you. Everything about the gospel is designed to glorify Jesus Christ.

That shouldn't shock us. And abase man. That shouldn't shock us either. Therefore, anything that diminishes Christ's glory is either directly or indirectly inconsistent with the gospel.

So as we're studying these things, if we come across anything that begins to smack of diminishing the glory of God or Jesus or the Spirit in the salvation of mankind, we need to step back and say, whoa, wait a minute.

Wait a minute. That's starting to sound like we're elevating man and maybe devaluing God's role here. So anytime you see that imbalance begin to happen where man is elevated over what we might be thinking in terms of God's involvement, we're in trouble.

[20:49] All right. Can you hold on to that? Hold on to this quote. If you want, we'll we'll this will be on the website, right? Okay. Okay. So you'll you'll be able to get that off the website if you want.

Hey, bro. Good. Good to have you. You didn't miss much. We only got a few. Did you get a sheet? All right, brother. So here's another brother who's got a personal story about this.

So if you ever want to hear more about what people have gone through as they've tried to follow the Lord in some of these doctrines, there's another guy that has Jeremy has some.

Jeff has some. I know my brother Clyde has some Greg has some. I've talked to these guys. Even y'all. Yeah. Even even. Yeah. I mean, anyway. All right.

Now, look, these doctrines are known by several different designations. And I've used some of the terms already. The first is Calvinism. Whenever you hear Calvinism, typically there are some aspect of one of these doctrines or more that people are referring to.

[21 : 54] Also, the five points. Typically, people say the five points of Calvinism and combine all that. Or as we're calling them, the doctrines of grace.

Sometimes people will add the doctrines of God's sovereign grace, just simply emphasizing the sovereignty of God in salvation, His control over the entire event of salvation from first to last and everything in the middle.

Okay? Now, obviously, there's been and is much today in the way of confusion.

You see that on your sheet? Emotionalism and fear mixed up in how people think about these beliefs. And I want you to know that's what we're talking about.

We are talking about beliefs. These are faith responses to God's saving work as we see them in Scripture.

[22 : 57] Faith responses guided by the truth of God's Word so that we are responding to God from that truth regarding how He saves sinners.

sinner. That's what the doctrines of grace are. And that's why we say this is not a peripheral issue, a marginal issue. This is the heartbeat of how we understand God doing His work through Jesus Christ.

So, the older I've become in my faith, the more precious these have become to me. There was a time in my Christian life for Suzanne and I both, even after we married, where we lived our Christian life with no knowledge of these doctrines at all.

But let me tell you, when we began to learn these, God got so big and it was so humbling. The love that we had for the Lord just grew exponentially as we came to understand this.

So, we're talking about truths that we believe and these truths push us through and past confusion, emotionalism, and fear. We have nothing to fear from these doctrines.

[24 : 07] Okay? Now, let me ask you this in a general way as we look into the Scripture. What is the origin then? When we go to the Bible, what is the true origin of all lies, confusion, and fear stemming from false doctrine or false teaching?

What is the true origin of all of these? Now, I'm going to give you a number of Scripture passages. We're going to look them up real quickly and read them off and then we're going to talk about the answer to this question.

So, here's the first set of Scriptures for us. Alright? Let's look these up and go through them together. The first is John 8.44. And if some of you want to turn to some of these others and be ready to read them, that's fine with me.

Alright? John 8.44. Jesus is speaking to a group of religious Jews and He is saying some difficult things and He comes to verse 44 to challenge them and says this.

They're thinking that they're of God and Jesus says, you are of your father, the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father.

[25 : 24] Now, here's for our purposes what Jesus describes Satan as. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in Him.

Whenever He speaks a lie, He speaks from His own nature for He is a liar and notice, the father of lies.

So, what is the true origin of all lies? That's right, beloved. It is spiritual. The lies that all of our friends and neighbors and loved ones who are not in the Lord live by, they don't even know that they are living by the doctrines of Satan, the lies of Satan.

I used to live under that. You used to live under that before you were saved. Alright? Now, I can't preach on every one of these, so we'll have to move a little more quickly through them. 1

Corinthians 14, 33.

Shoot up a hand if you have that. No? Ben, why don't you go ahead and read that one for us while people are getting there. For God is not a God of confusion, but of peace. Alright?

[26 : 36] It's very straightforward, isn't it? God is not a God of confusion, but of peace. So, whenever we have that kind of confusion... Now, look. I'm not talking here about you saying, oh, I don't quite understand that.

Can we clarify that? That's not what we're talking about. We're talking about the kind of confusion that causes you to believe lies and live in the dark. Not in the light.

With me? 2 Corinthians 11, 3. Alright? Alonzo, if you'll do that one. But I am afraid that as a servant deceives you by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from the sincere and sure devotion to Christ.

Alright? What is Satan doing there? He is deceiving. He's a deceiver. And then, if you drop down to verses 14 and 15, Michelle? No wonder, for even Satan decides himself as an angel of Christ.

Therefore, it is not surprising that his servant also describes himself as servant of the resurrection. He's a man who will be a man of the earth. Alright? So, we have Satan deceiving and we have Satan coming down here and he is disguising.

[27 : 44] And it says, even his servants will disguise themselves. Who are his servants? Human false teachers. Human purveyors of these lies that foment confusion and deception among God's people.

Alright? You're getting the picture here, huh? 1 Timothy 1.7. Alright, Mark? Wanting to be teachers of the law even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make and make confidence after they are.

So, here we have false teachers who are confidently teaching lies. And he says, they don't even know what they are talking about even though they sound very confident and believable.

See? This stuff camouflages. These lies masquerade. They hide. Satan doesn't want you to see them for what they are so that you are deceived.

And then finally, we have 1 Timothy 4.1-2. Who has that one? Anybody? I'm not there. So, Clyde? [28 : 53] Doctrines of demons.

My goodness. Doctrines of demons.

That's the baseline. If you had to pick one scripture out of all of those to answer that question, I'd say 1 Timothy 4.1-2 pretty much nails it. The true origin of all lies, confusion, and fear stemming from false teaching is the doctrine of demons.

Now, hang on to that. That becomes very important. Alright, now the next question then, in light of this, how do we fight this? So, Ephesians 6, I'll read. If somebody will look up James 4 and John 17, I'm going to read from Ephesians 6, verse 11, put on the full armor of God so that, purpose, you will be able to stand firm against what?

The schemes of the devil. Wear God's armor and you will be fit for spiritual battle and be able to stand against the schemes, the deceitful ways, the masquerading, camouflaging ways of our great spiritual enemy.

[30 : 31] Alright, James 4, who has that one? Alright, Dora? Dora? There you go.

That's pretty good, isn't it? You have several commands or imperatives listed in principle form there, one upon the other.

That's how we fight. And then finally, John 17, 17, Jesus is speaking in this one. What does He say? Who's got that one? Alonzo? Sanctify them in the truth. Your Word is the truth.

Alright, what does it mean to be sanctified? What's Jesus praying here? Sanctify them in the truth. What does that mean? Sanctify. Becoming more like Jesus. Make them holy.

Make them holy. Make them like me. And what is the means He prays for that that will happen for these people? The Word. The truth. That's what He says. Isn't it? So He prays to the Father.

[31 : 34] Make them holy. Make them more like me. Sanctify them. Make them holy in the truth. No truth. No holiness. This is what Satan is battling against.

As we look at Scripture and see these doctrines to be the truth that Scripture teaches, there should be no wonder in your mind at all why there are people, Christians, well-meaning, brothers and sisters in Christ from different denominations who love the Lord and do not believe a word of what we're teaching tonight and will call us heretics and have.

Maybe Greg and I will tell you a few stories hiding the identities of people because we're not up here to bash our brothers and sisters, but we have had a number of people come into this church in the past six years who have gone right back out as fast as they could get out once they found that we believe what we're going to teach tonight.

A few of them have actually told us to our faces, no thank you, and off they go. They didn't sit down and talk with us. They didn't discuss it. In fact, Greg, correct me if I'm wrong, brother, help me.

In the six years we've been here and in the ten years that Greg and I have ministered together, I can only think of one time they sat down and actually let us respond to questions out of all the people who, okay, I could only think of one and that was fairly recently.

[33 : 04] That's why I could remember it. All right. All right. Does anybody have a burning question right now? If you don't, I want to, that time will come.

We're going to do questions, probably not tonight, but we'll do it. All right. All right. Let's keep, let's keep motoring. Some important introductory questions that we're going to ask and answer going through this.

All right. The first one is this. The doctrines of grace. What does the phrase doctrines of grace refer to? I'm not going to assume that you guys are well schooled in this subject matter.

So we're just going to go very basic to start off with. All right. The first thing we can say, doctrines, that has to do with beliefs or teachings. That's all we mean. You can have doctrines in philosophy. You can have doctrines that pertain to the military. They have doctrines that they go by. Military doctrine. It's just beliefs. Okay.

[34 : 09] And then the next one. Christian doctrine. Christian doctrine refers to the beliefs and teachings of the Christian church about God and His ways.

So these beliefs and practices should be based on biblical doctrine or truth because they're of Christ, the Christian church. That brings us to biblical doctrine.

That refers to what the Bible teaches for our belief and practice in personal holiness to the greater glory of Almighty God. What I'm doing is breaking down doctrines of grace.

grace. So this is what we mean by doctrine. Grace refers to God's work of salvation or His work of forgiving men for their sins by His unmerited favor and blessing.

What do we call that? Imputation. Where God imputes the righteousness of His Son. Credits the righteousness of His Son to you. So your righteousness is an alien righteousness.

[35 : 14] That is, it is not your own. God didn't clean you up and give you a spiritual bath and now your righteousness is what makes you good. No. Impossible. He gave you the righteousness of His Son who lived a perfect sinless life and that perfection was applied to you.

Credited to your spiritual bank account. And so the righteousness you stand in before God is the righteousness none other than His own Son. And nothing can conquer that.

Nothing can obliterate it, erase it, or blur it. So, hey, praise the Lord, right? So that's what we're talking about. The emphasis here is on this work being God's work from first to last.

You're going to see that in the book if you haven't already read it. You'll see it in the book. Doctrines of grace then is a shorthand phrase. It's just shorthand.

About the biblical beliefs and teachings from God's Word referring to God's work of saving mankind from sins through the merit of Jesus Christ alone.

[36 : 24] That's the imputation I just talked about. So in the phrase's historical context, text, it referred to five biblical theological summations or points which church leaders of that era formed in response to five theological errors threatening the truth about the respective roles of God and man in salvation.

Now, are you with me? So now we are setting the historical context. We're going to spend at least one more session, maybe two, talking only about the historical context.

You need to know where this came from. You need to understand what it was in God's economy at that particular time in human history that God did to bring these truths to light.

It was nothing short of God reinforcing the Protestant Reformation. Alright, how many of you, hands up, how many of you have heard of the five solas?

Alright, praise God. You're in a good church. That must be taught here. For all of you to know this. Yes, the five solas. These five points are parallel in importance and vitality to the five solas.

[37 : 49] That will help you put it in historical context. That's how important these are. Okay? So we have five points of Calvinism coming to light, to fruition, to development in response to five theological errors of that era.

And again, we're going to bring all of this out and talk about it in greater... I'm just giving you the overview right now. So here's what we're talking about in TULIP. The doctrines in this acrostic are summary form for the five points of Calvinism or the doctrines of grace.

The five points of the doctrines of grace. Total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the...

I say the saved, but typically you see this rendered as the saints. The perseverance of the saints. Saved saints, same thing. I think there's a little more clarity to...

I don't want this to be confused with Catholic doctrine. That's why I chose saved. Okay, that's all this is. I know we have some folks here from the Catholic background, and I don't want to confuse you about that.

[39 : 05] We're not talking about the saints that the Catholic church prays to. Alright, you good? Are you with me? We're talking about saved people who are made holy. That's a saint. You're a saint and I'm a saint because we're made holy in Christ.

Okay, so the perseverance of the saved. Now, there are your five points. We are eventually going to take each one of these in turn, go to Scripture, and talk about them.

What does this mean? Where did it come from? How did we get it from the Bible? Then we're going to look at verses. Every single verse in the Bible that people use to contradict what this teaches. We're going to answer, well, yeah, but if that's true, what about this verse that says this because that sounds exactly opposite. What's that? Because that's what you're going to run into if you haven't already.

People are going to use other verses to disclaim this and make it sound like it's wrong. Right? You got that? Why study the doctrines of grace?

[40 : 18] Here we are back to what I did when I first started talking to you. The first reason is to be a faithful and responsible student. You are a lifelong learner.

What does disciple mean? Learner. You are a lifelong learner of Jesus Christ. You're a lifelong student of His Word. Till you die and go to heaven and as all made complete, you need to grow. And so this means that you need to own, that is, understand and obey, live out God's Word. Hard to do that if you don't know what it teaches. So we're just trying to teach the truth here.

To be a faithful and responsible communicator, you need to be able to communicate what you believe. Share it. Explain it. Defend it.

So to graciously and accurately convey God's Word. We're going to underline that word graciously and we're going to talk about a kinder, kinder, gentler Calvinism. Alright?

[41 : 19] We're going to need to do that. And then finally, to be a faithful and responsible worshiper of God in truth. That is, to glorify God in all things as His learners, His disciples.

So you want to be a good student, a good communicator, and a faithful worshiper. Of course we do. Now, here's the question. Are these doctrines essential to my understanding of God?

Because, look, I've already shared there was a time in my life as a believer, as a saved man, trusting in Jesus, that I didn't know anything about these doctrines. Could you say that about other doctrines that you didn't know anything about, let's say, in the first six months of your Christian life? Were there other things you didn't know about in the first six months of your life that you learned later? Does that mean that those things weren't essential? That logic doesn't stand.

No matter how long you might have gone after you were saved, before you came into contact with Tulip, doesn't matter. What matters is, is this the truth?

[42 : 28] And are you learning it, understanding it, owning it, and living it out? If it's God's truth, you need to know it. Because you're God's child. That's the issue. This is why Paul made, in Acts 20, made a very big deal out of telling the Ephesian elders when he met with them, I have not shrunk back from teaching you the entire counsel of God, the whole counsel of God.

That's been my aim of being with you. I haven't gotten on soapboxes. I've tried to teach you God's Word. And this is what we're trying to do here. But since these doctrines seem to set people on edge and stir up trouble in the church, can't we just avoid talking about them and teaching them? I mean, my goodness, Jeff, there's a lot of other stuff in the Bible we could teach and we could just stay away from this and not have any trouble. But are they necessary to what we believe and how we live?

And my answer is yes. We cannot ignore them and they are essential. They are necessary. Look, the doctrines of grace come under the theological heading of soteriology.

That's how you say that. This comes from the Greek word for the study of salvation. Soteriology has to do with salvation. The five points come under this heading because they outline and describe God's work of saving mankind from sins.

[43 : 55] Alright? That's one part of this. However, the doctrines of grace also take in other major categories of Christian theology and beliefs such as anthropology, which is the study of man,

hamartiology, which is the study of sin, and Christology, which is the doctrine of Christ or the study of the Lord Jesus, among others.

Anthropology comes from the Greek word anthropos, hamartiology comes from hamartia, and Christology, of course, is Christos, Christ.

So what you believe about God's work in saving sinners affects every other area of your theology. These are just some of the reasons that we need to understand these doctrines.

Therefore, this is not a nitpicky, unimportant, academic issue that you can afford to ignore and remain unclear or ignorant about.

Why would you want to? Why would you want to? I'm going to take you to the book now. If you'd go to page 199, and for time's sake, I'm just going to read this to us for this time, for this session.

[45 : 30] 199, Lorraine Bettner, I think he's dead now. Does anybody know that? Randy, you know for sure. Lorraine Bettner, so I think he was he was a professor, I forget now, I'm drawing on 22 years ago, but a theologian nonetheless.

So he wrote this, first paragraph there on 199. This is not a cold, barren, speculative theory. not an unnatural system of strange doctrines such as many people are inclined to believe, but a most warm and living, a most vital and important account of God's relations with men.

Well said, sir. It is a system of great practical truths which are designed and adapted under the influence of the Spirit to do two things, mold the affections of the heart and give right direction to the conduct.

Let me see a show of hands. How many of you, once you came to the knowledge of the doctrines of grace, felt your heart molded and warm toward the Lord and felt yourself given a better direction in how you should live to His glory?

[46 : 44] Did it have that effect on you? Okay. Amen. Me too. Suzanne too. That's exactly how it affected us. Calvin, now here, this is a little bit, you've got to get past some of the language here with Calvin.

He was a brilliant man but this is good. Calvin's own testimony in this respect is this. So he's, Calvin is about to talk about the essential nature and necessity of these doctrines as against what so many people were thinking and believing even in his time.

I would, in the first place, entreat my readers carefully to bear in memory the admonition which I offer. What is that, John?

That this great subject is not, as many imagine, a mere thorny and noisy disputation, argument, nor a speculation which wearies the minds of men without any profit, but a solid discussion imminently adapted to the service of the godly.

Why? Because it builds us up soundly in the faith. It trains us to humility and lifts us up into an admiration of the unbounded goodness of God toward us while it elevates us to praise this goodness in our highest strains.

[48 : 12] For there is not a more effectual means of building up faith than the giving of our open ears to the election of God, which the Holy Spirit seals upon our heart while we hear, showing us that it stands in the eternal and immutable that is unchangeable good will of God toward us, and that, therefore, it cannot be moved or altered by any storms of the world, by any assaults of Satan, by any changes, by any fluctuations or weaknesses of the flesh.

For our salvation is then sure to us when we find the cause of it in the breast of God. Man, that'll preach, won't it? That's why he's John Calvin.

Wow. If you jump over on page 201, the last sentence there before a source of security and courage go up, that last sentence. When a person sees himself as one of the Lord's chosen and knows that every one of his acts has an eternal significance, he realizes more clearly how serious life is, and he's fired with a new determination to make his life count for great things.

This is one of the reasons that this is so important. And then if you'll go over to page 205, a very similar introduction from Lance Quinn. Lance Quinn was many years Dr. MacArthur's personal assistant right before I got to seminary out there.

Lance had just left and the guy who replaced him was the guy who started discipling me and a number of other guys. So Lance, just a great guy. He's still pastoring down in Florida.

[50 : 02] The subject of theology has taken a real beating of late. Those who've come to question the relevance of the theology in general do so for a number of reasons. For instance, they say that theology is boring or it's too complicated or over their head or divisive or impractical and unrelated

to their life, but theology, rightly defined and understood as the study of God, is the most important subject in all of life to master.

Admittedly, theology sometimes has been taught in a boring way or it's been made unnecessarily complicated or seems to be beyond the grasp of the average Christian or has divided believers or has been applied wrongly or not at all, but it does not have to be this way.

Theology, rightly studied, provides the key to all right thinking and living. Folks, this is why we study this. We study these doctrines because they inform our heart and warm our heart to God and then they inform our heart and warm our heart and how to live for God's glory.

That's why we do it. It's just not that hard to get your mind around that, is it? More to come as we give you assignments to read here. Alright?

So listen. I'll have one more page I want to read to you. One more thing. The most vital question that we need to ask and answer is this. It's this.

[51 : 28] Are these five points taught in Scripture? At the end of the day, that's what we have to answer, isn't it? We have to look at these carefully if they're taught in Scripture.

Let me take you to one other place in the book. It's page 17. And I just want to show you a couple places. This is it. We won't read any more out of the book tonight. But I want to show you this book covers so much territory.

Page 17 in the first half of this first paragraph. The question of supreme importance is not how the system under consideration, the five points, came to be formulated in five points or why it was named Calvinism, but rather whether it is supported by Scripture.

The final court of appeal for determining the validity of any theological system is the inspired, authoritative word of God. Amen. Right? You got it right there in the book.

That's what we're trying to deal with. Now look, if the answer to that question is yes, then the next question that begs is, are we understanding these truths and are we teaching them correctly?

[52 : 44] Are we understanding and teaching these things correctly, biblically, accurately, skillfully, faithfully, as good Bereans?

All right, now this is where I want to get started. I want to bring in some historical perspective to this issue.

We'll do this over the next session or two. And we want to begin to understand the doctrines of grace within the framework of God's big picture of salvation. God's work to preserve and pass on His truth from the beginning of the new covenant of God's grace in Christ.

So what we're talking about when I say things like that is this, the New Testament church. The new covenant in the Lord Jesus Christ in the advent of the New Testament church.

That is, the people who are now under the new covenant, not the old one. The new covenant is about defining doctrine and defying error through the centuries.

[53 : 50] So Jesus' infant church in the first century is when we're going to launch. So this is the advent of the people of God under Jesus Christ sitting under the apostles, being taught by them.

The Bible is being written. Apostles and disciples are being martyred. They're dying right and left as they try to write these letters and minister. This is the time we're talking about.

The first one that we're going to start with then is the Jerusalem Council. Now please don't let this get too heady or academic for you. I know this is going to sound a little bit like you're in a college class or something.

Yeah. But that's okay. You'll see how it all comes together. The Jerusalem Council. This is the apostles' fight for doctrinal purity and it's in Acts 15.

I'll ask us all to turn there. Acts 15. And I know this is a long deal here.

[55 : 02] Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brothers, unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved. Alright, is there a problem?

Yeah, that's a problem.

What would that fall under? works. Okay. And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brothers determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.

So you see what's going on here. They're going to go now sit under the bigwigs. Peter, James, and John and find out what's going on. Do these people need to take on Jewish rites and ritualism in order to be saved in Jesus?

Do we have to add that to our salvation? Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles and were bringing great joy to all the brothers.

when they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church, the apostles, the elders. They reported all that God had done with them. But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed, Pharisees who had been saved, stood up saying, it is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the law of Moses.

[56 : 24] The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. See? They've got to look in. This is the battle. Sound doctrine, truth. We've got one side saying one thing and another side saying another thing.

Let's come together in prayer and let's look into this together and see what God shows us. After there had been much debate, does that sound familiar? Much debate, see?

Peter stood up and said to them, Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe.

And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit just as He also did to us and He made no distinction between us and them. You see Peter's wisdom here.

He cleansed their hearts by faith. You might remember back when that was a big deal for Peter. That was a big moment of crisis for him. The Gentiles are going to be brought into this thing?

[57 : 20] Now therefore, why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of our Lord Jesus in the same way as they also are.

All the people kept silent. They were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. So then James weighs in. They discuss it more. And then it talks about toward the end of the chapter, Paul taking off and going on this second missionary journey. It's a very enlightening chapter to help us.

The point about all of this is here we have an example of the apostles' fight for doctrinal purity. This was a big debate, man. They are going hammer and tong at this thing together until finally Peter stands up because he's the man and they're all going to accept in what Peter says now.

And it's wisdom. It's scriptural wisdom. And that's what stood. There have been these kind of fights from the beginning of the church. Godly men have had to stand forward and be counted for Christ and for truth.

[58 : 37] And you know the story of the disciples. Every single one of them but John was martyred taking these stands, weren't they? Alright, let's look at a couple more before we end.

Let's look at Paul's fight for doctrinal purity. Paul's fight for doctrinal purity. 2 Corinthians 5 And I'm saying we're going to pick it up at 20.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ as though God were making an appeal through us. we beg you on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God.

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. And working together with Him we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain.

For He says at the acceptable time I listened to you. On the day of salvation I helped you. Now is the acceptable time. Now is the day of salvation. Giving no cause for offense in anything so that the ministry will not be discredited but in everything commending ourselves as servants to God.

[59 : 53] In much endurance afflictions hardships distresses beatings imprisonments tumults labor sleeplessness hunger impurity knowledge patience kindness in the spirit in genuine love in the word of truth in the power of God by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left by glory and dishonor evil report good report regarded as deceivers and yet we are true as unknown yet well known as dying yet behold we live as punished yet not put to death as sorrowful yet always rejoicing!

As poor yet making many rich as having nothing yet possessing all things our mouth has spoken freely to you O Corinthians and our heart is open wide you are not restrained by us but you are restrained in your own affections I speak to you as children open wide to us also and do not be bound together with unbelievers for what partnership of righteousness and lawlessness you see what he's fighting here he's trying to help these people live pure lives and not be unequally yoked with unbelievers in ways that will compromise their faith by all means witness to them model the

love of Jesus to them but don't join them in paganism and in unbelief Paul said look what we have endured in our fight for the faith look what we've gone through this is the normal Christian life this is what it looks like when people stand for truth and stand up and be counted for what's right they suffer they suffer in a world that hates God and hates truth and lives by the lies of the devil Peter wrote the same thing didn't he in 1st and 2nd Peter don't be surprised by the fiery ordeal that comes upon you brothers and sisters what did Paul tell Timothy all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted it's a promise it's put it down Paul's fight for doctrinal purity 2nd Thessalonians 2 15 anybody got that no 2nd Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 15 so then brethren stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught whether by word of mouth or by letter from us why does he have to tell them to stand firm because it's hard because they're under attack they're being persecuted false teachers have infiltrated the church in Ephesus 1st Timothy I can't read all of chapter 1 but Paul is telling him that they need to stand up he's telling Timothy you need to stand up we've got ungodly men who are trying to turn this thing upside down and Timothy you've got to stand up for what's true don't be like some of these other guys who shipwrecked their faith you see that down at the end of chapter 1 Hymenaeus and Alexander in verse 20 of chapter 1 I've handed those guys over to Satan so that they can be taught not to blaspheme they've shipwrecked their own faith you see it's a fight even the elders at that church had believed wrong things that had pulled them away into error and they refused to repent Paul said I'll tell you what I did I took those two yahoos and I turned them over to the devil for him to discipline them that's what I did Paul could do that he's an apostle it's a fight what about Peter's fight we'll just go on Peter's fight for doctrinal purity we got a lot going on in Acts again Acts chapter 4 Acts chapter 5 in verse 8 of chapter 4 Peter filled with the Holy Spirit said to these people rulers and elders of the people if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man because they had healed a man as to how this man has been made well we need to let you know and all the people know that it was by the name of Jesus the Nazarene whom you crucified whom God raised from the dead it's by this name this man stands here before you it's not us it's no magic he was healed by the power of Jesus working through us and then he says this in 11 he's the stone which was rejected by you the builders but which became the chief cornerstone anyway and there's salvation and no one else for there's no under name under heaven that can be given among men well they come in and they say I'm telling you what we're going to imprison you guys we're going to discipline you and we're going to let you go and we let you go we're going to tell you don't be talking like this anymore and what did they say okay what'd they say you judge whether or not it's right for us to either do what you say or what

[65 : 03] God says we're going to do what God says what happened to Peter legend says he was crucified upside down all these men died because they got into the fight 2 Peter 3 1 and 2 let's go back to that one you can look up these others you'll have them there now 2 Peter 3 verses 1 and 2 this is now beloved the second letter I'm writing to you in which I'm stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles remember what I have taught you remember what I have told you this day is coming and it's going to be a terrible day of judgment and then he goes on to talk about how the earth is going to be destroyed by fire over in 1st Peter 4 verse 12 beloved do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you which comes upon you for your testing as though some strange thing were happening to you to the degree that you share the sufferings of

Christ keep on rejoicing so that also at the revelation of his glory you may rejoice with exultation look if you're reviled for the name of Jesus you're blessed because the spirit of glory and of God rests on Sabias just make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer or thief or an evildoer or anything like that suffer for Jesus suffer for righteousness verse 19 therefore those who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful creator in doing what's right it's a fight it's a fight for doctrinal integrity faithfulness but it is a fight it's a fight for truth because we have someone who fights against us beloved put this down the further away in time you get from the apostles ministry on earth the greater the potential for corrupt doctrine in the teaching and preaching ministries of the church this is why we need to meet continually teaching God's word with skill and care and fidelity and humility we constantly need to be under the word of God now there are two primary reasons for this progression of corruption the further we get from the apostles time and teaching the first one is this we've already talked about it satanic deception

Satan has always sought and will always seek to pervert God's truth as it's passed on to each successive generation in human error people make mistakes folks they have faulty memories and they tend toward personal bias we're lazy we're slothful we're distracted we're too busy but look the last thing here God has always raised up faithful servants who have sought to teach guard and live sound doctrine and until Jesus comes back that will be the case

God himself has preserved his truth in the Bible and he has passed on his truth through faithful men and women that concludes the first session if there are any questions related to what we've gone over we'll try not to jump ahead but if there's any question about what we've gone over or a quick comment let's do that before we end the floor is open now I know I went fast let me ask this first did I leave you in the dust not too bad would anybody admit it if I did it it's okay PJ told me this is like sitting in a college class or something like that just remember he just got saved do you see what I'm saying we're all at these places and that's why we need to come together right so God will teach PJ and he'll take what he can take and he'll teach Jeff and Jeff will take the principles but not the principles