

I - Irresistible Grace

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[0 : 0 0] I want to start by praying for us. So let's pray together. Father in heaven, I pray now against Satan, our enemy. Lord, we know that he would love to distract us tonight, to distort your truth, to take away any memory we would have of this sermon, to prevent us from knowing you and loving you more. So now as we look at your word and look at this issue of grace, I pray that you would be gracious to us, that you would remove any effect he would have from this building and from these people, that you would enable us to learn from your word and to love you more because of it. I pray it in Jesus' powerful name. Amen.

So tonight we're going to continue our series on salvation. We're at week four out of five. Week five is going to come, sermon five is going to come in two weeks, but tonight we're at week four. And if we can just pull up the slide, there it is. Okay. So these are the weeks that we've been going through, looking at the big picture question of salvation.

How do we go from being people who don't believe in Jesus to being people who believe in Jesus? Right. The message of salvation is that all of us, everyone who's ever lived apart from one man is a sinner separated from God, deserving of death, deserving of judgment, deserving of hell for eternity. That's the place that we all find ourselves in. No one's exempt from that.

God acted in history. He took the initiative. He sent Jesus to die for us on the cross. And what Jesus did was he took God's anger, his righteous anger against us. He took it upon himself and he died so that everyone who believes in him, everyone who confesses his name as Lord and Saviour will be saved from that terrible judgment. So there's two big frameworks in history, been around for a few hundred years, and they help us to understand this question of salvation. How does God save us?

So far, we've looked at these two opposing views and we've learnt quite a bit, I hope. First week, we looked at this question of how does someone become a Christian? Do they, as the Arminians say, exercise their free will? You know, God gives us all free will, the ability to choose. Do we have choice before us of heaven and hell and we choose heaven and reject hell or the other way around?

[2 : 3 0] Or is it what the Calvinists say, that we are all completely sinful to the core, that we are spiritually dead and therefore, because we're dead, we cannot choose God? It's him that has to take the initiative. It's him who has to raise us from death. Remember the two big kind of analogies for each of these. One, the Arminians, they're called synergists. So God works in cooperation with humanity to make salvation happen. The Calvinists are monogists. So it's just God doing everything from start to finish. He's the one saving us of his own choice. So we looked at free will and total depravity. And I said that the Bible doesn't teach anything about free will. The Bible teaches actually that we're all completely depraved. We are completely helpless. We need God or else we're screwed.

All right. Week two, we looked at conditional election and unconditional election. Election is that God, before the foundation of the world, before creation, before you and I ever came on the scene and did anything good or bad, God chose for himself a people to be saved. Now, the Arminians say that it's conditional, that God looked forward into the future. He saw that you guys would choose him. And so he chose you in response to your choosing him. Okay. That's conditional, conditional on your belief in him.

That's why it's two-handed. Cooperative event, your salvation. Calvinists, because they think that we're all dead in sin, they believe in unconditional election. We can't choose God. He has to choose us.

And it's not based on anything we do. It's not based on how much money we're going to earn or where we're going to live or what culture we come from. It's just God's own free choice. And really, at the end of the day, it's a mystery why he chooses some and not others. It's up to him. Last week, we looked at the atonement. That's Jesus' death on the cross. And we asked the question, who did Jesus die for?

Did he die for everyone, like the Arminians say, everyone in the same way, so that everyone has the opportunity to come to faith? Or did he die, like the Calvinists say, in a limited way, not that the effect was limited, but that the scope was limited, that he died in a special way for the elect, for those people whom he'd already chosen? And I said that I would go with the Calvinists with a big footnote, and I would say that God died for the elect in a special saving way, but at the same time, he died for all people in a general way, that there are benefits from Jesus' death that spread across everyone. Okay? Get the tape, if that sounds confusing. All right, and tonight, we're at grace.

[5 : 14] Resistible or irresistible grace. This series is a big word series. They're going to be another bunch of big words here tonight, but I know that you're all smart people, and that you can deal with it, and that you can get the sermons, and you can get the books, and we'll explain the big words too.

I'd certainly need them explained to me, so we'll do this together. But tonight, resistible grace, irresistible grace. This is the kind of big word tonight is called prevenient grace. Prevenient grace. This means that God, in order for us to respond to God in faith, God has to do something. God has to provide some grace for us. That's called prevenient grace.

He gives us grace before we respond to him. Now, this still works with both ideas. The Arminians will say, yes, God looked forward into the future, saw who would choose him, and he chose them, but he still needs to give them some grace in order for them to make the decision, and that grace comes in the form of free will. The Calvinists say that prevenient grace is true as well, and we're going to see how they see it differently, but they say that it's irresistible. It doesn't just, the grace doesn't just make belief available. It actually makes you a believer if you're given this grace. You will come to God. Just a footnote on this one. Irresistible grace was a term used by the Arminians kind of derogatorily about the Calvinist belief. So, I would prefer to use the word invincible grace.

Okay? It's a bit more comic book. Invincible grace. That just means that God, if he wants to save you, he's not going to be beaten by you or anyone else. If he wants to save you, it's going to happen. It's invincible grace, and we'll get more into this in just a second. First, I want to talk about where these two different groups of people agree on this issue. Okay? So, they actually agree on something. Three points, actually. This is where they agree. First of all, that there is such a thing as prevenient grace. That is, that for people to make a decision to follow Jesus, they need to have prevenient grace. God needs to do something. He needs to give them some grace. Both believe that.

Both camps believe that everyone's a sinner, and that unless God gives grace, we'll never choose him. Both believe also that this grace is Trinitarian, and by that they mean that the grace is given to us, and it flows out of the Father's love for us. The Father is loving. He loves us, and so he gives us this grace. It flows from the cross of Jesus. So, the reason we've got the grace is because Jesus died on the cross. That's where it all happened, and it's appropriated to us. It's conveyed to us by the Holy Spirit. So, the Holy Spirit is a person. He is a member of the Trinity. He is God, and he is actively at work in us here tonight, and when he wants someone to become a Christian, he's the one who gives the grace. So, it's Trinitarian, flowing from the love of the Father, from the grace of Jesus dying on the cross, by the Holy Spirit to all who believe. And all, both of these groups believe that it's absolutely necessary. You've got to have prevenient grace. God's got to give grace in order for people to turn to him. Now, they understand it differently, very differently.

[8 : 55] And this is why we've got these two as the two big options, because we need to come to it tonight. We need to look at, not necessarily what history says, but what the Bible says, and we need to make our choice. The reason we need to make a choice about what we believe is that it's actually important.

I've said before that this is an in-house debate, that it's a family argument, that you're not going to be disqualified from being a Christian if you believe one and not the other, but actually, it's important that we understand this, because we're talking about God. We want to know God. We want to love God.

We want to be like Jesus. We need to know the character of God. So, we're going to go to the Bible and see what it says about this issue. So, first of all, we're going to take the Arminians.

We're going to take their view about resistible grace. And first of all, we need to know two things. Before we even get there, you need to know that this view of resistible grace was championed by a guy you might have heard of. His name's John Wesley. So, if you've ever heard of the Wesleyan Church, it's named after him. He was a great English preacher, evangelist, minister.

He was an open-air preacher. He just got on a horse every day and rode all around England and preached to people. He was an amazing guy, great guy. We appreciate this man. He's just a really great guy. And Arminians, quite a few Arminians are called Wesleyan Arminians after this guy. He was an Arminian and he believed in resistible grace. First of all, what we need to know about resistible grace from the perspective of Arminians is that it's universal. So, this flows on from last week, right? The atonement, Jesus died on the cross for all people and so his grace is universal for all people. And what the universal provenient grace of God does is it takes sinners like you and me all around the world and it gives us free will, right? That's one of the main purposes of preventing grace. It gives us the ability to choose, to choose God, to reject God. Free will is what it grants us. And so, it's very true according to Arminian that your salvation is in your hands. If I was an

[11 : 24] Arminian preacher here tonight, I would say, this is it. Here's heaven, here's hell. Make your choice. It is a free decision. Accept or reject. That's what prevenient grace does. And they also believe that this kind of realisation that you want to be a Christian can come not just from reading the Bible but can also come through general revelation. That is, that you can see a sunrise and think, man, Jesus is God. Or that you can be told by your own conscience that you can be really convicted about bad stuff you've done and think, I need Jesus. So, it's universal and it's general in that sense.

They also believe that it's resistible, okay? So, God can give you this grace but you can reject it. And that's obvious, isn't it? If it's universal, if God's prevenient grace is given to everyone but not everyone becomes a Christian, then it must be resistible. Some people choose it, some people don't. God might want you to be a Christian but you can resist that and refuse.

Universal and resistible. I've got a summary statement here. It says, Prevenient grace, according to Arminianism, is the necessary grace of the Trinity, right? We agree with that, given to all persons that precede salvation, restores free will and enables sinners to cooperate with God. That's the synergism in salvation if they choose to believe. So, there's a lot of qualifications there. Everyone's given it but you'll only accept it if you do this, this, this.

That's Arminian resistible grace. What about the Calvinists? They don't believe in resistible grace. They believe in irresistible grace. They're similar, like I said, on the first three points. They believe it's such a thing as prevenient grace. They believe it's Trinitarian. They believe it's necessary.

But, where the Arminians will talk about universal and resistible, they'll talk about limited or particular grace and irresistible grace. Before they get there, they'll agree that there is a general grace from God that's given to all people.

[13 : 59] Right? Even Calvinists will say that everyone is blessed by God in some way. There's a general grace. It's called common grace. So, in Acts 14, 17, Paul says to the people in front of him who weren't Christians, he said, God has shown his goodness to you, his common grace to you in giving you rain and sunshine and plenty of food to eat. And so, everyone everywhere is blessed by God in some way. Loving family, the ability to have relationships, enjoy creation, that's God's common grace. But, they'll say that that never ever leads anyone to put their faith and trust in Jesus.

You can have the most loving family, the most plentiful crops, the most food in your belly, see the most beautiful sunrise, have the most attuned conscience, but you'll never go from that to putting your faith in Jesus. It just won't happen. We're too sinful, we're too wretched, we're too dead spiritually. So, they talk about a particular grace. And this is given to the elect, the people that God has chosen before the foundation of the world. This is a particular effectual call. It's efficacious.

God sees these people and he calls them and they come to him. They're the people who believe. If you're a believer, it's because God has called you.

He's given you a special call. So, therefore, we should, the Calvinist will say, we should preach to everyone indiscriminately, tell them the good news, but it's going to fall on deaf ears unless God gives a special call to those whom he's chosen ahead of time. And it's irresistible for that reason, that these people who get the call have been chosen ahead of time by God. He's chosen them for salvation and he's going to see it through. He's not going to let anything get in his way. He's not going to be overcome by Satan, by demons, by sinful people. If he wants to save you, he will see it through and you will be saved.

It's invincible grace to the elect, to those whom he's chosen. The reason it's invincible is that we are spiritually blind or we're spiritually dead. And when God commits the act of waking us up, of healing our blindness, of raising us from the dead, we will follow him. It's the only response we can give. When we see what he's done for us, we will make the decision to follow him.

[16 : 47] This is the point where I think a lot of us get confused. We're going to talk about this in a minute, about this objection that people have that, well, God can't force anyone to love him. God can't force anyone to choose. And the point is he doesn't.

He, in his grace, in his irresistible grace, wakes us up, removes our blindness and enables us to make that free will decision to follow him.

The only reason we can make that free will choice to follow him is because he's done the work in raising us from spiritual death. Listen to this summary.

God's common prevenient grace, says the Calvinist, is extended to all people. But his saving prevenient grace is only extended to his elect, whom he chose unconditionally.

These respond irresistibly. That is, they will not reject God once he has opened their eyes to his grace. I was trying to think of an analogy or a story to explain this.

[17 : 53] And whenever you do this, it's dangerous because it's bound to be wrong in some way. So just take it on face value. I thought about this analogy. Imagine there's a prison cell. And there's ten men inside this prison cell.

And they're, you know, the door's locked. They're cuffed. They've got chains on their feet. Now in the Arminian version of salvation, the way that they see this playing out, this is what happens.

God comes into the prison grounds. He opens the prison gates. He unlocks the cuffs and takes off the chains. And then he walks back out. And he waits to see who will follow him out.

He makes grace and salvation available. And then leaves the men to make their own choice. Therefore, whoever follows him out gets what he wants.

Whoever stays gets what he wants. All get what they want. Say four people follow him out. They've exercised their free will to follow Jesus.

[18 : 58] That's the Arminian version. In the Calvinist version, same thing. There's ten men in a prison, chained, cuffed, locked. God comes in in the same way. Opens the gate.

Uncuffs everyone. Takes off the shackles. But this is where it gets different. God knows that every single man will choose to stay in the prison.

The Bible says that all men love darkness rather than light. Men love sin rather than holiness. And by that I mean men and women.

We all will choose sin over godliness. We're sinners by nature and by choice. And so because he knows this, he chooses four people whom he'd chosen before any of this had happened.

And he wakes them up to his glory, to his grace, to his goodness. And he leads them out. This is one of the key differences between these two ways of thinking.

[20 : 05] The question is in that story, who is the hero? In the Arminian version, we have co-heroes in a way. God is a hero because he has done much of the work.

But we have to give some credit to the people for having the courage. Those four men. Having the courage to follow him out of that prison. It's a synergistic event.

And both of them deserve praise. In the Calvinist story, the men walk out of the prison and they can claim no credit. They know that they never would have chosen God apart from him choosing them.

Apart from him leading them out. God is the only hero in that story. And the question for you tonight is, when you think, if you're a Christian, when you think about your testimony, when you give your testimony about how you become a Christian, who is the hero?

Who gets the credit? Who gets the credit?

[21 : 16] Who gets the credit? Who gets the credit? Well, that might be a good analogy. We've looked at some good historical theology, but that's not enough.

We need to go to the Bible. We need to see what the scriptures say because we know that God's word is infallible and true and good for correction and training in godliness.

So we need to know what the Bible says. And when it comes to this point, John Wesley just really falls apart. He was a great Bible teacher, a great preacher.

But when asked, where do you go to in the Bible on this? He's got empty pockets. He really does. Arminians struggle to find a verse that will back up this claim that God's grace is for all and it enables all to make a free will decision to choose him or reject him.

It's really, truly not there. He had one verse, John 1, 9, I think it was, and it was based on a mistranslation in the King James Bible. I've got a quote here.

[22 : 25] I don't want to rub this in if you side with the Arminians, but there's a guy named Tom Schreiner and he did, I think it was a PhD, wrote a book on this issue, the Arminian kind of take on this.

And he says this, What was most striking to me in my research was how little scriptural exegesis or scriptural study had been done by Wesleyans in defence of prevenient grace.

It is vital to their system of theology. It's vital to all of these points that they've got. Nonetheless, not much exegetical work has been done in support of the doctrine. Wesleyans contend that prevenient grace counteracts the inability of humanity due to Adam's sin, but firm biblical evidence seems to be lacking.

One can be pardoned then for wondering whether this theory is based on scriptural exegesis. They will go to the passages of scripture last week where we looked at how Jesus died for all people and I agreed with that.

But in terms of that death for all people enabling all people to choose God, there's just not a shred. What about the Calvinists? Well, they've got a bunch of verses.

[23 : 45] They've got a stack of verses to talk about irresistible grace. They really do. And I'm going to take only three of them. First of all, is grace really particular?

Is this saving call of God really that particular? Is it only appropriated to some people? I'm going to look at Romans chapter 8. I've been here a lot in this series.

Romans chapter 8 verse 28 to 30. Paul says, He says, When it's talking about the call here, it's not talking about the general call.

It's talking about the call that's given to those whom God predestined. It's just a group of people. Those whom He predestined, those of the elect, that group of people, He also called. And it wasn't just a call to say yes or no, because those who He called, He also justified.

That means they become believers. They become right with God. And not only that, they didn't just become justified, but they were glorified. Glorified. That's what happens when you get to heaven. That's the complete picture.

[25 : 15] It happens from start to finish, and it's God's doing from start to finish. He chooses. He calls. He justifies. Makes right. And then He glorifies and invites into heaven.

And it all happens to that same group of people whom He chose. What about irresistible grace? Is grace really irresistible, or is it really invincible?

Do those whom God calls actually come to Him? We heard it tonight in the sermon text, in the Bible reading. The example of Saul, who becomes Paul, writes half the New Testament.

I don't know if you've heard that story before, but that's like the picture of conversion that we get in the New Testament. That Saul hated Jesus. He hated the church.

He hated the Father. And yet God chose to save him. And from that point on, he became the greatest missionary evangelist of all time. Just to recap, verse 1.

[26 : 16] Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. So he hates Jesus. There's no kind of inkling that he might choose God. He hates them. He hasn't wanted anything to do with them.

He's dragging women and men into prison, and he's having them killed. Verse 3. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?

Who are you, Lord? Saul asked. I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting, he replied. Now get up, go into the city, and you will be told what you must do. That's the call of God.

The call of Jesus himself. Saul obeys. He goes to where he's told to go. So Ananias meets him, and he says, Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here, has sent me that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

He appropriates the grace, remember. Immediately something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized. He was born again.

[27 : 27] He actually was physically blind, and he was made to see again, and it's the same thing that happens to us spiritually. When God calls us, the spiritual scales fall from our eyes, and we see Jesus for who he is.

What happened? He didn't run away from God. He didn't resist God. He got up and he was baptized. And then verse 20, at once, he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.

His beliefs changed. His outlook changed. His job changed. His whole life changed. This is what happens when God takes a hold of you. He makes you born again.

He regenerates your heart, and everything changes. Suddenly you want to read his word, even if you struggle to do it. Suddenly you want to love Jesus. You want to serve Jesus. You want to worship Jesus. You want to be here instead of watching primetime TV.

See, that's what God does. He wakes us up to his glory, and we follow him accordingly.

[28 : 26] Finally, I want to look at 1 Corinthians 1, verse 22 to 24. Paul, who is now going around the world talking about Jesus, says, Jews demand miraculous signs, and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews, and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

Here's the thing. People all over the world, universally, think, no matter whether they're Greeks or Jews or what race or what culture, they think that the message about Jesus is a stumbling block.

It's foolishness. It's outdated. It's stupid. That's what people think, naturally, in our natural state.

Now, why do some people think that it's the power of God and the wisdom of God? The exact opposite. The answer in this passage is that God has called those people.

Verse 24, But to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God. That's the difference. The reason, if you're a Christian, that you don't think it's absolute rubbish is because God has called you.

[29 : 53] And the reason you followed him was because he raised you from spiritual death. He released you from your blindness. You saw how incredible it was that he died for you, and then you made the choice to follow him.

This was true in the life of C.S. Lewis. I talk about this guy just about every week. He is my hero. It's him and Spurgeon and a few other guys, and they're just legends.

And C.S. Lewis, you might know, the author of The Chronicles of Narnia, but also author of many other books. And this guy was a brilliant professor at Oxford College, very intellectual, philosophical guy.

He did not believe one inkling, pardon the pun, if you get the joke, you're in it, in Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

He was an atheist. And he tells his story in a book called Surprised by Joy. And he tells the story of irresistible grace. By increments, time by time, over time, not like Paul all in an instant, but over years, he went from being an atheist to being a Christian, and this is how it happened.

[31 : 08] He thought it was rubbish. The whole thing about Jesus was a complete crock, because in other religions, he saw that there was dying and rising gods, there was forgiveness of sin, there was heaven and hell. There was nothing to his mind that was distinctive about Christianity.

And he knew a lot about comparative religions and mythology, and so he threw it out. And one night, he was walking with his mate, J.R.R. Tolkien, and another guy named Hugo Dyson, I think, and they were walking along in Oxford, and these guys were telling him about Jesus, because they were Christians.

And by the end of that night, he says, he resigned himself to God very reluctantly, and he said he believed in a God at this point. He became a theist.

Still thought that Jesus was a bunch of rubbish. And then over the next sort of few months and years even, I think, he said that he had this growing suspicion that God was chasing after him, and it really worried him.

And he saw a really strong atheist friend of his, he called the toughest of toughs, who started to kind of concede ground to God, and he said, if that guy's not safe, then I'm not safe either.

[32 : 21] I think God's going to get me. And he was petrified. He didn't want to be a Christian. He thought they were all insane. And then this day came, where he was going with his brother to a zoo for a picnic.

And I think he was riding in a sidecar of a motorbike. And this is what he says. When I started out the journey, we started in fog and cloud. And by the time we got to the zoo, it was sunny.

When we started out the journey, I did not believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. And by the time we arrived, I did. He says, aside from that, I don't know how it happened.

I wasn't thinking about it at the time. But God got me in the end. He said later that he was the most dejected and reluctant convert in all of Britain.

He didn't want to be a Christian. But in the end, he had to submit to God. That was God calling him. Why did he become a Christian?

[33 : 32] God called him. God called him. It's irresistible grace. And I tell you what, it makes God the hero. C.S. Lewis said, I think it was in one of the Chronicles of Narnia, that the Pevensies, the children, turn up.

I'm trying to remember. It's in Prince Caspian, I think. I really like these stories. I know the kids' stories, and they arrive in Aslan's country and he says something about calling them.

Aslan is like the Jesus figure, calling the children. And they said, hang on a sec, we called you. That's why we're here. We chanted Aslan's name. That's why we're here. And he said, you would not have called if I had not called you first.

Jesus says himself, you do not love me, or you do love me, but I love you first. Jesus says in John 6, 44, I think it is, no one comes to the Father, sorry, no one comes to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

And the Greek there, I think, is draws him, even more, kind of irresistible. No one comes to me, Jesus, unless the Father draws him.

[34 : 59] That's what we're talking about. So, just by way of conclusion, I want to talk about a couple of objections. I know that a lot of objections might be coming to your mind now as I talk and I want to just hit a couple of them because I think we can misunderstand this doctrine which should be so glorious and encouraging and yet we make it out to be something to be feared and something to be detested.

So, first of all, you might say you must be wrong because grace is resistible. It's clear. People resist God. People hear the gospel and they resist, resist, resist.

They die. They resisted God. They resisted his grace and that's true. People do that. I've shared the gospel with people who have resisted to their deathbed and they didn't become a Christian.

They died not knowing him. But we're not saying that irresistible grace is irresistible to all people. We're not saying it's universally irresistible grace. We're saying it's irresistible or invincible to the elect, to these people who God has chosen for salvation.

That's when it becomes irresistible. Next of all, you might say irresistible grace makes God out to be someone who kind of forces people to follow him, forces belief on them.

[36 : 16] He drags them against their will to become Christians and that's not true either. That's a caricature of Calvinism that's just not true.

God doesn't, and I think I've said this unhelpfully in the past few weeks so I apologise if I have, God doesn't grab us by the scruff of the neck and drag us against our will. What he does is he calls us effectually, it does something, it gives us a heart to exercise our will to follow him.

We've made the decision. Both people in the jail, the ones who stay and the ones who go, both get what they want. Hell will be full of people who wanted to be there.

Every one of us wants to be in hell by our own nature. God enables some to want to be with him in heaven. Everyone gets what they want.

I want to read a quote just to make this a little more clear. The term irresistible grace itself is misleading as I said.

[37 : 21] It was coined by the Arminians at the Synod of Dort, not by the Calvinists. It suggests that God grabs poor sinners by the scruff of the neck and forces them to believe. This is a caricature of Calvinism.

We have preferred to speak of invincible grace or unconquerable grace or to say that God's saving grace is finally irresistible. Sinners are hostile to God and when God touches their lives with his sovereign grace, he frees them from sin's bondage.

As a result, they willingly trust Christ. They willingly do it. God doesn't force sinners to believe against their will. He liberates their will by his spirit.

He doesn't violate their personalities. He sets them free to be the people whom he attended. People aren't forced against their will.

Their will is set free to find the one whom they've really desired their whole lives. So this is the sequence when it comes to salvation.

[38 : 31] Many of us will look back at our lives and will say, this isn't true. I know. I made the decision. I made the decision. I made the decision.

That's the way we see it when we look back across our lives, the history of our lives. But this is the way the Bible sets it up. This is the sequence. It starts off with predestination. That's unconditional election.

God, before you were even born, even thought of, even a twinkle in your parents' eye, God decided that you would be a Christian. And he chose a people for himself.

Now in the meantime, in the course of our lives, there's a general call to all people to become Christians. God calls everyone of all nations to repent and believe in him. We preach to everyone and say, please come to know Jesus.

That's the general call. But the specific saving call of God comes to those people whom he chose before time. then God acts to regenerate those people.

[39 : 36] He wakes them up to who he is. He raises them from spiritual death. This is called being born again. Remember Jesus said to Nicodemus in John chapter 3, unless you're born again, you'll never enter the kingdom of God.

You'll never enter the kingdom of heaven. You have to be born again. This is this point. God wakes you up. This is in 1 Peter. I don't have time to read them, but 1 Peter chapter 1, also in James chapter 1, I think, talks about us being born again.

None of us chose to be born, did we? Anyone here choose to be born? No, we didn't choose to be born. That was decided for us and it's the same thing with your salvation.

You are born again, not according to the will of man or according to the will of the flesh, but according to the will of God, John chapter 1 says. So God wakes us up.

That's the new birth. That's regeneration. That's when you go from hating Jesus to loving Jesus and then we make the decision. We make the decision. We do. God wakes us up.

[40 : 37] We see Jesus. We can't believe how gracious he's been to us. We can't believe that he'd die on the cross for us and we say, I want to follow Jesus. And as we'll see in two weeks time, from that point on, God secures us and keeps us safe all the way onto the shores of heaven.

The reason we've got the perspective wrong is because we're so human centred. How about this? Matt Sheffer told me this earlier today. I thought it was brilliant. From our perspective, right, when we see the sun, we see it rise and we see it set.

And before we knew any better, everyone on earth thought that the sun revolved around the earth. Right? We're the centre of the earth. The sun revolves around us. It rises.

It sets. That's the way we see it. That's a human centric perspective. I think that's the Arminian perspective. We know in actual fact that we revolve around the sun.

The sun is enormous and we live on a little pebble. What Calvinism is trying to do is to wake us up to that reality.

[41 : 52] It's not about us. We're not the hero. Even if we look back and see we've made a decision, it's only because God has enabled that to happen and he's done everything from start to finish to accomplish his will that cannot be thwarted, the Bible says.

We need to have a sun revolving around the earth kind of perspective rather than a human centred kind of perspective when it comes to this. I'll finish now but I'll finish by trying to encourage you.

I know inevitably some people are going to leave here feeling discouraged and deflated and like it's not fair and it's a democracy and we should have more of a say than this and we don't understand God and I want to encourage you again.

This really is the optimistic position that God is in control and not me. If you knew me, you'd be glad about that.

That a loving, generous, gracious God is in control from start to finish is an encouraging thing. So I want to encourage you to do a few things.

[43 : 00] Preach the gospel. to all people indiscriminately. You don't know who God has chosen so preach to everyone. God uses means.

He's a means and effect kind of God. To save people, he'll use your words of evangelism. He'll use your prayers for your unsaved friends. And if we don't preach and if we don't pray and if we don't argue and if we don't plead, then God will simply use someone else and we'll miss out on being part of God's big plan.

Don't be overlooked in God's plan. Do evangelism. Pray. Plead. God's plan. God's plan.

God's plan. In the end, we need to say that the new birth is from God, that the call, specific call is from God, that salvation, as the Bible says, is of the Lord.

And we need to stop pushing against that and rebelling against that. We need to accept it. We need to be encouraged by it. And we need to praise God God. Because of it.

[44 : 13] If you listen to the words of the songs we sing, we're singing to this God. If you listen to the prayers of people when they're on their knees and they're feeling helpless, they're praying to this God.

And that's who I'm going to pray to now. So let's bow our heads. Father, thanks again for an opportunity to look at some really heavy theology, but some really important theology.

God, please make us humble. Everyone here is proud. Everyone here is arrogant. Everyone here wants to be autonomous. Everyone here wants to be the hero of the story.

So Lord, please be gracious to us and overcome that in us. Help us to see you as the hero. Help us to worship you as a sovereign God who accomplishes all things in accordance with his will.

Pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. God bless you.

[45 : 40] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.