

Reformed Theology 5—The Practical Benefits of Reformed Theology

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[0:00] Let's get started with a prayer this morning. So let's open up a prayer. Dear Lord, thank you for this day. Thank you for a day that we can honor and celebrate mothers. Just thank you for all the amazing Christian faithful mothers in this church that are witnesses. Lord, we just ask for blessing on them, especially this morning. And then we also ask for your Holy Spirit this morning as we look to your word and try to apply the truth of your word to our life. Let's pray this on your name. Amen.

Well, I know what you're thinking. Who is this old man? Not a pastor, obviously. So right now you can lower your expectations. So you will not be disappointed in the end. So I'm Tim Willems. My wife is over here and Erica and my son Josh. I retired a few years ago from the federal government and we followed our kids down. Both of our kids went to Covenant. Our daughter lives currently in Chattanooga with her husband and our grandson. So that is our story. So that is our story. So I'm very excited about this class. We get to apply what we've been learning in the four previous sessions of theology into practical Christian living. So this is really where the rubber meets the road. So let's hope they'll be a little more interactive. A lot of questions. So get ready. So first I have a question for you. I don't know if you remember those old infomercials where they would go on for like 30 minutes. The older people here recognize that. [1:36] Or an hour and they would try to sell you things like knives or it was some sort of kitchen appliance. Well if you remember there was one overarching thing they wanted you to know about the product.

Like in every single product there was one thing they wanted you to learn about that product or to know. Anybody remember what can think of what that would be? I don't remember what that was but they were always saying call now.

Call now. You have to do it before you change your mind, right? Yeah, exactly. They were talking about best in market whatever they want to advertise. Best available.

Best available, right? Yeah, exactly. It was the best of everything, right? And then the whole idea was they would keep telling you how good it was. Well one thing that they kept saying is that they wanted you to understand is that this product would change your life.

Even if it was just a knife set. You would not be, your total life would be changed if you just had this knife set or this one kitchen appliance. You would replace all of your kitchen appliances and somehow your life would be completely different.

[2:40] Well of course that was never true. But today this is the reformed theology that we talk about grace.

This does change your life. This has a huge impact when we apply this theology to your life today. So in fact it changed my life.

I was in my late 30s. I started a series on John Piper's series on Romans. So I would listen to it in the car back and forth. And it's about 225 sermons on Romans.

So it took me like a year and a half to get through it. But I was slowly becoming reformed through that process. And by the time I was done with it I had a completely different perspective on the Bible and who God was.

And so today this isn't theoretical. This is things that, this is extremely practical for everyday living. These doctrines that we've been talking about. So we're going to look at four key benefits to the reformed theology that we have been covering.

[3:52] And if you see in your outline, the four key benefits are assurance of salvation. Our hope rests in God's faithfulness. Humility in worship. It provides the foundation for our humility and God-centered worship.

Confidence in evangelism, missions. God is responsible to gather his elect through the proclamation of the gospel. And it is a gateway to humble acceptance of God's providence and his absolute sovereignty.

So before we get started, I just want to do a quick review of the last four classes of the doctrines of grace. So you see the acronym there?

So G is for God's grace in election, which is we're talking about predestination. R is radical corruption, and that is total depravity.

And it means that every part of us has been affected by the fall, and we are spiritually dead. A, accomplishing grace. Irresistible grace and effectual calling.

[5:02] This deals with the order of salvation, and we'll talk a lot more in depth about that later. C is for complete atonement, or limited definite atonement.

That means that Christ died for the elect. And then E, enduring preservation. Perseverance of the saints. That means that God loses no one in this whole process.

So, in summary, it just helps us understand how salvation works. And I really can't think of a more important topic than you could ever study in your life, to be honest with you.

So, the first benefit. Let's look at the assurance of salvation. Our hope rests in God's faithfulness.

So, before we jump into the Reformed view, we want to take a look at the Arminian view first.

So, we have a comparison. When we got saved, most likely you landed in the Arminian camp, whether you knew it or not. Because that was your perspective of how you got saved.

[6:08] Maybe you heard somebody said you had to make a decision. Maybe you did an altar call. You know, it was something that you went forward and you made, maybe you signed a card or something like that.

But in your perspective, from your experience, it looked like it was something that you did. That it was something that you had control over. So, that's where we all start out with, is kind of that Arminian perspective.

So, the definition of Arminianism here is, our will provides our ultimate eternal destination.

So, to give you an example of a hospital, let's say that you have a rare disease. And you're in the hospital and you're close to death, but you're conscious and you're aware.

And in walks the doctor and he says, I have a cure for you. It will make you completely well.

Completely cure you. But I can't just give it to you. I have to have your permission to give it to you.

[7:17] You have to accept it before I can give it to you. So, the doctor will not force the medicine on you, but will respect your decision whether you want to live or die.

So, that is just like, if you think of God as the doctor, right? Who, let's say, for example, you have an Uncle Bob who's not saved, right?

So, God, let's say, wants Uncle Bob to come to faith, but he can't override Uncle Bob's will. So, if Uncle Bob says, nope, don't want anything to do with it, then God is up there, you know, kind of like, please, Uncle Bob, please respond.

Please accept me. So, but he can't go over his will, Uncle Bob's will. So, that is the kind of the perspective of Arminianism.

So, we provide the needed faith and repentance for salvation. In Arminianism, free will is paramount. It is, it should never be compromised.

[8:23] So, if you think about it, so God's sovereignty is nullified by our will. Our will is sovereign over God's when it comes to salvation.

So, this, as you can imagine, creates many problems with assurance, if you're responsible for it. I struggle with assurance of my salvation in my 20s quite a bit.

And I went and talked to my pastor. I said, how does salvation work? I mean, I don't, you know, I think I'm saved. I just want to know how it works. And he said, well, he said, God comes down 50%, and then you've got to come up the other 50% and to meet him halfway.

And that actually made it much worse for me, because I thought, well, if I have to do the 50%, did I do it right?

Did I do it correctly? Did I have enough faith? Did I repent? You know, did I believe what I was supposed to believe? So, in fact, we were cat sitting a few weeks ago up in Crossville, and we went

to a Baptist church, and we were in their Sunday school class.

[9:35] And the guy started talking about how, like, just because you accept Christ, you might not be saved. But then they started talking about, like, what does that mean to accept Christ?

Like, what do you have to do to get to be saved? Do you have to believe a certain exact thing? Do you have to be committed to a certain amount, you know, before you get there? Do you have to repent a certain amount?

And it was really actually a really sad conversation, because they really didn't know. They were really struggling. Like, what's the magic information that this needs to take place before to get saved?

So, obviously, that creates a lot of angst and issues when you're from an Arminian perspective. So, if my will is the determining factor in salvation, it's also what preserves my salvation, right?

So, if I get to choose, then that's also what still preserves my salvation. So, for myself, my will is really fickle. Like, some days I have good days and bad days.

[10:40] And it's always, my will is always kind of changing, you know? So, I don't want to trust on my will for my salvation. And what about what happens when you fall into sin or you get dementia?

You know, what happens then? Does God still hold on to you? Or, you know, do you say something when you're in a dementia state that maybe, God, you lose your salvation?

So, there's a lot of uncertainty there. So, with Arminianism, assurance is tied to feelings and your own performances.

Your own performance. So, these false realities have real consequences. Our kids went to a school and some of their teachers were, like, getting saved, like, every week.

Because they either lost their assurance of salvation or they never thought they had it. So, they would come and they would come to the stage and they would, you know, be crying and stuff. I'm, you know, I just became saved, you know.

[11:46] And then next week, they'd be right back again. So, it was all because of their misunderstanding of what salvation is and how does it work. And they never had full assurance of their salvation.

They never could confirm that they actually had salvation. So, I think of Arminianism as, like, holding on to just, like, a thread.

Where the doctrines of grace is like an unbreakable chain that God takes and wraps around you that cannot be broken. He's got you. And that's where we get this verse in Romans 8.30.

It's called the golden chain of salvation. So, look at that in your notes. It says, So, what you see there is you see a progression from for the foundations of the earth where he predestines us. Then he calls us. Then he justifies us. And then we're finally glorified when Christ comes back again. So, it's a, all these links are part of the chain that started before the foundation of the earth for your salvation.

[13:07] So, nobody's lost in this chain. What happens before the foundation of the earth? Whoever's name is there before the foundation of the earth that God determines who the elect is?

They are never lost. They go right through to being glorified. So, I would call it the golden chain of assurance. So, I'm just going to change that.

So, you can trademark that. So, some theologians, when they talk about this idea of predestination, they talk about it as a covenant of redemption.

That this covenant was made before the foundation of the earth with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And this is where they determined the plan and who was part of their plan.

Who were they going to rescue? So, the definition of that comes from Lewis Burkhead's systematic theology. And it says, The eternal agreement between the Father and the Son, and implicitly the Holy Spirit, in which the Son undertook to accomplish the work of redemption for the elect.

[14:20] And the Father promised to give the Son a people and all that was necessary for their salvation. So, you see a lot of this sort of language in John where it talks about the Father giving the Son the people.

This is where a lot of that comes from. So, I think, to me, this is extremely comforting knowing that before this was the most important thing, before the foundation of the world, before they created anything, was they had a plan of salvation.

They had a plan for the elect. So, what's interesting is that when they created the covenant of redemption, they documented it in a book.

They wrote it down. They wrote down the names of everybody that they were going to provide salvation for. It's called the Book of Life. In Revelation 13.8, it's talking about worshipping the beast. But listen carefully in this verse. It says, It's incredible.

[15 : 37] So, we have a book that was written for the foundation of the world. And it's called the Book of Life of the Lamb who was slain. So, it already has who's in it and how is it going to be accomplished in this book.

So, it's just incredible to know that our salvation is so secure because of all of these things that we know from the Bible.

All right. We're going to move on to the order of salvation. So, this means that regeneration, when you're born again, occurs before faith.

And I think, for me personally, this is where the doctrine of grace stands or falls. Understanding this concept is really essential to the foundation of everything else.

Because the Bible does tell us, it tells us to believe. It tells us to repent. Right? But it also says that it's a free gift. It's grace. Right?

[16 : 44] So, how do you merge those two? Right? If you have faith, repentance, but yet it's a free gift. This is where the order of salvation comes into play.

So, it's important to remember that we were spiritually dead. So, that's in Ephesians 2.1. It says, and you were spiritually, and you were dead in your trespasses and sins.

So, there's no life there. And then, also in Ephesians 2.8, it says that faith is a gift. It says, for by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of your own doing.

It is a gift of God. So, the faith that we have is also a gift. So, you're saying, okay. So, how does it work? How does it work? So, when the gospel call is proclaimed, every time the gospel call goes out, the Holy Spirit rides on top of that call.

And when it hits somebody who is elect, it awakens them spiritually. It takes them from death to life. It takes the heart of stone and puts in a heart of flesh.

[18 : 03] And then, it gives them the faith to respond. And this all happens instantaneously. But it's very important to know the order.

The order is that God makes you alive first and then gives you that faith. And it's an irresistible faith. When you have it and you see Christ and all his beauty and everything that Christ is, you respond with your own free will.

This is what I want. This is, you know, you respond positively to the gospel. It's called irresistible grace. And this all happens instantaneously.

When I was a kid and I used to watch the Billy Graham crusades. And they would, you know, he would do his presentation.

And then they would have a certain, you know, they would do the altar call. And then a certain percentage of people would go down. And one thing I never understood was that, okay, if you're giving away salvation for eternity, I mean, that's like giving more than like a million dollars.

[19 : 11] Like, you know, if they were giving away a million dollars, everybody would be down there. But not everybody went. Only like, I don't know, 40, 50 percent or 20 percent of the people would go down there.

And I just baffled me. I'm like, why? Why wouldn't everybody go down there? You know? And it's because some people are made alive. And to other people, the Bible says it's foolishness.

It doesn't make any sense because they're what? They're spiritually dead. And they're still dead. So that made complete sense to me after figuring this out. So in A.W. Pink talks about the rebirth here.

It says, what you do in order to become, what did you do in order to become the child of your parents? Nothing. You were born into their family.

In a manner, it is not by an act of ours that we become the children of God, but by a supernatural birth. So, you're giving that illustration just like it's called rebirth.

[20 : 14] You didn't do anything when you came into the world, and you don't do anything when you become a Christian. It is completely unconditional. So, any thoughts or questions on that?

Does that make sense? Do you disagree? Got a quiet group this morning.

I think it's comforting to know that it's not in our hands. Yeah, definitely. It's free. Right. Exactly.

Yeah. That is such a comfort, knowing that it was not us, but it was God that made us alive.

Took us from life to death. Exactly. Yeah. So, yeah. So, I think that order of salvation is kind of at the core of Arminianism and Reformed theology.

Of course, Arminianism would say, your faith has to come before rebirth happens. You've got to come up with it over here before it happens. Where with Reformed theology, it's completely grace. [21 : 26] And that's why I think that when you think about grace, Reformed theology provides the true full meaning of grace. Because it's completely a gift. It gives you rebirth. And then in Ephesians says, it gives you the faith to believe.

Everything is a gift. You didn't come up with any of it. And, because we're unable to. We're unable to. All right.

All right. So, we want to address another issue here. Am I chosen? Addressing the fear of not being elect.

So, you might have the person that believes in sovereign grace, but still has the fear of not being elect. So, I want to kind of say three things to that person.

So, number one, if you believe your past is riddled with sins that affect your election, realize that nothing you did or can do will exclude you from election.

[22 : 27] Right? It is completely unconditional. So, the first point is that no matter how much sin that you've had, it has nothing to do with your election and who you are, how bad you think you are.

Think of the thief on the cross. That's all he did to his life was sin. And God saved him at the last minute. Number two, in 2 Peter, we are called to make our election sure.

So, how do we make our election sure? The confirmation of your election is the progress in your sanctification, no matter how small. So, God predestined the elect to be conformed to the image of Christ.

Therefore, you can look at your life and you see any change of regeneration, then you are most likely elect when you look back in your life. Do you have a change of desires now toward God and toward the Bible?

Do you have a love for Christ? Can you see any evidence of that in your life? And that shows that you are elect. You have been converted. And number three, I would say, just don't focus internally asking yourself, am I elect?

[23 : 42] But turn to Christ. Look to him for your comfort and assurance. Believe and trust in Christ and prove that you are elect. God gave us this doctrine not to live in fear, but in joy and confidence.

That's why he gave it to us. So, all right. Second benefit.

Before I go on, anybody have any other thoughts or questions on assurance of salvation? Okay. Humility and worship.

So, this Reformed theology provides the foundation for our humility and God-centered worship. So, how do you think that these ideas of grace, how does it bring humility in your life?

What do you think? I mean, I have nothing to do with it. Yeah. I can't boast about anything. Yeah. Exactly.

[24 : 54] It's totally the Lord, the Spirit, awakening my heart. Mm-hmm. So, I can't take any claim or say, yay me.

Right. Yeah, exactly. I'm really extra good or I was extra intelligent. Yeah. Exactly. Exactly right. Anybody else have any thoughts on how this creates humility in us?

Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. I have a son who is unsaved.

I've prayed for him for years. And it's good to know we have told him what he needs to know.

Mm-hmm. And, you know, if he's saved, I'll be very happy.

Mm-hmm. If he isn't, that's God. Yeah. Yeah. And I'm not going to be mad because God has some reason. Yeah.

[26 : 01] Yeah. That's true. Well, I'm sick. Yeah. Yeah. Exactly. Yeah. It's humbly, why did he choose me, you know? Obviously, there's nothing that I had anything to do with.

Right? Exactly. And that's why the Bible does in a few places, like in 1 Corinthians there, it says, let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.

Don't boast in yourself for your salvation. I did nothing. It was all Christ. I think Piper has a story where, like, if you go to heaven and, you know, God says, why did I save you?

Are you going to say, well, you know, I was smarter than my neighbor or I know something good when I see it, right? You know? No.

It has nothing to do with you. It's all Christ. You know, there's no difference. And then when I look at, like, unbelievers, I used to have a very kind of critical view of them.

[27:04] Like, come on, why can't you figure this out? You know? Like, this is good news. Just say yes. You know, do it. Do it. You know? I mean, like, you know, you just have to, you don't, you know, you just like, if you just argue them to death, they'd get there eventually.

You know? You just have to convince them. And so, when I see an unbeliever, I just think, oh, man, I was there. I was there. And it wasn't for the grace of God. I'd still be there.

I'd still be dead and blind. I mean, these people are blind. You know? They're dead. You know, then they're not only dead, but then the Bible says that Satan blinds them as well.

So, I guess, you know, we just, as Christians, when we're witnessing, it's just to have a heart of just, oh, you know, please, you know, save them just like you saved me.

So, let's talk a little about worship.

[28:07] God-centered in Christ-exalting worship. When you have a view of God that is doing all of this for us, it changes your worship experience.

It places all of the praise and glory of God alone for salvation. It results in more deeper, more joyful, and awe-inspired worship. It's not about man.

It's all about God. It's all about who he is. And it creates this, this is often called like big God doctrine because it makes God much bigger than, you know, it just kind of blows your mind and it just brings you to your knees when you realize that he is in total control of everything and salvation. And he's bringing that all to fruition. So, it completely, I think, changes how you look at worship and how you respond to your salvation and how beautiful the gospel is in all of that.

Jesus said in John 4 to worship in spirit and truth. So, you need to have the biblical truth of God and salvation is critical to worship, both corporately and in everyday life.

[29:19] That biblical true view. If you worship a God of the Bible that is not, that is not of the Bible but of your imagination, that's idolatry.

So, you want the correct view of God when you worship. And in Romans 11, 33, it says, For from him and through him and to him are all things.

To him be glory forever. And you're starting to see that he encompasses all these things. In Ephesians 1, it says, In him we have obtained inheritance, having been predestined, according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who are the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

I think it says that three times in that chapter. To the praise of the glory of Christ. That's what we should be focused on is what he did to accomplish our salvation.

And then, the third benefit is, well, now we have confidence in evangelism and missions.

[30:36] It's because God is responsible to gather his elect through the proclamation of the gospel. So, the proclamation of the gospel is part of God's plan. In Romans 10, 14 through 15, it says, How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed?

And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without somebody preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the people of those who preach the good news.

Right? So, us taking the gospel into the world is part of God's plan. It is the work of God to bring the elect to himself.

In Acts 10, in Acts 18, 9 and 10, And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, Do not be afraid that goes on speaking, and do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you.

For I have many in this city who are my people. So, he has identified that there are people that are his. And they need to hear the gospel so that they can be born again.

[31:45] And then in Acts 13, 48, it says, When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord. And as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.

See that connection there? They were appointed to eternal life. Those are the ones who believed. The ones that were appointed. The ones that were set apart before the foundation of the world. Those are the ones who believed. So, how does this give us confidence in our evangelism? I think we're just, we're the workers.

We're to go out and work the field. And do what God tells us to do in his word. Yeah.

Spread the gospel. Spread the gospel. There you go. Yeah. He gave us a commission. Yeah.

Yeah. Just be faithful, right? Yeah. And I think as far as worship goes, it really makes the worship much less complicated because in this, in the doctrines of grace view, we are focusing our

attentions on God, not trying to manipulate our worship service to appear attractive to unbelievers. [33:02] That's for maybe when we leave worship, go into the mission field. But worship is for worship. Right. Yeah. Good point. Exactly.

Yeah. Very good. Any other thoughts? How this would give us confidence in evangelism? It doesn't rely on our skill to give a good witness or recall scripture.

It's up to God. If they're elected, then just planting the seed is enough. Exactly. Yeah. That's a great point. You don't have to be Billy Graham. You can fumble through it.

You can, you know, be, you know, kind of, you think you might have made a mess of your presentation, but it's not, it's not up to you. It's God. You know, he'll take whatever, you know, that you provide and he will provide, you know, provide fruit.

That's his, that's purpose. But our job is just to do it. Yeah. Yeah. Exactly. That's a great point.

Yeah. Any other thoughts on that? I was at a small, really small country Baptist church in Birchwood, Tennessee.

[34:11] And pastor, not, it was not an impressive thing at all. The church itself, the congregation, it wasn't real exuberant. No strobe lights, no electric guitars, nothing. And the pastor was preaching from Isaiah and there was a lady there.

And at the end of the message, there's no altar call even, but after the service, she just came up in tears and asked, how can I be saved? I want to know how I can be Christian.

Wow. And it was just such a powerful visual for me to see, like, it didn't have any of the bells and whistles and yet God was just moving her heart. It was ripe. She was ripe for the harvest to the point where she was falling off the vine.

Yeah. Yeah. It was just amazing. Really encouraging to see. Oh, that's neat. What a neat story. I've heard people got saved by reading Leviticus, which is quite hard to say.

All right. We're kind of on the same lines. How does prayer play a role in evangelism? You could say, well, people are elect.

[35:18] They're going to be saved. Why pray? I think because God tells us to pray. Yeah. Yeah. That's a good reason, right? Yeah. Yeah. Exactly.

Tells us to pray. Wants us to pray. I mean, think about Jesus. He prayed all the time. You know, and it was necessary for him to pray. I think that would also mean that it's necessary for us to pray. Exactly. Any other thoughts on how does prayer play a role in evangelism? I think God is, you know, he's sovereign over the means, how someone becomes a believer and the end.

So your prayer might be that thing that God wanted you to do to bring about the salvation of somebody else. Right? In his sovereign plan, that prayer is part of his sovereign plan.

So prayer matters and it makes a difference. So, and we're called to do that. So, why does God use us in his plan of redemption and not just save the elect?

[36:45] Why do you think he chooses us to be part of his plan? I think he wants to share the joy.

Ah. You know, it's like, oh, you know, you're not a part of it. You know, he wants you to be a part of it, the sharing of joy.

Yeah. Yeah. I think you're right on. I think that he wants us to, yeah, to partake of the, there's nothing more exciting to see someone come to Christ.

Right? And it's really amazing when you think about from eternity's past to the future, he includes us in that way. No matter how broken and, you know, we think we are, he uses us ultimately for his glory.

Right? So it's such a privilege to be included in God's plan of redemption. And it is one of the most exciting things you can do when you bring somebody to Christ. In Ephesians 2.10 it says, we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

[37:59] So he didn't save you just to sit on your hands, but to, he's got work for you to do that he prepared for you before the foundation of the world.

So, and that is obviously part of his evangelism. All right. So, as you can imagine, modern missions was affected quite a bit by reformed theology.

Right? Because the, one of the main verses that they focused on is, I have other sheep that are not of this fold. They knew that they were people that were elect out there in the world.

And they needed, they needed the gospel. They, they knew that that was part of God's plan. And it creates commitment because it's not up to you. It knows that you just have to be faithful in going

and spreading the word.

And they also understood that God was an absolute sovereign. And so when you, I don't have time to go in depth on every one of these people.

[39:05] But their focus was, was that they were committed long term to the process. They understood that suffering was part of their life.

And that suffering was, was preordained as well. And I, Judson said, he said, if I had not felt certain that every additional trial was ordained by infinite love and mercy, I could not have survived my accumulated sufferings.

They knew that, that God is completely in control of everything. Everything that came into being.

Judson, for example, he entered Burma in 1813 and labored for 37 years.

He suffered greatly, losing two wives, eight children, and was imprisoned and tortured for nearly two years. So these are, every one of these suffered greatly, but they knew that, that God was in control.

And that there were people out there that needed to hear the gospel and was part of the elect. And, um, I know that when, um, when I was growing up, I had a missionary family, um, and they would come back on furlough a lot.

[40:16] And they owned the house next to us. And they were, they were, um, reformed. They would say that when, a lot of times the missionaries that were a minion, they would come and they would get discouraged right away. Like, they wouldn't have any converts.

And then, you know, or the trials would come and, and then they would, they would leave. And they would come and leave, you know. And, um, he just was saying how, what you believe about God and what you believe about these things makes a huge difference.

Not only for, you know, for these missionaries that are out on the field, um, but also for every one of us. Every one of us goes through, um, trials. All right.

So last benefit, the fourth benefit. Um, I believe that, um, this is a gateway to humble acceptance of God's providence and his absolute sovereignty. When you see God's salvation, or God's sovereignty and salvation, you recognize that he's sovereign in everything.

Um, and I like the term absolute sovereignty because if you go to ask any Christian, say, well, do you believe God's sovereign? And they'll say, sure, I believe God's sovereign. But if you push it down and say, well, did he, did he cause this to happen?

[41:25] Or did he bring about this salvation? They would say, no, no, God's not that sovereign.

Um, so I love the term absolute sovereignty because it says everything that happens happens because God has preordained it.

Um, as we see in, um, that evil is used by God without God being the author of creative evil to accomplish his purposes. And we see that in the Bible, right?

See that in Joseph's life. We see that in Jesus' life, right? All this evil that Jesus endured, right? Was for, um, a greater good, greater purpose, right?

And then, um, number two, we have even random occurrences, you know? Um, the tower of Salome, uh, I think they came up and said to Jesus, like, this is random fire.

Tower fell down on these people, you know, were they, what was, was something wrong with these people? He said, no, it was, it was a, it was meant for your repentance. That's what the purpose of that tower falling down. And it seemed like it was just a random act, but it wasn't.

[42:27] Nothing's random. Um, in Proverbs it says, uh, the lot is cast in the lap, but every decision is from the Lord. Every card dealt, every dice rolled in Vegas is, God, that's God determines that, right?

Um, R.C. said there's not one maverick molecule in the universe. God from, and then, um, West Mister says, God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel in his own free will freely and unchangeably ordain whatever comes to pass.

So we see that God's sovereignty goes far beyond just salvation. It is part of everything. And, and, and how that affects us is it gives us strength in the, in the trials of our life.

That it was, these are things that are, um, preordained, um, in life. Uh, West Mister Confession of Faith says, what is providence? God, the great creator of all things, does uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things by his most wise and holy providence.

So you see that if, if you really hold on to that, um, when you, trials come, um, things happen, it is knowing that there is a purpose for that, for your sanctification.

[43:39] There's a reason for that. We might never know why in this world, but there is. It's guaranteed, and it was, it's been given to you by, by God because he loves you. Um, um, I'll, I'll, there's a, we were camping and I was, we were getting, we were doing our laundry and there's a book and it said something like God's, knowing God's will or something like provocative like that.

So I, I like picked it up and it was a series of sermons that a Anglican pastor did in World War II, um, during the, um, where they would have the bombings and people were coming to him and like had all these questions like, you know, there's so much suffering and pain.

And so, um, he did a series and it ended up being in the book, which I was holding. But what was sad was, was that, um, his view of God was so limited and he didn't believe in a sovereign God. He said, all those bad things are happening. God has nothing to do with it. It just happens. You know, all these things that you see, God's, he's, he's out of control and, and God can't, God can't has any, can't do anything about it.

And there's no purpose in it. There's no good purpose in any of it. Um, and he even went to say that like, um, is like, if you wanted to be in God's will, you got to follow his will through your whole life.

[44:51] So let's say, for example, if you, if you marry this person and God wanted you to marry that person and you went to this college and he wanted to go to that college, you know, then, then he totally lost you the rest of your life in his will, you know?

Well, that would be so discouraging. And that is a, you know, direct comparison to knowing that God is all sovereign and his providence is in control of everything.

He can't get outside of God's will, you know? Um, and we're coming down to the wire. Um, and it also provides a worldview, uh, a logical framework to understand theology, the Bible and the world. Um, I think I'll jump down to the testimonies. Um, I love this, uh, testimony by John Piper, this quote, he said, reformed theology has been for me a pathway into the deepest and highest and most satisfying vision of God that I have ever known.

I think that's really telling the deepest and highest and most satisfying vision of God. Um, and then Abraham Kuyper said in Calvinism, my heart has found rest.

[45:59] And I think that's so true. It's so, so much rest is found in a, in a sovereign God that is sovereign over your salvation and every other part of life.

So, um, so I guess I'd ask you, where are you along this journey? Um, these things are difficult sometimes to come to, um, even like people like RC and, and then John Piper who are, you know, huge Calvinists had a very hard time coming to it.

It was a, it's, it's a life. It really is difficult. So, um, it's just, if you're on this journey, just continue the journey. Um, I'm sure that, you know, one of the pastors would be loved to talk to you about it if you're struggling with some of these ideas.

Um, but just continue in the word and, and, um, and be faithful to the word and it'll, it'll, um, bring you to these doctrines of grace. So, all right.

Any final questions or thoughts before we close? I guess I'd just say that, you know, we call it Calvinism, but it's actually biblical doctrine.

[47:11] Mm, that's a good point. Calvin took out, he took out of the scriptures. And so it's, it's in the Bible. Exactly. Yeah. Yeah. I don't know if you'd appreciate being called Calvinism, even, you know, Calvin would.

Yeah. I, yeah, he, yeah, exactly. That, that, that term kind of came way after his death. Yeah, exactly. So, um, you're exactly right. Yeah. It's just, when you, when you look at the Bible and it has been historically, it's been the doctrine of the church, um, when you look historically as well.

So, yeah, that's a good point. All right. Well, thank you so much.