

What is "reformed"?

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Preacher: Philip Wells

[0:01] Amen. Excuse me. I just want to see what I'm doing. Here's my introduction.

Sorry, the writing got a bit small. And there are Grace Baptist churches, which might be the same thing, but not quite.

And there is the Church of England, and there's the Church of Scotland, and there's Anglicans, and they seem to be Anglicans in Africa. And there are Roman Catholic churches, and there are Presbyterian churches, and there are churches which say they are charismatic, charismatic churches.

There is such a thing as a United Reformed Church. We'll say it on the board, on the outside. There are Pentecostal churches. Then there are churches that have names that defy definition, like the Vineyard, or the Potter's House, or the Crowded House.

And you think, is that a way of saying I'm a Baptist, or is it something completely different? Why are there so many churches? It's a puzzle. I'm not sure I completely know the answer to it, but I can tell you two wrong answers.

[1:17] One wrong answer is this, that says, if they're nice people, and generally speaking, they will be nice people, they're all basically the same. That's not true.

That's not true. Not all churches are basically the same. And here's another wrong answer, that they're all completely different. Absolutely nothing in common.

That's not true either, because in some cases, and it gets a bit difficult to explain it all, but there's almost no difference at all. They're really all on the same page in some cases.

So it's not right to say they're all the same, really, and it's not right to say they're all completely different. That's a confusing way to begin, isn't it? What I'd like us to look at is at the idea of a Reformed church, or a church that is Reformed, because our church, Calvary Evangelical Church, on its description of itself, will say it is an Evangelical Reformed Baptist church.

And I'd like to try and think about what is meant by that word, the Reformed bit. If you want to know which of those other lists of churches would be Reformed churches, well, let me tell you that if you have at home somewhere on a dusty shelf the Book of Common Prayer, that that is a Reformed document.

[2:44] If you have been a member of a Presbyterian church, so Lindsay from a Presbyterian Church of America, or one of the Presbyterian churches in America, would say that is definitely a Reformed church.

Some Baptist churches are definitely Reformed, but actually, a church that says United Reformed, it probably isn't. See, it's very confusing, isn't it? So we, Calvary Evangelical Church Brighton, would say we are a Reformed church, and I want to try and explain what is meant by that.

And this is in the context of a deeper look at church membership, because it's very clear from the Bible that as many as possible Christians should belong to a local community of real Christian people.

When I say real Christian people, I mean not people that you only contact on the internet, like virtual Christian people, but real people that you can actually touch and have coffee with and give a hug or a handshake to.

But you may well say, for good reasons, that I need to belong to a local church, but this church XYZ, when I come to look in it, is not the church for me, because there are fundamental differences, which mean I cannot wholeheartedly join in.

[4:01] So I'm not trying to say that every Christian, in principle, should be able to belong to any church.

In the Lord's providence, you might say, well, such and such a church, although it's actually next door to my house, it's not the one for me. But you might say, church ABC, that is the one for me. There may be superficial differences. There may be matters in which I don't share the same taste and preference as other brothers and sisters.

But on the fundamental things, we are totally in agreement, and therefore we join together. So that's the sort of context that I'm looking at.

What are the fundamental things that we say, these are important, we agree on that. And because we agree on that, we don't mind too much if we disagree on some of the more superficial things.

[5:02] Right, I now take a breath, and I'll tell you my plan. And the plan is, number one, a very simplified look at history. And I'll tell you, it is very simplified.

It's going to be one of those things that if you actually know the details of it, you'll say, well, he got that wrong, and he got that wrong. But I'm just going to give you enough to survive. So enough history so that you don't drown.

Just a simplified look at history. Secondly, a look at the ideas involved. And I hope you will survive that. I'm going to try hard to make it palatable, but you need to come with me on that.

The third thing, I want to look at the Bible. We need the ideas and the history, and we'll see, then we'll put it to test with the Bible.

And we'll let God himself decide what we should actually believe. And then the fourth thing is by way of application. We'll take a look at ourselves and say, why does this matter?

[6:04] What difference does it make? Okay, that's the plan. Four steps, history, ideas, Bible, and then application. So this is the history.

And I've got a timeline, a timeline. So timeline starts over here in the year, European calendar, year 30 AD or thereabouts.

So this is the time of Jesus. And at that point on the timeline, we have the working of God. He's worked through hundreds and thousands of years bringing his people to the point of the birth of Jesus, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, and the encapsulation of that, not by accident, but by design, into this book.

So that is the starting point on the timeline. You're with me so far because that's obvious and easy. Yeah. So the line stretches out up to where we are now, 2017 AD.

AD meaning Latin, anno domini, which means the year of our Lord. In other words, it says that the European calendar is calibrated from this as point zero, and all the other years go on from there.

[7:29] That's a particular Christian culture, European thing. Let's put a few points on this timeline.

This is very oversimplified. Okay. Here's fairly early on in the timeline. And this line here is going to represent the space that Christian churches occupy as Christian churches.

Try and make this clear. This arrow is when somebody falls out of that space and becomes not a Christian church. So back in the early days, Christians debated the idea, is Jesus really God?

I'm oversimplifying this ever such a lot. And some of them came to the conclusion, no, he's not really God at all. And when they started to believe that, they stopped being true Christians.

They became something else. And they fell out of this safe space here and became sort of out of that area. And of course, there are churches today, I'll put that in inverted commas, which don't believe that Jesus is fully God, of which the prime example in Brighton would be Jehovah's Witnesses.

[8:58] Here's another place on the timeline. And here is a place where different churches went in a different direction. Oh dear, I'm sorry about that. But stayed within the space that you could genuinely say, well, they're still genuinely Christians.

So something's going to go wrong with this arrow by the look of it. But this is over baptism. And some people, some churches would say, baptism is for believers of most ages.

So I'm going to be a little bit cautious there because if a child is very, very young, we say, are you really believing or not quite sure whether you're thinking independently on that.

But baptism is for believers of most ages, but not for babies just because they're babies. So that's about baptism. And then other churches, and I would say actually in historical terms, the majority would say, sorry about the arrow.

I will carry on, but it looks as though I've got the version before the final version up on the screen. Anyway, I will just pretend that didn't happen. Other churches would say, baptism is for babies if they're children of believers.

[10:19] So now you see we've got two arrows, which you can hardly, oh, it's all right on yours. It's not working on mine. Within the church, you could say the real churches, but they differ over baptism.

That's for believers that baptize babies simply because they're babies of believers. And you end up, therefore, oh, here's another one that falls out.

And I think this one falls out of being a real church. When you say that if you baptize a baby, it becomes automatically, automatically a saved, regenerate child.

So they don't need the gospel. They don't need to believe in Jesus because the baptism itself did it. And to my mind, in my judgment, that takes us outside of the legitimate things that make you a real church.

I'm being very simplified on this. What does this end up with? Well, this is why you end up with Baptist churches, because they baptize people, baptize believers. And the rest of the churches, infant Baptist churches, which would be Methodists, Presbyterians, Church of England, and so on.

[11:32] So that explains why you get those different churches. Does that make sense? Okay, let's do this same sort of thing with a different idea.

So this timeline is, I'm going to put a particular place at 1517. So you can see that's not to scale, because it ought to be way over here, shouldn't it?

But 1517 and around then. And this time is the time in European history of the Reformation. A big upheaval in the religious and social and political life of Europe.

And you can put a particular date of 1517 on it. Anybody know why 1517 is a worthwhile date to pin? Martin Luther, who was a Roman Catholic monk, had been thinking.

And he came up with 95 discussion points or assertions or 95 theses, which he did what they all did in those days. He couldn't put it on Facebook. He pinned it to the church door in Wittenberg.

[12:41] And that seemed to set things rolling. So 1517 is an important date. And let's look at the idea of the Bible.

I think I can stand here, because what I'm seeing on the screen is different to what you're seeing. So here is something now about the Bible. The idea, this idea, the church is under the Bible and constantly being challenged and reformed by it.

So this is an idea about the Bible. It says that the Bible has the power and the authority to challenge the church. Even if the church has been doing this for yonks, but if it says something different in the Bible, the church should change and reform.

That's why it's called the Reformation, because it's a time of reforming a lot of ideas and structures in the church. So that's one idea. And here's an idea which I think falls out of, outside the space of real gospel church.

And this says that the source of truth is the church's tradition. And that beats the Bible.

[13:58] So an example of that would be, in those days, they had the relics of saints. So you would have the finger bone of St. Peter or the ankle bone of St. John or a wisp of hair.

All these sorts of things. Tons and tons of them. It was absolutely so ludicrous. And people said, oh, well, if we've got a wisp of hair that belonged to St. Peter, and we'll keep it up on the mezzanine floor, and we'll get a special cupboard to put it in, and that'll make our church rather special and powerful.

And the people believed all that stuff. The technical name is superstitious nonsense. They believed all that stuff. And in the, where's that in the Bible? And at this time, the Bible was brought in to challenge those thoughts.

And some people would say, well, we've always done it. It's part of our tradition. How can that be wrong? And other people said, well, it doesn't say it in the Bible. So it is wrong. And you get that divergence.

And still, the Roman Catholic Church would take the official position that tradition and the Bible are equal partners.

[15:15] And in practice, that means that the Bible is not allowed to challenge tradition. That's still the official position of the Roman Catholic Church. Hence, I am putting it outside the space occupied by genuine gospel churches.

And up here, we would have what we would say in this sense, the reformed churches, the churches that say the Bible rules over everything, and we will form ourselves and reform ourselves according to the Bible.

Otherwise known as Protestant churches, because they protest against the way Roman Catholicism was running. Okay. Just wind that back.

That makes sense. That one's about the Bible. And you can diverge outside that space with the one on the Bible. Here's another one. Again, going back to 1517.

And this time, it's about how you get right with God. How you stand right with God. God, I'm not going to do all the technicalities, but I will tell you that the technical word for this is justification.

[16:20] It means how I know that God approves of me and is on my side and says yes to me. And how do I get to that point? It's a very important point, isn't it?

Very important point. And there's one thought which says God changes something outside of us to change our standing with him.

So God changes my standing by changing something outside me. So here's a good example. A few months ago, I became a grandfather again.

Okay. That changes my standing. I'm a grandfather. I can't believe it. What did I do to achieve this? Absolutely nothing.

It was my daughter who did that by having a baby. And she did something completely outside of me. And that changes who I am. And justification, in this way of thinking, is something that Jesus does for me, outside of me, which changes who I am.

[17:30] And that has a word which is imputed righteousness. It's something that comes to me from outside and labels me, even though I contributed nothing to it.

Now here's another idea. Justification is God changing something inside me so I become a better person.

And this is, I understand it, well, this is called imparted righteousness. So we're saying that this idea is saying that how I come to God is that he puts something inside me to make me a bit better.

And then he says, yeah, that's fine. Imputed righteousness imparted righteousness. And what does the Bible say? Well, Luther struggled with this for a long, long time.

But he suddenly claimed to see quite clearly that the Bible teaches this one. But what Jesus does is outside of us and comes to us as a completely free gift to which we contribute nothing.

[18:45] And all the songs that we were singing just now are based on that idea. We could say, nothing in my hand I bring.

Simply to thy cross I cling. Naked come to thee for dress. Helpless look to thee for grace. Foul. I to the fountain fly.

Wash me, Savior. Or I die. In other words, I'm not bringing anything. I'm not saying, well, I'm a little bit better, actually. Will that do? I'm saying, I'm absolute rubbish. You've got to accept me.

If I'm going to be accepted, it's because somebody has done something for me which I could never do for myself. Justification. And the Reformed churches are meant to go along with that.

And the key person who triggered this, who wasn't the only person who thought of it, no doubt. But this is linked to the name of Martin Luther. And the Roman Catholic Church, best of my understanding, would still officially teach this.

[19:55] Which is not what the Gospel says. Not what the Bible says. Does that make sense? That's justification. So I'm now going to do that timeline again. And again, we're going to go back to the Reformation, although we want to go onwards from there as well.

And this one is about salvation. So it's a little bit broader thought than just justification. This is salvation, the whole package of what it is to be a Christian. And here's one thought which says

salvation is by God's grace in Jesus Christ received by faith.

Faith itself is a gift from God. It has to be a gift from God. God saves us. So that's one idea. And here's another idea, which I think still is within, you know, Gospel churches would still teach this. I don't think this means that you're teaching something completely, completely wacky and off-beam.

But here's this slightly different thought. Salvation is by God's grace in Jesus Christ received by faith. I'm okay, that's just the same. But faith is entirely or partly within everyone's ability.

[21:17] It's a bit subtle that, isn't it? So it's saying that faith is something I can do. Faith is my bit. Christ does his bit and I now do my bit.

We could do it percentage-wise. He does sort of 90%, I bring 10%. Or he does 99% and I bring 1%. But I've got something in there that I did.

Perhaps it's my faith. The logic of it, we partly save ourselves through our contribution of faith. I'm trying to make this simple. I hope I'm not oversimplifying it. If you want to go really completely outside this space of a real gospel, you would say salvation is by us making ourselves good enough for him.

That would go completely outside the gospel. How am I saved? I bring to God how well I've done. I've done some good deeds today. I'm not as bad as other people. You know, really I'm okay somehow.

[22:22] Now then, that would be called salvation by good works. And the Bible says, by the works of the law, by good works, no one can be saved.

By the works of the law, no flesh shall be justified. That is absolutely wrong. Church-wise, well the Reformed churches would say that one at the top.

And the particular name that gets tied to that is John Calvin, although he didn't invent it, but he did teach it, and it gets tied to his name. This is sort of a little bit more vague, and I'm not going to try and oversimplify that.

Many good-hearted Christian people would say something a bit like that. But this one, salvation by good works, well, some of my colleagues and brothers in ministry have gone to, for example, Anglican churches, and they preach this one, and the people in the congregation are incensed, are angry, because in their hearts they believe this one.

And they call the minister awful things and terrible stories I could tell, because the human heart likes this one.

[23:55] I'd like to think that somehow I'm not too bad. But the gospel says, unless you can say, foul eye to the fountain fly, you can't be a Christian.

Which is a tough thing to say, isn't it? You need what Jesus did. There is no other way. So that one was about salvation.

Does that make sense, having seen the others? It sort of fits together. So now I'm going to put those ideas into a table. And each, under little categories, the first column will be if you believe that you are free enough to believe that you've got that capacity within you.

And this other column is saying what I've been trying to convey, that none of us is good enough. We don't have the capacity at all to come to Jesus Christ unless it's by his grace.

And let's just see what it does to these different thoughts. So what does it say about humans and their sin? So on column one, you would be saying humans are sinful, but there is enough goodness in them that they can do something that clinches salvation.

[25:24] They have the power to choose, perhaps, or the power to believe, or the power to turn. So they're not so bad that they can't do those things. That would be on that column. Second column says human beings are sinful, and the real bad news, but the true news, is that they are so sinful that they are blind, rebellious, and cannot of themselves do anything to clinch their salvation.

That would be what Stuart Townend says in the song where he says, once I was blind, but believed I saw everything.

I couldn't see the kingdom. I couldn't see the goodness of Jesus. I had to have my eyes opened by God.

Does he get the thought? Let's take this on now to Christ and his cross. For Christ and his cross, on the first column, we would say, let me just wind back again.

Jesus says to people, you should believe. He says to people, you should choose. He says to people, you must turn.

[26:43] The Bible says those things. That does not imply that they can do it, but they must. You see how, what a tight squeeze humanity is in.

You must believe, you must turn, you must choose, but you can't. See, once you begin to see that, it really makes you cry out to God, doesn't it?

I need help to be a Christian. I need a miracle to make me a Christian. That's the truth of the matter. Let's go back to Christ and his cross.

So on this way of thinking, you would end up saying, Jesus died for everyone, bearing their sin, but because coming to Christ is a matter in the capability of the sinner, Christ is actually unsure as to whether anyone will choose to benefit from his cross or not.

That's the logic of that position. It's down to the human's free will because they can choose and believe in turn.

[28:01] Will they do that? And God says, I don't know. Let's wait and see. So you end up with a position that Jesus having died on the cross, potentially he might be very disappointed because maybe nobody will believe.

He just can't tell us. It's down to the free will of these human beings who supposedly are able to make up their own minds freely on this or not.

Now on this view, it has a different understanding of the power of the cross because it says, Christ is offered to everyone, but his death on the cross causes the salvation of his people and cannot fail. So this understanding of the cross is saying that the cross does not simply make salvation possible, but we don't know whether it will work or not. It says that this understanding of the cross says Christ's death on the cross actually saves his people with such a powerful act that their salvation is no longer in doubt and although it will take centuries and millennia to work it all through and processes in their lives, there is no way that they will not get to heaven.

That's the power of the cross. Let's go on to the next bit. God and his call. Now on this view, God offers salvation freely to all but he waits to see whether anyone will choose to receive it or not.

[29:47] So God says, here's the offer of the gospel, over to you now. And there's no guarantee that anyone will believe it or not because they're free to or not to.

That's the version of the call. On this column, he offers his salvation freely to all and he says, come to the Lord Jesus Christ, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, turn to the Lord Jesus Christ and he goes even further.

He goes even further and to, this is his business now, he goes to one and another and he sort of, the Holy Spirit whispers in their ear, do you see?

Let me open your eyes, let me open your heart and the person says, yes, because God has done more than just say something on the outside, he's done something on the inside too.

Now you might say, that's very mysterious, I say, it is very mysterious but we've got examples of it in the Bible about Lydia. Do you remember? Lydia, one of the women that Paul went to speak to by the river, Philippi was it?

[31:07] And he went to the prayer time because the Jewish people would have had a prayer time by the river and he went and he told them what was in the Bible and he told them about Jesus and Lydia believed and it said of her, whose heart the Lord opened to hear the word spoken by Paul.

So it wasn't just the word on the outside, the word was there but there was something on the inside and the Holy Spirit did this and I put the word sweetly because I think the sweetness of this is important.

It's not forced. It's not an act of sheer power. It is an act of power but it is an act of sweet power that Lydia didn't say, oh no, what are you doing to me?

Her heart was opened. She said, yes, this is wonderful. Whose heart the Lord opened or the man whose eyes were opened and so on and I don't know how you would put it, how you became a Christian.

Would you say, I was rather cleverer than other people and I saw this or I was rather more spiritual than other people and that's why I got the idea or would you say, actually I was blind, I was going my own way but the Lord put his hand on me and opened my eyes to the goodness of Jesus and opened my heart to believe on him and I got no complaints about that.

[32:28] It was just so wonderful. The Lord sweetly opened the eyes, the ears, the heart to come to faith in Jesus Christ. So this does something to what faith is.

What does the preacher, the evangelist, say that faith is? Now I've got one of my good Christian brother and I remember hearing him preach the gospel and he said, what you have to do is to believe that Jesus died for me.

So he urges his listeners, I want you, all of you, to believe that Jesus died for me. Come to that position, Jesus died for me. Now that's what he, he's asking people to have faith and he's saying that's what faith is.

Interesting that nobody in the New Testament uses that way of putting it. This is in asking people to believe a fact, isn't it?

That's a fact, or not. Jesus died for me. It's a fact about what he did or didn't do. And I'd say that is subtly different from the way the people in the New Testament approaches it because faith under this heading is saying, I want you to put your trust in Jesus Christ.

[33:53] I want you to say, I need him. I need what he did. Don't necessarily understand the depths of it.

I don't understand the supernatural heights and depth of it, but I know what he did and I need that. And I need him. And this is slightly different because it's not faith in a fact, it's faith in a person. It's based on his action, but we're saying, put your trust in Jesus Christ. And I think that's significantly closer to the way the Bible puts it than this one.

Okay. Let's think about what this does to the future. Now, if faith was, I chose, it was down to me, then presumably I can un-choose if I want to.

If I'm in charge of this process, I can choose to stop believing. I suppose that's the logic of it.

There's no guarantee. Whereas this way of looking at it is that God opened my heart.

[35:07] God chose to do that. And he chose to do it because he wanted me to be in heaven. He was determined that would happen. And that means that he will keep me whatever life throws at me, whatever thick and thin I go through, whatever wobbly, feeble sort of person I am, most of us are.

God says, I'll keep you. It never depended on you in the first place. It's never going to depend on you all the way through. I brought you. I'll keep you.

And I put something here about choice and will. Because there is choice and will involved, this version says that the key thing is the human choice.

It depends on human choice and human will. And this version says, yeah, of course people choose. Of course there is an act of choosing and an act of believing and an act of turning.

Of course there is. But it happens because that is not the key thing. The key thing is that God first chose me.

[36:21] He chose me in a secret and mysterious way for which I'll never plumb the depths of but for which I'm eternally grateful because he came after me.

That's the only reason I ever chose him. Okay? So that's the set of ideas. And this lot fits together and these all fit together.

And I'm not going to stop and try and demonstrate that. I hope that will commend itself to you. That was a look at the ideas. Now let's look at the Bible. I'm so sorry. I have actually brought the wrong slides because this should now say number three.

But anyway, let's carry on. Please turn to John chapter six. Because having tried to explain the history to you and having tried to explain the way different sets of ideas about salvation hang together, I have yet to say whether the Bible puts it one way or the other.

And that's important. We need God to tell us which of those sets of ideas is right, if any of them. So we're going to look in John chapter six. And that's the chapter that was read to us.

[37:29] Do have it open if you are able to. And we're going to come in, for example, at verse 35, which is Jesus-centered. Jesus declared, I am

the bread of life.

He who comes to me will never go hungry. He who believes in me will never be thirsty. So that's a statement of Jesus. It's a promise about the sort of person.

He is the sort of thing he offers. He's the bread of life. I think I've got a click. And he says, he puts it in different ways which all mean much the same thing. You come to me, you believe in me, and by implication you eat me or drink me.

He who comes to me will never go hungry. He who believes in me will never be thirsty. So that's about Jesus. And he comes, as one of the old theologians said, clothed in his promises.

He doesn't just come like as a photograph of a Middle Eastern guy. He comes with lots of labels attached to him saying, this is what I promise, this is what I am, this is what I offer.

[38:35] And here, now we've got his audience. And I didn't really take fully into account that he's got a hostile audience. And that's clear from the longer reading that Arsema did.

Most of the people are not getting it and not taking him up. So I've got four people. And there's a leg of one of them which you see is not quite right.

And he says to, in verse 36, I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. So we've got unbelief as a feature of this.

And why do we have some people believing? Why do we have some people not believing? There are the promises. Here's the audience. And Jesus is quick to say, or he says this repeatedly, verse 44, he says, well, no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him and I will raise him up at the last day.

So that addresses that idea of the capacity of people to come. And he says, you can't. I'm not really surprised I'm addressing an audience many of whom don't believe, says Jesus, because no one can come unless there is that work of the Father in which he draws the sin.

[39:55] Excuse me, Tim. He draws the sinner. He goes and goes further than just speaking. He actually draws and enables. And you have it in verse 65 where Jesus says, that's why I told you, no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.

Okay, let's go on a little bit. So here are some people who do believe. And of these people, in verse 37, Jesus says, all that the Father gives me will come to me and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

For I have come down from heaven to do not my will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me that I shall lose none of all he has given me but raise them at the last day.

So Jesus describes the people who do respond, first of all, in this way, that they've been given. So I'm going to put a little sort of label on these two people and say they're going to be believing on Jesus.

We'll see that in a minute. But why? And the answer that Jesus gives to this is that they've been given to him by the Father. And he repeats that.

[41:08] Verse 37, all that the Father gives me will come to me. So there's something unstoppable about this. And you say, what is this giving? And Jesus doesn't enlarge on it but I think we can reasonably assume that this is something that the Father has done.

He's not doing it there and then. It's something the Father has already decided at some point. This one, this one, this one, this one, this one, this one, I'm going to give them to Jesus. And if I give them to Jesus, they will definitely come to him because all that the Father gives me will come to me. And what do we find about these people? All that the Father gives will come. And the object of this coming, as Jesus several times repeats, is to raise them up at the last day.

Verse 39, this is the will of whom who sent me that I lose none of all he has given me but raise them up at the last day.

Do you get the connection between right at the beginning that he's given them to Jesus and right at the end Jesus is tasked with raising them at the last day and not losing them in the meantime.

[42:26] So you get the span of that statement, all that the Father gives me will come to me and those that come to me I will raise up at the last day. That's the Father's will. And now, in verse 40, these people are described in a different way.

For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day. So he uses the same idea, these people I will raise up at the last day.

I've just described them as those who've been given. Now I'm describing them in a different way. Those who look to the Son and believe in him.

And do you notice in the NIV it says everyone. So there's a wide scope for this.

Everyone who looks, everyone who believes, everyone who comes will have eternal life. I will raise him up at the last day. The will of the Father is described in these two ways.

[43:34] It's like two sides of a coin. Everyone who looks, everyone who believes, if you look and believe you will have eternal life and be raised on the last day.

That's the free offer side of it. That's the free offer to anyone and everyone. And you could go into the marketplace, you could go into the middle of a city, I could stand here in this group of people and say anyone who believes.

If you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ all the good things that he promises will be true for you. You will have eternal life, you will be raised on the last day, that's true.

If you believe, come and believe. Turn to him. Okay, that's the free offer. Top side of the coin, underside of the coin, which is God's business, not my business.

My business is to tell people to believe and to say how great Jesus Christ is. And that's the right thing to do. And God is going to do a work secretly.

[44:38] And I don't know about it, but God knows about it. And that's what was described in those other verses. All that the Father gives me will come to me.

And whoever comes to me, I will never drive away. Put it in that verse. If you come to Jesus, he'll never drive you away. Come to me, says Jesus.

I'll never drive you away. Come! And then underneath, the other side of the coin, there's the gift of the Father. This secret, almost unfathomable work that the Father gives people to the Savior. and they come and they'll never be lost. And if you like, you could look at it chronologically and you could say, first thing you need to know is you need to come. Come.

Believe. And then when you've believed, I could say, do you know why you believed? I said, no. Why did you believe? Because the Father had done something and had decided to do something for you before you'd ever thought of him.

[45:44] He'd been thinking of you and planning how to bring you to his son. Which is pretty mind-blowing, isn't it? So let's not, that's the picture that we have in John chapter 6.

Let's just keep the picture there and think of what this is saying in regard to that table I had. What does it say on that table of things? It says this, God the Father chooses, it uses the word give, but it's the same thought, isn't it?

It's God the Father who, bottom line, he gives. You can't come unless you've been given by the Father. All who are given by the Father will come. The fundamental thing is the kindness, the mystery, the wonder of the Father's choice.

What does it say about human ability? It says that humans cannot do it themselves. You cannot come unless the Father draws you. What does it say about God's unstoppable grace? It says that if you're given, you will come, and if you come, you will be raised on the last day.

What does it say about the free offer of the gospel? It says everyone who believes. It doesn't narrow it down and say, well, I'm not quite sure that I can promise you this. It says I can totally promise you this.

[46:55] If you believe, you will have eternal life. What does it say about future certainty? It says Jesus has been tasked with raising the given ones, not losing them, but raising them on the last day.

This is the Father's will, that all he has given to me I will keep, not lose, and raise on the last day.

This is the Father's will, that anyone who looks to me will have eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day.

Future certainty. And incidentally, here's an offer of Jesus Christ for you. Let me just stop and make that offer. For some of you, Christianity is a rather new thing, and you've been learning about it a

while, and I hope thinking about it, and maybe you've got to the point where you say, this is for me. This is for me. I want to come to this Jesus. I want to believe these things, and I invite you to do so. God says, if you, your trust in Jesus Christ, all these promises, all these wonderful promises are for you.

Maybe you're not ready to do that, but maybe you are, and if you're not ready to do it, ask God to make you ready. Ask God to show you more clearly. Ask God to give you more certainty. Look in the Bible.

[48:08] Keep coming along and listening to sermons, and don't stop until you've got it clear and certain and definite for you. Number four, last thing, why it matters.

Look at ourselves. Why, if this is what being reformed is, which I think it is, why bother with it? Well, first answer, because it's true. There's no doubt that this is what the Bible teaches.

It's true. That's a good reason for believing anything, isn't it, if it's true. Number two, it is powerful for the hearer, because we say to the hearer, this is who Jesus is.

He isn't a sort of rather naff, half-hearted saviour who does so much and then says, well, you know, the rest of it's up to you, I'm not really quite sure what's going to happen now. He's a saviour who actually saves.

This is the power of the cross, that it saves people. We come to a saviour who's totally in charge of this. If we've got him, then we've got salvation.

[49:12] It's powerful for the hearer. This is who Jesus is. This is what he can do. And if you have him, just think of what you've got. Come and look and live and believe.

Number three, it deepens the gratitude of the believer. So here's the believer and I ask, how did you come to believe?

And this says, I came to believe because he drew me. Because he opened my heart. Because he opened my eyes.

That makes our gratitude so much deeper, doesn't it? Am I crackling? Number four, it strengthens the believer for the future.

What does the future hold? Oh, it's unknown for all of us, isn't it? Bad things could happen, good things could happen. We don't know.

[50:17] But we do know that even though I am so feeble, Jesus has been tasked with bringing me home. The future is not really a question about me, it's a question about him.

Do you think he's capable of keeping people? Is he the sort of shepherd that keeps people so he doesn't lose his sheep? Of course the answer is yes, he's perfectly capable of that.

And it also, fifthly, interprets the present. What is going on? Why is life so difficult? Why is life so brilliant? Because I'm in that connection between the Father giving me to the Son and the Son raising me on the last day.

And all this in between simply works that out in the richness and variety and wonder and unfathomability of how God does what he said he's going to do.

That's what the present is. And from the point of view of teaching the Bible, in fact, this undergirds everything else. And I don't have time to spell that all out, but I'd ask you to take it from me.

[51:31] the way that everything in the Bible is presented and ought to be brought across has this as a foundation. And where the foundation is and how strong the foundation is, that's going to affect the sort of building you build on top of it.

I'm just going to say this undergirds everything else. It undergirds what we think of Christ, the Holy Spirit, the plan of God, who God is, everything. So here's my conclusion. What is reformed?

Have I actually answered that question? Well, my answer is this. It's that understanding of the Scriptures as they speak of salvation that best grasps Scripture or better still the way Scripture grasps us.

It's the way of understanding salvation that best humbles the sinner with realism about what we're saved from, about his or her predicament.

It's the way of understanding that best exalts the Savior with his power and his competence and his plan to save. It's the way of explaining it and understanding that best honors God in the depth of his

grace and the mind-blowing wisdom and the extent of his plan and the wonder of the whole thing.
[52:49] So, my PS, I hope you will say yes to God and I hope you will say yes.

Now I've seen that. That's the truth I want to hear again and again. And if any church teaches that, I'm more than glad to belong to it. Let's sing number 777.

Let's sing