

Reformed Theology 1—Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

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[0 : 00] Father, thank you for your mercy towards us in Jesus Christ.! Thank you this morning that fear has been banished from our hearts because of perfect love in Christ.

! There is hope and peace and love. The greatest of these is love. That you gave yourself for us and you have made us your adopted sons and daughters.

And have welcomed us into your family. And we are completely free from any fear of future wrath.

And we have been justified by faith that we give you thanks.

We rejoice at opening the scriptures to think. Lord, we know that thinking your thoughts after you is not something that comes naturally to us. And so we pray that you would give the gift of illumination and understanding.

And help us to think rightly. To rightly handle the word of truth. Carefully we pray in these few minutes.

[1 : 07] In Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Welcome y'all. Come on in. There's some outlines in the back. Do you want to grab one of those? And you may share. I printed 25.

So when I say you may share, please share. It's a little too suggestive and warm or something like that. Alright, so.

But you have that with you. By way of introduction. Several years ago. Yeah, front row. I'll be watching you. Got my ruler. I can smack your knuckles. Several years ago.

Dr. Piper. I trust everybody knows who John Piper is. A preacher. Yeah, that's right. Preacher out of Minneapolis. He tweeted several years ago. He said, Can we reassess whether Sunday coffee sipping in the sanctuary fits?

And then he quoted, if you know the verse. Hebrews 12, 28. Let us offer to God acceptable worship with reverence and awe. So he said, Can we reassess whether Sunday coffee sipping in the sanctuary works?

[2 : 13] Quite a few. Quite a bit of alliteration there. After a couple weeks, it had 1,000 retweets. 1,500. Yeah, 1,500 comments.

3,000 likes. 2.7 million views. It sparked articles from the Fox News in the U.S. And from Daily Mail in the U.K. So one of the Desiring God team said, Dr. Piper, what in the world were you talking about?

Are you saying I must leave my coffee at home? And we certainly want to dress water bottles in this place, which is the really thing that gets tipped over. But Dr. Piper kind of answered.

Essentially, he said, The question is not whether you should or can drink coffee in church. The question is, Why can you drink it there? He says, The heart of the matter is not coffee in the sanctuary.

The heart of the matter is the absence of existential, ongoing, terrifying, shocking, awe-inspiring, trembling, mouth-shutting, comforting, safe, satisfying encounter with the majesty and the mercy of the great I Am.

[3 : 22] He continued, we have this quote for you at the top of the outline. And my concern is that in the last 40 years or so, the evangelical church has put so much emphasis on the casual, the intimate, the come as you are, the acceptability of the gentle Christ, that two unfortunate things have happened.

One is that this emphasis has morphed into a pervasive form of entertainment-like worship with an atmosphere of chipper, funny, light-hearted cheerleading so that nothing would feel more natural than to grab your drink and join the party as we go into the worship service.

You know, we're just hanging out, having a good time. One effect. The other unfortunate effect, the other effect of this lopsided emphasis on the casual approachability of God is that the kind of existential encounter with the majesty of God that I'm talking about has become for many people inconceivable and therefore undesirable.

So Piper's firestorm that he started with tweets, the funny thing about Piper's, he schedules all his tweets, so he said he didn't know anything about the comments because he doesn't look at that. He goes, the thing, he said, the problem is not the coffee in the sanctuary. The problem is that we've lost a sense for the greatness of God and the gravity of worshiping him. This is the God that the Jewish people only sent one person into his presence once a year after dozens of sacrifices, and they even put bells on his feet just in case he died.

[5 : 05] That God has not changed. And we've lost a sense of the majesty and the mercy of the great I am.

One reason, one of the reasons I feel that where we are, where we are, is because of a gradual distortion of the gospel. Now, for the past several decades, many have preached the so-called prosperity gospel.

Prosperity preachers teach that success and wealth come from believing the gospel. Believe this message. Believe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be wealthy and happy.

You will be healthy, wealthy, and happy. It's literally raking in millions of dollars in the third world and other parts of the world.

It's raking in millions here. I remember Jim and Tammy Faye Baker. Y'all probably remember them. Remember when they went belly up in North Carolina because of their prosperity ministry.

[6 : 11] So, you know, I think, obviously, well, I would imagine most of us come to the realization that that's not the gospel. Jesus said, in this world you will have trouble, which means it's not all going to be healthy, wealthy, and happy.

More recently, many have begun to preach a therapeutic or psychological gospel. What I mean by that is, we all know that everything in our culture focuses on how you feel. Social media is always asking you how you feel.

Give us a little, you know, when it first came out, your little status thing was essentially gush on yourself, you know, or something like that. How do you feel? Doctors ask, how did you feel about your visit today?

You know, a cable guy came by our house years ago and said, how did you feel about your cable guy today? In addition, in America, we have one-third of the world's psychiatrists, two psychiatrists for every dentist, and more counselors than librarians.

So, everyone wants to know how you feel. So, it's not surprising that in the gospel preached most broadly in this country is one that focuses on how you feel.

[7 : 24] It focuses on you. Focus on me. Focus on our needs, our desires, our wants, our fulfillment. It says, come to Jesus if you're empty and you'll be filled. Filled. Says, come to Jesus if you want purpose for your life and you'll find it.

I wonder if John the Baptist could receive that gospel. I don't think so. Come to Jesus if you feel depressed and he will make you happy. You can see collisions with that, with the story of Joseph and so many other things.

What's the common thread of these two gospels? I know some of you are looking down at your outline and trying to find out where we are. You know, my outlines are mainly notes. And so, are mainly quotes. So, you know, so I don't know what to tell you.

Hold on, I guess. But what's the common thread between those two, a prosperity gospel and a therapeutic or psychological gospel? Gospel. Man-centered.

Man-centered. That's right. It means that the gospel becomes, well, it becomes a non-gospel, but it becomes a message that centers on men and women, on their wants, on their desires, on their needs.

[8 : 36] Most acutely in the therapeutic gospel, which is the gospel, I promise, you is preached most broadly in this country. It takes you out of the moral world of the Bible and into a therapeutic world.

Sin is no longer a grievous act, cosmic treason, as R.C. Sproul said, against a holy God.

Sin becomes just a personal aberration, you know, like a unfortunate outcome of not being a perfect person or something like that. But David Wells said this, and he said this again and again.

I promise I read this book, I think 10 to 13 years ago, something like that. He says, in the psychological world, we want therapy. Imagine what has happened the last 13 years since I read this book.

The boom of therapy. In a moral world, a world of right and wrong and good and evil, we want redemption. Do you see how exchange those? In a psychological world, we want to be happy.

[9 : 41] In a moral world, we want to be holy. In the one, we want to feel good. That's really important. In the other, we want to be good. But that's not the teaching of the Bible.

That's not the truth of the gospel. The gospel is the good news about what God has done to save sinners. It's not good news if we could strip it.

It's not mainly, firstly, designed to make you feel significant or important or to give you purpose in life. Wonderfully, it does.

But firstly, it's trying to remedy your sin and your problem against a holy God. And so I say all that to say we need a vision of the greatness of God of the Bible.

Now, maybe for a little experiment, what comes to your mind when you hear the word Calvinism? Predestination. Predestination, yeah, that's right.

[10 : 46] The frozen chosen, maybe. What else comes to your mind? You can say it. I mean, we're not going to... Five points. What? Five points, yes. Five points. Yeah? Anything else?

Personally, it's brought a lot of deep conversation. So when you said it, I thought it's just a conflict that has arisen.

Yes, depth of conversation and sometimes conflict, yeah. Yeah, I often think the depth, you know. I think in over our heads, you know, when I hear the word Calvinism.

But I want you to know, first and foremost, Calvinism is not about five points. Calvinism is about restoring a grand vision of the great God of the Bible.

Calvinism at its base is trying to articulate God as he reveals himself so that we worship God for God, not for any gifts he gives or any of these things.

[11 : 51] J.I. Packer wrote this years ago. I think there's a wonderful summary of that point. He says Calvinism is something much broader than the five points indicate. And so that's the problem. And we're going to cover the five points in a little bit more detail, the history of them, but they derived after Calvin was dead.

So Calvin didn't write the five points. Surely he taught some of the truths in there, but the articulation and the tulip and all that fun stuff was after he was dead and it was written as a response.

All right, so Calvinism, something much broader than the five points indicate. So if you just read the five points, you might miss the main point. Calvinism is a whole world view stemming from a clear vision of God as the world's, the whole world's maker and king.

Calvinism is the consistent endeavor to acknowledge the creator as the Lord, working all things after the counsel of his will, Ephesians 1.11. Calvinism is a theocentric, that just means theos, means God, centric means centered, but God-centered, a God-centered way of thinking about all life under the direction and control of God's own word.

Calvinism, in other words, is the theology of the Bible viewed from the perspective of the Bible, the God-centered outlook which sees the creator as the source and means and end of everything that is both in nature and in grace.

[13 : 15] He ends that paragraph saying, the five points assert no more than that God is sovereign in saving the individual, but Calvinism, as such, is concerned with a much broader assertion that he is sovereign everywhere.

Everywhere. And so, shall we sip coffee in church? I won't argue that point, but we need a vision for the greatness of God.

We, even as we enter this subject, we need to let God define God and not us form him in our image, you know, and I think that's what, so the doctrines of grace are not about who's in, who's out.

The doctrines of grace are about preserving a biblical vision for the greatness and majesty of God. And if you read Calvin, which I would commend him to you, although you may not like him, we can talk about that later, that's the enduring impression you would leave.

I guarantee, you get up to the institutes, you would be left with a staggering vision of the majesty and greatness of God. All right, so thank you, though, for coming to a class on Calvinism.

[14 : 32] And I trust, beginning this morning and over these next, what's five total weeks, so four after this one, we will unpack. We call them, I prefer, the doctrines of grace.

I think that articulates what they're attempting to do. And so we titled this class Amazing Grace, an overview of the doctrines of grace. We thought about doing what's so amazing about grace, but alas, the news precluded that title.

All sorts of questions rush to our mind when we think about Calvinism. We think about things like, did God die for everyone or only the elect? Did God choose who is saved or does he choose based on foreseen faith?

Is someone who is saved always saved? What about someone who is not saved? If God is sovereign, how can human beings be held responsible? Well, our hope is to kind of give some framework for these things.

But first session, I want to kind of set up, consider the absolute sovereignty of God and the real responsibility of man. So we're going to zoom out with a macro lens a bit.

[15 : 32] Look at what the Bible says about God and man. And then look at how they work out in salvation. And so Calvin actually famously said, you can't understand yourself until you look at yourself in relation to God.

And so that's what's so helpful. Like even when you talk about things like human free will, it's so important that we keep them within the view of God as God reveals himself in the Bible. And so we're going to unpack it through this idea of providence.

So the first point here is the doctrine of providence. So there it is in the outline, all you outline followers. And so there it is right there, the doctrine of providence, which is a very important term just to talk about God's sovereign rule over all things for the good of his people.

Working all things for good. And so the Heidelberg Catechism says down there, the almighty and everywhere present power of God, whereby as it were by his hand, he upholds and governs heaven, earth, and all creatures.

And so governs them that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty. Indeed, all things come not by chance, but by his fatherly hand.

[16 : 41] Westminster Catechism kind of clarifies a little bit of this when he says, God's works of providence are his most holy, wise and powerful, preserving and governing all his creatures, ordering them and all their actions to his own glory.

So the first thing the doctrine of providence teaches us is that God ordains all things that occur in creation. God ordains all things that occur in creation.

And down there, you see this next statement of faith. And catechism, just so you're aware, sometimes we'll quote catechism because they're helpful summaries of scripture. And so rather than quote like 15 scriptures, we're quoting a catechism because it summarized a lot of scripture. So all those points, I could defend them with scripture, but I want you to see it in that summary form. And so God ordains all things that occur in creation.

Look down there. This is our statement of faith. I didn't put the year in parentheses. That would be 2020 though. From all eternity, God sovereignly ordained all that exists and all that occurs in creation in order to display the fullness of his glory.

[17 : 45] God's plans are efficacious. That means they always come to pass. They always come into effect. Oh, well, that's the next attributed phrase. Always coming to pass and they are universal in accomplishing all the affairs of nature, history, and individual lives.

And so, and I've put some bullets down here for you. I'm not going to hit all these, but God orders all things, ordains all things that occur in nature. So we see that in weather. We see that even in the Feast of Tabernacles where they're crying out to the Lord to rain on them.

This idea that it is God who directs the weather. You think about the seven lean years, or the seven fruitful years followed by the seven lean years in the people of Egypt that led to all of God's people being in the nation of Egypt.

It was revealed beforehand because it is not the movements of nature or natural processes that determine these things. It's God. He works within natural processes, but He's not limited by those. That's why He can cause the sun to stand still for as long as He would like to. And so God rules over all of nature. Scripture is wonderfully clear on that.

[19 : 01] So weather, plants, and animals all come from Him, even demons, and Satan. So this is very important. I think sometimes, you know, we live in a world and sometimes we talk about spiritual warfare in such a way that we can think that like good and evil are in this tug of war.

And that, you know, light, dark, bad, good, Star Wars-esque, dualistic universe, that they both have power, real power, great power, and we don't know who will win.

That's not the way the Bible reveals good and evil. I find it so fascinating that where is the most demonic activity in our Bible?

It's in Jesus Christ's life. It's as if He walks into town, they run up to Him, oh my gosh, what are you doing here? You know, and fall down before Him. All these people are like, man, I don't know about this guy, Jesus, but not the demons because He's invading their terrain.

You know, it's an explosion of demonic activity. He is God incarnate. And so it's just amazing. What it's saying is He has no trouble.

[20 : 12] You know, one of my favorite stories that really does piss off the philosophers, I shouldn't say piss, it irritates them, is the one, Bertrand Russell, you know, he said, I can never worship a God who does this, but Jesus takes all these demons, throws them in a bunch of pigs, and so sad for the bacon, but in the pigs, they run off the cliff and into the ocean.

And Bertrand Russell said, I would never worship a God that would just kill pigs. You know, I can't exegete that passage and why you should still believe in God, but the point is, He is powerful.

Like, see you later demons. Okay? So that's the way it presents. So He's over all, everything that occurs in nature, even angelic, supernatural beings, all that occurs in history.

This is one of my favorite texts, and it just so happens to be preached in Athens, Greece, but He says, the God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, made from one man, that's from Adam, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined a lot of periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place.

All that you call life, God determined it before He created anything. And He did that for every person on the planet.

[21 : 29] You know, yeah, some kings might beat their chest and say, I'm big and tough, but, you know, the Bible says, it is God who exalts one man and brings down another.

And He just does it when and where He wants. Now, He has mysterious purposes because sometimes there's wicked people like Kim Jong-un and North Korea that are in power and doing great wicked things, and so we have to trust Him and hide under promise.

So He does all this, everything in nature, everything in nations, everything in our individual lives.

Our birth was from His hand. The Bible says conception in the womb, in the secrets, in the hidden place, in the depths of the earth.

All these are metaphors for Him doing something that no eye can see. That's what He did with you.

You are here because God decided you should be here. all the circumstances of your life.

I find it striking what He says to Moses. Who made man's mouth? Who makes him mute or deaf or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? We think of these, you know, afflictions like that as being random.

[22 : 46] And again, this gets us into the deep end of mystery, but God determines those things. God, God brings the life. And God determines the character of life, decisions, the king's heart.

Now this is a great verse to remember when you have a boss that drives you nuts, you know. The king's heart is a stream of many water in the hands of the Lord. He directs it wherever He wills.

That means you are not held by any man's decisions. It is God who directs them. And so God orders and leads right naturally to their plans.

The heart of man plans His way, but it's the Lord who establishes Himself. Later it says, how can man understand His way? Because God does it. You know? When you get into romance, they call it serendipity.

You know, I don't know, like, what is that? Like spontaneous happenstance? Well, that's not true. There's no serendipity. God's purposes reveal and He does wonderful things.

[23 : 51] Words and actions. You know, Psalm 139 is just loaded down with this stuff. On the omniscience, God knows all things. On the presence, God's everywhere presence with the fullness of His being. Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it all together.

You hem me in behind and before and lay your hand upon me. He's saying, He says later, I planned all your days, but He's saying here, I planned all your words. Like even those ones you

said under your breath this week.

Either one's you blurt it out. You say, I didn't mean to say that. Well, actually, you know, you did. And God, so, you know, what's it giving us this picture?

God orders all these things. Charles Spurgeon said, I believe that every particle of dust that dances on the sunbeam does not move in Adam more or less than God wishes and that every particle of spray that dashes against the sun steamboat has its orbit as well as the sun in the heavens, that the chaff from the hand of the wind is steered as the stars in their courses.

The creeping of an aphid over a rosebud is as much fixed as the march of a devastating pestilence. The fall of leaves from a poplar, that's Tennessee State Tree, is as fully ordained as the tumbling of an avalanche.

[25 : 02] What's he saying? Even the great, and we say that, right? Even insurance calls certain things God acts, you know, acts of God, you know, but it's not just the great, it's the mundane, so much so that Jesus said, you know, not a hair will fall from your head and it's fallen from some heads and apart from the will of my Father who's in heaven.

So it's just an incredible vision. Alright, so God orders all that occurs in creation and all that occurs in creation is according to His will.

Our statement of faith continues in that section, these decrees are an exercise of His free, unchangeable, wise, and holy will. This idea that God is absolutely free, there is no free being in the universe except God.

God says, I do, I'm in the heavens, I do what I please. anywhere, everywhere, all of us, the reason I can say there's no being that's not completely free because, you know, the contingency of our life is all over the place.

Like, we get up and I got up last morning, yesterday morning, planned on kind of waiting a little bit to eat breakfast and it's just growling, you know, right? Stomach, growling, sleep, you need, you get a little earful, get hangry, angry, whatever, tired, whatever, all of the contingencies all around us.

[26 : 26] We have to eat, we have to sleep, we have to breathe, but it gets, gets all the way down into all the different decisions we make.

There's contingency. We can't do what we want. We, you know, we can't just decide to go start a new career tomorrow, whatever. I mean, we can, but we can't, we can't ensure that it'll provide the way we need to provide, but God has no such limitations.

He's absolutely free. So God's wise. So he, he, he has a free, unchangeable, wise will. He's, oh, the depths, the riches, wisdom, knowledge of God, how unsearchable his judgments, inscrutable his ways.

Who has known the mind of the Lord and who has been his counselor? Who can give it to him again that he should be repaid? Why? Because from him and to him and through him are all things. He is the only wise God who chooses the best means towards the best end for his purposes. And so he orders it according to his sovereign will. Now, man, I am like already behind. This is just a silly exercise.

[27 : 27] What is this stuff? You know, so we talk about the will, will of God, like what, you know, you know, but when scripture reveals about the will of God, it reveals two things.

It reveals the moral will of God, which is God's way of living that can be rejected and disobeyed. And so we think about that, like think about the Lord's Prayer where Jesus says, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

What's the assumption to that? What's kind of that mean about the will of God? It's not always done.

There's a place where the will of God is not always done. Wonderfully, there's a place where the will of God is always done, in heaven. But what's he saying there?

Now, he certainly is not saying, well, he's saying the will of God is his, the commands that are good and right and you should follow him.

[28 : 35] And it's all throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. But they can be rejected. Now, so that's one sense. The moral will, I like the way some people say, the moral will and the sovereign will.

And so the sovereign will is never disobeyed. So think about this. These are two phrases from Jesus' mouth. The first one is, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The second one's in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus says, not my will, but your will be done. what's that talking about? That's talking about more than just God's idea or God's design for what is good and fruitful and helpful for people.

That's talking about God's plans that will always be done. And so Jesus is saying and he sent, you know, his humanity, he's submitting himself to the cross and the cup of God's wrath and saying, it was the will of God.

And we know that because of Isaiah 53.10, it was the will of the Lord to crush him. So what is the will? Well, Isaiah 53 could have been written for the cross.

[29 : 56] The will of God is that Christ would be crushed in the place of guilty sinners. And so there's this idea. So there's so much to say on that. But this idea that, you know, I think that's a really crucial category because sometimes in Scripture, God said he desires for all men to come to the knowledge of the truth and to repentance.

And I think that is expressing his moral will because in his sovereign will, he's not limited in any way. Like there's no one. He has no obstacles to saving.

And so it's revealing his desire for all to walk in his ways, all to follow him, all to love him. All right. So there's a lot there that probably has a nice little book called Other Two Wills in God.

Or it began with an article. You could find that or you could ask me and I could send it to you. All right. So that's kind of the definition of providence. God works all things everywhere and in your life for your good and for his glory.

The mystery of providence is how does this work out? What in the world are you talking about? In ordaining all things, though, God does not take away human responsibility.

[31 : 12] responsibility. The Bible continually affirms that God is absolute sovereign, yet human beings are not pawns or puppets. Human beings are responsible creatures, yet their actions and decisions never diminish God's sovereignty.

All right. So I need you to like summon that coffee you drink this morning for this next quote. All right. So just zero in. But this is what articulation, I think, so helpful as you begin this discussion of God's sovereignty and human responsibility, this definition of what one author calls compatibilism. And I remember when we first got engaged, Kim and I did, she asked me, are we compatible? I said, not really, because we're both sinners and so we're incompatible. But, so there's worldly definitions of compatibility.

I mean, we both like blue, you know, or something like that or prefer the beach over the mountains or something like that, which is the opposite for us. But, so there's compatibility. So this idea, when we think about God's sovereignty and human responsibility, we think they're incompatible.

One guy said, God's sovereignty and human responsibility are like two parallel lines that only meet an eternity. That seems really profound, but it's actually not profound. Because it doesn't say they're compatible.

[32 : 30] So, compatibilism, the Bible as a whole, so this is that quote by D.A. Carson, it's somewhere in that little section. The Bible as a whole, and sometimes in specific texts, presupposes or teaches that both of the following, both of the following are true.

God is absolutely sovereign, but his sovereignty never functions in Scripture to reduce human responsibility. You understand that? God's absolutely sovereign, but he never, it never functions in such a way to reduce, so that means it never functions in such a way to make you a pawn or make me a pawn or just a puppet or whatever.

He's not the master man moving the puppets. Merely. No, he's not. He's not. He's absolutely sovereign, yet it's not that way. So then, the second assertion there is human beings are responsible creatures.

That is, they choose, they believe, they disobey, they respond, and there is moral significance in their choices, but human responsibility, so it's a caveat, never functions in Scripture to diminish God's sovereignty or to make God absolutely contingent.

So, he's saying human beings have real, make real decisions. You decide who to marry or where to live or what job to pursue or whatever it is. You make, most importantly, you make decisions in relation to God.

[33 : 43] You choose to follow Him, you know, and yet those things never diminish God's sovereignty, his absolute sovereignty over those things. Okay? So these ideas, these things that are seemingly incompatible are actually compatible, and what I would argue most often when I talk to people about these things, sometimes people ask me, are you a Calvinist?

And I'll say, that depends. What do you mean by Calvinist? You know, because most often when people talk to me about Calvinism, they have gone way over here into the God's sovereignty world in such a way that they assume the responsibility is no longer real.

Okay? And so, just know, that's usually the one. So they say, well, this is Calvinism. So that's not Calvinism, you know? And so, actually, it's 100% God's sovereignty and 100% in secondary causes human responsibility.

Okay? And so, we see that all throughout the Bible, this is this idea of concurrence. So in the doctrine of providence, if you're reading a big, heavy book, they might talk about the doctrine of preservation, this idea that God preserves all things, of sustenance, that is, God, like, fills all things, and then concurrence, this idea that God works within as the primary mover.

If you've ever read Aristotle, the unmoved mover, he is the first cause of everything, and yet, it concurs with secondary causes.

[35 : 26] And I know that probably just glazed some of your eyes over, but the divine cause is primary, but remote, meaning it's not, if I tune the little details, making you go here, you know?

Like some people say, did I drop this, or did God call me to drop, that type of thing? Like, that's not the way it works out. God works with secondary causes. But the human cause is secondary, but proximate.

That means it's the near cause, and so you see that worked out in Scripture. So I want to walk through a couple things, and we're like almost out of time, so this is like absurd. But a couple things I'd say, and this is the chunk of the outline, so how does this work out?

So the most striking, and we're just going to plug two, I put a number of these in here, is the story of Joseph. Joseph. So if you remember the story of Joseph, I mean, it's like the ultimate betrayal, kick you down the street, get lost, I don't want any more of you in my life story.

He has this coat of many colors, his brothers see him coming over the ridge, so to speak, they're like, okay, we've got to decide what to do with this guy. You know, his father's loved him the most for a long time, we've got to get rid of him, and they throw him into a pit, and then after a little while, they say, they see this caravan of people going by, they say, let's sell him there, let's don't kill him, because Reuben said don't kill him, and so they, let's sell him there, and he winds up in Egypt.

[36 : 56] And then the troubles just seem to get worse, you know, Potiphar's wife, the ruler's wife, kind of chief administrator's wife, says he was trying to make a move on her, and she screams out, he's thrown into prison, he's down there in prison for I don't remember how many years, but this is just years and years and years, all the time in the world to get really bitter.

And yet gradually, God makes it clear to him through some of these prophecies that God had raised him up to be, to help his people after the seven prosperous years, then the seven lean years, the whole world would need to come to Egypt.

And at the end of his life, after his dad's dying, Jacob's dying, his brothers are like, oh no, this is gonna, you know, there's some things, there's some things you're only gonna settle when dad dies, you know, like, okay, he's gone, come on, you know, don't be like that, but you know, sometimes you can think that way, and the brothers are like, man, Jacob, Joseph's gonna, like, Jacob's dead, Joseph's gonna, you know, he's gonna take us out.

And they, so they lie, and they said, even at that very point, they lie and said, well, Jacob's to be nice to us, essentially. And this is Joseph's response. He says, as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.

To bring about that many people, bring it about that many people should be alive as they are today. So, all right, what are the two causes? What's the divine cause there?

[38 : 41] Yeah, we gotta, we gotta do this together. I know we don't have a lot of time, but come on. God was moving Joseph where he wanted him and strategically placing him where he was moving and leaving. Right. God, the unmoved mover, was moving Joseph wherever he wanted him to go.

What's the human cause? Sin. Sin. Despicable. I said this is the worst. Kicking down this flight of stairs story in the whole Bible. And yet God says, in the same act, I find this very striking, in the same act, he's saying, all your betrayal, all your lying, all your cheating, all your stealing, all that stuff, you meant it.

Everything in your power, you meant it. I want to get him out. God meant it for good. God did not turn Joseph's story around.

God designed all the details of it. That's amazing. And yet, the acts of Joseph's brother were no less real, wicked, mean, heinous in the sight of God.

These stories like this run throughout the Bible. Maybe the next one. Look at Acts 2.23 down there under the death of Jesus.

[40 : 03] I think this is a very important one too. This Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, not foreseeing what these bad guys would do, but knowing intimately what would happen, you crucified and killed by the hands of men.

So Jesus delivered up. So if you know that phrase, that phrase is used again and again in the Gospels when Jesus says he'll be delivered up and the apostles assume he's going to be delivered up by the betrayal of Judas, but what Jesus is saying, actually he was delivered up all along by God.

Delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. So what's the divine cause there? Come on, we can do this.

Come on. I'm just kidding. Divine cause. God. God. Yeah. Did you say that? Yeah. Who? Yeah, God. Oh, yes.

Delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. And yet the human cause is no less real. Like you crucified and killed.

[41 : 22] Fascinating thing in the book of Acts. They don't articulate the gospel just that way. They're articulating it mainly in Jerusalem. You killed him. You're the Jews who are here. Like you, gradually, yes, in one sense, we all killed Jesus Christ, but in another sense, we all weren't the primary or the most proximate cause.

And so the New Testament or the book of Acts recognizes that. It says he was killed later on. And so, you know, it's just articulating is such an important point. And I have a quote down there for Jonathan Edwards who says, and I promise we're going to get done in about five minutes, but, in efficacious grace, that's just that word we talked about, effectual, bringing to pass grace, we are not merely passive, nor yet does God do some and we do the rest.

So that's what sometimes it can be. Either we're passive, we're pawns, or God does one half, we do one half. That's not it. God does all and we do all. God produces all and we act all.

That's what compatibilism means. For that is what produces, vis-a-vis, our own acts. God is the only proper author and fountain.

We only are the proper actors. We are, in that respect, wholly passive and wholly active. So, does that make sense?

[42 : 53] God does all, we do all. So that's the way these seemingly incompatible things work together. And I think one helpful analogy I've heard used is that the Bible is God's story and we are actors in the story, not directors.

So that can be illustrative. You know, obviously the illustration falls apart because this is real life, not a story, but this idea that God has a purpose for everything and yet the actors have a part to play and make decisions and all these things.

And so I heard one author talk about it in relation to C.S. Lewis and the line, the witch, and the wardrobe. Why was it always winter and never Christmas in Narnia? Who can tell me?

The wicked witch. Enslaved the land. And yet, in another way we could say, why was it always Christmas and never, always winter and never Christmas?

Because Lewis designed it that way. Or why does Aslan have to die? Anybody know that one? Edmund.

[44 : 03] Man, you know, you just hate Edmund when you get that mugged. Edmund! Well, in another sense, because Lewis wrote the story that way.

Who killed the white witch? Aslan. But, in another sense, who killed him? C.S. Lewis did.

Now, yeah, obviously that starts to fall apart, but I do think it gets back to what we introed with, with this idea that God wants us to understand God as he is, not according to our man-centered categories.

And it's so important. What the Bible, the Bible is not mainly about you. Like, it's not mainly about three things, to get to heaven, to have a happy life, and, you know, whatever.

That's not what it's about. The Bible is mainly about God. Like, you're a part of the story, not because you're worthy and significant and wonderful or whatever.

[45 : 12] And you are wonderful, but only because God has determined that you are. and so, you know, and so just thrilling, I think, you know, because it's, you know, we live in this, we are born self-focused, right?

We are so attentive to our needs, it is crazy. Man, I can tell you what I need every moment of the day. You know, it's crazy. No one has to teach me that. Well, God wants to un-self-focus you and throw you into this God-centered world that you would be enamored, not like with your part to play, but with Him.

That you would see Him as He is, that you would let Him define existence, let Him define who He is, who you are, and all these things. And so, Heidelberg Catechism says a few things down there. Right after that definition of providence, or I mean, yeah, the definition that I read a moment ago, it says, what does it benefit us to know that God has created all things and still upholds them by His providence? It says, we can be patient.

Now, this is a good hand to hold on to. We can be patient in adversity, thankful in prosperity, and with a view of the future, we can have a firm confidence in our faithful God and Father that no creature shall separate us from His love, that all creatures are so completely in His hand that without His will they cannot so much as move.

[46 : 40] So, we can be patient, all things work together for good, and adversity. We can be thankful in prosperity. Every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father of love.

The Father above, it is not because you did anything to earn it, especially salvation. and we can be confident as we look towards the future.

You know, every storm cloud has something in it that God is doing. You know, I remember years ago, and I'll conclude with this, doing a, we were doing a reading like this, and one of the ones in the Heidelberg Catechism talks about, you know, what's your only hope in life and death?

That I'm not my own, but belong by body and soul and life and death to my holy, well, I can't remember it all, but one of the things it says is, not a hair shall fall from my head apart from the will of my Father who's in heaven.

And one time, I was reciting this in the church, and a buddy of mine who was going through chemo and was dying of leukemia and his five-year-old daughter, he was, I think it was one of his last times at church, he's in a wheelchair, his five-year-old daughter was rubbing his head and it said, not one, we recite it together because these are the things that will change your life.

[48 : 00] Not one hair shall fall from my head apart from the will of my Father in heaven. And he said, his daughter turned in and said, that means your hair's too, Dad. What's that do?

That's Calvinism. To me, it's, I'm not my own, man, I belong to the Lord. And I have firm confidence. So come with me. Because the God on high is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That means he has, he has no dark side. No shadow. And so, man, patience, thankfulness, confidence for the future.

That's unbelievable. And that's what Calvinism at its base is trying to restore. Let God be God. And trust me, your spiritual life will be better.

[49 : 13] So, I do have a quote in there from the man himself, John Calvin, which is, in many ways, that's what that, and you, we sang it last week, that, what is our hope in life and death?

that whole, we are not our own, that you see all throughout many different confessions and catechism is from this text. And that's from Dr. Calvin.

All right, I'm going to read it just because, and then I promise I won't keep you anymore. Wild horses, you know, but he says, we are not our own. Let not our reason nor our will therefore sway our plans and deeds.

We are not our own. Let us therefore not set it as our goal to seek what is expedient for us according to the flesh. We are not our own. Insofar as we can tell, let us therefore forget ourselves and all that is ours.

That would do all of us a solid. Forget ourselves. Conversely, we are God's. Let us therefore live for Him and die for Him. We are God's. Let His wisdom and will therefore rule all our actions.

[50 : 18] We are God's. Let all the parts of our lives accordingly strive toward Him as our only lawful goal. May God bless us this day. Thank you for being here next week.

Keep marching forward.