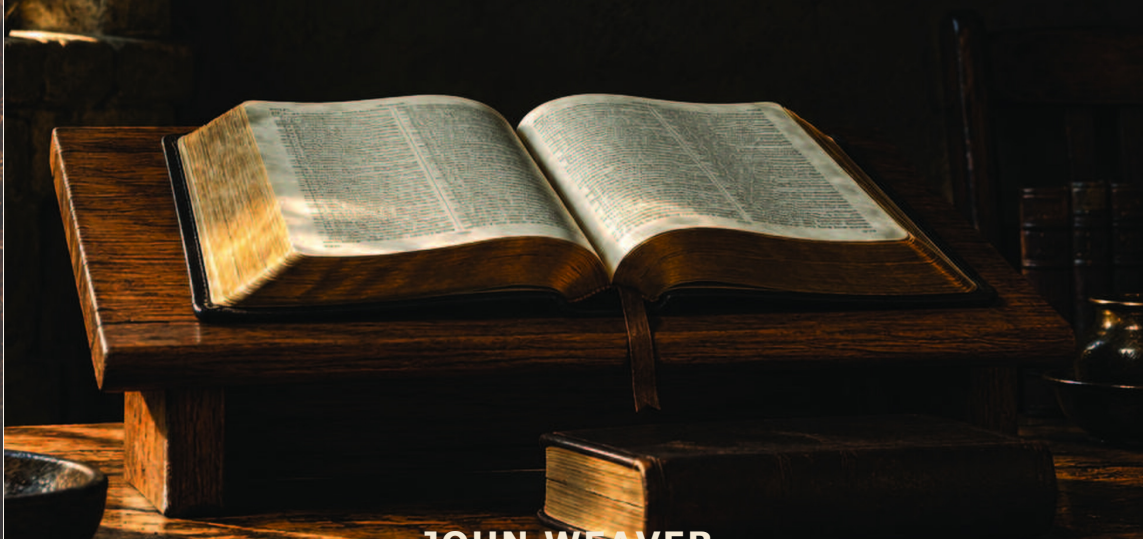
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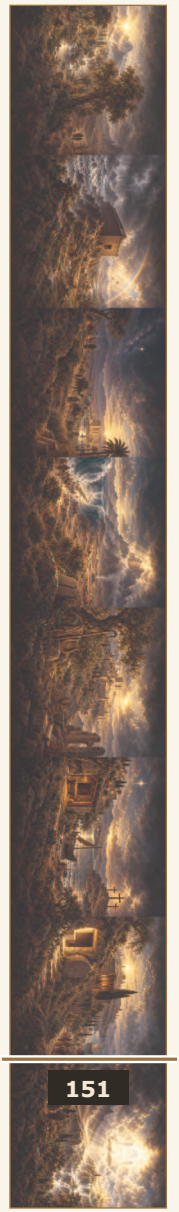
*"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,*
*and a light unto my path."*

PSALM 119:105



**JOHN WEAVER**

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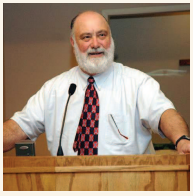

*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*

**JOHN 17:17**

True theology concerns both what is believed and how that belief governs life. John Weaver examines knowledge of God, the authority of Scripture, and the practical implications of doctrine. These messages invite readers to test religious claims by the Word and to consider the conduct that sound teaching requires.

*“I cannot take one verse out of context or make it mean something that the rest of Scripture does not teach.”*

JOHN WEAVER



## John Weaver

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CHAPTER 1

# True Theology

*Part One of Two*

## Introduction and Purpose

The message that I began today will not be finished until next Sunday. I am planning an additional two messages after this for further explanation and edification. I encourage you to do everything you can to be back here next Sunday, because the majority of the message, the main point of the message, will be next Sunday.

I have been asked repeatedly by numerous people to deal with this subject, and I am going to do so. The title of the message is True Theology. Romans 11:36 says, “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”

Theology is the science concerning God. Since theology is the science concerning God, it follows that, in order for it to be true, it must be based upon divine revelation. Speculation, superstition, and private interpretations have no place in the study of theology. In order to know God, we must study that which He has revealed concerning Himself. If God had not made a revelation concerning

Himself, then it would have been absolutely impossible to know God.

## The Necessity of Divine Revelation

There are several questions asked in Job 11:7: “Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?” The answer to both of those questions is absolutely no. Man cannot find out God by himself. Man cannot search out God. If God had not been pleased to give us a revelation of Himself, we would know absolutely nothing about God.

Our Lord said it like this in Matthew 11:27: “All things are delivered unto me of my Father. And no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.” So even Jesus Christ said it is impossible to know God apart from Himself. Thankfully, God has revealed Himself in the Bible, which is the written Word of God, but He has also fully revealed Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the living Word of God. Colossians 2:9 says, “For in him,” that is, in Christ, “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” So Jesus Christ is God.

Hebrews 1:1–3 says, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds. Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

The Bible says that God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son. In times past, God spoke to the fathers by the prophets in different ways. In the Old Testament, there were dreams and trances that God gave to those prophets; they heard the Word of God and preached those truths unto the people. However, all of that is over, past, and done with, because God in these last days has spoken to us by His Son.

In other words, Jesus Christ is the full and final revelation of God. There is no need for anything else. When you try to add to revelation, when you say that there have been new or additional revelations since Jesus Christ, such as the Book of Mormon, Judge Rutherford's works, or someone else, you are saying that Jesus Christ is not the full and final revelation of God. That would be an insult not only to Christ, but also to the Father who sent Him.

The Bible says in John 5:23, "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him." To say that there have been newer and additional revelations since Jesus Christ is an absolute denial of Hebrews 1:2, where the Bible teaches that God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.

Some of the things I am going to tell you today will be new; some, I hope, you already know. I want to give you a quote by Spurgeon on theology. Charles Haddon Spurgeon has been called the prince of preachers, as have John Owen and some of the other great expositors in time past. Listen to what Spurgeon said concerning theology.

## Spurgeon on the Study of God

It has been said that the proper study of mankind is man. I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God's elect is God. The proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy which can ever engage the attention of a child of God is the name, nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father.

There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the divinity. It is a subject so vast that all of our thoughts are lost in its immensity, so deep that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can grapple with, and in them we feel a kind of self-content, going our way with the thought, "Behold, I am wise." But when we come to this master science, finding that our plumb line cannot sound its depth and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the thought that vain man would be wise, but he is like a wild ass's colt, with this solemn exclamation: "I

am but of yesterday and know nothing." No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind than the thoughts of God. But while the subject humbles the mind, it also expands it. He who often thinks of God will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods along this narrow globe.

"The most excellent study for expanding the soul is the science of Christ and Him crucified, and the knowledge of the Godhead and the glorious Trinity. Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the deity." When you begin trying to delve into the knowledge of God, you come to the realization that you know absolutely nothing and can do nothing. As you begin to study theology, and the doctrine of God, you will soon note that historically there have been two approaches to the study of theology. One is a God-centered approach, and the second is a man-centered approach. The God-centered approach tends to exalt God, and the man-centered approach always tends to exalt man.

## Two Approaches to Theology

It seems that many people cannot distinguish between man's duty and responsibility and obligations, and the work of God in its origination and its initiation. We can know nothing of God except the fact that God has revealed Himself. Let me point something out to show you how God works. If you examine Exodus 25 and 26 carefully, you will note that when God gave the directions to Moses for the tabernacle, God began with the ark inside the Holy of Holies. God began with everything on the inside and worked His way out. In chapters 28 and 29, He gave the duties of the priests and the offerings. Here is a picture of everything beginning with God and going outward toward man. You will also notice, as you read the book of Exodus, that when Moses set up the tabernacle, he began with the external, with the outside, and then worked his way in to the Ark and the Holy of Holies.

So here is the picture of man moving toward God. But now I want you to watch something: man could not move toward God until God had first moved toward man. Do you think that any Old Testament believer would be bold enough and foolish enough to say, “It is my

salvation; I decided to bring an offering"? Do you think any Israelite would think that somehow he approached God first?

If God had not ordained the tabernacle, if God had not ordained the priesthood, and if God had not ordained the offerings, no one would have come to Him, because no one would have known the way of approach. Nor would they have known the offerings, nor would they have known anything that would be acceptable unto God. The movement of God first was absolutely necessary. If God had not moved outward in grace, man could never have approached God.

## Defining Calvinism and Arminianism

I am going to discuss these two differing theologies. I want you to see, and I hope by the time we get through next week you will see, that one is absolutely biblical and exalts God, while the other is unbiblical and basically exalts man at God's expense. I will be using some names and terms because I want you to be familiar with them: Calvin and Calvinism, and Arminius and Arminianism. However, understand this: it is not the men or the movements that I wish to focus upon, but rather their differing theologies.

Obviously, both of them cannot be right. One is right and one is wrong. If I am right, I want to stay right. If I am wrong, I want to repent and be right.

A lot of people do not like the terms Calvinism and Arminianism, but these terms are mere handles to pick up a system, or a body of thought, or a theology. A pot and a handle may be inseparably connected, but they are not one and the same. What is a handle? A handle is merely a convenient way to pick up a pot. So the term Calvinism, or the term Arminianism, is merely a simple way to pick up a whole system, a whole body of thought, or a whole theology. The handle Calvinism identifies a theology, a body, or a system of thought. The term Arminianism also identifies another system or another body of thought.

Let me begin by giving you some definitions. First of all, let us talk about Calvinism. Listen carefully to this definition because I am immediately going to give you the definition of Arminianism

afterwards. Calvinism is a comprehensive theological system chiefly distinguished by its view of God and His relationship to man.

The name of the system is indeed derived from John Calvin, not because Calvin was the founder of this system—he was not—but because he was one of the few men who was a chief exponent of this body of thought.

Arminianism is a theological system chiefly distinguished by its view of man and his relationship to God. Did anybody see the difference between those two definitions? Calvinism is a comprehensive theological system chiefly distinguished by its view of God and His relationship to man. Arminianism is the theological system chiefly distinguished by its view of man and his relationship to God.

The name of the system bears the name of Jacob Arminius, not because he was the founder of it—he was not—but because he was one of the chief exponents of this body of thought. Let me put it like this: this is going to be a summary of everything I am going to tell you in one sentence. Arminianism began in the proud heart of fallen man. It was espoused by Pelagius, modified by Cassian, defended by Erasmus, defined by Arminius, and popularized by John Wesley.

## Historical Roots of Calvinism

Calvinism did not begin with John Calvin. Calvin was born on July 10, 1509, and died May 27, 1564. If John Calvin had never been born, the doctrines collectively referred to as Calvinism would still be among us. Why? Because the history of Calvinism is the history of God's plan to create man for His own glory.

These doctrines of grace were known as Calvinism in the days of John Calvin, as Augustinianism in the fourth century, and before that as Paulinism in the first century, from the writings of the Apostle Paul. Moreover, these same doctrines were taught and preached by the Old Testament prophets.

Calvinists do not see themselves as followers of John Calvin. Rather, they see themselves as Christians in the fullest sense of the word. They reject man-made philosophies and seek to discover and declare the grand view of God and His relationship to man as set

forth in the Scriptures. Those referred to as Calvinists do not follow any man blindly, even John Calvin. They set themselves to follow the clear teachings of the Word of God. Wherever the Scriptures are, there is where Calvinists are.

When the Scripture is silent, they are silent. When the Scripture speaks, they speak. True Calvinists are exegetes and expositors of the Word of God. They are never pontiffs or libertines. They adhere only to the Word of God.

As you begin to study theology, whether systematic theology, historical theology, or biblical theology, take note of the fact that most theological books are written by Calvinists. If you have not done this, I invite you to my library, and you can search this out for yourself. If you come to my library, you will probably find twenty-five, thirty, or forty books just on theology. Out of those books, only two of them were written by Arminians. I did not specifically pick all those written by Calvinists. The fact is that it is the Calvinists who do the studying and set forth true theology. It was the Calvinists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries who produced the great expositors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

First of all, Calvin is not the author, the originator, or the founder of Calvinism. Calvin simply systematized the truths that he expounded from the Bible. Calvin did not invent a new teaching any more than Columbus invented America or Newton invented the law of gravity. Columbus and Newton simply discovered what was already there all along. Likewise, Calvin uncovered truths that had been in the Bible all along. He was not the first to uncover these truths, and he will not be the last to uncover these truths. Calvin, therefore, is not the author, originator, or founder of Calvinism.

## The Chief Doctrine of Calvinism

That is interesting, since it bears his name. Fact number two: the chief doctrine of Calvinism is not predestination. Anytime you hear the word Calvinist, someone will say, “Well, you believe in predestination.” Well, sure, I believe in predestination because the Bible teaches predestination. But the chief doctrine of Calvinism is not predestination.

In the first catechism that Calvin drew up in 1537, predestination is barely mentioned. In his Confession of Faith, drawn up the same year, in 1537, there is no mention of predestination at all. In another catechism and four other confessions attributed to Calvin, the doctrine is mentioned only in passing. When you get to the first edition of the Institutes—and, by the way, if you have never read or seen the Institutes, you should—the doctrine is given hardly any place at all. The Institutes were the first systematic theology ever published, and they were written by John Calvin. Only later, in the later editions, when the doctrine of God's grace was developed, did he enlarge upon the doctrine of predestination.

Now let me tell you why the primary doctrine of Calvinism is not predestination. The answer is this: predestination deals primarily with man and other events, and especially fallen man. The emphasis in Calvinism is on God. God deserves all honor, power, and glory. For the Calvinist, God is the center of all things, and His name, His glory, and His doctrine are central tenets of Calvinism. It is true that predestination may be a fruit or logical scriptural conclusion from the doctrine of God, yet the main doctrine of Calvinism is God.

Now, look back at Romans 11 again, and verse 36. We read it earlier, where the Bible says, "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever." "For of him," that is, originally; "and through him," that is, providentially; and "to him," that is, ultimately, are all things.

The person of God, His attributes, His creation, His redemption, His providence, and His eternal purpose, which He purposed in Christ Jesus, are the center, or central point, of Calvinism. Henry Meador said it like this: "Calvinism has been defined as that system in which God is most highly glorified, and man most deeply abased." Here is fact number three: Calvinism is not restricted to the five points. If you do not know what the five points are, I will tell you momentarily. But let me say this: Calvinism has an unlimited number of points.

## Calvinism Beyond Five Points

I never will forget when I was in graduate school. We were studying the sovereignty of God, and I would imagine there were at least 100

or 150 students in that room. The instructor was a Presbyterian, and supposedly a Calvinist. As we were talking about the sovereignty of God, one preacher boy in the back said, "I believe that God is sovereign over all the big things, but not the little things."

Before I could stop myself, I said out loud, "Oh, what utter blasphemy!" Everybody looked at me, including the professor. I looked at Dr. Neal and said, "Dr. Neal, I'm sorry. I did not mean to make that expression vocal, but if you don't correct that young man, I will."

I said, "Because you know that every big thing is made up of a series of little things, and if there's anything over which God is not sovereign, God is not God." Dr. Neal looked around and said, "I'm afraid Mr. Weaver is right." Those were his exact words: "I'm afraid." Then he said, "Well, I suppose if there were 20 points to Calvinism, Mr. Weaver would believe them all."

I looked at him and said, "Dr. Neal, you know there are only five points to Calvinistic soteriology—that is, the doctrine of salvation. But there are multitudinous points to Calvinism because Calvinists speak only when the Bible speaks. So does the Bible speak of the deity of Christ? Yes. Does the Bible speak of justification by faith alone? Yes. Does the Bible speak of sanctification? Yes. Does the Bible speak of the second coming of Christ? Yes. Therefore, Calvinism would have a point on all of those things."

Calvinism is not simply limited to the five points. It may surprise you to learn that Calvin had nothing to do with the five points commonly given as Calvinism. Calvin's goal, and every Christian's goal, should be to expound and exegete the Word of God in its entirety. Two cries were prominent during the Reformation: Sola Scriptura, the Scriptures alone, and Tota Scriptura, the Scriptures in total, fully and completely.

There are five points in Calvinistic soteriology, the doctrine of salvation, but those five points are the exact same five points found in Romans 8:29–30. They relate only to the doctrine of salvation. Calvin was born in 1509 and died in 1564. The five points did not come into existence as we know them until 1619. Calvin died in 1564.

If Calvin did not originate the five points, who did? Where and why were they formulated? The five points are usually given under the acronym TULIP: total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints. There may be better terms for some of those points, but this is how they are commonly identified. How, then, did these points come into existence?

## Origins of Arminianism and Pelagianism

To understand that, we must understand Arminianism. Jacob Hermanson, whose name was Latinized to Jacobus or Jacob Arminius, lived from 1560 to 1609 and defined Arminianism for us. Arminius was four years old when Calvin died, so they never met. But Arminius was not the founder of Arminianism.

William Cunningham, in his Historical Theology, wrote: “As there was nothing new in the substance in the Calvinism of Calvin, so there was nothing new in the Arminianism of Arminius. The doctrines of Arminius can be traced back as far as the time of Clemens Alexandrinus and seem to have been held by some of the church fathers of the 3rd and 4th centuries having been diffused in the church through the corrupting influence of pagan philosophy. Pelagius and his followers in the 5th century were as decidedly opposed to Calvinism as Arminius was, though they deviated much further from sound doctrine than he did.”

Arminius based his teachings upon the teaching and philosophy of Pelagius, and upon Cassian, who came somewhat later and taught a modified Pelagianism. Pelagius was a horrible heretic. Seven points were prominent in his teaching, as recorded by Philip Schaff in Church History, Volume 3, pages 787–788. These points require no scriptural refutation; if their total and absolute error cannot be seen, we need to go back to step one. Here is what Pelagius taught.

Adam was created mortal and would have died even if he had not sinned. Second, Adam's fall injured himself alone and not the human race. Third, children who come into this world come into the same condition in which Adam was before the fall. By the way, that point is very prevalent in today's educational realm: tabula rasa, like a

blank tablet. In other words, they think every child comes into this world with a blank tablet. That's straight from Pelagius.

Fourth, Pelagius taught that the human race neither dies in consequence of Adam's fall, nor rises again in consequence of Christ's resurrection. Fifth, unbaptized children, as well as others, are saved. Sixth, the law as well as the gospel leads to the kingdom of heaven. Well, that would be true if you could obey the law, but nobody can obey the law. Seventh, even before Christ, there were sinless men. Pelagius taught all of these. Augustine, one of the early church fathers, defended the biblical positions against Pelagius and so devastated Pelagius's teachings that no one wanted to identify with him.

George Smeaton wrote, “Augustine's unanswerable polemic or argument had so fully discredited Pelagianism in the field of argument, that it could no longer be made plausible to the Christian mind. It collapsed. But a new system soon presented itself, teaching that man with his own natural powers is able to take the first step toward his conversion, and that this obtains or merits the Spirit's assistance.”

So, here's what happened. Pelagius was defeated. He was exposed as an absolute heretic by Augustine. Then Cassian came along and wanted to take some from Augustine and some from Pelagius and combine them. Cassian taught a modified, or semi-Pelagian, system.

Cassian acknowledged that Adam's sin extended to his posterity, and that human nature was corrupted by original sin. But, on the other hand, he held to a system of universal grace for all men alike, making the final decision in the case of every individual dependent upon the exercise of free will. Speaking of those who followed Cassian, Smeaton continues: “They held that the first movement of the will and the assent of faith must be ascribed to the natural powers of the human mind. Their maxim was this, it is mine to be willing and it is on the part of God's grace to assist.” They asserted the sufficiency of God's grace for all and that everyone, according to his own will, obeyed or rejected the invitation, while God equally wished and equally aided all men to be saved.

The entire system was a halfway house containing elements of error and elements of truth, yet not really differing from Pelagianism in its final result. We have the same theology preached and taught today. Whenever you hear a preacher say, "God has done all that He can for you; now it is up to you. You must take the first step," that is semi-Pelagianism, or Cassianism. It says that you must be willing, and once you are willing, God is obligated to assist and help you.

What starts with man ends with man, and ends for man's honor and glory. If God only assists in man's salvation, it is still man's salvation. According to semi-Pelagianism, man is not dead or impotent; he is alive, has some ability, and needs only a little help.

## The Remonstrance and Synod of Dort

What has all this to do with true theology and with the five points? In 1610, one year after the death of Arminius, his followers objected to the Belgic Confession of Faith, a Reformed or Calvinistic confession, and to the Heidelberg Catechism, written in Heidelberg, Germany, which was likewise Reformed or Calvinistic. Because they opposed the Belgic Confession, John Calvin, Theodore Beza, and the other reformers and their followers, they published their objections in a document called the Remonstrance of 1610.

The word remonstrance means to protest. The Arminians were protesting the Reformed faith. In 1610, they drew up this document, the Remonstrance of 1610. Therefore, the Arminians are sometimes called Remonstrants. They wanted to change the Belgic Confession of Faith, to which all the Reformed churches in Holland and Europe at that particular time had ascribed. The Belgic Confession was written mainly by Guido de Bray, a preacher and Reformed pastor. He died as a martyr in 1567.

In the Remonstrance of 1610, the Arminians presented five articles to the Dutch Reformed Church of Holland, in the form of this remonstrance or protest. They wanted the churches of Holland to adopt these articles as their standard of faith. Here are the five articles they wanted the church to adopt. Number one, each person is not spiritually helpless; each has a free will and can choose to be saved, which is a denial of total depravity. Number two, God chose

the elect on the basis of His foreknowledge of who would respond and be saved.

The election is based upon man's choice and not upon God's choice. The election, therefore, would be conditional and not unconditional. Number three, Christ died for everyone, but each person must choose to accept salvation: universal atonement, and a denial of effectual atonement. Number four, man can resist God. In essence, man is stronger than God, and God does not have the power or the right to go against man's will. Number five, whether or not man can lose his salvation is not clear. Later this point was changed to definitely teach the possibility of a truly regenerate believer losing his faith in salvation.

The five points came from the Arminians, who were presenting them to the churches of Holland and asking them to adopt them as their standard of faith. Here is what the Arminians were maintaining:

First, Scripture must be interpreted to teach that man is never so completely corrupted by sin that he cannot believe the gospel when it is placed before him. Second, man is never so controlled by God that he cannot reject the gospel. Third, God's election of those who shall be saved is prompted by His foreseeing that they will believe based upon their own will and accord. By the way, that is not an election; it is a ratification. Fourth, Christ's death did not ensure the salvation of anyone, for it did not secure the gift of faith to anyone. There is no such gift. What He died for was rather to create a possibility of salvation for everyone if they believe.

My own comment here is that there would therefore be a possibility that no one would believe. Isaiah 53:11 would then be wrong when he said, “In Christ you'll see the travail of his soul and be satisfied.” Fifth, they said that it rests with believers to keep themselves in a state of grace by keeping up their faith. Those who fail here and fall away are lost.

That is basically what they wanted the Dutch Reformed Church to accept. The church called for a national synod. The synod met in Dordrecht, Holland, on November 13, 1618. Hence, it is referred to as the Synod of Dort, D-O-R-T. The synod consisted of eighty-four

members and eighteen secular commissioners. Of the eighty-four scholars, fifty-eight were Dutch and the rest were foreigners from England and other parts of Europe. The Synod conducted 154 sessions and finally ended on May 9, 1619. The interesting thing about this Synod is that it did not matter whether you were a biblical scholar or a secular commissioner who happened to have been there. You will understand later why some of those commissioners were present.

Every individual who sat in this synod had to take a vow. The vow was: "I promise before God in whom I believe and whom I worship, as being present in this place, and as being the searcher of all hearts, that during the course of the proceedings of this synod, which will examine and decide not only the five points," that is, of the remonstrance, "and all the differences resulting from them, but also any other doctrine, I will use no human writing, but only the Word of God, which is the infallible rule of faith. And during all these discussions, I will only aim at the glory of God, the peace of the church, and especially the preservation of the purity of doctrine. So help me, my Savior, Jesus Christ. I beseech Him to assist me by His Holy Spirit."

If scholars and theologians believed that and would take a vow like that today, searching only the Scriptures, I tend to believe we'd see a change in our country. Here were biblical scholars gathering together to consider the five points that the Arminians had presented.

One of the remonstrants, Simon Episcopius, was one of the spokesmen. He was summoned to the Synod in 1618 and insisted on being permitted to begin with a refutation of the Calvinistic doctrines, especially that of reprobation. He hoped that by placing his objection to this doctrine in front of all the rest, he might excite such prejudice against all the other doctrines of the system as to secure the popular voice in his favor.

The Synod promptly reminded him that, as the remonstrants were accused of departing from the Reformed faith, they were bound first to justify themselves by giving scriptural proof in support of their opinions. The Arminians refused to do this. They refused to give what they considered scriptural proof for their opinions. When

the Synod would not allow them to go in and raise a disturbance, they withdrew.

They had presented five points that they wanted the Synod to consider, but the Arminians refused to answer questions, submit studies, or provide copies of their positions. They even denied the authority of the Synod. It was a long and tiresome struggle. The Synod said, "Look, just put your objections to the confession of faith in writing." They refused.

When one of the leaders, by the name of Bogerman, asked the Arminians if they acknowledged the Remonstrance of 1610 as truth—remember, they had written it, and it was their desire that it be accepted—they all remained silent.

Finally, on January 14, 1619, the Remonstrants were asked again to respond, and they replied that they would not submit to the authority of the Synod. Bogerman arose and said, “The foreign delegates”—that is, those from Europe and England—“are now of the opinion that you are unworthy to appear before the Synod. You have refused to acknowledge it as your lawful judge and regarded it as an opposing party.

“You’ve tried in everything to have your own way. You have despised the decision of the Synod and of the political commissioners. You refused to answer questions. You declared the credentials to be invalid. Synod has treated you with gentleness, but you have been lying from the beginning to the end, as one of our foreign theologians has remarked. With this eulogy, we will let you go. God will keep His Word, and He will bless the Synod.”

“In order that we will not be delayed any longer, you will be sent out. Depart! Go!” And thus they were kicked out of the Synod. The Synod proceeded without them. It then considered each of these five points in detail—not merely considering them, but taking them and refuting them with the Word of God. Thus came the five points commonly referred to as Calvinism.

These five points were brought into existence long after Calvin was dead. The reason there are five points is that the Arminians raised those five points. Therefore, the Synod said, “No, you are

wrong, and here is where you are wrong," and gave forth the five points as documented by Scripture.

One scholar, John Zardewitt, is very, very adamant in his judgment on the Arminians. He says, "Arminius and his successors were oath breakers. And to avoid the consequence of this offense, they in effect withdrew themselves from the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts while claiming to continue as faithful members of the church and placed themselves under the protection of the secular power." He goes on to say that a man is rarely honest enough to withdraw himself if his views become incompatible with the confessions of the church. Instead, he attempts by means of a strange line of reasoning to convert the church to his own understanding of truth. Isn't that true?

I had one man get upset with me at my preaching. He told me that where I was pastoring at that time, I ought to leave the church. He disagreed with what the Scripture said and what I was preaching. I told him very kindly and lovingly, "You know, it would be a whole lot easier for you to leave. If I left, I'd have to move my whole family. All you've got to do is walk across the street."

The amazing thing is this: people, instead of wanting to find out truth and submit to truth, if they differ, want you to change to them regardless. So the Arminians then were thoroughly and completely refuted and basically denounced as heretical. Note something: isn't it amazing that in 1619, if you were an Arminian, you were a heretic, while in 2012, if you're a Calvinist, you're a heretic? Arminianism has become the standard of the norm.

## Spurgeon's Assessment and Conclusion

Spurgeon said, "I've heard it asserted most positively, that those high doctrines which we love, and which we find in the Scriptures are licentious ones. I do not know who has the hardihood to make that assertion, when they consider that the holiest of men have been believers in them."

"I ask the man who dares to say that Calvinism is a licentious religion, what he thinks of the character of Augustine, or Calvin, or Whitefield, or in successive ages, were the great exponents of the

system of grace. What will he say of those Puritans whose works are full of them? Had a man been an Arminian in those days, he would have been accounted the vilest heretic breathing."

"But now we are looked upon as the heretics and they are orthodox." Spurgeon said, "Opposition to divine sovereignty is essentially atheism. Men have no objection to a God who is really no God—a God who shall be the subject of their caprice, who shall be a lackey to their will, who shall be under their control. They have no objection to such a being as that."

"But a God who speaks and it is done, who commands and it stands fast, a God who has no respect for their persons, but doeth as He wills among the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, such a God as this they cannot endure." The difference between Calvinism and Arminianism is not simply one of emphasis. Calvinists emphasize the responsibility of man as well. The difference is one of content. Either salvation is by God or salvation is by man. It cannot be both.

Spurgeon said, "The doctrine of justification itself as preached by an Arminian is nothing but the doctrine of salvation by works."

Further, he said, "There is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified unless we preach what nowadays is called Calvinism. The nickname to call it Calvinism. Calvinism is the gospel and nothing else. I do not believe we can preach the gospel if we do not preach justification by faith without works, nor unless we preach the sovereignty of God and His dispensation of grace, nor unless we exalt the electing, unchangeable, eternal, immutable, conquering love of Jehovah, nor do I think we can preach the gospel unless we base it upon the special and particular redemption of His elect and chosen people which Christ wrought out upon the cross, nor can I comprehend a gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called and suffers the children of God to be burned in fires of damnation."

"I do not serve the God of the Arminians at all. I have nothing to do with them or with Him. I do not bow before the Baal they have set up. He is not my God, nor shall He ever be. I fear Him not, nor tremble at His presence. The God that saith the day and denieth the morrow, that justifieth the day and condemns the next, is no relation

to my God in the least degree. He may be a relation to Asherah or Baal, but Jehovah never was nor can be His name." And that's true. The problem is this.

Arminianism appears as the gospel of Christ, but in reality, it is another gospel. It is a heresy, deadly and soul-ruining, all the more so because it is subtle, plausible, and popular.

You may ask how this can be proved from Scripture, and what really were the conclusions of the Synod of Dort. I respond that you will have to wait until next Sunday to find out. But I will show you from Scripture how God saves sinners: it is the work of God, not the work of man. God saves sinners.

When you hear someone detract from and denounce the five points, remind them that they are stated in negative terms because the Arminians presented them positively. Therefore, the five points, soteriologically, had to be presented negatively because they refute the false teachings of the Remonstrants and the Arminians.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your grace, for Your mercy, for Your love. We pray, Father, that You would help us as we fellowship around a meal together today, and that we would indeed bring honor and glorify Your name. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

# True Theology

*Part Two of Two*

## Introduction and Review of Calvinism vs. Arminianism

Our main text is Romans 11:36. We have been looking at a message entitled “True Theology,” and I think you will see today why it was given that title. Although we have been considering some history, there will be far more scriptural text today. The Scripture says, “For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen.”

You remember that “of Him”—that is, originally; “through Him”—that is, providentially; and “to Him”—that is, ultimately—are all things. God, then, is the sovereign. He is the most important and most holy being in the entire universe.

We have been looking at the terms Calvinism and Arminianism. It is important to remember that these two terms refer to far more than mere men. Calvin really had nothing to do with the term Calvinism or with the five points. Arminius never really had

anything to do with Arminianism. Calvin was dead long before Arminius came on the scene, because Arminius was only four years old when Calvin died. After Arminius died, the Remonstrants came along with the Remonstrance of 1610.

The important point is that these two terms, Calvinism and Arminianism, are like the handle of a pot. The handle may be inseparably connected to the pot, but it is not the same thing as the pot. The handle is simply a convenient way to pick up the pot. These terms are simply convenient terms in order to pick up a system, a body of thought, or a theology. The distinction between Calvinism and Arminianism is far more than mere emphasis; it is a distinction of content. One centers upon God and His relationship to man, while the other centers upon man and his relationship to God. One is God-centered, and the other is man-centered.

The truth is, it is only grace that opens our eyes to see that God is all and in all. By nature, each of us is born an Arminian. We always place ourselves first and consider that there is nothing more important or greater than man. George Whitefield said, "We are all born Arminians. It is grace that turns us into Calvinists."

It is certainly grace, because grace teaches us to understand that God is the greatest of all beings and that all things were made for Him, for His honor and His glory. Revelation 4:11 says, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created." Everything that ever came into existence has only come into existence at the pleasure of God and for His honor and His glory. Grace enables us to understand Proverbs 16:4: "The Lord hath made all things for Himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil."

## Grace Opens Eyes to God's Sovereignty

Grace teaches us that no man deserves anything from God except justice. Anything we get from God other than justice is grace and mercy. Grace teaches us that we are dead in trespasses and in sins, and totally and completely unable and incapable of doing anything that pleases God. That is why the Bible says in Romans 8, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

The only thing that you and I can do by nature is sin. Each of us has done plenty of that before our conversion, and unhappily we have even done some of it after our conversion. Grace opens our eyes and teaches us that God is all and in all.

The Arminians in the 1600s were also called Remonstrants. The word "Remonstrants" refers to a protester. The Arminians, or Remonstrants, protested against the Belgic Confession of Faith and the teachings of Calvin in the Reformed churches throughout Europe, especially in Holland. J. I. Packer analyzed the system of thought embodied in Arminianism, or in the Remonstrance: "The theology which it contained, known to history as Arminianism, stemmed from two philosophical principles."

## J.I. Packer's Analysis of Arminian Principles

First, divine sovereignty is not compatible with human freedom, nor therefore with human responsibility. Second, ability limits obligation. From these principles, the Arminians drew two deductions: since the Bible regards faith as a free and responsible act, it cannot be caused by God, but is exercised independently of Him; and since the Bible regards faith as obligatory on the part of all who hear the gospel, ability to believe must be universal.

Hence they maintain that Scripture teaches the following positions. First, man is never so completely corrupted by sin that he cannot savingly believe the gospel when it is put before him. Second, he is never so completely controlled by God that he cannot reject it. Third, God's election of those who shall be saved is prompted by His foreseeing that they will of their own accord believe. Fourth, Christ's death did not ensure the salvation of anyone, for it did not secure the gift to anyone. There is no such gift. What it did was rather create a possibility of salvation for everyone if they believe. Fifth, it rests with believers to keep themselves in a state of grace by keeping up their faith. Those who fail here and fall away are lost. Thus, Arminianism made man's salvation ultimately dependent upon man himself, saving faith being viewed throughout as man's own work and, because his own, not God's work in him.

When these five points were presented to the Synod of Dort, the Arminians were kicked out because they refused to even

acknowledge their own writings. The Synod considered these five points and not only refuted and rejected them, but set forth what we know as the five points in answer to the five points of the Arminians. Thus the Synod of Dort came out with this in the year 1619, years after Calvin was dead and a few years after Arminius died as well. One scholar writes concerning the Synod: "The Synod has given a very close examination to the five points which had been advanced by the Remonstrants, and had compared the teaching advanced in them with the testimony of Scripture."

## The Synod of Dort's Response and Conclusions

"Failing to reconcile that teaching with the Word of God, which they had definitely declared could alone be accepted by them as the rule of faith, they had unanimously rejected them." The Synod unanimously rejected the five points of the Arminians. They felt, however, that a mere rejection was not sufficient. It remained for them to set forth the true Calvinistic teaching in relationship to those matters which had been called into question. This they proceeded to do, embodying the Calvinist position in five chapters, which ever since has been known as the five points of Calvinism. The five points relate only to soteriology, that is, the doctrine of salvation.

The reason those five points were there is because the Arminians presented five points, and the Synod of Dort was answering those points and setting forth what Scripture really taught. The conclusions of the Synod of Dort are important because the Arminians wanted to set the Synod and anybody who believed the Reformed faith in a very bad light. They were extremely uncharitable and were casting dispersions upon the truth. They were finally kicked out of the Synod because of their rebellion, stubbornness, and refusal to cooperate.

Here are the conclusions of the Synod of Dort: "And so this is clear, simple and straightforward explanation of the Orthodox teaching on the five articles in dispute in the Netherlands, as well as the rejection of the errors by which the Dutch churches have for some time been disturbed. The explanation and rejection the Synod declares to be derived from God's Word and in agreement with the confessions of the Reformed Churches."

"Hence, it clearly appears that those of whom could hardly expect it have shown no truth, equity, and charity at all in wishing to make the public believe." The Arminians then set forth what they wanted everybody to believe: "The teaching of the Reformed churches on predestination and on the points associated with it by its very nature and tendency draws the mind of the people away from all godliness and religion, is an opiate of the flesh and the devil, and is a stronghold of Satan wherein he lies in wait for all people, wounds most of them, and fatally pierces many of them with the errors of both despair and self-assurance.

"That this teaching"—that is, Arminianism—"makes God the author of sin"—or, rather, that is what the Arminians were saying about the Calvinists—"that this teaching makes God the author of sin, unjust, a tyrant, and a hypocrite, and is nothing but a refurbished Stoicism, Manichaeism, Libertinism, and Mohammedanism. That this teaching"—that is, Calvinism—"makes people carnally self-assured, since it persuades them that nothing endangers the salvation of the chosen, no matter how they live, so that they may commit the most outrageous crimes with self-assurance; and that, on the other hand, nothing is of use to the reprobate for salvation, even if they've truly performed all the works of the saints."

They further wanted the public to believe that this teaching means God predestinated and created, by the bare and unqualified choice of His will, without the least regard or consideration of any sin, the greatest part of the world to eternal condemnation; that, in the same manner in which election is a source and cause of faith and good works, reprobation is the cause of unbelief and ungodliness; and that many infant children of believers are snatched in their innocence from their mother's breast and cruelly cast into hell, so that neither the blood of Christ nor the baptism or prayers of the church at their baptism can—

The Synod of Dort, in the name of the Lord, pleads with all who devoutly call on the name of our Savior Jesus Christ to form their judgment about the faith of the Reformed churches, not on the basis of false accusations gathered from here or there, or on the basis of personal statements of ancient and modern authorities—statements

often quoted out of context, misquoted, and twisted to convey a different meaning—but on the basis of the church's own official confessions and the present explanation of Orthodox teaching, endorsed by the unanimous consent of the members of the whole Synod, one and all. These are slanderous accusations which Reformed churches not only disavow, but even denounce with their whole heart. Moreover, the Synod earnestly warns the false accusers themselves to consider how heavy a judgment God awaits for those who give false testimony against so many churches and their confessions, trouble the consciences of the weak, and seek to prejudice the minds of many against the fellowship of true believers.

Finally, this Synod urges all ministers in the gospel of Christ to deal with this teaching in a godly and reverent manner in academic institutions as well as in churches, both in speaking and writing, with a view to the glory of God's name, holiness of life, and the comfort of anxious souls. They are to think and speak with Scripture according to the analogy of faith, and refrain from all ways of speaking that go beyond the bounds set by the genuine sense of the Holy Scriptures, lest impertinent sophists have justification to scoff at the teachings of the Reformed churches or bring false accusations against them.

May God's Son, Jesus Christ, who sits at the right hand of God and gives gifts to men, sanctify us in the truth, lead to the truth those who err, silence the mouth of those who lay false accusations against sound teaching, and equip faithful ministers of His Word with a spirit of wisdom and discretion, that all they say may be to the glory of God and the building up of the hearers. Amen.

I thought that was an excellent conclusion, but I want you to note something. They admonish not only pastors and ministers, but all believers, to speak with Scripture according to the analogy of faith. The analogy of faith is simply the teaching of the whole Word of God. So if I read a verse here and say to myself, “Ah, this verse teaches such and such,” and go around saying, “This is what the Bible teaches. Look in this verse right here,” I must understand that verse according to the whole teaching of God's Word.

What have I not done? I have not consulted what Scripture as a whole teaches. I must interpret this verse in light of the totality of the

teaching of the Word of God. I cannot take one verse out of context or make it mean something that the rest of Scripture does not teach. Most errors of individuals who hold erroneous doctrine are based upon this one simple context. They will take a verse out of context, or say, "Well, this verse teaches this," with absolutely no regard to what the Bible teaches as a whole.

What the Synod of Dort is saying is this: we want everything based upon the Word of God, and based upon the total teaching of the Word of God. I want to show you the crux of what has been going on since the 1600s; it is still going on today. Here is the real issue between Calvinism and Arminianism.

## The Crux: Does God Save Sinners or Help Them Save Themselves?

Does God save sinners, or does God help sinners save themselves? I am going to show you the Calvinistic position, which is the Bible position, and I am going to break it down into three words and show it from Scripture. Here are the three words: God saves sinners. God saves sinners.

## God: The Triune God

The first word is God. By God, I mean the triune God—the one true and living God who has revealed Himself in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is one God, but that one God has revealed Himself in three distinct persons, and each person is involved in salvation. I will show you a little later that, without the three persons, we would have no salvation.

When I begin to discuss the Trinity, or the triune God—one God revealed in three persons—I must tell you that I cannot explain it. I can give illustration after illustration, but to explain or define God is to limit God. You cannot limit the limitless God or the infinite God. You cannot explain God. If you could explain God, you would be greater than God. But I will tell you what the Scripture teaches.

I want to read to you the Athanasian Creed, though I will not read all of it. To me, it is one of the most beautiful and easily understood creeds. Athanasius lived in the fourth century, and in the fourth

century they were fighting heresy even then. So he formulated this creed. The word “Catholic” will be used several times. Please understand that when Athanasius uses the word “Catholic,” he is not referring to the Roman Catholic Church. The word “Catholic” by itself simply means universal. That is all he means here. Listen carefully, because he is talking about the Trinity, and yet he is talking about the three in one: “Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic”—or universal—“faith.”

“Which faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the Catholic faith is this: that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in unity, neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance. There is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit. But the Godhead of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is all one, the glory equal, and the majesty co-eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit: the Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, and the Holy Spirit uncreated; the Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Spirit incomprehensible; the Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Spirit eternal. And yet there are not three eternals, incomprehensibles, or uncreated, but one eternal and one incomprehensible. Likewise, the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Spirit Almighty; yet there are not three Almighties, but one Almighty. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God; yet there are not three Gods, but one God.

“So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Spirit Lord, yet there are not three lords but one Lord. For we are compelled by the Christian verity”—the Christian truth—“to acknowledge each person by himself to be both God and Lord. We are also forbidden by the Catholic”—or universal—“religion to say that there are three gods or three lords. The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone, not made, not created, but begotten. The Holy Spirit is of the Father, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. There is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; and one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits. In the Trinity, none is before or after another, none is greater or less than the other, but all three persons are co-eternal together and co-equal. Thus the unity in Trinity and

the Trinity in unity is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved must think thus of the Trinity."

What heresy has done down through the years is either try to confound the persons or divide the substance or divide the essence, which is absolutely impossible. When a Calvinist says "God," he is referring to the triune God as revealed in Scripture: one God in three persons. The one true and living God has revealed Himself in Scripture in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That is what we mean when we use the word "God."

## Saves: God Actually Saves

The second word is saves. God saves sinners. The word "saves" simply means that God actually saves. He does not make us savable and leave everything then to man. Our Lord declared in Luke 9:56, "For the Son of Man has not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." He said in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." He came to seek and to save, not to make savable, not merely to offer salvation, but to save that which was lost. So God actually saves.

Why is our Lord's earthly name Jesus? Jesus in the Greek, Yahashua or Yeshua in the Hebrew, means "salvation is of the Lord" or "God saves." Jesus literally means "God saves." Jesus and Joshua are basically the same name. Matthew 1:21 says, "And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus." Why? "For He shall save His people from their sins." Why is He called Joshua? Why is He called Jesus, which means Savior or Salvation is of God? Because He shall actually save His people from their sins.

There is a big difference between saving and simply making someone savable, putting someone in a position of being savable, or offering salvation. Colossians 1:12–13 says that the Father has done this for us: "Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." Verse 12 says we need to thank the Father because He has made us meet, or acceptable, to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

How did He do that? Colossians 1:13 says, “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.” He actually took us from one kingdom and put us into another kingdom. He actually delivered us. He actually saved us. God saves sinners. The Bible is saying here that God powerfully and mercifully removed us from the kingdom of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.

God did not simply open a door and say, “All right, the door is open, walk through it of your own will.” If God had done that, every sinner would have slammed the door shut as fast as he could and turned and run the other way. Why? Because man by nature hates God.

That is what Romans 8 says. The carnal mind is enmity against God. It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So if God had simply made salvation possible, no man would have been saved. All you have to do is read Romans chapter 3: “There is none righteous, no, not one. There’s none that understandeth. There’s none that seeketh God.” They’re all going out of the way. They’re all unprofitable.

Mark chapter 10 makes it obvious why our Lord must actually save. The passage concerns the rich young ruler who walked away from Christ because of his great riches. “And Jesus looked round about”—after the rich young ruler had walked away—“and Jesus looked round about and said unto His disciples, ‘How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God.’ And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and saith unto them, ‘Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.’” Now let me ask you, is there anyone in this room that can take a camel and put him through the eye of a needle?

He said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." "And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, 'Who then can be saved?'" I want you to note that the question deals with salvation: "Who then can be saved?" And Jesus, looking upon them, saith,

"With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible."

Now what did our Lord just get out of His mouth? "With men it is impossible." I was preaching one time in Louisiana, showing how a man was absolutely, totally depraved, unable to do anything. After the service, one woman came up to me and said, "Pastor Weaver, you just make it so hard for someone to be saved." I looked at her and said, "Well, I apologize. I did not make it hard for a sinner to be saved. I meant to make it impossible. Because with man, it is impossible. You cannot save yourself. God must save you."

"Looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Jesus Christ is designated as the author and the finisher of our faith. In other words, Jesus Christ is the Alpha and the Omega. He is the beginning and the end, and He is everything in between. We are totally and completely dependent upon Him. Sinners do not save themselves in any measure at all, or by any stretch of the imagination, because salvation, first and last, whole and entire, past, present and future, is of the Lord, to whom be honor and glory forever. Amen. God actually saves. Listen carefully: God saves sinners.

## Sinners: Christ Came for Sinners

It is absolutely amazing and a wonderful truth that our Lord saves sinners. In Luke 5:32, our Lord declares, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Sinners need saving; sinners need deliverance.

Over and over, the self-righteous Pharisees mocked our Lord. They said in Luke 15:2, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." In Matthew 11:19, they accused Christ of being the friend of publicans and sinners. I am thankful that our Lord was and still is the friend of sinners, and that He still associates with sinners. Accordingly, according to Luke 15:1, sinners will listen to Him: "Then drew near Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him."

The self-righteous hypocrites and the Pharisees would have nothing to do with them. They wanted nothing to do with Christ. But sinners would listen to Him. He came not to call the righteous. You and I both know that there are none righteous, but many individuals arrogantly and pharisaically think themselves so. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Who is a sinner? Those who are guilty and vile and wicked; they are law-breaking, trespassers, rebellious, sinful, and depraved. Those are the ones our Lord came to seek and to save. He did not come for the self-righteous or the arrogant. No. He came to seek and to save that which was lost.

Romans 5:6–8 says, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Who did Christ die for? The ungodly. He died for sinners. He did not die for the self-righteous.

**SCRIPTURE READING - Ephesians 1:1-11 (KJV)**

If you are a sinner, you need to be encouraged. You are the one whom our Lord came to seek and to save. I do not care how wicked or vile you are, what you have done, or what you have not done. If you are a sinner, if you are ungodly, you are in the category that our Lord came to seek and to save. God saves sinners.

Turn to Ephesians chapter 1. Look in Ephesians chapter 1, because I want you to see that God actually saves sinners. We will read, first of all, Ephesians 1, verses 1 through 14. Lord willing, I am going to come back in a month or so—I do not know how long—and preach seven or eight messages from this text.

## The Work of the Triune God in Salvation (Ephesians 1)

In the Greek, this is the longest sentence in the Greek Testament. Although you will find a period in your King James Bibles, actually the sentence begins and does not end until you

get to verse 14. Look, because you are going to see here the work of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus and to the faithful in Christ Jesus. Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace"—talking about Christ now—"wherein He abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known unto us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He hath purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance."

“Being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will, that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ, in whom you also trusted after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.”

Now, look at the work of the Father. Go back to verse 3: “Blessed be the God and Father.” In verse 4, what has God done for us? “According as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world.” God chose us. Verse 5 gives the second thing the Father did: “Having predestinated us.” He chose us, and He predestinated us.

Verse 6 says, “To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.” According to this verse, He

has made us acceptable. One of the things I try to emphasize concerns the way many people witness. They will look at a sinner and say, “Will you accept Christ?” That is bad terminology.

What you should ask is this: “Would you receive Christ as He is fully and freely offered in the gospel?” What is the difference? The word “accepted” here literally means to be made gracious. When God saves a sinner, He has to take that sinner and make him gracious and beautiful. That is what this word means. God the Father does not have to make Jesus Christ gracious and beautiful; He already is. Therefore, we need to receive Him as He is fully and freely offered in the gospel.

The Father has chosen us, predestinated us, and made us accepted. What has the Son done for us? Verse 7 says, “In whom we have redemption.” He has redeemed us. Verse 8 says, “Wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence.” In summary, He educated us. He abounded toward us in wisdom and prudence. What else did the Son do for us in verse 11?

"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance." So, the Son then has redeemed us. He's educated us. We have obtained an inheritance in Him.

What has the Spirit done? Ephesians says, "That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ, in whom you also trusted after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." What did He do in verse 12 and the first part of verse 13? He quickened us. So the Spirit quickened us and enabled us to believe. That's the same word that's used in Ephesians 2:1: "And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." The word "quickened" means to be made alive. So He quickened us and enabled us to trust in Him.

Look in the latter part of verse 13. Here's the second thing the Holy Spirit did: "In whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." So the Spirit not only quickened us, He sealed us. Then if you look in verse 14: "Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory."

So the Holy Spirit then is our earnest. Everybody knows what an earnest is, I hope. If I come up to Clay and say, "I want to buy your truck. How much you want for it?" He says, "I want $5,000." I say, "Okay, I'll buy it, but I've got to go get the money." He says, "Well, give me some earnest money. Give me $500." And that way he knows I am coming back.

Do you realize the Holy Spirit is our earnest? We know that our Lord is returning back for us, for He's given us the earnest of His Spirit.

Now, let me show you what we've just done. I'm just trying to show you that God saves sinners. We picked out from the Scripture the work of the Father, the work of the Son, and the work of the Spirit. It's the Father who chose us, who predestinated us, who made us acceptable. It was the Son who redeemed us, who educated us, who obtained for us an inheritance. It's the Spirit who quickened us, who sealed us, and who is our earnest. God saves sinners. We looked at the Scriptures, and we saw this is what the Father did, this is what the Son did, and this is what the Holy Spirit did.

## Salvation is of the Lord Alone

Instead of reading these truths horizontally, read them vertically. Those whom the Father chose, the Son redeemed, and the Spirit quickened; those whom the Father predestinated, the Son educated, and the Spirit sealed; those whom the Father made acceptable, the Son obtained an inheritance for, and the Holy Spirit became the earnest of their salvation. Salvation is the work of the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. If you deny the Trinity, you deny salvation. Salvation is the work of God alone. God saves sinners. Jonah was correct when he said in Jonah 2:9, "salvation is of the Lord."

You may say, "But I know that the Scripture shows that, but I believed." Yes, I know you believed, but from whence did your faith originate? Did it originate with you, or did it come from God? "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

You may say, "But I repented!" I know that you repented. But from whence did repentance come? Did it come from you or from God? The Bible tells us that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, that He might give repentance. Acts 11:18 says, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." And 2 Timothy 2:24-26 says, "If God peradventure will give them repentance." Repentance is the gift of God.

You may say, "I not only believed and repented; when I came to Christ, I was willing to come to Christ." I know you were. But who made you willing? Why were you unwilling to come to Christ for so long, and then suddenly willing to come to Christ? Philippians 2:13 says, "It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Faith is God's gift, and when I believe, I am exercising the gift God gave me. Repentance is God's gift, and when I turn from my sins, I am exercising that gift. When I willingly come to Christ, I know that I have been drawn of the Father, because "no man can come unto Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him."

In other words, I acknowledge that salvation is of the Lord. My faith is of God. My repentance is of God. My willingness is of God. Everything I am and everything I have came from Him. Our Lord said in John 15:5, "Without Me you can do"—how much?—"nothing."

Charles Spurgeon said, "When I was coming to Christ, I thought I was doing it all myself. And though I sought the Lord earnestly, I had no idea the Lord was seeking me."

"I do not think the young convert is at first aware of this. I can recall the very day and hour when first I received those truths in my own soul, when they were, as John Bunyan said, burnt into my heart as with a hot iron. I can now recollect how I felt I had grown all of a sudden from a babe into a man, that I had made progress in scriptural knowledge. Having found once for all the clue to the truth of God, I saw that God was the bottom of it all, and that He was the author of my faith. So the whole doctrine of grace opened up to me, and from that doctrine I have not departed unto this day. I desire to make this my constant confession: 'I ascribe my change wholly to God.'"

Spurgeon also said, "I will go as far as Martin Luther when he says, ‘If any man ascribes anything of salvation, even the very least of it, to the free will of man, he knows nothing of grace, and he's not learned Jesus Christ rightly.’"

Those who understand that salvation is of the Lord will honor the Lord the most, because we realize that He alone is salvation. As Peter said in Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." It is Jesus Christ and Him alone. He has done it all. Yes, we respond; yes, we believe; yes, we repent; yes, we come willingly. But it is God who gives us that faith and repentance and makes us willing to come to Him.

For without Him, we can do nothing. When we get to glory by the grace of God, we will not be saying, "I'm so glad I made a decision." We will be saying, "I'm so glad that God saves sinners," because salvation is of God.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You. We acknowledge Your mercy, love, grace, goodness, and kindness. Lord, we confess again that salvation is of the Lord. Thank You, Father, for sending Jesus Christ; for His suffering, sacrifice, and substitution; and for the Holy Spirit of God, who convicts and enlightens us. Thank You, Father. We acknowledge that salvation is of the Lord, and acknowledge salvation is of the Lord, and we give Thee all the honor and all the glory through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen. Amen.

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