

IX. SALVATION

The Greatest Gift to Mankind

So now that God's wrath has been appeased and Christ has broken down the wall between us and Him, how exactly does this salvation thing work? Is there more to do? Is there a secret handshake or password? Do we have to recite the Ten Commandments or go to church every Sunday? Is God just waiting for us to choose Him? Is everyone saved? If not, why? Let's look at a few things to help us understand this great gift of salvation.

✠ A BRIEF HISTORY OF SOTERIOLOGY ✠

In speaking of this victory and purchasing of us by the atoning work of Christ, it becomes important for us to look what exactly is purchased. In the last 400 years, the discussion (a nice way of saying "the debate") about this has largely been between two sects of Christian beliefs known as *Calvinism*✠ and *Arminianism*✠.

We won't be looking too deeply at these two sides, because we want, first and foremost, to go to the Scriptures to ascertain our *soteriology*✠ (study of salvation). That said, these two "sects" of Christian theology, and in particular, Christian soteriology, have by and large shaped much, if not most of, our understanding of what the Scripture says about salvation and how it "works." Therefore, it would be beneficial to understand a little bit about the two perspectives to help us examine what we believe and why. So, without going into an *extensive* study on the two groups, I will give a little background information and a small snapshot of what the two views entail when it comes to this particular doctrine of soteriology.



John Calvin

Calvinism

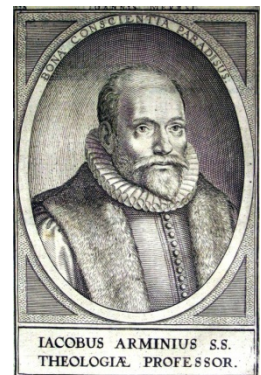
Calvinist theology, also called *Reformed theology*✠ (so named because it sprung from the *Reformation*✠⁶⁴³) is a theological system that derived in its modern form from the great theologian named John Calvin (1509-1564). He was a Dutchman who lived in the 16th century who helped spur on the Reformation, which was sparked by Martin Luther in 1517, when Calvin was only 8 years old. Luther's writings had inspired him greatly, and though they were contemporaries, they never met during their time on the earth. Calvin took many of Luther's themes and built upon them. The theological insights he penned have been incredibly important and have greatly influenced the church ever since.

Calvin's greatest work is called the *Institutes of Christian Religion*, his work of systematic theology, and, outside of Scripture itself, it is one of the most important works of Christian literature ever written.

Arminianism

Arminianism, sometimes called Wesleyanism (as it was made popular by the great John Wesley, who in turn started the Methodist Church) is the following of another theologian named Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609). Arminius was a fan of Calvin's work, and even studied under Calvin's successor and disciple, Theodore Beza. Arminius even said this about Calvin's work:

Next to the perusal of the Scriptures, which I earnestly inculcate, I exhort my pupils to peruse Calvin's commentaries, which I extol in loftier terms than Helmschlosser himself; for I affirm that he excels beyond comparison in the interpretation of Scripture, and that his commentaries ought to be more highly valued than all that is handed down to us by the Library of the Fathers; so that I acknowledge him to have possessed above most others, or rather above all other men, what may be called an eminent gift of prophecy.



⁶⁴³ The Reformation, in a nutshell, was a movement that started in 1517 when Martin Luther, who was at the time a Roman Catholic monk, came to realize through reading the Scripture that many of the practices and beliefs of the Catholic Church were not Scriptural. What set him off was when one of the Pope's commissioners was sent to Germany, where Luther was, to collect money to build St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. The "fund raiser" wasn't Girl Scout Cookies, however, it was what are called "indulgences," which was a way of "selling" forgiveness of sins. You could buy, for instance, indulgences could be sold on behalf of loved ones in Purgatory (a false doctrine in itself) to get them to heaven quicker. He wrote out this and his other grievances in an article called his "95 Theses" and nailed them to the door of his church in Wittenberg, Germany.

Nonetheless, Arminius did find things in Calvin’s theology that he didn’t like, and so in his teachings, he pursued other thoughts. But it was only after his death in 1609 that his theological differences were systematized as the “Five Articles of the Remonstrants.”⁶⁴⁴

These five points articulated the main discrepancies that the Arminians disagreed with. Then, almost ten years after that, and 55 years after Calvin’s death, followers of Calvin’s teachings responded to the “Five Articles of the Remonstrants” with what they called the “Five Points of Calvinism.”

For this reason, it is helpful to understand each “camp.”

In a *nutshell*, here are each position’s five “points” and where they agree and disagree. The order here is in order of the original Arminian order, with the Calvinist response. Today, however, the commonly held “order” is by the acronym **T.U.L.I.P.**,⁶⁴⁵ which is **T**otal Depravity (Article 3), **U**nmerited Election (Article 1), **L**imited Atonement (Article 2), **I**rresistible Grace (Article 4), and **P**erseverance of the Saints (Article 5). These terms can be sometimes confusing, and to be honest, some of the terms, in and of themselves, tend to be a bit cold and clinical. I hope to shed light on them so we can rightly see in Scripture what precisely they are in regards to our salvation:

ARTICLE	ARMINIAN	CALVINIST
1. Election/Predestination	Election is conditional upon faith in Christ; God elects those He knows beforehand who will have faith.	Election is unconditional. Christ purchased us on the cross, and He chose before the foundations of the world who He would save.
2. Limited/Unlimited Atonement	Unlimited Atonement: Christ died for all. The death of Christ purchased the possibility for anyone to get saved. The atonement is applied to those who willfully choose Christ.	Limited Atonement: Christ died for those whom the Father chose and gave Him before the foundations of the world. His blood actually purchases their salvation.
3. Total Depravity	Man cannot save himself by his own choice, but needs God’s grace to open his eyes and make him alive.	Agrees with Arminian position. ⁶⁴⁶
4. Irresistible/Resistible Grace	Man has the free will to resist God’s grace, even if by God’s grace their eyes are opened.	Man can and does resist God, but if God opens the eyes of a non-believer and makes them alive to see their real need for a Savior, they will respond to God’s grace positively. This is based on the concept that it is God who chooses us, not simply that He knows who will choose Him.
5. Perseverance of the Saints/Eternal Security	Eternal security is conditional based on the believer’s decisions to remain faithful to Christ. Even a true believer can lose their salvation.	Eternal security is unconditional. If God chose you, it is up to His power and ability to keep you. True believers can’t lose salvation.

We will briefly cover each of these as we look at salvation, quickly giving both sides, but focusing on the side (or agreement of sides) that I would put forward as being more in concert with the whole of Scripture.

⁶⁴⁴ <http://www.cVOICE.org/creedremonstrants.html>

⁶⁴⁵ The acronym TULIP was created to more easily remember the five points. It is of recent origin, and most older Reform theologians wouldn’t put it in that order because it isn’t in “chronological” order of how we understand soteriology.

⁶⁴⁶ One major difference, however, is that Arminians believe that since the cross, as detailed in Article 2, simply and only made salvation *possible*, they “solve” the problem of Total Depravity *not* with God sovereignly choosing them before the foundations of the world (since they believe He simply foreknew (as they see it, “knew the future”) that we would choose, detailed in Article 1), but that the cross gave a universal grace which is called “prevenient” grace (which means preceding). It is a grace bestowed on everyone, making them, who are in fact totally depraved, now able to respond to the cross. This is a major difference, and it means that ultimately (or effectively), Arminians deny Total Depravity. In a sense, they do deny it, but in another, they don’t. I therefore, agree with them on Total Depravity, but not on how they reconcile it (since I see no Scriptural basis for prevenient grace).

The Ongoing Legacy of Calvinism and Arminianism

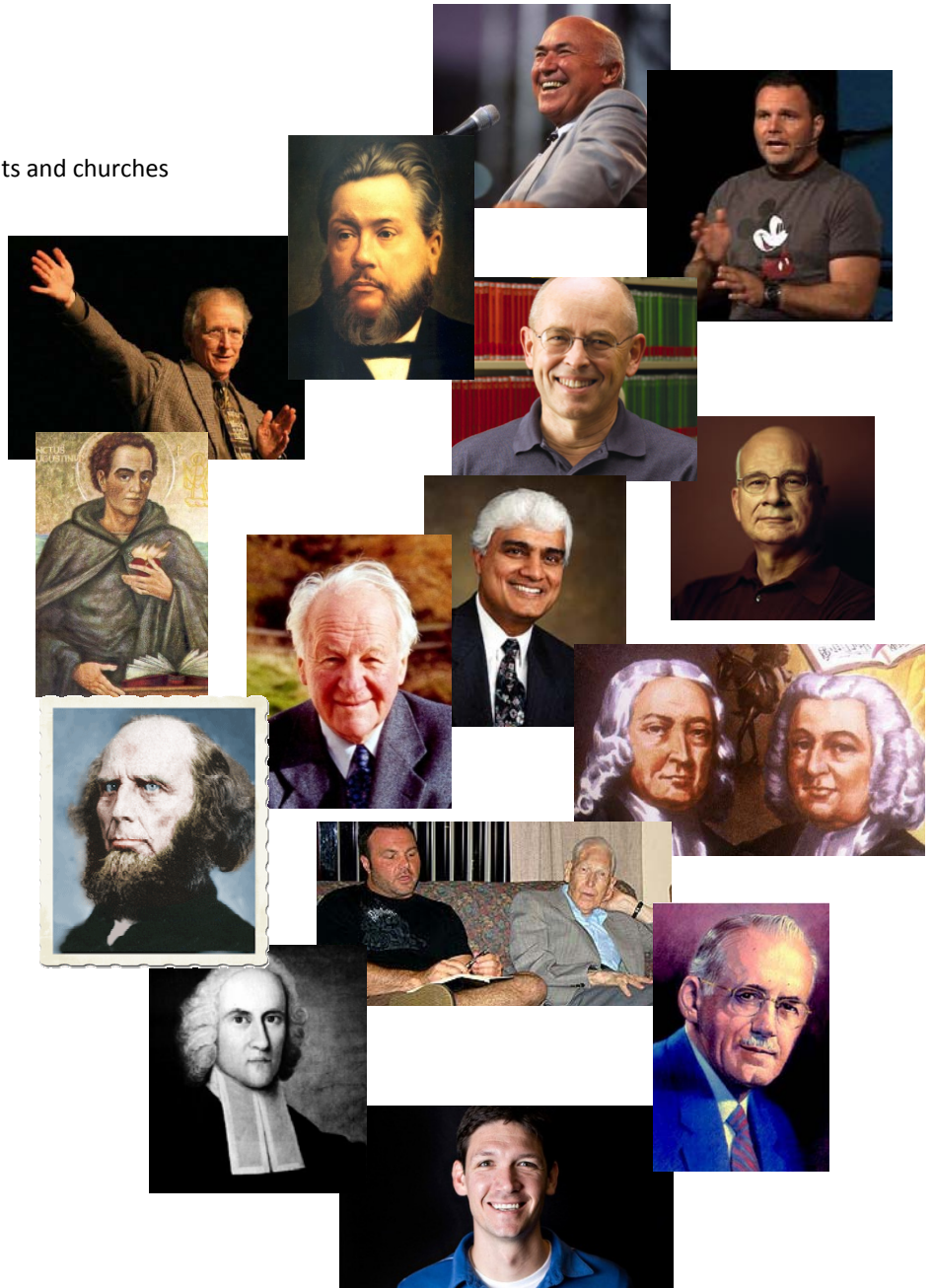
Now to catch us up after 400 years of church history, we can see that the legacy of both men lives on, as do the discussions on which side is “more biblical.” Here’s a partial list of some of the more famous people and movements and where they land. Keep in mind, this doesn’t mean that *every* last bit of doctrine of any particular person is exclusive to where they are listed, nor is *every* individual church or denomination exclusive to where they are listed.

Arminian

- Methodist Church, founded by John Wesley
- Holiness movement, which would include many Pentecostal churches
- Calvary Chapel (founder Chuck Smith’s background is from the Four Square Church)
- Foursquare Church
- Church of the Nazarene
- Assemblies of God
- Young Life
- Campus Crusade for Christ
- Many charismatic movements and churches
- John and Charles Wesley
- Charles Finney
- Thomas Oden
- Norman Geisler
- Chuck Smith
- Greg Laurie
- G. Campbell Morgan
- Ravi Zacharias
- A.W. Tozer

Calvinist/Reformed

- Presbyterian Church
- Baptist Church
- Puritans
- Augustine
- John Frame
- Martin Luther
- Episcopal Church
- Lutheran Church
- John Piper
- John Stott
- J.I. Packer
- Paul Washer
- Jonathon Edwards
- Wayne Grudem
- Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones
- Joshua Harris
- C.J. Mahaney
- Mark Driscoll
- Tim Keller
- John MacArthur
- Matt Chandler
- David Platt
- R.C. Sproul
- D.A. Carson
- Richard Baxter
- C.H. Spurgeon



It’s time to play “Name That Theologian”!

From the list at left, guess who is who!
(Answers on page 222)

A disclaimer:

Many of these particular issues that are disagreed on fall in the category of “open hand” doctrines, in the sense that they aren’t necessary for salvation and being a good, bible-believing, Jesus-loving Christian. They may, however, fall in the category of open handed *convictions*, meaning that while unnecessary for solid Christian faith, they may be vital in how you approach your faith and how you interact with God, other believers, non-believers, the church, etc.

So, while in one hand we shouldn’t overreact and get into arguments or nasty divisions over these things, we should also not under-react (new word for your dictionary) in thinking that it doesn’t matter at all, because it does.

Once I saw this guy on a bridge about to jump. I said, "Don't do it!"

He said, "Nobody loves me."

I said, "God loves you. Do you believe in God?"

He said, "Yes."

I said, "Are you a Christian, Muslim, or a Jew?"

He said, "A Christian."

I said, "Me, too! Protestant or Catholic?"

He said, "Protestant."

I said, "Me, too! What denomination?"

He said, "Non-denominational."

I said, "Me, too! Charismatic, Pentecostal, or cessationist?"

He said, "Charismatic."

I said, "Me, too! Calvinist or Arminian?"

He said, "Calvinist."

I said, "Me, too! Four Point or Five Point Calvinist?"

He said, "Five Point."

I said, "Me, too! Do you read the NASB, KJV, or ESV?"

He said, "NASB."

I said, "Me, too! Are you amil, premil, postmil, or preterist?"

He said, "postmil."

I said, "Me too! Are you supralapsarian or infralapsarian?"

He said, "supralapsarian."

I said, "Me too! Are you covenant, new covenant, dispensational, modified dispensational, or progressive applicatory dispensational?"

He said, "progressive applicatory dispensational."

I said, "Die, heretic!" And I pushed him over.

Sad...but true.

We must *always* walk in humility, not trying to “pick teams” or be divisive. Paul noted this with the problem church in Corinth:

1 Corinthians 1.12-15

What I mean is that each one of you says, “I follow Paul,” or “I follow Apollos,” or “I follow Cephas,” or “I follow Christ.” 13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? 14 I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name.

I think Calvin and Arminius both could put their name in there and say “why do you say, ‘I follow Calvin,’ or ‘I follow Arminius?’ Was Calvin crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Arminius?”

**The goal here is not to choose sides,
but to understand what we believe and why we believe it.**

But know that it isn't necessarily *wrong* either, to identify with certain teachers, as long as we identify with humility, for even Paul himself said, “follow my example as I follow the example of Christ.”⁶⁴⁷ The heart is what is in question.



C.S. Lewis: One of the
Greatest Irishmen of All Time

Additionally, many would argue that we should all “just be Christians.” At the core of this statement, I wholeheartedly agree, and I love how C.S. Lewis puts it that we should all simply be “mere Christians,” and not divide ourselves. That said, it should also be taken to heart that this concept really only exists in a perfect world where there are no false teachings, heresies, legalism, liberalism, and distortions of the Gospel.

For instance, if we *all* just said “I’m just going to call myself or associate myself as a “Christian,” because denominations are stupid and divisive,” then you would inadvertently lump yourself with *every* “Christian” sect, including Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, Unitarians, Baptists, Catholics, Presbyterians, Rastafarians, Lutherans, Calvary Chapels, Arminians, Calvinists, Methodists, non-denominationalists, Pentecostals, charismatics, the televangelists with big hair and sparkly clothes, and the mean-spirited Westboro Baptist folks and the Aryan Nation (white supremacists).

Therefore, even C.S. Lewis related Christianity as a great meeting hall where we all come with our “close handed” like theology and values, and off of the hall are individual rooms where we humbly retreat with like-minded believers according to our own “open handed” beliefs. So there is a great and open fellowship with many, and a time and place to live and grow with a small group of like-minded believers.⁶⁴⁸

So, while denominations *can be* divisive (and sadly, often are, as we jokingly saw), they can also be good and healthy to help differentiate between good theology and bad theology; *or sometimes even* simply differentiate between two acceptable theologies with varying values. Therefore, as C.S. Lewis commends, so long as we agree on the “close handed” issues of salvation,⁶⁴⁹ we can have solidarity in our faith, unity in our love for one another, and diversity in our particular convictions and values.

Discussions – YES! Disagreements – YES! Division – NO!

-Chuck Smith

Just for fun, and to show you how crazy it can get, I would more or less officially be an:

Irish-American, Reformed, Protestant, four and a half point Calvinist, new covenant, infralapsarian, non-denominational, continuationist, premillennial, and orthodox born again Christian theologian, Elder-Pastor, teacher, husband, dad, friend and child of God.

But I used to be just an Irish-American going to hell.

⁶⁴⁷ 1 Corinthians 11.1

⁶⁴⁸ Just for the sake of clarity, to be part of this corporate church in the great meeting all, the “close handed” things must be agreed upon. Therefore, “Christian” type groups such as Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Rastafarians, Aryan Nation, Westboro Baptist, Unitarians, and Universalists wouldn’t even get invited to the party. No room at the inn, so to speak, as they’re preaching “another Jesus.” (2 Corinthians 11.4)

⁶⁴⁹ see the Ancient Creeds in the first section for the main “close handed” doctrines, pg. 8-10

So What did the Atonement Purchase for Us?

To begin with, without going, again, into *too* much detail, one of the largest debates and disagreements of these five points rests on the atonement, which is **Article 3** in the above chart. These two camps have differing views on the nature of the atonement and on what exactly it accomplishes. Let me try to break it down.

UNLIMITED ATONEMENT: THE POSITION OF ARMINIANS

Arminians believe what has been coined *unlimited atonement*.♣ What this means is that Jesus' death on the cross made salvation possible for *all* people; in other words, it is unlimited in its extent. They point to verses such as these:

Isaiah 53.6

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity *of us all*. [emphasis mine]

1 Timothy 2.3-6

This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires *all people* to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. [emphasis mine]

John 3.16, 17

For God so loved *the world*, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that *the world might be saved* through him.[emphasis mine]

Hebrews 2.9

But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for *everyone*. [emphasis mine]

2 Peter 3.9

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, *not wishing that any* should perish, but that *all* should reach repentance. [emphasis mine]

So far, that's pretty good. God desires all to be saved, gave His Son to die and bear the sins of the world so that salvation could be possible. So far, me likey.

LIMITED ATONEMENT: THE POSITION OF CALVINISTS

Calvinists, however, believe what is called *limited atonement*.♣. What this means is that Christ's death was limited *only* to those who got saved. In other words, it is limited in its extent. The Calvinists, then, point out "their" Scriptures:

Matthew 1.21

She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save *his people* from their sins. [emphasis mine]

Matthew 20.28

"...the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom *for many*." [emphasis mine]

John 10.11

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life *for the sheep* [not the goats and not the wolves in sheep's clothing; emphasis mine]."

Acts 20.28

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care *for the church of God, which he obtained* with his own blood [not through their response to the opportunity He gave them, but they were obtained "with his own blood;" emphasis mine.]

Ephesians 5.25

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved *the church and gave himself up for her...* [emphasis mine]

Okay, so those make it a little more interesting. So who did Jesus die for? These verses point to the fact that Jesus came from the Father in light of the Covenant of Redemption to purchase His bride. They show that God, who chose us before the foundations of the world, sent His Son to die for and purchase those whom God had already chosen.

The point that Calvinists make is that the blood of Christ does so much *more* than just purchase an *opportunity* for us and hopes that we choose it, but that the blood of Christ is *exactly and precisely* what purchases us for redemption, forgiveness, justification, salvation, adoption, sanctification, and glorification. They state that it is the atonement that *finished* the work, not *started* the work by making it possible.

**On the cross, Jesus didn't say "It is now possible."
He said, "It is finished."**

Essentially, *both* sides are limited in some way; Calvinism is limited in extent, and Arminianism is limited in its effectiveness and power. For example:

	ARMINIANISM	CALVINISM
Limited in:	Limited Power and Effectiveness. The atonement doesn't actually purchase us for salvation, but only makes it available. What makes it effective is that we must now choose it. Therefore, the blood of Christ only initiates salvation, rather than doing the whole work and purchasing it for us.	Limited Extent. Some Calvinists would call it "particular atonement" rather than "limited," as it gets misconstrued as almost to say there's "only enough of His blood to go around for the few of us." But rather, the point of its "limitation" is that for those "particular" and "limited" number of people who God actually chose, for those people, the blood actually purchases every part of their salvation, not just an opportunity.
Unlimited in:	Unlimited Extent: The blood of Jesus purchases the <i>opportunity</i> , but not salvation, for <i>all</i> people to be saved (while maintaining that not all will choose, so this is not universalism).	Unlimited Power and Effectiveness. The blood of Jesus doesn't just simply make salvation possible, but it actually purchases us as our ransom and completes the transaction. Through His blood we are given (not just made available) eternal life, forgiveness, and a future glory in Christ forever.

So which is it? Did He die to purchase the *opportunity* for salvation (unlimited atonement), or did He die to actually purchase us *for* salvation (limited atonement)?

Here's the good news: as I search the Scriptures, to me it very much seems that He did both.

UNLIMITED LIMITED ATONEMENT: THE "OTHER" POSITION

Now, we should never seek "the middle" for the sake of the middle. We should never seek "the balance" for the sake of the balance. There are some things that God is not in the middle of. To aim for a "middle ground," that middle ground must be biblical, not just theoretically or philosophically middle because it "feels" or "sounds" better. So let's look at this.

First of all, whichever "side" you lean towards, it should never be "your" verses and "their" verses. These are all the Word of God, and so they *must* somehow agree. They are not in opposition or contradiction.

When asked how he reconciles Calvinism and Arminianism, the great Calvinist theologian C.H. Spurgeon responded:

I don't have to reconcile them. Friends don't need reconciling.

This is so true, and I have to say that I believe wholeheartedly that John Calvin and Jacobus Arminius would be grieved to see what is going on in their name. I believe that they would be friends, despite some of their theological differences. Calvin wouldn't push Arminius off the cliff.

Therefore, upon further study, we see that Christ did indeed die to make a way for salvation for all people, but that the only ones who get the *full benefit* of the atonement are those that receive it, those that believe in Christ who were chosen by God the Father before the foundations of the world. In that sense, it is unlimited in its availability, limited to who it is given, but for those who it is given, its power and effectiveness is unlimited in its scope in purchasing them for redemption.

Read these words by a theologian from his commentary on **Galatians 5.12**:

I reply that this is true when we have men in mind; for God commends to us the salvation of all men without exception, even as Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world.

Then also in his commentary on **Colossians 1.14**:

This is our liberty, this is our glorying against death, that our sins are not imputed to us. He says that this redemption was procured by the blood of Christ, for by the sacrifice of His death all the sins of the world have been expiated.

Is this an Arminian or Calvinist theologian, do you think? It sure sounds very Arminian to me! You may be surprised to find out that the theologian was John Calvin himself! But as we see, his statements are neither "Arminian" nor "Calvinist," they are just plain *biblical!* The thing is, over the years, Calvinism has become like the game "telephone." It's been 400 years since Calvin died, and through all that time, many of teachings have taken on a life of their own. By *today's* standard of Calvinism, *Calvin himself would not be a Calvinist!*



How 'not' to study theology.

Look, now, at this verse that gives great insight to this:

1 Timothy 4.10

For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, *especially of those* who believe. [emphasis mine]

Millard Erickson states his view of unlimited atonement like this: "God intended the atonement to make salvation possible for all persons, Christ died for all persons, *but* this atoning death becomes effective only when accepted by individual. This is the view of all Arminians."

I wholeheartedly, 100% agree with this! *But* I *also* see very clearly that the atonement, while as Arminians say truly made *possible* salvation for all persons, also *particularly* was designed to in actuality and in totality *purchase* for God a specific *people* whom He chose before the foundations of the world for His glory and by His great grace!

The blood of Jesus isn't just a down payment, it is our Ransom! It is finished, not started!

In other words, on this issue I see biblically that the Arminian position is affirmed, but that this *unlimited limited atonement* view is Arminian-*Plus*. In **Luke 22.20** Jesus says that "This cup that is poured out for you *is* the new covenant in my blood." He didn't say that it makes it possible, but that in His blood *is* the New Covenant!

Additionally, it should be noted that on the Day of Atonement in the Old Testament, a sacrifice was made for the whole nation, but the whole nation wasn't necessarily filled with believers in Yahweh with faith that He will send a Messiah. Those that *were* true believers, however, *also* took their own sacrifice to the temple. Therefore, the High Priest would make a general sacrifice to God to enact His mercy on the nation (in the form of blessing, food, shelter, family, etc., and

letting them live life and have more opportunity to repent of their sin, rather than killing them instantly in their sin), and particular sacrifices for those who were in faith (who therefore were, by faith, participants in the eternal promises of atonement).

In other words, when God poured His wrath on Jesus, He could have only spared believers at that time and consumed those who had no faith in Jesus. But instead, Jesus took on the wrath of the whole world, saving them from immediate wrath, allowing them to live out their life in hopes that they will know that God sent His Son.

For the record, there are many theologians (most of which were in the “Calvinist” list above) who hold to this “middle” ground:

- Richard Baxter
- John Bunyan (author of *Pilgrim’s Progress*)
- C.H. Spurgeon
- John Piper
- Wayne Grudem
- Mark Driscoll
- C.S. Lewis
- John Stott
- And of course, John Calvin himself

Most of these guys still claim hold to the phrase “Calvinist” and even still claim the term “limited atonement,” but it’s just that *they* hold to what the *original* meaning for Calvin’s version of “limited atonement” meant, that Christ indeed died for the sins of the world, making salvation possible for all who would believe, but that atonement was only applied in a saving way for some. Spurgeon again says that the atonement is “general and particular.”

This view is sometimes called “Four and a Half Point Calvinism” (somewhat jokingly), “Modified Calvinism,” or “Moderate Calvinism.”⁶⁵⁰ Before moving on, I realize that this is the kind of stuff that hurts the noggin, but don’t be dismayed! If you don’t get it, don’t worry, this stuff has been at the top of the docket of discussion for 400+ years, and there is no general and complete orthodox consensus.

We only think when we are confronted with problems.

-John Doughy

Remember that your mind only comes alive when you see a problem and try to understand it. Otherwise it stays in neutral. When we are faced with big concepts like this, the Trinity, free will, etc., it sharpens our mind towards spiritual things, causes us to be more dependent on the Holy Spirit, and teaches us to be humble as we approach the Word of God and the great glory of God.

**Not all things are good for us to know, and so God has not revealed them to us;
and there are some things that are good for us to know,
even when we can't explain them fully.**

Deuteronomy 29.29 says that “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” To be sure, some aspects of this particular doctrine are “secret things,” yet some aspects of it, namely *the aspects that are in the Word* “are revealed” and “belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”

So, although some of this will be difficult or even impossible for us to completely grasp, we *should not* write it off as “well, it’s sort of debatable” or “well, there isn’t a general and complete orthodox consensus, so why bother.” No way! These aspects of God’s design and plan were purposely and lovingly placed *in His revealed Word* for an incredible purpose: so that we and our children may do all the words of the law! In other words, for us to know and teach our

⁶⁵⁰ Some theologians who agree with the other four points of Calvinism, but rest simply and only on unlimited atonement with no aspect of particularity for the elect, would be called “Four Point Calvinists” or “Amyraldists,” named after a theologian named Moses Amyraut (1596-1664).

children how to walk in *all the counsel of God* and in *all truth*, we must give ourselves to studying *all the Scriptures*, not just the easy and clear ones.

**We are prone to ask more questions than God chooses to answer.
There is a great danger that our questions will pass over into accusations.**

-John Piper, speaking specifically of the doctrine of election⁶⁵¹

That said, as we move on, I think it would be helpful to give you an idea of where I will be coming from as we approach the doctrine of salvation. If it hasn't become clear, the position I take is the Reformed view, but with accepting unlimited limited atonement (which, again, was Calvin's original view), since I see both in the Scriptures and I do see them both complementing each other, not in opposition or disagreement.

ARTICLE	My POSITION
1. Election/Predestination	Reform position. Election is unconditional. Christ purchased us on the cross, and He chose before the foundations of the world who He would save.
2. Limited/Unlimited Atonement	Both positions (which is the position of many Reformed theologians, including John Calvin himself). Unlimited Limited Atonement. Christ died to make salvation possible for everyone, tearing down the dividing veil between God and man. Whosoever responds to the gospel will be saved. For the elect (the "whosoever") whom God had chosen before the foundations of the world, their purchase is whole and complete, since Christ finished the work on the cross. It wasn't left up for them to complete it, but it was purchased for them.
3. Total Depravity	Both positions. In agreement with both, of course, since both sides agree. Man cannot save himself by his own choice, but needs God's grace to open his eyes and make him alive. ⁶⁵²
4. Irresistible/Resistible Grace	Reformed. If God opens the eyes of a non-believer and makes them alive to see their real need for a Savior, they will respond to God's grace positively. This is based on the concept that it is God who chooses us, not that we choose Him or even that He just simply knows who will choose Him.
5. Perseverance of the Saints/ Eternal Security	Reformed. Eternal security is unconditional. If God chose you, it is up to His power and ability to keep you.

At the risk of confusion, I want to lay out a few ways that I view my particular theology when it comes to these. I want to do this a few ways because I know that in many ways it seems like we are "picking sides" or "going to the buffet." I also know that Calvinists, sadly, have gained a terrible reputation for being argumentative, rude, elitist, unloving, and arrogant. Lastly, I personally see much more in concert, at the end of the day, between the two sides.

Since, as you see, the sides are agreed on **Article 3**, and I take both sides of **Article 4** (which Calvin and others did), I am 5/5 on the Reform side (according to the *original* teachings of Calvin's Reformed theology), but by *today's* description of Calvinists, I would be 4.5/5.

That said, since I affirm *part of* unlimited atonement (and all of limited atonement), and since both sides agree on total depravity (except for the Arminian view of prevenient grace, which I don't agree with⁶⁵³), I would be 1.25/5 Arminian (yes, I'm being a little petulant here!). Some jokingly call this "Calminian," which is funny, but slightly misleading (since you can't agree with *all* five points in every regard, and a clean mix and match just simply doesn't work systematically). Therefore, I just prefer to say "Reformed," since that encapsulates a wider (but still rather specific) variety of theologians within a certain sphere of orthodox Christianity.

⁶⁵¹ www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/pastoral-thoughts-on-the-doctrine-of-election

⁶⁵² However, I disagree with the way in which Arminians solve the problem of our need for grace, which they called "prevenient" grace (which means "preceding"). See footnote 646 on pg. 191 for more detail.

⁶⁵³ See footnote 652 above.

How Then, Are We Saved?

To try to grasp these huge questions, it is important to remember that though Jesus *accomplished* the atonement of our sins on the cross, the work of His sacrifice must still be *applied* to us for us to partake in this salvation. It could be compared to someone buying a car for you and completing the transaction, but without that person giving you the keys to the car it remains ineffectual in your own life.

First, we will look at what theologians call the “order of salvation,” which comes from a Latin phrase *ordo salutis*.♣ Now, it should be clear that this “order” is for our own understanding. The bible doesn’t have a numbered list, and some theologians differ over the order. Additionally, others think that some of these items are simultaneous events. For the sake of learning and study, however, we will look at one particular order:

- **Election** (which occurs long before the “event” of salvation, as we will see)
- **Effectual Calling** (God’s inward call, drawing us to Him)
- **Regeneration** (being born again)
- **Saving Faith** (believing the truth and being converted in your heart; understanding and admitting our need for Jesus as Savior and turning to Him as Lord; this is most often seen as being simultaneous with regeneration)
- **Justification** (made right before God (discussed in the previous section))
- **Adoption** (being brought into the family of God)
- **Sanctification** (continual growth and maturity. Transforming by the power of the Spirit and being conformed day by day into the image of Christ.)
- **Perseverance** (remaining as a Christian throughout your life)
- **Death** (not a commonly referred to item in the *ordo salutis*, but an important part of the “timeline” of our salvation nonetheless)
- **Glorification** (the moment we cross from life, through death, and into life again)

Before we take another step, we should humbly remind ourselves that these deep things of God will not always or easily be understood by us.⁶⁵⁴ Therefore, we humbly submit ourselves to God, His Word, and His Holy Spirit to teach and guide us, keeping ever before us His glory, wisdom, and grace. Capiche?⁶⁵⁵

So with that in mind, we now need to rightly look at *when* this order is put into play. To do this, we have to go way back before we ever heard the gospel, before the cross of Christ even, before the Fall in the Garden, and before, even, the foundations of the world. It was in what we may call “eternity past,” that God, in His mercy and grace, decided that He would intervene and save people from sure destruction. This is what many call the doctrine of *election*.♣

Election and Predestination

The word *election*♣ simply means “choice.” It’s the idea that God “chose” or “elected” people to be saved. This has been, for sure, a hotly debated topic for quite some time, particularly in the last 400 years or so. It is sometimes called *predestination*,♣ meaning that God has *predetermined* (in other words, chosen or elected) some to be saved. Though admittedly it is a complex and often mysterious topic, it is nonetheless incredibly clear in the Word. The sticky part isn’t the fact that it is in there, but to the *details* and *degree* that it applies to our life.

Let’s look at a few verses to help us start a working understanding of what it is.

1. he predestines

- Five times the word *proorizois* used as a verb to describe predestining people unto salvation (“to predestine”).⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵⁴ Proverbs 25.2 // Deuteronomy 32.4 // Daniel 4.37 // Isaiah 55.8-12

⁶⁵⁵ I realize there are many ways of spelling “capiche,” however, a quick search on “Yahoo Answers” shows that no one actually can agree (or actually knows definitively) what that spelling is. So if you are Italian, feel free to give me your spelling.

⁶⁵⁶ 1 Corinthians 2.7 // Romans 8.29, 30 // Ephesians 1.5, 11

Ephesians 1.4-12

For he chose us in him *before the creation of the world* to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ *he predestined us* for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with *his pleasure and will*—⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, *in accordance with the riches of God's grace* ⁸ that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, ⁹ *he made known to us the mystery of his will* according to his good pleasure, which *he purposed* in Christ, ¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

¹¹ In him *we were also chosen*, having been *predestined according to the plan* of him who works out everything *in conformity with the purpose of his will*, ¹² in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

Romans 8.29-30

²⁹ For those God *foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son*, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And *those He predestined*, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified.

2. He FOREKNOWS

- The verb “foreknow” occurs five times in the New Testament.⁶⁵⁷
- The noun “foreknowledge” occurs twice.⁶⁵⁸

1 Peter 1.1, 2

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to *God's elect*, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who *have been chosen according to the foreknowledge* of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

Concerning foreknowledge, it should be made clear that foreknowledge is *not just the fact that He knows what will happen*. Look at these verses speaking of God's actual planning of definite events,⁶⁵⁹ not just simply “knowing” that they will happen:

Ephesians 2.10

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God *prepared beforehand*, that we should walk in them.

Isaiah 25.1

O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you; I will praise your name, for you have done wonderful things, *plans formed of old, faithful and sure*.

Psalms 33.10, 11

The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. ¹¹ *The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations*.

These verses in **Acts** should give us a definitive picture of this:

Acts 2.22, 23

“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— ²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the *definite plan* and *foreknowledge* of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”

⁶⁵⁷ Acts 26.5 // Romans 8.29, 11.2 // 1 Peter 1.20 // 2 Peter 3.17

⁶⁵⁸ Acts 2.23 // 1 Peter 1.2

⁶⁵⁹ Jeremiah 29.11 // Isaiah 14.25-27 // Job 42.2, 3

So as it pertains to our salvation and Him “foreknowing” us or that we are saved according to His “foreknowledge,” we can see that it is not simply just that He knows ahead of time that we will choose Him. In the Word, the verb “to know” is indicative of not just cerebrally or intellectually knowing facts, but knowing intimately.⁶⁶⁰ Therefore, for God to “foreknow” is not just Him looking into a crystal ball and seeing “who is going to choose Me,” but that we are *chosen* by Him *according to His foreknowledge*, meaning that it is according to the fact that He planned the *intimate knowing* of us.

3. He Chooses and Elects

- The word *eklego* is used eight times as a verb to describe God choosing people for salvation (“to elect” or “to choose”).⁶⁶¹
- Seventeen times the word *eklektos* is used as a noun to describe the people (“the elect”).⁶⁶²
- Seven times the word *ekloge* is used as a noun speaking of God’s choosing of us (“election” unto salvation).⁶⁶³
- Once the word *hario* is used to describe choosing us (“to choose”).⁶⁶⁴

John 15.16

You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last.

1 Peter 2.9

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

So when (and why) were we predestined, elected, chosen, etc.?

So here is the big question, or at least one of them: when, and in what way, were we chosen? This is the question that Calvinists and Arminians have been asking each other, because the thing is, *both* sides believe in the doctrine of election, that God gave grace to unable sinners before the foundations of the world. So what’s the difference? The difference is how we receive it.

What do you think?

Were we elected long ago because God knew *we would* choose Him? Or did we choose God *because He elected us* long ago?

The first line of that statement above is the position of the Arminian, that God, in His foreknowledge (which they equate simply with His knowing of future events), knows who will choose Him and repent of their sins, and so *because* they repent He *then applies* the atonement of Jesus Christ to them. So the basis of being chosen by God is one’s own free choice of God, making God’s election of us a response to our choice.

The Calvinists, on the other hand, believe that God had already chosen and determined which of His broken image bearers will repent, and that He applies the atonement to them not *because* they repented, but so that they *could* repent. They believe that election, as **Romans 9.16** says, “depends not on *human will or exertion*, but *on God*, who has mercy.” [emphasis mine]

Confused yet? If not, don’t worry, you will be, we’re going to get deeper (and this all matters very much!).

Before moving on, it might be helpful to look at a simple quote from Justin Taylor, who quotes C.J. Mahaney, who cites Philip Ryken, who in turn quotes Donald Grey (thus making this, with me included, a fifth generation quote, beating our old record of four!⁶⁶⁵):

⁶⁶⁰ Genesis 18.19 // Exodus 2.25 // Psalm 1.6, 144.3 // Jeremiah 1.5 // Matthew 7.23 // Galatians 4.9 // 2 Timothy 2.19 // 1 John 3.1

⁶⁶¹ Mark 13.20 // John 15.16 // Acts 13.17 // 1 Corinthians 1.27, 28 // Ephesians 1.4 // James 2.5

⁶⁶² Matthew 22.14, 24.22, 24, 31 // Mark 13.20, 22, 27 // Luke 18.7 // Romans 8.33 // Colossians 3.12 // 2 Timothy 2.10 // Revelation 17.14

⁶⁶³ Acts 9.15 // Romans 9.11, 11.5, 7, 28 // 1 Thessalonians 1.4 // 2 Peter 1.10

⁶⁶⁴ 2 Thessalonians 2.13

⁶⁶⁵ pg. 94

The famous American Bible teacher Donald Grey Barnhouse (1895–1960) often used an illustration to help people make sense of election. He asked them to imagine a cross like the one on which Jesus died, only so large that it had a door in it. Over the door were these words from Revelation: “Whosoever will may come.” These words represent the free and universal offer of the gospel. By God’s grace, the message of salvation is for everyone. Every man, woman, and child who will come to the cross is invited to believe in Jesus Christ and enter eternal life.

On the other side of the door a happy surprise awaits the one who believes and enters. From the inside, anyone glancing back can see these words from Ephesians written above the door: “Chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.” Election is best understood in hindsight, for it is only after coming to Christ that one can know whether one has been chosen in Christ. Those who make a decision for Christ find that God made a decision for them in eternity past.⁶⁶⁶

Election is best understood in hindsight.



Therefore, in our own minds, the question can quickly turn to “then do I have a choice? Can I resist God’s election?” Rather than keep you in suspense, I’ll give you the quick answer, an emphatic “No!” And we should praise God for this!

Now, it should be clear that as sinners, we as a people *constantly and always* resist, reject and deny God. Countless times you may hear the Gospel and choose to ignore it. God will bestow His grace on you in many ways, such as by giving you a family, a job, health, love, and all those great things. Yet, as **Romans 1.18-32** shows us, in our ungodliness we “suppress the truth,” even though knowledge of “God is plain” to us, because He has shown it to us. It says in **verse 21** that “although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”

Now, that sure sounds like resisting God’s grace, but this is what we refer to as *common grace*,♣ which is His grace that is available in an infinite amount of ways to all people, down to the breath that we breathe.

But concerning salvation, here we are talking about His grace that saves, called *saving grace*,♣ that is given by His calling, or election of us. This “calling” is different than just simply the general calling out or proclamation of the Gospel to everyone to repent. Rather, this is an inward calling that wells up inside of us because of God’s gracious choosing.

Now, I would say that the term *irresistible grace*,♣ which is the commonly used term (noted in the chart we saw previously), isn’t the greatest. It does make it sound as if God forcibly commandeers us and strong arms us against our will and desire. Now, I’ll be honest, I’m okay with this, because if He left it up to me, I’d still be locked in a room playing depressing music on my guitar without any hope, because submitting to God was *in fact* against my will! So is it such a bad thing to have God intervene “against our will”? Clearly it is not, but in our minds, we still want to reconcile the concept, as we should desire this, because it helps us understand God and His grace and love, as well as ourselves.

Again, there is an *unlimited* aspect to the atonement in which salvation is now *possible* for all humans, and so the Gospel message is, in fact, “repent, and whosoever will repent and call upon the Name of the Lord will be saved!” But, as we commonly see, and have done at some point, no doubt, we can indeed resist this general and *external call*♣ of the gospel.

But there is an *inward call*♣ that is personal and specific, which is the *limited* aspect of the atonement, because it has targeted specific people that God divinely, by His grace, chose for redemption. The word in Greek for “call” is *kaleo*, and it is not a general call we can deny or resist (such as the Gospel message), but it speaks more of a decree or summons, as if a king calls you or summons you into his presence. Or quite possibly, it is like a subpoena to the court. It’s not really an option.

To be called is not to be asked, it is to be summoned.

⁶⁶⁶ Philip Ryken, *The Message of Salvation*, pg. 68, 69

This is something that He enacts and brings to fruition. Look at these verses concerning His inward calling to us:

2 Timothy 1.9

[God] *saved us and called us to a holy calling*, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, *which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began* [it was decided before we were even able to respond or resist]...[emphasis mine]

Romans 9.10, 11

...when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, 11 though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, *not because of works* [whether we decide to respond or not] *but because of him who calls*— ...16 So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. [emphasis mine]

Romans 8.28-30

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for *those who are called according to his purpose*. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30 *And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified*. [emphasis mine]

Though all of these give us a great snapshot of God’s internal call, **Romans 8.28-30** gives us an awesome picture. We see that there are people who God “foreknew,” meaning that He had already decided that He would know them intimately. Those same people He “predestined.” To be predestined is different than foreknowing in that our predestiny (new word for you) is the actual “destiny” we are given in the sense of our life, actions, and His plan that we walk out. This destiny is given to us *because of* His foreknowledge (another new word) love for us.

From there, those He “predestined” He also “called,” speaking, of course, of the inward calling. Those He calls He “justifies” and “glorifies.” So from beginning to end – foreknowing love to glorification at the end of the age – what percentage of those He foreknew were glorified? 100. Everyone God chooses and calls will be saved and preserved for glorification. Look at this verse in **Acts**:

Acts 13.48

And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.

How many Gentiles who heard the outward call of the Gospel were saved? Every single one of those who were appointed to eternal life (inwardly called). In other words, 100%. None who were inwardly called and appointed rejected this saving grace, because it is, indeed “by grace, through faith.”

I will make one more statement about this “irresistible” grace and inward call. I do think that we can *temporarily* resist this call, but I believe that ultimately, “those whom He called He also justified.” I will use myself as an example. When I first felt the inward call (this is all hindsight, by the way, as I wasn’t thinking this as I went through it), I kicked against it. I tried to suppress it. Over the course of a few weeks, however, it intensified, and ultimately, led to my regeneration, which we will look at next. Basically, I do believe that we can “frustrate” or maybe even “put off” the inward call, but our efforts will be in vain, as God’s saving grace because of His sovereign call upon us will win.

The story of Paul the Apostle’s conversion story tells us of this when he was still Saul of Tarsus and got kicked off of his horse by the risen Jesus:

Acts 26.14, 15

‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ 15 And I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.’

The phrase “it is hard for you to kick against the goads” is a term the first century folks would understand well. Goads were like spurs, and if an ox got too slow in its job, the farmer would spur the side of the ox. If the ox got irritated at the work it was being forced to do, it would sometimes kick against the spurs (goads). In turn, the farmer would just spur even more and even harder until the ox finally realized it wasn’t going to win. Here, Jesus says, “it’s hard to do that, isn’t it, Saul?” What He is telling Him is “kick all you want, because I’ll just spur you more until I win.”

Ultimately, if God wants you and has chosen you, He will get you. Though we may be able to resist His saving grace for a time, ultimately, His love will win.

REGENERATION

Upon hearing the gospel call and by His grace responding to His inward call, there is this moment in our life when God, in His sovereignty, mercy, and grace, opens our eyes, ears, and understanding and we recognize that the gospel is true.⁶⁶⁷ This is the moment most of us call being *born again*, and is also known as *regeneration*. ♣

Romans 8.10, 11

But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

Titus 3.3-7

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. 4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

When considering this truth we must realize that this plan of redemption has, from the time of the fall until this very day, always been as we have seen, “by grace through faith.”⁶⁶⁸ It has always been in His wisdom, love, mercy, and grace that He would make a way for Him to dwell with us again, that He would be our God, and we would be His people. But again, this would take a great act of grace, as we know there is nothing we can do to attain God’s mercy, for we are law breakers and unable to rebuild the bridge that we have burned.⁶⁶⁹

This truth of needing God’s grace alone was foreshadowed in all the previous covenants, but it would not be seen in completion until this work of absolute “satisfaction by substitution,” as John Stott puts it.⁶⁷⁰ As we have seen, this is a work entirely dreamed up and carried out by the Trinitarian God, and by Him alone.⁶⁷¹ We have clearly seen that there is absolutely *nothing* that we can do to earn His grace, favor, forgiveness, love, or atonement. It is simply by His own pleasure and purpose that we are

Therefore, as our sin was imputed onto Christ as He became sin for us,⁶⁷² and it is His grace that He enables us to even see this great truth. For we, as sinners, walk blindly around our lives, in opposition to God, yet by His grace He allows the scales to fall of our eyes.⁶⁷³ This is what many would call *regeneration* (being born again). In this moment, it is the Holy Spirit who allows us to see and recognize as we never did before this great truth of substitutionary atonement, that our sins were imputed onto the Lamb of God.

This is something we cannot do ourselves. We can’t will it, decide to do it, or conjure it up. Going back into previous chapters, we must remember that we are spiritually dead in our sins and trespasses. We are unable to respond to the cross in and of ourselves. We are dead. Let’s look closely again at this passage in **Ephesians**:

Ephesians 2.1-10

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. 4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is

⁶⁶⁷ Deuteronomy 29.4 // Isaiah 6.10, 44.18 // Jeremiah 5.21 // Matthew 13.15 // John 12.40 // Acts 28.27 // Ephesians 1.18

⁶⁶⁸ Ephesians 2.8

⁶⁶⁹ Romans 3.23 // Proverbs 20.9 // 2 Chronicles 6.36 // John 8.34

⁶⁷⁰ *The Cross of Christ*, pg. 112.

⁶⁷¹ See **Chapter VI**

⁶⁷² 2 Corinthians 5.21

⁶⁷³ John 12.40 // Acts 9.18, 28.27 // Ephesians 1.18

by grace you have been saved. 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Let’s notice a few things here that I emphasized in italics. In **verse 1**, we clearly see that we were spiritually dead because of sin. All we did was pursue self. Paul then says in **verse 3** that we *were* by nature objects of wrath. Here he is reminding us that we were headed down the path of ultimate destruction. Destruction by what? God’s wrath. Why? Because God is just and holy and He *must* punish sin. His wrath burns against it, as we discussed in the section on the cross.

Verse 4 then begins with the game changer. “But because of His great love for us, God...*made us alive.*” We didn’t choose to become alive or choose to be born again. *He* is the one who chose to make us alive even though we were totally dead...*because of His love and mercy!* He then reiterates that it is “by grace” we have been saved, and he makes it clear that it is a “gift of God.” This is not by works (repentance, making a choice or decision, changing your life, etc.).

This is truly a mysterious and powerful truth. It should be noted that this is one of the “orders of salvation” that more times than not, it seems, comes nearly simultaneously alongside of faith and repentance. However, a few things should be noted to make sure that we clearly see that, even if only by mere seconds, regeneration must come before “saving faith” and repentance:

- Regeneration is an act of God alone. Since we are dead in our sins, we cannot repent or choose God. On this point, Arminians and Calvinists agree (though Arminians, as noted before, believe in prevenient grace).
- This makes a clear distinction between being born again and having saving faith (even though, again, they may happen nearly instantaneously).
- Some Christians may believe that being born again and being made new comes *after* we believe in Christ. But this would be a works based salvation. Rather, belief in Christ and other “evidences” simply point to the fact that the person *has indeed* been born again and made new.
- Sometimes we will say something like “if you believe you will be born again.” But this is not how the Word says it. God causes us to be regenerated or born again *so that we can* believe, not *because* we believed. It is a gift of God.
- This is where the order of “by grace through faith” becomes important. We are saved “by grace” (the gift of regeneration or being born again due to God’s loving mercy, done solely by Him) and then “through faith” (faith that is made able *because* we have been regenerated). It is God’s grace that causes us to be born again or regenerated, so that we can have faith in Christ and repent of our sins for salvation.

We see this explicitly taught by Jesus to Nicodemus, a Pharisee inquiring of Jesus about whom Jesus was.

John 3.3-8

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” 4 Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” 5 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

Here, we yet get another great picture of the work of salvation being by God alone. Just as a man can’t choose to be born naturally, but it is up to his human parents, we have “no choice” as it comes to our spiritual birth, but it is the choice and unmerited gift of our spiritual Father. As Jesus teaches here, we don’t see the Spirit at work, He does what He wishes according to the Father’s decree. We simply see the *effect* of the Spirit upon regeneration.

SAVING FAITH, REPENTANCE, AND CONVERSION

Upon having our eyes opened by God's grace, we now are now at the point where we are to respond to Him in faith and repentance. There are a few key things we must consider as we examine our own salvation and as we engage in conversation with others.

- **Faith is not just belief:** Demons believe in God,⁶⁷⁴ Pharaoh's magicians believed in God,⁶⁷⁵ and Nicodemus believed that Jesus was from God.⁶⁷⁶ But belief does little for us unless we have faith. You could say, broadly, that faith is "belief in action." Belief is a simple acknowledgement of some fact, but faith is actively entrusting it, pursuing it, and allowing it to change your beliefs, actions, and attitudes.
- **Faith declares Jesus as Lord:** As previously stated, belief is simply a cerebral acknowledgement, but real faith will ascribe trust and devotion to Christ as Lord. There must be a spiritual acknowledgement that Jesus is God and Lord, and a desire to enthrone Him in our life and follow Him and His Word.
- **Faith declares Jesus as Savior:** After we are born again (regenerated), we will see the reality of our situation: that we need mercy from God. We also then realize that this mercy has been offered through a Savior who died in our place. Saving faith comes as we recognize that we have indeed sinned, that this sin deserves punishment, but that Jesus, our Savior, paid the price for our sin by incurring the wrath of His Father.

But here it's important for us to recognize that even our *faith and repentance* are not by our own will power, but that they, too, are *gifts from God*. Indeed, the whole act of salvation is "by grace, through faith." It is not initiated by grace (opening our eyes) and then "sealing the deal" by our works (faith and repentance). But because God had chosen us before the foundations of the world, it was He and He alone who opened our eyes and drew us to Himself in repentance and faith!

Not only is our new birth a gift from God, but even our initial faith and repentance. It is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God, so that no one can boast.

Look at these verses speaking of our conversion:

John 6.37

[Jesus said,] "All those the Father *gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.*"[emphasis mine]

John 1.12, 13

Yet to *all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.* [emphasis mine]

Indeed, every aspect of our salvation is "not of ourselves," so that "no one can boast!" It was *nothing* of me that saved me, but *only* by God's rich mercy and great, glorious love!

For me, this came on August 21, 1997. I was 18 years old, and I was wrestling with these ideas for a few weeks. I remember the night very clearly, and I know that it was only by God's grace that I was finally able to recognize this great truth and repent of my sins and disbelief.

I had just moved back to Los Angeles from South Dakota (now, when L.A. is a



Chosen only by God's grace.
This is one week before I met Jesus.

⁶⁷⁴ James 2.9

⁶⁷⁵ Exodus 7.19

⁶⁷⁶ John 3.2

“nice change of scenery” you know it must have been bad), and I can guarantee you that I was completely, 100% seeking my own glory, happiness, pleasure, and purpose (and, for the record, finding none of it). I was being medicated for depression (as evidenced in the far left of the photo) and was a complete and utter emotional wreck. It was nothing short of an absolute miracle that God gave me eyes to see and ears to hear. Without God’s grace, His effectual calling in my heart, and His regenerating work, there is no way I could have been able to see through the thick fog and cloud in front of my eyes.

UNDERSTANDING GRACE

When thinking about salvation in particular, we really need a good working knowledge of what grace is. In the Greek, the word “grace” is *charis*, which means “gift.” It’s where we get the term charismatic and charisma.

In chapter six of his book *Chosen for Life*, Sam Storms has ten characteristics of saving grace. I’d like to list a few of them here briefly (he expounds each one quite a bit, and I recommend reading it if you get a chance).

1. **Grace sees sinners not simply as *undeserving*, as if we are neutral, but that we are *ill-deserving*.** This means that not only do we not deserve this gift, but we *actually* deserve hell. This is of *paramount* importance if we are to understand, at least in part, why God “only” chooses some. I put “only” in little quote finger thingies because we *act* as if He *should* saved *more* and complain that He *only* chooses *some*. But we *all* are not just undeserving of being saved, but in reality we *all* deserve the opposite.

We deserve hell. Everything else is a gift.

This is such an important truth for us to understand, for it not just is the case with saving grace, but even common grace. Even if we agree that our salvation is by grace alone, we will then all too often thank God and then move on. We think that the job promotion is because we are good workers. No, the promotion is by God’s grace! Then we’ll say, “well yeah, but my boss did in fact tell me he gave me the promotion because I show up early and work harder. He didn’t say ‘it’s because of God’s grace.’”

Well, of course this is true! But how did you decide to be a good worker and show up earlier? Because God gave you the desire and ability! How did you get the job in the first place? Your skills and resume, or God’s grace? God’s grace, because it was *His gift* to you to give you the skills to pay the bills! You may say, “no, I went to school for the skills because marshmallow sculptures have always been my passion.”

Sure...but who gave you the passion? God! When we start believing that it is us who does this or does that, we begin to brag and boast and we fall in the trap of the Galatian church:

Galatians 3.1-6

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. 2 Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? 4 Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? 5 Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith— 6 just as Abraham “believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”?

The Galatian Christians were mostly Jews that had become believers in Christ. They started out well, understanding that their salvation was by grace, but then they went back into “doing” the Jewish Law and tradition in order to *maintain* and *continue* in their salvation! Paul calls them “foolish” and says that they have been “bewitched,” using language so strong that he, in essence, treats their newly found legalism and self-righteousness and personal ability and credit as *witchcraft!*

Let us *never* forget the words of James, the half-brother of Jesus.

James 1.16-18

Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. 17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. 18 Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Does James here say that “the gift of salvation” is a perfect gift and from above? Or the “gift of repentance,” even? No! He says that we should “*never be deceived*” (as the Galatians were), but we should constantly know and acknowledge that “*every good gift and every perfect gift is from above!*” Praise God!

2. **Grace cannot continue to be grace if God is compelled to give it due to something good we did (such as repentance, even).** If God gives us saving grace because He is responding to something that we do, it is now not a gift, but an obligation, or even “due payment” or a “deserved blessing.”

Let’s think about this for a second. I can give a gift to my son for no reason, simply because I love him. I can *also* give him a gift in response to something he does good, like acing a spelling test. All of a sudden, I feel *obligated* to give him a gift for acing a test, and so it has now ceased from being a gift, it has become payment.

Furthermore, we need to distinguish between “grace” and “reward.” The Word speaks of “rewards,” but they are always given to us (most often spoken of as eternal rewards we get later in heaven) for what we have done. We should note that salvation is not a *reward* for repentance. Salvation is *by grace*, a gift of God, not a *response* of God!

3. **Likewise, grace cannot continue to be grace if God is compelled to take it away when we do something bad.** For it to be a true gift, it can’t be dependent on us, but must be dependent on the goodness of God. Now, of course we know that the Lord gives and the Lord takes away,⁶⁷⁷ but the point is that He is not obligated to do either. If He gives saving grace to you, He is not obligated to take it away if you fall into sin, because salvation was *never a reward for something we did good*, it has *always* been and will *always* be a gift. Furthermore, He promises that He *won’t* take it away. Now, if it was a *reward* or *response* to us (like a response to our repentance), *then* He would be warranted, almost obligated, to take it away when we fall into sin. But this is not the case.
4. **Grace can’t incur a debt.** In other words, it can never be paid back, even in part. This was also the mistake of the “foolish Galatians.” Have you ever given someone a gift for no reason, and they say, “oh you shouldn’t have! Now I want to get you something!” Or if you pick up the bill at coffee as a blessing, they say, “thank you so much, and next time, I’ll get it!” They can be *genuinely* thankful, but it’s *so annoying* isn’t it? You just want to bless them and enjoy it! I think it’s annoying to me because I myself do it all the time, and I think we get most irritated by the things we are guilty of. Okay, confession time is over.

With God, I’ll go beyond even irritation and say that, yes He is patient, but He completely abhors legalism. He does not want to be paid back, and He *cannot* be paid back, even partially! So don’t try! Enjoy this free gift of salvation!

5. **Grace is sovereign.** This more or less encapsulates the previous four by saying that God’s grace is not dependent on outside influence, either positive or negative. God’s grace is not swayed by anything other than His own perfect goodness. His grace doesn’t take into account the condition of man (whether good or bad), but simply and *only* takes into account the goodness of God. It is immovable, it cannot be coerced, it cannot be influenced, helped out, or hindered. It can’t be moved along or stopped. It will accomplish what it pleases.⁶⁷⁸ Speaking of God’s grace saving some from hell, and not all, Paul answers the questions of the Christians in Rome by saying:

Romans 9.14-16

What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God’s part? By no means! 15 For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” 16 So then it depends *not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.* [emphasis mine]

Therefore, as we have seen, for a gift to actually be a gift, it must be *freely* given, not given because the person was obligated to give it. This is a fundamental reality that we must embrace. According to Arminians, God foreknows who will choose Him, so He elects them and saves them. Though the Arminians will still say it is “by God’s grace” that He opened their depraved eyes so that they *can* choose Him (which I agree with), the fact remains that *He* is reacting to

⁶⁷⁷ Job 1.21

⁶⁷⁸ John 3.3-8

something *they* did. By this, it has ceased from being a gift, and rather God is obligated to save by rewarding them because, as He has stated, He will turn away no one who comes to Him. Look, for instance, at this passage where Jesus speaks of this very thing:

John 6.37-40

All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. 40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

Jesus here indicates that He is “obligated” to not cast out anyone who comes to Him. Yet we have seen that for grace to remain a gift, it must not be an obligation or response to us. But reading in context as we move on to **verse 44**, we see who Jesus is *actually* obligated to and *how* we come to Him:

John 6.44

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.

Therefore, with seeing in **verse 37** that it is the Father who gives us to Jesus, that in **verse 38** Jesus is here to honor His Father’s will (not ours), in **verse 39** Jesus is obligated to keep all those who come to Him, but His obligation is not to “our choice by our will” but to “God’s choice by His will,” and in **verse 44** that we can’t come to Jesus unless the *Father* chooses to send them and draw them (“effectual call,” as we saw earlier, with all preceding verses pointing to “irresistible grace”).

Do you see the problem in the idea of God responding to our choice? All of a sudden, *God owes us something!* Since we respond by repenting, now *God* is *obligated* to save us! So how does the phrase, “this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God” come into play? It can’t! It is no longer God’s grace, but God’s obligation.

All of this tends to be greatly problematic for us, because we *love*, even *insist* on taking on the roles of which God alone is intended to take on.

Every role, right, and power that God has, we want.

We want to be Lord of our life, we want to be the one who saves ourselves, we want to be our own provider, we want to be our own strength, and yes, we want to be the one who chooses our own destiny.

This may be a tough pill for us to swallow, but it is true. We desire to have a role reversal with God. I recall the book of essays by C.S. Lewis called *God in the Dock* (which means “God on Trial,” as the “dock” is an English term used to describe what we may call the “witness stand”). In the book, man is the judge who sits on the bench and holds the gavel, and God, of course, is on the witness stand, being questioned and judged by us. This is precisely the type of attitude that Paul takes on in what is considered somewhat the “flagship” section of Scripture on predestination and election, **Romans 9.14-24**.

What this means is that for us to truly believe in God’s grace being a true gift, we must recognize that every last detail of the atonement and all of salvation was done solely by God and His grace ALONE!

From election, predestination, His choosing of us, His foreknowledge, His call, our being made alive, our repentance, our confession of faith and surrender, and the other aspects that we will be looking at, *all of these* are by God’s gracious love.

Ephesians 1.4-7, 11-14, 18-20, 2.4-10

even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,

11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. 13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,

2.4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

I'm holding out for Grace. I'm holding out that Jesus took my sins onto the Cross, because I know who I am, and I hope I don't have to depend on my own religiosity.

-Bono

Lastly, there are two terms commonly used to describe these two views of how salvation works. The Arminian view is called *synergism*,♣ which means that God enables man to choose and repent in his free will to be saved. There is a partnership in salvation. God opens the eyes, man reaches out to God. God reaches down to us who are drowning and can't swim, we reach up to Him to take hold. This is often called "double handed" salvation.

The Reformed view is called *monergism*,♣ which means that God alone did the whole work of salvation. God opens the eyes, makes us alive, and draws us to Himself as a gift. God reaches down to us who are drowning and already unconscious. He grabs us and pulls us out. This is often called "single handed" salvation.

So if God already picked His team, why pray and evangelize for the lost?

In extreme camps of Christians, namely *hyper-Calvinists*,♣⁶⁷⁹ they would see the fact of predestination as evidence that evangelism is not necessary, because sharing the gospel with depraved, spiritually dead people is pointless since they can't "choose" to be saved. Yes, it's true, some Christians do believe this. However, this doctrine should do *exactly the opposite!* When we know that God has chosen some *regardless* of how "good" or "bad" they are and that they are chosen simply because of God's grace, this makes *everyone we know* as the *perfect candidate* for salvation! We should now walk around life, seeing people and thinking to ourselves "no matter who they are or what they have done (or are doing), they may be someone God has graciously called for salvation."

What this does, then, is gives us our marching orders. We will look more at this in the coming sections, but in brief, it should cause us to arm ourselves with the great truth of the gospel of salvation, the fact that Jesus died for the sins of the world and has come to save. This is a critical moment in the *ordo salutis*, because these people that God has indeed chosen must first *hear* the gospel for the atonement of Christ to be applied to their life.

And as a matter of fact, if we believe the opposite, that God has not chosen us before the foundations of the world and that He is simply foreknowing (in a "I just know how they will choose" kind of way) who will choose Him, then we should stop praying for our lost friends and family, because it would be pointless.

⁶⁷⁹ Hyper-Calvinists would oftentimes fall into the category of Christians who believe in utter as opposed to total depravity, extreme limited atonement (as opposed to Calvin's actual version of limited atonement, which some call "unlimited limited atonement" and the lack of a need for evangelism since God has already picked teams. Poor John Calvin, he wouldn't even be a Calvinist today by those standards.

If our salvation is dependent on us choosing God, we should stop praying and asking God to save our friends, because it isn't up to Him.

But if salvation is simply and *only* by God's grace, then not only does it amplify my desire to *pray* for salvation, but it greatly motivates me to share my faith! Some may say, "well, if God already picked everyone, why evangelize?" This, indeed, is a *terrible and unbiblical view!* There is a grave misunderstanding of the whole of God's predestination.

Consider these incredible words from the prophet Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 1.4-10

Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

6 Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth." 7 But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a youth'; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. 8 Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the LORD."

9 Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me, "Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. 10 See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."

Predestination is not limited *by any means* to salvation. The term *election* speaks specifically of God's choosing of whom He will spare, but predestination goes beyond that, and speaks even to each action and event in our life. Here, God "appoints," or predestines, Jeremiah (and did so before he was in the womb) to actually *be the vehicle to preach salvation*.

Further, Paul makes this even more clear in the following verses, showing that those who are chosen to be saved are intrinsically connected to the *means* by which they are saved:

Romans 10.13-17

13 For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" 17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

God's predestined choice for who is saved is *NOT* separable from His predestination of *how* they are saved.

God not only sovereignly elects those unto salvation, but He also sovereignly chooses *how* He is going to make it happen. He does this, mainly through us, for a few reasons:

- It magnifies His glory. Seriously, what is crazier than the thought of a completely holy God, who instead of rightfully destroying law breakers, instead saves some by His sheer grace, then *uses* those very redeemed law breakers to save more! Now *that* will confound the wise!
- It magnifies His grace. The Word calls us living epistles, and when the world sees us as similarly broken image bearers, it is the greatest evidence of God's grace and mercy.
- He loves us and wants us to enjoy the work of redemption. He's a good Father and loves doing His work with His kids.
- He has made us in His image. This is one of those great and humbling privileges, that we get to partake in bringing about salvation.
- It is a major part in amplifying our dependence on Him. When we are impassioned to share our faith, we are driven more and more to His Word, to prayer, to study, and to humility because we are deeply motivated to present the grace, mercy, and love of Christ to a dying world in need. If God just "made it happen" since He has already chosen them, we would become disengaged, self-absorbed, independent, and lazy in our faith.

JUSTIFICATION

After receiving this “gift” (grace) of opened eyes and regeneration and are now able to finally believe in faith, we are now imputed His righteousness.⁶⁸⁰ He has become sin, we have become God’s righteousness. Complete substitution. This onetime event in our life is called *justification*.♣

You see, the simple thought that Christ simply just gave us a free gift because He loves us, though is true, is also not quite complete. The fact of the matter is that this free gift came at a price of punishment, a high price necessary for redemption, and Jesus paid the price by becoming our disgusting sin, trading to us His righteousness. It is in this moment when we see what Christ has done for us and acknowledge that our sin can only be paid for by Him that we are then justified. We are saved. We are reconciled. We are united in Christ. The separation has been destroyed.

So we see that God, the righteous judge, now declares us “not guilty” of our crimes, both past, present, and future, because we have, by grace through faith, accepted His Son as a worthy Savior, the one who satisfied the wrath of a Holy God. He now acquits us of all wrongdoing, but again, not because He is a crooked judge who breaks His own law by looking the other way, but He acquits us because He, as a righteous judge, sees that the punishment for the wrongdoing has in fact been paid for by Christ, our penal substitution. The requirement of the law has been fulfilled in the eyes of the Judge.⁶⁸¹

This is what Martin Luther called “the great exchange.”

2 Peter 1.1, 2

I, Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours:

2 Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

1 Peter 3.18

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,

SO NOW WHAT?

So there we have it! We’re saved! Now what?

As great of a truth as we have seen thus far, it is far from over. Though the atonement has been made, we still have much to look forward to. Though the power of death has been rendered powerless, it still has yet to be completely destroyed.⁶⁸² In the meantime, we have life to live as witnesses of Christ’s work. But this life we live we don’t live alone, nor do we live it by our own strength.

ADOPTION, SANCTIFICATION, PERSEVERANCE, DEATH, AND GLORIFICATION

As tempting as it is to continue and discuss the rest of the order of salvation, I have chosen, however, to put off commenting on these until later chapters, when we will see these wonderful parts of our salvation walked out and fulfilled through the power of the Holy Spirit and glorification of Christ. That said, I wanted to make mention of it here as to not only build anticipation during your reading in order to get a clear context of God’s plan, but also to make a clear point of reference here for future study as you return to this study by keeping the “parts” of our salvation in one chapter.

So, for now we will continue in **Chapter X** to look at what we are to do during this time of sanctification and until that great Day of glorification. In the meantime, take note internally of how your spirit groans and desires for something better, something more glorious than this current life you live. Know that this time will come, but for now, there is work to be done.

⁶⁸⁰ 2 Corinthians 5.21 // Romans 3.22, 5.17, 21, 10.6 // 1 Corinthians 1.30 // Philippians 1.11, 3.9

⁶⁸¹ Romans 4.25, 5.16, 18, 8.4 // Titus 3.4-7

⁶⁸² 1 Corinthians 15.20-28 // Mark 12.36 // Romans 16.20 // Hebrews 10.11-13

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

Why UNDERSTANDING GOD'S GRACE AND SALVATION IS SO CRITICAL

Result #1: It increases your desire to pray.

The deep understanding that we are saved simply and only by God's sovereign grace is a game changer. I'm not talking about *intellectually* knowing this truth, but understanding, as much as we are able, the depth of it. When we realize and begin to comprehend that salvation is nothing of ourselves, it *increases* our faith in God's ability to save!

Here's the thing. We're sinful people. We are spiritually bankrupt because of sin. I have lots of friends and family that I deeply want to see get saved. Sometimes, if I am to be honest, I get discouraged, because they are "so far" from God and "so objected to the idea of God" and they would "never step foot in a church." I get discouraged, my hope wanes, and I just can't picture it in my head.

Now, if God's plan of salvation was that He simply through a life preserver out and whoever would *respond* to it would be saved, well, then I am right to be discouraged. If my friends' and family members' salvation is contingent on their response to the gospel, then my prayers could rightly be depleted.

But here is the *good news!* That "though we were still sinners, Christ died for the ungodly," and that we are saved "by grace through faith, not of ourselves, it is the *gift* of God." It is God alone who opens eyes and gives the *gift* of salvation! My prayer life is catapulted now for those who I previously, and embarrassingly, gave up hope on.

If we believe salvation comes by our own will, desire, faith or repentance, then we should stop praying to God and asking Him to save our friends.

But if salvation is by grace alone, then now our prayers *will* have purpose and effectiveness because they are going to the God who *alone* does the saving! I can *know* that when I pray, "oh Lord, I pray for my friend, that You would sovereignly open his eyes, even though he is so far from looking for you," that God not only hears the prayer but is *able to do it!*

In addition to prayer, I noted in the main text that it increases our faith and desire for evangelism. Because I already covered it a bit, I will only add a quote from John Piper:

Embracing and being embraced by the doctrine of sovereign grace—beginning with unconditional election—first produces that kind of radical, risk-taking sacrificial love; and then it humbles us to rejoice in the truth that we did not produce this beauty in ourselves, God did. Then we give him the glory.⁶⁸³

Result #2: It causes us to live freely, not religiously or in fear.

The thought that it is up to us sinners to choose God and then, as we'll look at more in the next chapter, have the responsibility on us in order to *keep* our salvation is, to be honest, a terrible way to live. It is terrible for a few reasons:

- It diminishes the work of Christ. The blood of Christ is dramatically cheapened.
- It engages a rules/performance based relationship with God. If we are constantly looking over our shoulder or checking off a list to keep God happy and content with us so that He doesn't discard us or disapprove of us is, by definition, religion, rather than real relationship.
- It forces the Word to change the word "grace" into "reward." If our salvation is something given to us because we choose, and then it can be taken away when we choose not, saving grace ceases to be grace. Saving grace is now "saving reward," or even "saving privilege," something that is given upon doing the right thing, and then taken away when we "go too far." But our salvation, as we have seen, is "not of ourselves, it is the gift of God, so that none can boast."

⁶⁸³ www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/pastoral-thoughts-on-the-doctrine-of-election

- It promotes legalism. We aim now to please God and keep Him happy. But what the blood of Jesus, God's grace, and the atonement teaches us is that God is *already pleased with us because He is completely pleased with His Son!* We are *freed* from the Law, because Jesus has satisfied all the righteous requirement of the Law!

Result #4: You become more deeply grateful, knowing that all you have is by His grace. You are more content. You worship more.

If there is one thing that maybe sticks out to me as I've been studying the reality and depth of God's grace, is that I have become so much more humbly grateful for what God has done. There is such a deep sense of God's sovereignty, in so many ways, I am finding it to be very difficult to even put it into words.

I worry less. I have less fear. I have more love. I have become more selfless. I have become more caring. I have become more excited to share my faith. I have more passion. I could go on and on, and I can "boast" about these things because more than ever in my life, I can *only, only, only* give full and complete credit to God and His grace. I must admit, that in the past, if I had these attributes, I could easily claim that I got them from something I did. Even if that "thing" that I did was good and godly, like read the Word, without understanding God's grace, I secretly gave credit to myself and my own self-discipline.

Now, here's the thing, by me reading the Word and worrying less, it was indeed God's grace that I worried less due to His Word, but not understanding grace, *I didn't give Him the credit*. Now as I understand God's grace (or, I should say, understand it more), I am deeply humbled, in awe, and amazed that He has given me grace, through His Word, that I could worry less. I realize, more than ever, that it is only by His grace. This has had a profound effect on my interaction with God and others.

The end doesn't always justify the means.

I say this because though it was, say, His Word that caused me to worry less or trust more, that's great, but if I don't give His grace the glory and credit, is that okay? Absolutely not. I boast in myself, and I rob God of His glory. I boast in myself, and say that the grace I was given by the blood of Christ was neither enough nor sufficient, but that I can do it. This, again, is why Paul rebukes the Galatians when he says:

Galatians 3.1-6

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. 2 Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? 4 Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? 5 Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith— 6 just as Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"?

The Galatians may say, "but the end justifies the means. If adding works and legalism helps us be more like Christ, then who cares?"

God cares. Jesus cares. The Holy Spirit cares.

The Father gave His Son so that we wouldn't have to "add anything." This spits at His plan.

The Son willfully came to die for us and purchase us for Himself. This says "thanks, but I need a little more."

The Holy Spirit agrees to enter into us and be our Helper. This says, "no, it's cool, I got it."

The end doesn't always justify the means, and we get ourselves on a fast track to self-righteousness, independence, and moralism. Sure, we may "look" like Christians, and of course, by God's grace, we are still indeed Christians, but we become ineffective, lifeless, fruitless, joyless, and frustrated in our faith.

Result #5: You understand the whole of Scripture and God's design more.

Looking back to **Chapter I** when we introduced theological concepts, I pointed out that theology is not like a buffet where we pick and choose what we like. It is more like a jigsaw puzzle, where every piece fits and is dependent on another piece.

With the doctrine of election and soteriology in general, the whole of our faith and understanding Scripture is *intimately* connected to what we think and how we view salvation and salvific themes. Here is what gets affected by how you view salvation, God's sovereignty, and His grace:

- It teaches you how and why you evangelize
- It guards against legalism and establishes your freedom in Christ
- It teaches you more about how and why you pray
- It amplifies your understanding and value of the work and cross of Christ
- It radically changes how you view the work of the Holy Spirit in your life
- It causes you to have a higher view of God's sovereignty
- It focuses the light in which you read and study the whole bible
- It dramatically effects how you view God's love
- It completely effects how you view God's covenant with us.

These are truly just a few quick things. And if you give more thought and time to them, the reality of how these are effected by how we view salvation, grace and His sovereignty become abundantly clear, and sobering, even.

Result #6: The doctrine of election and God's grace makes God bigger and more supreme in your life. It, more than other doctrines, anchors the Christian and the church, keeping it from drifting into other poor doctrines.

This is probably a conglomeration of all of these results, but nonetheless, needed to be clearly stated. A higher view and value being put on God's sovereignty, grace, and way in which we are saved simply makes God bigger. Much bigger.

**The bigger God is in our life, the smaller we are.
The smaller we are, the less we worship ourselves.**

This, of course, as I wrote already, goes far beyond the initial act of saving faith. John Piper says:

The doctrine of election has an amazing effect to awaken people who are drifting in the river of inherited assumptions with no engagement of the mind. Suddenly they are jarred by the radical God-centeredness of the Bible and the frightening man-centeredness of their own hearts. They are put on a quest to build a way of thinking Biblically about the God and the world that may avoid the tragedy [that theologian Chuck] Colson warns about [in his book about engaging with a postmodern world]: namely, the world discovering, at last, that truth really matters, just when the church has decided in the name of cultural relevance that doctrine doesn't matter. The doctrine of election is good for us and for our grandchildren in ways we can't even yet imagine.

This particular doctrine indeed acts as an anchor for us. God's sovereign grace, predestination, and election keeps us grounded in the most important truth: that God is sovereign, not us.

PRACTICAL TOOLS

♣ Definition of Terms ♣

Calvinism: This is a systematic theology that was derived from the teachings (primarily teachings on soteriology) of a great theologian named John Calvin (1509-1564). He was a Dutchman who lived in the 16th century who helped spur on the Reformation (see entry below), which was sparked by Martin Luther in 1517. Calvin took many of Luther's themes and built upon them. The theological insights he penned have been incredibly important and have greatly influenced the church ever since. It weighs in heavily on God's sovereignty (see *monergism* entry below), as well as the doctrine of soteriology (see entry below). It is also more broadly categorized as "Reformed theology" (see entry below). Calvinists hold to five particular doctrines as their flagship, which are summarized in the acronym "T.U.L.I.P." (see entry below).

Hyper-Calvinism: Hyper-Calvinists would oftentimes fall into the category of Christians who have played the "telephone game" a little too much with Calvinism. They would tend to believe in "utter" as opposed to "total" depravity, "extreme limited atonement" (as opposed to Calvin's actual version of limited atonement, which some call "unlimited limited atonement," or even a balanced view of "limited atonement"). They would also see the lack of a need for evangelism since God has already picked teams. These tend to hold onto *their* version of the Five Points as absolutes, rather than convictions, and often go so far as to question the salvation of any Arminian and declare them as teaching heresy. They are often prideful, judgmental, and have a very ominous, unloving picture of God that they inadvertently portray.

Arminianism: This is sometimes called Wesleyanism (as it was made popular by the great John Wesley, who in turn started the Methodist Church), it is the following of another theologian named Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609). Arminius was a fan of Calvin's work, and even studied under Calvin's successor and disciple, Theodore Beza. Nonetheless, Arminius did find things in Calvin's theology that he didn't like, and so in his teachings, he pursued other thoughts. After his death in 1609 his theological differences with Calvinism were systematized as the "Five Articles of the Remonstrants." Arminianism, though not denying God's sovereignty, weigh in more heavily on man's free choice and free will, which causes their soteriology to have man more involved, making him able to lose salvation and affect whether or not he becomes a Christian in the first place (see *unlimited atonement* and *synergism* entry below).

Soteriology: This is quite simply the "study of salvation," as it focuses on the various elements of salvation: how we get it, how we keep it, etc.

Reformed theology: This is so named because it sprung from the Reformation. This is a general term for most of the main Protestant denominations, such as Baptist, Presbyterian, and Lutheran. They *usually*, but not always, are Calvinistic in their theology.

Reformation: This is a movement that started in 1517 when Martin Luther, who was at the time a Roman Catholic monk, came to realize through reading the Scripture that many of the practices and beliefs of the Catholic Church were not Scriptural. He wrote out his grievances in an article called his "95 Theses" and nailed them to the door of his church in Wittenberg, Germany. Since then, Protestantism developed over the next 400 years, and of course, continues today.

T.U.L.I.P.: This is the commonly held acronym by which Calvinists systematize their flagship doctrinal beliefs. It stands for Total Depravity, Unmerited Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints.

Unlimited atonement: This is the Arminian view of the atonement that means Jesus' death on the cross has made salvation possible for all people; in other words, it is unlimited in its extent. The blood of Jesus purchases the opportunity, but not salvation, for all people to be saved (while maintaining that not all will choose, so this is not universalism). The atonement doesn't actually purchase us for salvation, but only makes it available. What makes it effective is that we must now choose it. Therefore, the blood of Christ only initiates salvation, rather than doing the whole work and purchasing it for us.

Limited atonement: This is the Calvinist or Reformed view of the atonement that means Christ's death was limited only to those who got saved. In other words, it is limited in its extent. Some Calvinists would call it "particular atonement" rather than "limited." This means that for those "particular" and "limited" number of people who God

actually chose, for those people, the blood purchases every part of their salvation. The blood of Jesus doesn't just make salvation possible, but it actually purchases us as our ransom and completes the transaction. Through His blood we are given (not just made available) eternal life, forgiveness, and a future glory in Christ forever.

Unlimited limited atonement: This view affirms the strengths of both views of the atonement. Christ did indeed die to make a way for salvation for all people, but that the only ones who get the full benefit of the atonement are those that receive it, those that were chosen by God, in Christ, before the foundations of the world. In that sense, it is unlimited in its availability, but limited to who receives it. To those who it is given to, the blood of Jesus doesn't just make salvation possible, but it actually purchases us as our ransom and completes the transaction. Through His blood we are given (not just made available) eternal life, forgiveness, and a future glory in Christ forever.

Ordo salutis: This is Latin for "order of salvation." Now, it should be clear that this "order" is for our own understanding. The bible doesn't have a numbered list, and some theologians differ over the order.

Election: It's the idea that God "chose" or "elected" people to be saved. This happened before the foundation of the world, and some call it "predestination" (see entry below).

Inability: Inability means that we, because we are dead in our sins and trespasses, are unable to choose God on our own, because we are spiritually bankrupt. We need God to draw and raise us and cause us to be born again by His grace, and only after we are given His grace, we *then* can respond in faith.

Predestination: This is a broader term for "election" that incorporates not just election for eternal life for some, but the idea that the rest who were not elected were predestined to hell. Though this sounds harsh, there is much to say about the nature of how this works in the great plan of God.

Foreknowledge: This is not just the fact that He knows what will happen. Look at these verses speaking of God's actual planning of definite events, not just simply "knowing" that they will happen. For God to "foreknow" is not just Him looking into a crystal ball and seeing "who is going to choose Me," but that we are chosen by Him according to His foreknowledge, meaning that it is according to the fact that *He planned* the intimate knowing of us.

Common grace: Grace that's available in an infinite amount of ways to all people, down to the breath that we breathe.

Saving grace: This is grace that saves, and is given by His calling, or election of us.

Irresistible grace: This refers to the "internal call" (see entry below) that God calls us by unto salvation. Because it was His choice to elect us before the foundations of the world, we can't reject His choice.

External call: This is the general gospel call, any proclamation to people who do not know the Lord. This call to Jesus and repentance can be rejected.

Inward call: This is the inward call rooted in God's election of us before the foundations of the world. It is not a general call we can deny or resist (such as the external call, see entry above), but it speaks more of a decree or summons, as if a king calls you or summons you into his presence. Or quite possibly, it is like a subpoena to the court. It's not really an option.

Regeneration: This is the moment most of us call being born again. Upon hearing the external gospel call (see entry above) and by His grace responding to His inward call (see entry above), there is this moment in our life when God, in His sovereignty, mercy, and grace, opens our eyes, ears, and understanding and we recognize that the gospel is true.

Synergism: This means that God enables man to choose and repent in his free will to be saved. There is a partnership in salvation. God opens the eyes, man reaches out to God.

Monergism: This means that God alone did the whole work of salvation. God opens the eyes, makes us alive, and draws us to Himself as a gift.

Justification: After receiving this "gift" (grace) of opened eyes and regeneration (see entry above) and are now able to finally believe in faith, we are now imputed His righteousness. He has become sin, we have become God's righteousness. Complete substitution. Martin Luther called this the "great exchange."

Recommended Resources

Theology Books

Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem. Chapters 31-37 deal with the first aspects of our salvation, namely common grace, election, effectual call, regeneration, conversion, repentance, justification, and adoption.

Doctrine by Mark Driscoll. Chapter 9 deals with salvation.

Salvation Belongs to the Lord by John Frame. Chapters 13, 14, and 15 cover the themes in this chapter.

Books

Fifty Reasons Jesus Came to Die by John Piper.

Religion Saves + Nine Other Misconceptions by Mark Driscoll. The book is the ten most frequently asked theological questions that Driscoll gets. In this book he covers, among other topics, the idea of grace and predestination.

The Cross and Salvation by Bruce Demarest.

Chosen for Life by Sam Storms. This highly recommended book was invaluable in my study for this section. It is from the Reformed position.

Chosen but Free by Norman Geisler. This is from the Arminian position.

The Doctrine of God by John Frame.

The Message of Salvation by Phillip Ryken

Sermons

www.marshillchurch.org Type in "cross." Choose from a few sermons:

- Christ on the Cross 12 week Series, which includes:
 - Jesus Died for Our Freedom
 - Jesus Died for Our Unrighteousness
 - Jesus Died to Forgive Us
 - Unlimited Limited Atonement
 - Jesus Died to Reveal God
- "Jesus Loves Sinners" from their **Luke** series
- "Predestination" from their Religion Saves series.
- "Predestination" an 8 minute clip from their Trial series (**1 and 2 Peter**).
- "Grace" from their Religion Saves series.

www.christianessentialsbc.com/messages This is Wayne Grudem's sermons going through his book, *Systematic Theology*. Go to the sermons on Chapters 31-38.

www.desiringgod.org This is John Piper's ministry. Along with audio or video sermons, he has the transcripts as well. Type into the search field on desiringgod.org to find these audio sermons that have attached articles. Simply type in "election," "predestination," "atonement," etc.

- "TULIP, Part 7: Limited Atonement."
- "For Whom did Jesus Taste Death?"
- "The Pleasure of God in Election"
- "Divine Election: The Role of the Father and the Spirit"
- "Those Whom He Predestined He Also Called, Part 1 and 2"
- "Why Hope? Grace!"
- "Why We Love the Doctrines of Grace"

- “Unconditional Election and the Invincible Purpose of God”
- “The Freedom and Justice of God in Unconditional Election”
- “Pastoral Thoughts on the Doctrine of Election”
- “I Will be Gracious to Whom I Will be Gracious”
- “Are There Two Wills of God?”
- “Is it Sin for Me to Not Like the Doctrine of Election?,” a 3 minute video clip

Web Articles

fm.thevillagechurch.net This is the church where Matt Chandler, a gifted teacher, is the Teaching Pastor. Go here, click on “Resource Library,” select “Articles and Position Papers,” and scroll down at articles on atonement.

www.monergism.com is a great site in general, but this particular link has a lot of information on soteriology.

www.gotquestions.org If you tend to have lots of questions in general, this is a great website to get to know. Go here and search “salvation,” “limited atonement,” “unlimited atonement,” “Calvinism,” “Reformed theology,” “Arminianism,” “justification,” “election,” “predestination,” you name it.

NAME THAT THEOLOGIAN!

- Smiley guy at the top:
 - Dude who would look perfect in a flannel holding an axe:
 - Guy in the super cool and manly Mickey Mouse shirt:
 - Nice looking, next door neighbor kinda guy in the purple polo:
 - Guy with his hand raised that looks like your super nice uncle Bob:
 - Guy that looks like he was born somewhere between Europe and Africa (because he was):
 - Bilbo Baggins' stunt double:
 - The only guy with a full head of white hair that isn't a wig:
 - The guy who looks like he's in one of those "Got Milk?" ads:
 - The Bobbsey Twins:
 - The guy who you probably aren't going to ask to baby sit your kids:
 - The guy who looks like he just graduated high school:
 - The guy who's ready to eat (he's wearing two napkins on his shirt):
 - The guy who may have stolen Charles Finney's mustache:
 - The guys sitting next to the other guy who is half his age:
- Chuck Smith**
C.H. Spurgeon
Mark Driscoll
Wayne Grudem
John Piper
Augustine
John Stott
Ravi Zacharias
Tim Keller
John and Charles Wesley
Charles Finney
Matt Chandler
Jonathon Edwards
A. W. Tozer
J.I. Packer (age 85, next to Mark Driscoll, 40)