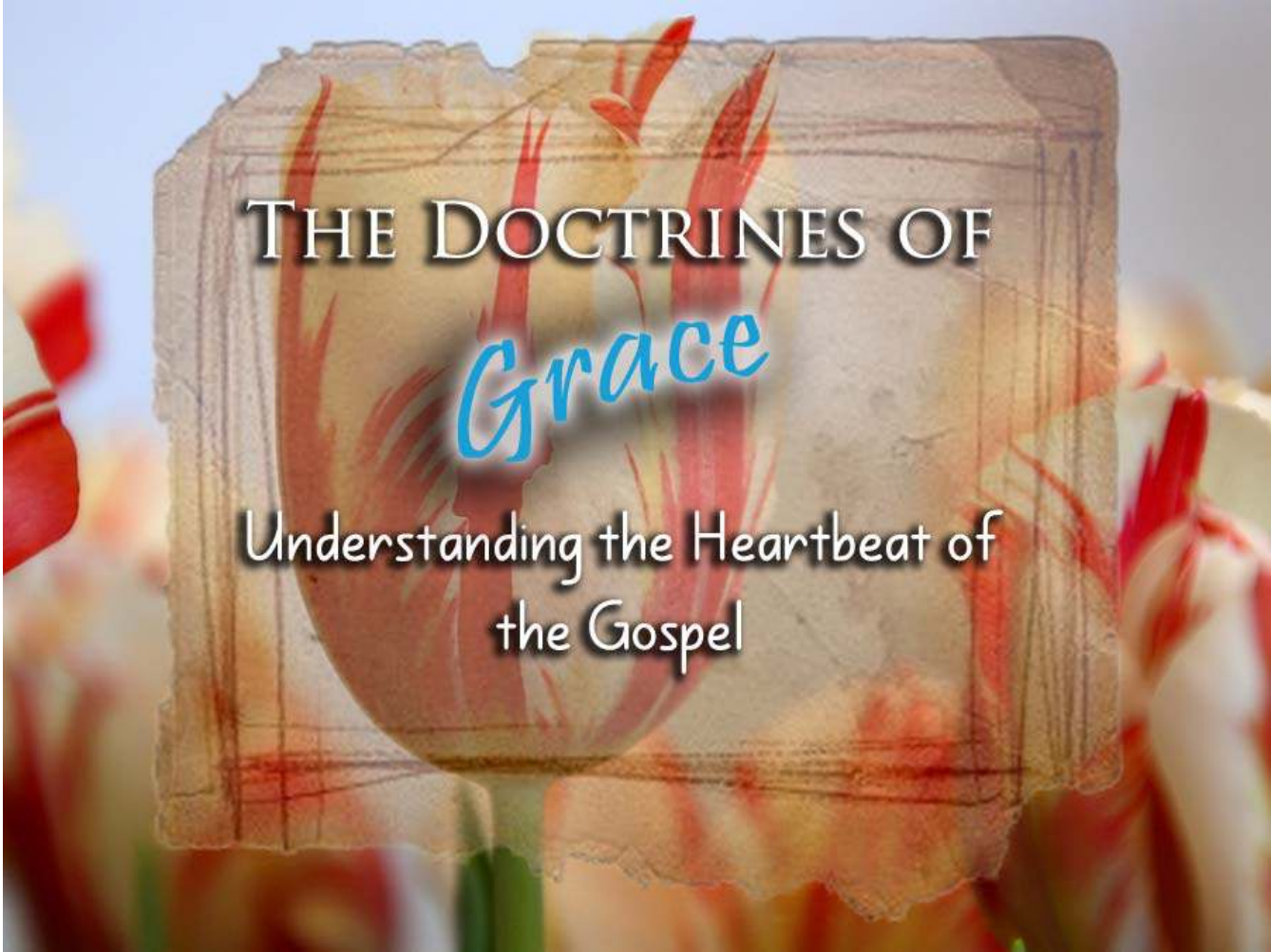


# Theology for Life

Volume 3 | Issue 1 | Spring 2016

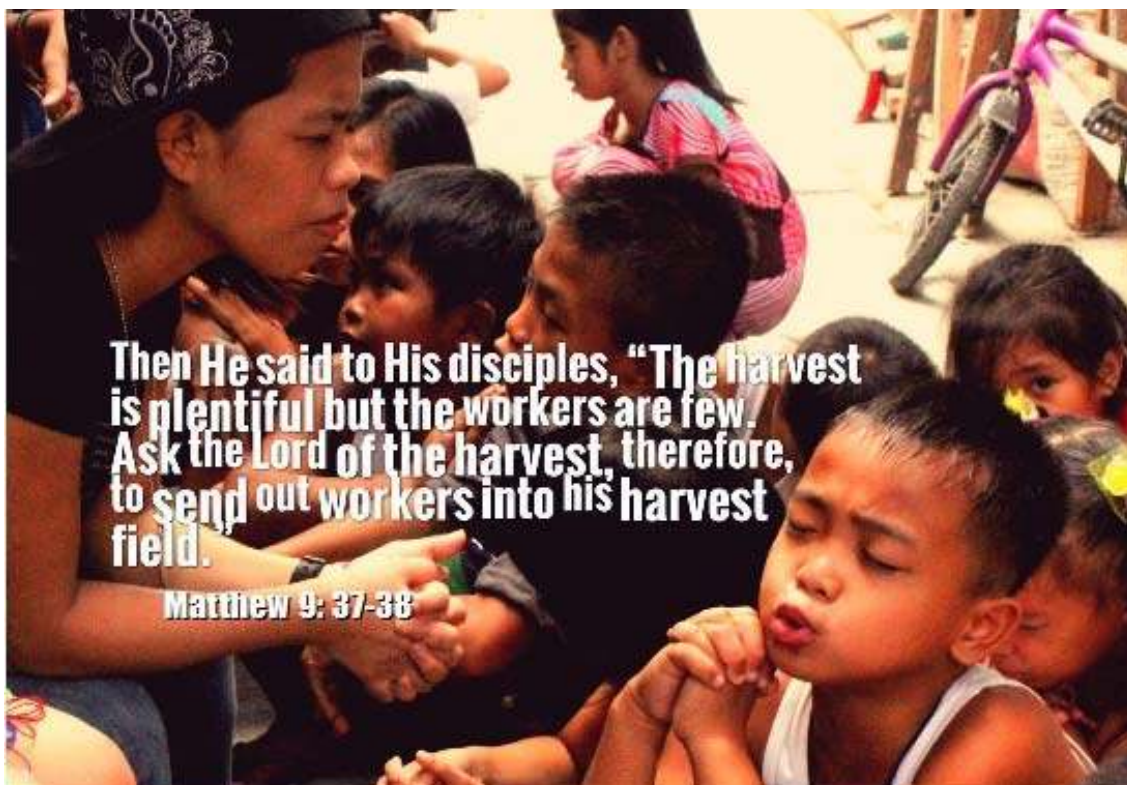


## THE DOCTRINES OF *Grace*

Understanding the Heartbeat of  
the Gospel

### Inside this Issue...

- *Evangelism, Missions, and Calvinism*
- *The Doctrine of Predestination*
- *Killing Calvinism: How to Destroy a Perfectly Good Theology From the Inside— A Book Review*
- *Five Points— A Book Review*



**Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."**

**Matthew 9: 37-38**

If you've been called to step out into the harvest field,  
World Family Missions is here to help you get there.

We are dedicated to helping entire families get equipped, get excited,  
and get out on the mission field – wherever it may be.

At home and abroad, from Colorado Springs to the Philippines, we are always  
looking for workers to participate in upcoming short- and long-term missions.

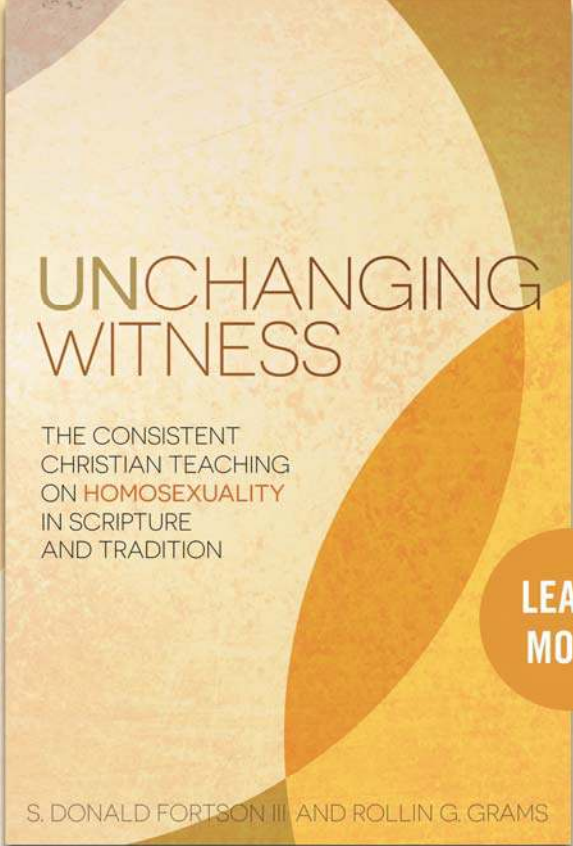


World Family Missions

To find out more about our organization or to apply for an upcoming mission, visit us at:







**B&H ACADEMIC**  
BECAUSE TRUTH MATTERS

# UNCHANGING WITNESS

THE CONSISTENT  
CHRISTIAN TEACHING  
ON **HOMOSEXUALITY**  
IN SCRIPTURE  
AND TRADITION





S. DONALD FORTSON III AND ROLLIN G. GRAMS

**LEARN  
MORE**

Donald Fortson and Rollin Grams address the arguments from the gay Christian movement and revisionist theologians and exegetes on a single point: Can they withstand the evidence of the primary sources?

[bhacademic.com](http://bhacademic.com)  
[bhacademicBLOG.com](http://bhacademicBLOG.com)

click on the icons below:

# Church Basics Series

Edited by Jonathan Leeman



Coming soon in June 2016

*Understanding Church Leadership · Understanding Church Discipline*

In the Church Basics Series, trusted church experts write practical, trustworthy resources on issues like Church Discipline, the Lord's Supper, and Baptism that every pastor can hand every church member.

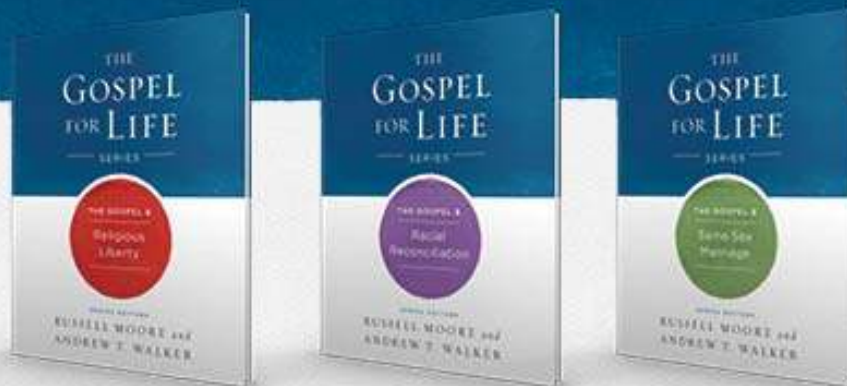
LEARN MORE AT [9MARKS.ORG](http://9MARKS.ORG)

**B&H**  
Baker Book House Company  
Baker Publishing Group

# THE GOSPEL FOR LIFE — SERIES —

*by Russell Moore and Andrew T. Walker*

AVAILABLE JUNE 1 EVERYWHERE



*Coming soon in January 2017*

**The Gospel & Abortion • The Gospel & Adoption • The Gospel & Marriage**

The Gospel for Life is a series of short, accessible books on a range of urgent topics facing the church, intended for the person of the pew. Editors Russell Moore and Andrew T. Walker of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) assemble leading voices to frame the issues with a gospel-centered perspective. The Gospel for Life series gives every believer a biblically-saturated understanding of the most urgent issues facing our culture today, because the gospel is for all of life.

**BUY HERE**

**B&H**  
Every WORD Matters™  
BHPublishingGroup.com

---

## Table of Contents

♦ <b>Editor's Corner</b>	Page 8
By Dave Jenkins	
♦ <b>Total Depravity: The Problem Defined and Solution Provided</b>	Page 10
By Michael Boling	
♦ <i><b>Killing Calvinism: How to Destroy a Perfectly Good Theology From the Inside</b></i> (A Book Review)	Page 14
By Dave Jenkins	
♦ <b>The Doctrine of Predestination</b>	Page 16
By Brian Cosby	
♦ <i><b>Five Points</b></i> (A Book Review)	Page 22
By Brian Cosby	Page 24
♦ <b>Limited Atonement</b>	
By Jason Garwood	
♦ <i><b>Antinomianism: Reformed Theology's Unwelcome Guest</b></i> (A Book Review)	Page 28
By Michael Boling	
♦ <b>The Work of the Holy Spirit in Salvation: A Brief Overview of the Spirit's Role in the Doctrines of Grace</b>	Page 31
By Craig Hurst	

## Table of Contents Continued...

- ♦ ***Knowing Christ*** Page 36  
(A Book Review)  
By Dave Jenkins
- ♦ **Assurance and Perseverance:** Page 38  
**An Examination of Hebrews**  
**6:1-8**  
By Dave Jenkins
- ♦ **Evangelism, Missions, and** Page 46  
**Calvinism**  
By Wei Fang Ho
- ♦ **Reforming According to the** Page 53  
**Word of God for the Spread of**  
**the Gospel**  
By Dave Jenkins
- ♦ **Recommended Books on the** Page 58  
**Doctrines of Grace**  
By Dave Jenkins
- ♦ **About the Authors** Page 60



## Editor's Corner

### EXECUTIVE EDITOR

*Dave Jenkins*

### STAFF EDITORS

*Sarah Jenkins*

*Craig Hurst*

*Michael Boling*

*Brian Cosby*

### DESIGN DIRECTOR & COPY EDITOR

*Sarah Jenkins*

### ADVERTISING

*To advertise in Theology for Life Magazine, email*

*dave@servantsofgrace.org*

### COPYRIGHT ©

*Theology for Life Magazine grants permission for any original article to be quoted, provided Theology for Life is cited as the source. For use of an entire article, permission must be granted. Please contact dave@servantsofgrace.org.*

Charles Spurgeon once noted, “That doctrine which is called “Calvinism” did not spring from Calvin; we believe that it sprang from the great founder of all truth.” With these words, Spurgeon set forth the critical truth that the Doctrines of Grace, also known as the Five Points of Calvinism or TULIP (Totally Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints) originates from. In this issue, you will learn the biblical and Reformed perspective on the doctrine of salvation. The men that wrote the articles in this issue are committed to these biblical truths and proclaim them from God’s Word.

Often Reformed theology gets a bad name because some people believe that it teaches what is known as Hyper-Calvinism—namely that God has chosen us so that we (Calvinists) don’t need to preach that sinners can believe in the Lord Jesus and be saved. God is sovereign over the process of salvation. We call sinners to salvation and trust that God will open the eyes of the blind, causing them to taste and see that the Lord is good. Through the Holy Spirit, God takes our heart of stone and replaces it with a new heart, with new desires, and affections for Himself.

The Doctrines of Grace explain the heartbeat of the Gospel. To understand the Doctrines of Grace one must be taken deep into the heart of God who loves to save the lost, the least, and the marginalized. One must dwell long on these truths and be taken into the very mind of God, who calls people who were formerly covenant breakers and invites them to be His covenant people. The Doctrines of Grace take one deep into the mind and depths of God.

Sadly, these truths have been misunderstood and maligned since the Second Great Awakening. Often what passes for Calvinism isn’t Calvinism. Calvinism is more than just a doctrinal view of salvation—it is based on the truth that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant, sufficient, and authoritative Word of God. It is based on the fact that *God alone saves*. In addition to these truths, Reformed theology rejects “gimmicks” in favor for God’s Word, not just to be preached and believed, but to be lived under. This is why the Reformers spoke of the means of grace. They believed that these “means of grace” define and give shape to the ordinary Christian life, as it is lived under godly authority in the context of the local church.

The Church must be reforming, or it will die. The church that is



conforming to the world has lost its first love and compromised the Gospel. R.C. Sproul, a famous Reformed theologian, teaches that these doctrines of grace should humble people. Those who believe in Reformed theology are often not humble, but instead known as “that guy/girl” who can blast everyone with his/her theological knowledge—showing no love or concern for people.

The central issue in contemporary Reformed circles with its resurgence on “gospel” everything is that many Reformed people know sound doctrine, but aren’t able to see the connection between *doctrine* and *how they live* their lives. Sound doctrine leads to sound living. Most, if not all, Reformed people would affirm that biblical truth. As I interact with those in the Reformed world, I am gravely concerned that we are people who can only answer doctrinal and theological questions at the expense of speaking the truth in love. I am very concerned that we lack the relational skills and maturity to talk across our own tradition to other Christians who love the Gospel. To put it another way, I believe many of us are guilty of what Paul says in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13—we know the truth, but we’re clanging gongs because we lack genuine love for other people.

I’ve been a Christian since I was a young child and have believed in the Doctrines of Grace at least since my early teenage years, if not before. I’ve been to the conferences, read the books, listened to the sermons, and know a lot of people in the Reformed world. To be fair, not everyone who’s Reformed could be categorized as I just explained. Most Reformed people I know are humble, love the Bible, love people, and have great relational and spiritual maturity; they are the “real deal”.

My prayer is that as you read this issue, you wouldn’t feel the need to “check these off your list” and say, “I’m good”, but rather that you would allow these truths to humble you. God wants to use you in powerful ways in the life of His Church. There is a great need for doctrinal knowledge in our day, but there is a *greater* need for doctrinal knowledge that leads to right living, and thus relational maturity as well. As you read this Issue of *Theology for Life Magazine*, whether you are new to Reformed theology or you are a long-time student of these truths, I encourage you to apply what you will learn to your life.

Our aim in life should not be to convert people to our theological position and viewpoint, but to show them the glory of Christ, be faithful to the Word, and point them to the Chief Shepherd Jesus Christ. As you read this issue, I’m praying that the Lord will use it in your life so that you’ll be encouraged, challenged, convicted, and your vision of God expanded. Furthermore, I pray that you’ll learn what the Gospel is and begin, if you haven’t already, to mine the depths of God’s Word on these issues.

In Christ Alone,

Dave Jenkins

Executive Editor, *Theology for Life*

## Total Depravity: The Problem Defined and Solution Provided

By Michael Boling



**Humanity has a problem.** Turn on the news, listen to the radio, or take a quick glance at your favorite social media outlet and you will likely find a plethora of stories concerning the desperate plight of someone around the world. Why does the inhumanity of man towards one another take place? Why are we so unable to right the societal ship, to mend the wrongs of our world by our sheer effort or perhaps through a focused avalanche of governmental spending? Surely the combined will of the world can fix what is wrong...or can it?

This is a question that has vexed mankind for centuries. Philosophers and religious sages throughout time have attempted to discover the secret to man's nature. Some have suggested that it is possible for man

to do enough "good" to fix the problems of the world around them, as well as earning enough "brownie points" with their respective deity to deal with matters of an eternal nature. Others have come to the conclusion that man is nothing more than the sum of his evolutionary parts, and thus are only acting out on their primal instincts. Is either approach correct? Is man capable of doing any good and, if so, can it amount to anything in total so that humanity can be understood as "good"? Are we only left to deal with the aforementioned primal animal instincts with the evil around us? Scripture deals with both issues quite thoroughly, providing us with the answer to whether man can achieve a necessary state of goodness, as well as providing for us the solution to this pervasive problem God calls *sin*.

If we look at the first chapters of Genesis, we find a world that is described as being *good*, and man as being very good (or *tov*). That phrase—"very good"—depicts a universe devoid of death and decay with Adam and Eve living together in perfect har-

mony with the world around them. There was no murder, famine, hatred, jealousy, slander, or any of the trappings we fall prey to on a daily basis. All was *perfect*. The Creator dwelt with His creation and man had the perfect relationship with his Creator and the universe.

Then something changed. Man disobeyed God's command, an action known as *sin*. The entrance of sin into the world was devastating as it introduced into death, both physical and spiritual. The perfect nature Adam and Eve had prior to sin was replaced with a fallen nature. Instead of a perfect desire to obey and glorify God, man now dealt with the urge to pursue all manner of depravity.

### Total Depravity Defined

Let's start with a helpful definition. The "Synod of Dort" explained this idea as such:

*"All men are conceived in sin and are by nature children of wrath, incapable of any saving good, prone to evil, dead in sin and in bondage thereto; and without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, they are neither able nor willing to turn to God, to reform the depravity of their nature, nor to dispose themselves for reformation."*[1]

When a term such a "total depravity" is used, there is the tendency to reject such a concept, due to the belief that man can do good. After all, is not helping that little old

lady to cross the street with no desire for repayment known as a "good deed"? Does such an action then mean that man is not totally depraved in all their actions? Man can act with kindness towards one another. Random acts of kindness, however many, cannot outweigh even one sinful act as noted in the above definition of total depravity.

"The perfect nature Adam and Eve had prior to sin was replaced with a fallen nature. Instead of a perfect desire to obey and glorify God, man now dealt with the urge to pursue all manner of depravity."

There are a number of Scripture references that speak to this reality:

- **Jeremiah 17:9** - The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?
- **Ecclesiastes 9:3** - Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.
- **John 8:34** - Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin."
- **Romans 7:18** - For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh.

- **Romans 3:10** - As it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one"
- **James 2:10** - For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.

From this small sampling of passages, it is evident that the heart of man, apart from God, is wicked—unable to correct its sinful nature, focused on the deeds of the flesh. There is no element or amount of good deeds that can be done to save man from the penalty of sin, which is death. Since all men are sinners and have broken God's law, the solution to man's inhumanity (or sin nature) cannot reside in societal efforts, government spending, or the "Star Trekkian" dream that, one day in the future, man will somehow "figure it all out" and will treat one another with the utmost love and respect. Scripture declares otherwise; left alone to our own devices, man has no hope.

### The Solution to the Problem

The situation seems rather grim, as it should. If man is incapable of being good enough to rectify the broken relationship with his Creator, let alone demonstrate any lasting love towards his fellow man, should we then throw up our hands in despair, giving in to our sinful desires? Thankfully, the answer is a resounding *no*.

God has provided the solution to the issue of total depravity – grace extended to undeserving man through the shed blood of Jesus. The Apostle John notes in 1<sup>st</sup> John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Confession of sins is a recognition of our state of total depravity and our dependence on God's grace to be poured out into our lives. Furthermore, concomitant with confessing sin is the act of repentance. As noted by Bryan Chapell:

"God, in His great love and mercy, has provided an answer. He sent His Son to pay the penalty for sin..."

*"Repentance is not so much a doing as a depending. It is not so much a striving for pardon as a posture of humility. In true repentance we confess our total reliance on God's mercy. We acknowledge the inadequacy of anything we would offer God to gain his pardon. In true repentance we rest upon God's grace rather than trying to do anything to deserve it."*[2]

**Crying out to God in a state of repentance from sin** results in the Holy Spirit's taking up residence in our heart, cleaning out the sinful nature, replacing those deleterious passions of the flesh with a love for God, and giving a desire for obedience to His commands. We will still have to deal with the temptation to sin. The Apostle Paul reminds us of this reality in Galatians 5:17, which states, "For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do."



When we come to know Christ as our Savior, does this mean we are still totally depraved? Given that we will continue to battle against the flesh and the reality that we always must depend on the grace of God through Christ as the solution to this problem, the answer is *in-part* is “yes”. John Frame helpfully explains, “The final word about the believer, then, is not corruption, but overcoming. As Paul says, “For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under the law but under grace” (Romans 6:14). The corruption of sin remains until death, but it grows weaker and weaker, through the continual strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ. Scripture promises victory in Jesus.”[3] The penalty for breaking God’s law is death, but through God’s grace, sin no longer reigns supreme over us, and that penalty of death as a result of our transgressions is covered by the blood of the Lamb.

### Final Thoughts

The world we live in has a sin problem. This issue has existed since Adam and Eve disobeyed God back in the Garden of Eden. That sin resulted in expulsion from the Garden and the presence of God, as well as the imputation of a sinful nature to each succeeding generation. Man is totally depraved, and without help from God, we would be doomed. God, in His great love and mercy, has provided an answer. He sent His Son to pay the penalty for sin, to redeem us to Himself, to restore the broken relationship between man and Creator, and to one day fully and finally fix all that has been broken and marred by sin.

### References:

[1] Canon 3/4:3. See Gerald Bray, ed., *Documents of the English Reformation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 466.

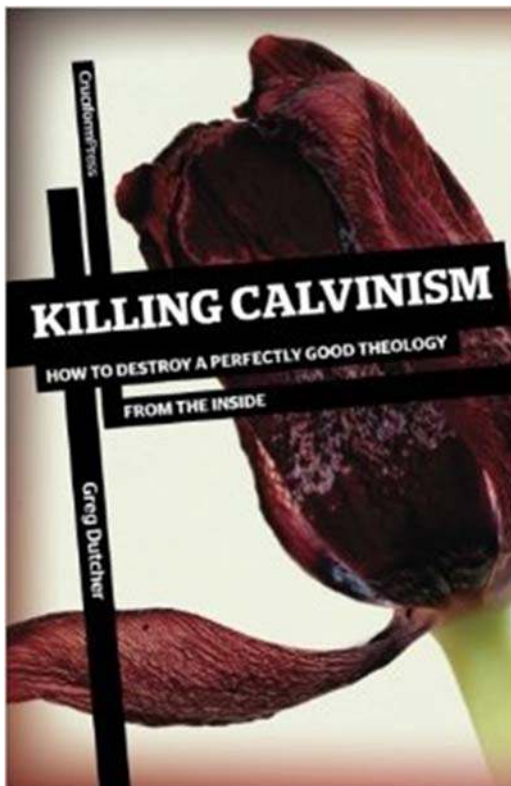
[2] Bryan Chapell, “Repentance That Sings” in *Fallen: A Theology of Sin*. Edited by Christopher Morgan and Robert Peterson. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 280.

[3] John Frame, *Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2013), 870.

## A Book Review:

### ***Killing Calvinism: How to Destroy a Perfectly Good Theology From the Inside***

By Dave Jenkins



The past ten years has seen the rise of the Doctrines of Grace, also known as **Calvinism**. In his helpful book, [\*Killing Calvinism\*](#), Pastor Greg Dutcher writes, not as an outsider critiquing what he doesn't understand, but as an insider looking at the strengths and weaknesses of the movement. [\*Killing Calvinism\*](#) will affect each person differently. Some will see the title of this book and determine it's not for them. Others will see the title and think this is a helpful book for them to read and consider. Some will read this book and disagree with its points entirely. In my opinion, this book is needed because many Calvinist do struggle with being humble because they have not yet come to understand what the Doctrines of Grace truly entail. R.C. Sproul once said that a Calvinist who lacks humility is an oxymoron.

Recently I was having a conversation with a new friend from church. My new friend is a former Pastor and well-educated man. As we talked it became apparent that he was a Calvinist, but (like me) was uncomfortable with

the label. Rather than focusing on the label "Calvinist", we both agreed that it is our wish to be biblical in our thinking and worldview. Dr. John Piper and several other pastors I know have also said the same thing—they want to be recognized for what they *preach* from the Word rather than their systematic theology. My friend noted that it's not the "Calvinist faith", but the Christian faith that we are called to preach and live.

While the whole [book](#) is good, the following point in particular stood out to me with regards to Spurgeon and Whitfield:

*“Make Spurgeon and Whitefield your models rather than Owen or Calvin, because the former were evangelists and won many people to Christ in a way that is nearer to our own day” (53).*

**The author is right—often Calvinists do focus more on Owen, Calvin, or**

**Spurgeon** and what they did in their ministries than viewing them as models for our ministries. This point is especially relevant as I have been guilty of doing this myself regarding Owen, Calvin, Spurgeon etc., focusing on their mighty God-inspired works, rather than focusing on what God wants to do in and through my life. I think the perspective Dutcher has on this is spot on and is one I hope all Christians, regardless of where they land on the theological spectrum, will consider.

“The work contained in this book is the truth “spoken in love” by a fellow Calvinist, for fellow Calvinists.”

[Killing Calvinism](#) is a helpful book written with a pastoral tone and from a pastor’s heart to fellow Calvinists. The work contained in this book is the truth “spoken in love” by a fellow Calvinist, for fellow Calvinists. Not only will Calvinists be well-served by considering the reflections in this book, but I also believe those of other theological persuasions will be helped by reading this book and thinking about how their theology fails to be put into practice in their daily lives.

**I recommend every Christian read this [book](#)** carefully and prayerfully to learn from the pitfalls of being haughty, and the need for humility in our interactions with one another. [Killing Calvinism](#) will be one means the Lord will use to correct some, train others, and equip Christians on what humble God-honoring theology looks like in practice. May God give those of us who are Reformed ears to hear what He is saying through books like [Killing Calvinism](#).

## The Doctrine of Predestination

By Brian Cosby



**The Protestant Reformation was a movement in sixteenth-century Europe that sought to reform the Roman Catholic Church** back to a Christ-exalting, gospel-believing, and Word-centered expression of the Christian faith. However, the more the Scriptures shed light on the errors of the Church's theology at the time, the greater the divide between Protestants and Catholics became.

The cries for reform, however, didn't begin in the sixteenth century. Many clergy were corrupt—living luxurious lives of rampant immorality and sexual promiscuity. Church positions were given to the highest bidder or to family members and widespread skepticism plagued the church due to its moral bankruptcy.

**In addition to this, the Church had created a theology apart from the Bible** that sought to keep certain structures in place. For example, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Pope plunged headfirst into a building campaign to raise money for St. Peter's in Rome. To fund his endeavors, he revived and extended the practice of *selling indulgences*.

For a sum of money, you could waive your time in purgatory or even have one of your dead relatives immediately go to Heaven. By buying one of these indulgences or doing various works of penance, a person could earn his/her way into God's favor. Salvation became less and less about something *God does* and more and more about something *man earns* by works.

A young German monk, Martin Luther (1483-1546 A.D.), responded to the various moral abuses of the church and of a "salvation by works" theology by nailing ninety-five theses—statements of faith—to the church door in Wittenberg. Thanks to the printing press (invented around 1450 A.D.), these theses were quickly printed and distributed across Germany. The



Protestant Reformation had begun.

Reformed theology, as we have come to call it, is first and foremost *biblical theology*—the study and discourse on the character and work of God as revealed in the Bible. And the study of God—who He is and what He has done—is certainly an appropriate place to start when formulating thoughts on topics like salvation predestination.

### What is “Reformed Theology”?

I usually summarize Reformed Theology by ten expressions. The first five are often called the *Five “Solas”*—referring to the Latin word for “only” or “alone”. The second list of five expressions are organized by the acrostic, *TULIP*, or what has been called the “Five Points of Calvinism”. The first five may also be applied generally to evangelical Christians while the second five are more specific to Reformed Christians (even though, originally, all major denominations embraced all ten of these). These ten expressions are:

“We are saved by God’s grace alone, displayed in the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ, and applied by the Holy Spirit.”

1. ***Sola Scriptura*** – The Bible *alone* is the only source of authority for faith, doctrine, and Christian living.
2. ***Sola Fide*** – We are justified—declared “righteous”—before God by faith alone, and not by works.
3. ***Sola Gratia*** – We are saved by God’s grace alone, displayed in the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, and applied by the Holy Spirit.
4. ***Solus Christus*** – There is salvation in no one else but Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and man.
5. ***Soli Deo Gloria*** – All glory and honor is due to God alone and to no other.
6. ***Total Depravity*** – Man, because of his sinful nature, is born into this world dead in sin, enslaved to its services, and inclined toward evil continually.
7. ***Unconditional Election*** – God’s sovereign choice of His people from before the foundation of the world is not dependent upon man’s decision or will, but upon God’s *free grace*.
8. ***Limited Atonement*** – Christ came to purposefully and intentionally die for God’s elect, His people.
9. ***Irresistible Grace*** – God, by His Spirit, effectually calls and saves sinners by grace.

10. **Perseverance of the Saints** – Once a person is saved, he or she will always be saved; *true salvation* cannot be lost.

### The Doctrine of Predestination

Out of the doctrinal expressions listed above, the doctrine of predestination (or election) usually elicits considerable reaction—both positive and negative. But what does it mean? Scripture teaches that before God created the heavens and the earth, He chose—or “predestined”—His people to be saved for eternity. Consider some of these passages from the Bible:

- “Even as [God] chose us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will” (Eph. 1:4-5).
- “For those whom [God] foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son” (Rom. 8:29).
- “In [Christ] we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will” (Eph. 1:11).
- “The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth” (Deut. 7:6).
- “For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you” (1 Thess. 1:4).

**Predestination, therefore, is a *biblical* word;** it comes straight from the Bible. Taken literally, it means to “destine beforehand” or to determine decisively something before it takes place. In the original Greek language, it is two words joined together (***pro-oridzo***). Many times, self-professing Christians will say, “I don’t believe in predestination.” While I understand their point—that they disagree with an *interpretation* of it—to say that they don’t believe in it is contrary to the fact that it is *in the Bible*.

The biblical writers consistently use the words “elect”, “election”, “chosen”, and “predestined”. However it’s stated, the message is clear: God has chosen *His* people before the foundation of the world for eternal salvation. Conversely, the non-Christian, “whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain” (Rev. 13:8) “will go away into eternal punishment” (Matt. 25:46). Let’s briefly look at this second point.

There is no doubt that the Scriptural truth that non-Christians will go to Hell is under attack in our day. There have been numerous books published in recent

times reaffirming the reality and existence of Hell precisely because of this attack. However, many people want to believe that if you are generally a “good person”, you will go to Heaven. But this isn’t what Scripture teaches. Even Jesus speaks more about Hell—and unbelievers going there—than any other person in the Bible!

Deep down, however, all of us want to know what is true, even if it’s difficult to bear. You have been told too many lies to want what’s easy. We live in a small-print world where everything comes with a disclaimer. From famous politicians to popular preachers, we have witnessed the scandals and the hypocritical lives of prominent people. Because of this, we have been trained to be skeptics about what people say—*especially* if it sounds “too good to be true.”

One of the common objections to predestination is: “If God has already elected those who will be saved, then why evangelize?” It’s a good question, and there are at least two primary reasons. First, we share the gospel because Jesus *commands us to* (Matt. 28:19). Second, we share the gospel because it is the means by which God saves His elect—through the hearing of the preached Word (Rom. 10:17).

**This second point is important. In the Book of Acts, Luke records the Apostle Paul and Barnabas preaching the gospel.** He writes, “When the Gentiles heard [the gospel], they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, *and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed*” (Acts 13:48, emphasis added). Did you catch that last line? Paul and Barnabas preached; the Lord saved. This is by God’s design.

In such a small-print world, it’s refreshing to let the Bible speak for itself. Yes, it is full of difficult doctrines, but would we *expect* anything less? If it always pleased our itching ears, we would see its shallowness and emptiness from the get-go.

But what we find in Scripture is so much more exciting and awe inspiring than small-print disclaimers. We are confronted with a God who calls His creation to worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24), to reflect back to Him His glory and to join in the chorus of the millennia of saints and of angels in Heaven crying out, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty!” *This* is the God we worship and adore. *This* is the God, who reigns forever as the sovereign Creator over the universe. *This* is the God, who elects His people by love.

### Predestination and Calvin

So, who was John Calvin and why do people get offended at the mention of his name? As a sixteenth-century Reformer in Europe, John Calvin (1509-1564 A.D.) sought to steer the church away from a man-centered view of the Christian faith to a God-centered view of the Christian faith. In doing this, he emphasized God’s absolute control over all things, a doctrine called God’s *sovereignty*. As R. C. Sproul has said, “there is not one single molecule that is outside of God’s control.” God has “declared the end from the beginning,” saying, “I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it” (Isa. 46:11). The Psalmist writes, “For he spoke, and it

came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm” (Ps. 33:9).

In asserting that God is in absolute control, the Bible teaches—and Calvin from the Bible—that we *aren’t*. This doesn’t mean, however, that we are mere robots or puppets. Man is fully responsible while God is fully sovereign. In fact, the apostle Paul writes of both of these truths at the same time: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling [man’s responsibility], for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure [God’s sovereignty]” (Phil. 2:12-13). Or consider this verse in Proverbs: “The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps” (Prov. 16:9).

That God is sovereign, however, still offends. Why? *Because we are rebels at heart.* We want to be like God, like Satan’s temptation to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:5). Submitting ourselves to greater wisdom, power, and holiness takes humility—something we rebels rebel against!

Because Calvin seemed to take freedom away from man, Calvin has been given a bad rap. But what Calvin sought to do, however, was to show that man’s heart is *not* free to begin with. Our hearts are prone to wander away from Christ every time—if left on our own. Apart from God’s grace in giving us new hearts to love Him, we remain chained and imprisoned (and dead!) by sin and unbelief. There is no freedom apart from God’s work of grace and its *grace* precisely because His salvation is something we don’t deserve.

### What is “Fair”?

Let’s pretend for a moment that you had one million dollars. You earned it through hard work, and it was yours. You find yourself out walking one day and see an elderly homeless man digging through a dumpster. You have compassion for the man, and so you decide to give him a hundred bucks. He didn’t ask you, but you gave it anyway. Unbeknownst to you, somebody down the street sees you and comes running up to you demanding that you give *him* a hundred bucks as well.

Stop right there for a moment. Think about the situation. Are you obligated to give this second man the money? Is he entitled to it? Absolutely not. But because of your generosity, there is a *false* sense of injustice—a *false* sense of thinking that you’re not being fair to the second man.

When we begin considering God’s eternal election of His people, before the foundation of the world, we must step back and ask the question: “What is fair?” Is it fair that everyone goes to Heaven? Is God obligated to send everyone to Heaven? We must remember that the wages of sin is death and Hell forever (cf. Rom. 6:23). If we are all sinners, which we are, then the payment or the consequence of our sin is death and Hell.

**Therefore, in answer to our question,** it would only be fair to send *everybody* to Hell. The fact that God elects some people for salvation points to His grace and love. That God doesn’t elect others points to His holiness and justice. Or to put it another way: by choosing some, He demonstrates His perfect love and grace. By not choosing others, He demonstrates His perfect holiness and justice. He is not obligated to save any-



body. But because He wanted to demonstrate the greatness of His mercy, He poured out His grace upon the beloved bride of Christ, the Church.

### A Comforting Thought

Think about this: if you were morally able to choose God apart from His grace and, therefore, enter into a saving relationship with Him, then you could just as easily “unfriend” Him and exit that saving relationship. The conditional element is *you* and *your* faith, not God. It would depend on how much you had a sense of faith or how much you felt like loving God. If you were strong in your faith one day, then you were saved. On the other hand, if you happen to have weak faith, then you would be unsaved. [REDACTED]

But thank God that He is not in the business of non-committal, semi-secure summer friends, but of a sovereign, eternal, covenantal, loving, and grace-driven relationship with His people. The good news of the gospel is that your salvation isn’t dependent upon you, but upon God’s eternal electing love. If it was dependent upon you, you would never be saved to begin with because your heart would always choose evil *every time*—chained by sin and oriented toward sin, like that broken shopping-cart wheel always veering toward the side of the aisle. [REDACTED]

“...Before you were born, God set His love on you.”

Reformed theology points to this biblical truth: that before you were born, God set His love on you (Jer. 1:5). He chose you from before the foundation of the world to be His adopted son or daughter by His power and grace (Rom. 9:10-23)—that He might “rejoice over you with gladness” and “quiet you by his love” (Zeph. 3:17). As Jesus said, “I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand” (John 10:28). If you know yourself this day to be a believer in Christ, you can take great comfort that you have been elected by a sovereign love that won’t let you go.

#### References:

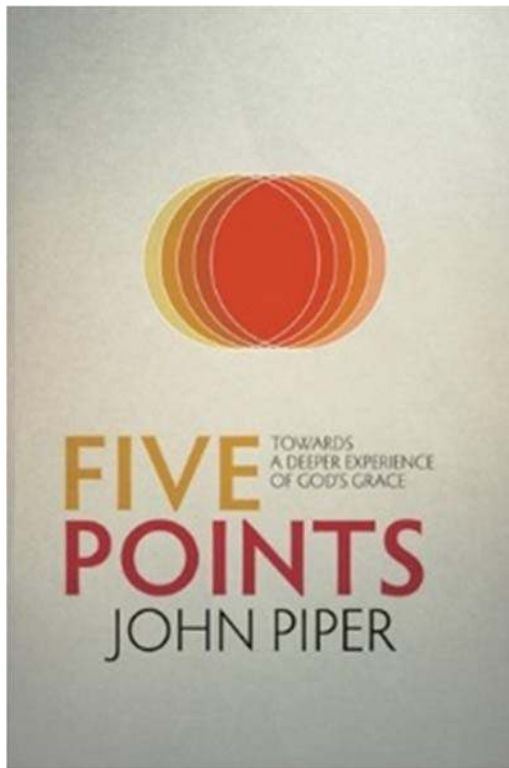
Some of this material has been adapted from Brian Cosby, *Rebels Rescued: A Student’s Guide to Reformed Theology* (Ross-Shire, UK: Christian Focus Publications, 2012).

Methodists, who did reject the Reformation view of predestination and election, came much later as a break from the Anglican Church through the labors of John Wesley.

## A Book Review:

### *Five Points*

By Brian Cosby



**Mark Dever, the pastor of Capital Hill Baptist Church,** recently articulated 12 sources God has used to reinvigorate Reformed theology among a younger generation in our day. Among them he named John Piper. Piper, said Dever, is probably “the single most potent factor in the recent rise of Reformed theology.” As part of the young, restless, and Reformed movement, I concur.

Piper’s new book, [\*Five Points\*](#), summarizes the basic doctrines of Reformed theology in a clear, accessible, and winsome way. If you’re wondering, “What are the ‘five points of Calvinism’ all about?” this book is for you. John Piper served as Pastor for Preaching and Vision at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota for 33 years before stepping down to devote his time to the ministry he founded—Desiring God. He is an award-winning author of a number of books including *Desiring God*, *Don’t Waste Your Life*, *God’s Passion for His Glory*, and *Finally Alive*.

**Although the so-called “five points of Calvin”** didn’t come from John Calvin in its contemporary form—they find their roots in the Synod of Dort in 1618-1619—Calvin certainly affirmed all five in his famous *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559). The five points, known by the acronym **TULIP**, are:

1. **T**otal Depravity
2. **U**nconditional Election
3. **L**imited Atonement
4. **I**rresistible Grace

### 5. Perseverance of the Saints

After a pastoral introduction and some historical context, Piper goes through each of these, though not in this order. While he values the traditional order of TULIP, he says, “People grasp these points more easily if we go in the order in which we ourselves often experience them when we become Christians” (14). Thus, the order Piper outlines throughout the book is:

1. Total Depravity
2. Irresistible Grace
3. Limited Atonement
4. Unconditional Election
5. Perseverance of the Saints

Like many pastors and theologians, Piper acknowledges that these labels have been and will continue to be misunderstood. For example, “Perseverance of the Saints” might communicate to some that *we* are the ones who make it to the end by our own effort and works; that God starts us in the right direction, but it’s up to us to continue on to glory. This would be the opposite teaching of perseverance.

“Piper pulls back the curtain to his own life experience with these five points...”

Piper also gives some rationale and defense for this book, placing his starting point with Scripture:

*I do not begin as a Calvinist and defend a system. I begin as a Bible-believing Christian who wants to put the Bible above all systems of thought. But over the years—many years of struggle—I have deepened in my conviction that Calvinistic teachings on the five points are biblical and therefore true, and therefore a precious pathway into deeper experiences of God’s grace (9).*

Two points from the book stood out particularly to me. First, *the God-ness of God*. I came away with a greater appreciation of the truth that God is self-sufficient, complete in Himself from all eternity. He does not need us, but loves us when there was no condition in us to love. In an age that is brimming with narcissism and “self-help guides”, we should be radically *God-centered* in our theology and worship.

The second point that I found particularly helpful in [Five Points](#) was the personal and historical testimonies at the end of the book on the “doctrines of grace”, as the five points are often called. Piper pulls back the curtain to his own life experience with these five points, and this only gave the book a raw, down-to-earth, practical side—helping the reader experience these doctrines for himself. They are not ethereal ideologies, but concrete and living truths we can experience now.

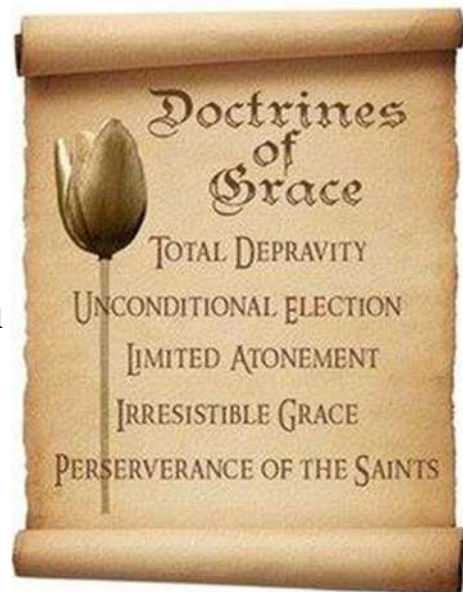
I highly commend [Five Points](#) to those who have no idea what all the fuss is about, but also to the highly trained pastor, wanting to communicate somehow biblical doctrine in a clear and pastoral way.

## Limited Atonement

By Jason Garwood

**Romans 8:30 states, “And those whom he predestined he also called,** and those whom he called he also justified [by Christ’s atoning blood], and those whom he justified he also glorified.” A central component to the gospel announcement is the death of Jesus Christ. The design of the gospel is meant to provoke—and grant—repentance and faith to sinners who cannot save themselves. The very first words out of the mouth of our Lord in the Gospel of Mark were, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; **repent** and **believe** in the gospel” (Mark 1:15, emphasis added throughout).

The gospel message’s necessary correlation between the *provision* of the gospel (atonement) and its *power* (the Holy Spirit) lead us to a problem. Did Christ die solely to make salvation *possible*? Or was His sacrifice on the cross *efficiently sufficient*? Was His sacrifice *impotent* to save to the uttermost? The relationship between God’s atoning provision and God’s power to execute all that He intended to accomplish in that provision is often misunderstood—and, worse yet, improperly taught.



### Paradoxical Prooftexts?

Because many evangelicals abandon the principle *scriptura scripturam interpretatur* (Scripture interprets Scripture), many resolve this apparent mystery by simply saying it is a paradox. To this end, those who hold this view explain, “Christ died for everybody.” A paradox is a concept, statement, or proposition that seems to be entirely contradictory to itself; maybe it’s true, maybe it’s not. For example, when we consider the atonement of Christ, we know some verses seem to indicate that Christ *only* died for His sheep; and yet other verses say Christ died for *every-*



*one*. Which is right? Can they be reconciled? Maybe they are both wrong? What are we to do?

Here are some examples of what we're talking about:

- “She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save *his people* from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21)
- “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life *for the sheep*.” (John 10:11)
- “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life *for the sheep*. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be *one flock*, one shepherd.” (John 10:14-16).
- “But you do not believe because *you are not among my sheep*. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” (John 10:26-27)
- “Who gave himself for *us* to redeem *us* from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.” (Titus 2:14)
- “For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of *all people*, especially of *those who believe*.” (1 Timothy 4:10)

As is clear, there are verses that must be reconciled and while they are sometimes viewed as paradoxical and mysterious, *they are not*. The Word of God is not divided, nor does it contradict itself. Therefore, we have to draw some other conclusions to resolve this problem.

### Limited Atonement

It is clear from some of the passages above that there are those that are saved, and it is implied that there are those who are not. There are sheep, and there are goats. Some people belong to Christ, and other people do not belong to Christ. Man is either “in Adam”, and thus condemned in sin, or he is in Christ, saved by God’s grace alone; *there is no neutrality*.

“When we correctly understand *total depravity*, we conclude that man cannot save himself.”

Because the Bible teaches the doctrines of grace, each of them depends on the other. When we correctly understand *total depravity*, we conclude that man cannot save himself. Before regeneration, sinful man is *totally* corrupt *inside and out*. He’s dead.

Dead people do not wake themselves up to receive a gift no matter how ‘free’ it is! The extent of our depravity is so deep and far-reaching that like Lazarus, we can only be made alive by a word from Christ.

If it is true (and it is!) that we are *completely dead and impotent* to save ourselves, then we must conclude that only by God’s *unconditional election* can a man be saved. Man balks at the idea that God wouldn’t choose everyone, when in reality, the real shock is that God would dare save at all! Since we are dead, we must be pulled from the bottom of the ocean. We’re not floating in the water reaching up to God; no, we’re dead at the bottom.

### The Design of the Atonement

All men *universally* are dead in sin (Rom. 3:23). God doesn’t elect universally. The Bible teaches that many will inhabit hell forever (Matthew 7:13). So why would the atonement be *universal*? Can we genuinely say that Christ died for all men *in the same way*? Paul says that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, but not all men are saved, which means we are either to become universalists and *everyone* goes to heaven *no matter what*, or we conclude that Christ can be the Savior of the entire world in the sense that *He is sufficiently able to save, but does not*. This is now a question of provision and power, or sufficiency and efficiency.

Christ’s Atonement is *sufficient* to save all men, but because all men are clearly not saved, it’s *efficiency* is different, depending on who it is we are talking about. John Owen once drafted and resolved the proposition in question. God’s wrath was poured out on Christ on the cross, which means that Christ’s propitiatory sacrifice was for: 1) All the sins of all men; 2) All the sins of some men; or 3) Some of the sins of all men. If number three is true, then only some sins are atoned for, and none can be saved, and Christ’s sacrifice was powerless. If number two is true, Christ died for the elect from all over the world, while others perish in their sins—and this is the Biblical position. If the first proposition is true, then why is it that not all men are free from the punishment that is due to them for their sin? The only logical answer is to say that Christ died for all their sins, but *the sin of unbelief*. Now we have to decide if unbelief is a sin (clearly it is). This is the doctrine of limited atonement.

Reformed Theology doesn’t limit the atonement; *Arminianism* does. “Ah, but Christ died for everyone!” states the Arminian. To which I would reply, “Yes, provisionally, but the atonement isn’t just a provision, *it is the power of salvation*.” We’re not talking about hypothetical circumstances; we’re describing the very means of God in history to bring men to salvation. Either Christ’s death *actually* saves, or it does not. It isn’t a mere event in human history that God put forth in hopes to save some. No, the atonement of Christ actually *does something*.

This is why we must keep in mind the rest of the doctrines of grace. We’re *totally depraved*, which means only God can *unconditionally elect* His people and resurrect their dead hearts through the *irresistible grace* of the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit

works on the heart, it takes it from stone to flesh, from death to life, sin to righteousness. That is a gift from God! The fact that a man can repent and believe is only because God gives it.

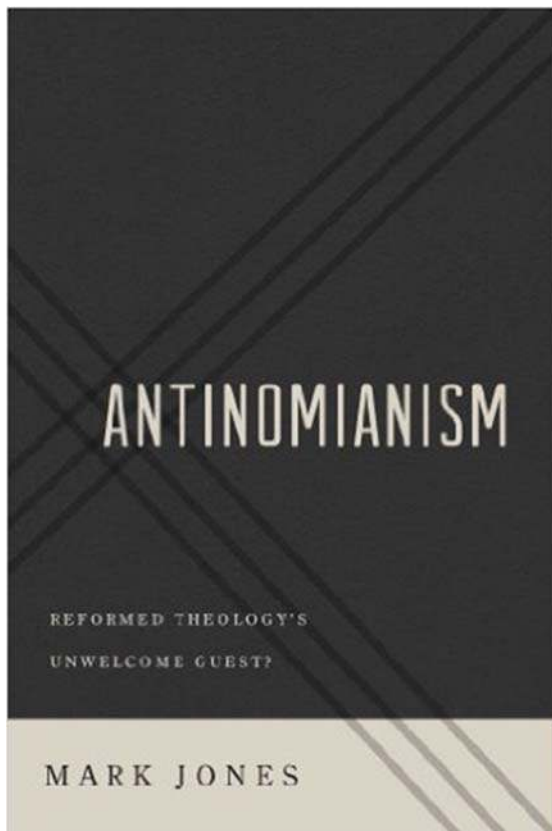
The atonement of Christ is limited by Arminians because the atonement becomes a mere possibility. But in the Reformed tradition, the atonement *saves completely*. A man is regenerated by the Spirit, given repentance and faith (John 3:27; Acts 11:18), and walks in the will of God unto the end (perseverance of the saints)—all because God says *that's how it should be*.

**From start to finish, God the Father elects His people, Christ dies for His people, and the Spirit regenerates His people.** Not all are regenerate; not all are elect; and not all are atoned for *in the same way*. And all of this removes boasting. This is for God's glory, and God's glory *alone*. Let us remember Ephesians 1:3-6, which states, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ [his atonement!], according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in"

## A Book Review:

### ***Antinomianism: Reformed Theology's Unwelcomed Guest***

By Michael Boling



**The debate over the relationship between law and gospel has been waged since the time of the Christ,** with some affirming justification by the grace of God which provides the believer freedom from the law, and with others declaring a more legalistic approach suggesting that salvation includes a heavy dose of law keeping. Somewhere in the middle of those two extremes lies the biblical approach to justification and sanctification. In his book, [\*Antinomianism: Reformed Theology's Unwelcomed Guest\*](#), Mark Jones makes the effort to explore this topic using the 17<sup>th</sup> century debate that waged on this very topic as the backdrop for his discussion.

While the word *antinomianism* means “against God’s law”, one would be hard-pressed to find a theologian or pastor, at least one *worthy* of such a calling, presenting the idea that the believer is no longer tied to any sense of obedience or structure by which obedience can be determined (i.e. the law). Jones rightly notes that defining the term *antinomianism* and identifying those who follow the tenets of that construct is difficult,

unless this approach is examined as “a system of thought...carefully understood in its historical context, rather than simply according to its etymology.”

In the first chapter, Jones explains in great detail the historical background of antinomianism, its adherents, as well as those who spoke and wrote against this view. He acknowledges that the first antinomians were Adam and Eve, with their misunderstanding of God's grace and His commands to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. With that said, Jones spends most of his efforts looking at this issue as it existed at the time of the Puritans, in particular in England and New England. While some may view this as an unnecessary historical interlude, understanding the viewpoints of those both for and against antinomianism, to include how theological constructs such as justification and sanctification were seen by the Puritan divines, as well as those of the antinomian persuasion is vital to grasping how this issue developed over time.

**Building on that historical foundation, Jones then makes the salient comment that “discussions and writings on holiness often lack a strong Christological basis**

and center”, further noting “without a robust affirmation of the holiness of Christ, and all that means, calls to holiness, however stirring they may be will inevitably devolve into a form of man-centered pietism.” The proper balance between gospel and law, grace and obedience is rooted in a correct understanding of the person and work of Christ. Those without an adequately developed Christology often center their theology far too much on the grace extended to the cross, while ignoring the life Christ lived on our behalf, a life that also provides the believer the standard for holiness. This includes some level of human responsibility for obedience to God's commands, which is something those of the antinomian persuasion vehemently argue against. As Jones notes, the antinomian often believes there is “no longer a continuing role for God's moral law in the life of the believer.”

“The proper balance between gospel and law, grace and obedience is rooted in a correct understanding of the person and work of Christ.”

**Of particular note in recent conversations is the role of the law in the life of the believer.**

Jones aptly comments, “The role of the law in the life of the Christian has historically been one of the most difficult and contentious points in divinity.” Addressing many of the concerns that have existed over the years on this issue, Jones ably works through the various positions on the role of the law demonstrating the tension that exists among theologians on this important issue. This concern was rampant during the 17th century, and Jones spends a good deal of time looking at the opposing positions. He speculates that when it comes to trying to define the position of the antinomian camp, “A close reading of antinomian writings from the seventeenth century shows that they were not always clear. Ambiguity was a hallmark of their utterances on the law, and they lacked the sophistication found in the writings of men like Sibbes, Goodwin, and Owen.” While the antinomians often looked for the means by which to diminish the importance of the law, the Westminster Confession of



Faith and the sermons and writings of the Puritan divines viewed obedience to the law as a continued importance for the believer. Jones states, “Because of the greater indicatives of the new covenant, the imperatives are not relaxed, but in fact are strengthened.” He is also careful to note continually that any level of obedience is through the work of the Holy Spirit, and the process of progressive sanctification, thus avoiding any implication that somehow the believer can accomplish good works on their own.

**Another valuable argument in this timely book is that of the issue of rewards**—a discussion sorely missing from the sermon series of most pastors today, likely due to the association of rewards with the supposed naughty term of “law”. Jones engages some hefty theological terminology in this chapter, such as the word *impetration*, a term related to Christ’s mediatorial work. The issue, as Jones sees it, with the antinomian approach is that it “essentially blurred the distinction between impetration and application. They were so concerned to maintain the graciousness of salvation that they not only denied that there were no conditions for salvation, but also suggested that even in the application of salvation man does not “act.”” While some may balk at the idea of any condition for salvation, Jones is careful to define that phrase even further noting, “The Reformed held firmly to the view that the elect have no role in impetrating their salvation. That hone belongs exclusively to Christ. But in the application of salvation, man plays a role...”, meaning there is the need for the bride to be obedient, through the work of the Holy Spirit, bringing her to a place of maturity in the faith.

With books on this subject matter, it is quite easy for the author to slip into an accusatory and polemic writing style, along the way lambasting those who take the opposing position. Jones thankfully avoids such an approach, instead choosing to work through the antinomian position, and the Reformed position, in great detail and with much grace, observing the complexity of the issue being discussed. Jones leaves the polemics at the door, instead approaching this subject matter with theological precision, and with a focus on demonstrating the apparent pitfalls of the imbalance found in the antinomian position regarding obedience and the place of God’s law.

**I highly recommend this book for the more seasoned believer and especially for pastors and Seminary students.** Holiness is a vital part of the Christian walk and understanding the proper balance between the indicative and the imperative, two intimately related aspects of justification and sanctification. Mark Jones outlines for the reader the proper approach to the issue of law and gospel, and this is a [book](#) that will serve as a needed corrective for the problematic extremes of too much grace and too much law

## **The Work of the Holy Spirit in Salvation: A Brief Overview of the Spirit's Role in the Doctrines of Grace**

By Craig Hurst

**When it comes to the place of the Holy Spirit within the doctrines of grace,** or, as it is

commonly called, the five points of Calvinism, He is usually relegated solely to irresistible grace. That is, His primary work is usually thought of only as drawing the unsaved sinner to Christ in such a way that they cannot, and do not want to, resist this working in their lives. While the role of the Holy Spirit in irresistible grace is clear, it needs to be equally clear that the working of the Holy Spirit extends throughout *all* of the doctrines of grace and not merely one of them. The Spirit is at work,

whether actively at the forefront or in the background, at every stage of the salvation process for the believer from their conviction of sin to their perseverance in salvation until the day they leave this mortal life.



### ***The Role of the Holy Spirit in Total Depravity***

At the outset, it may not be readily clear as to the role of the Holy Spirit in regards to total depravity. It is man who is depraved and lost, not the Holy Spirit. It is man who is in need of salvation, not the Holy Spirit. What does the Holy Spirit have to do with this first point?

The Holy Spirit convicts man in his state of corruption. In John 16:4-15, John discusses the various roles of Spirit will play when He comes once Jesus ascends to Heaven after His resurrection. Beginning in verse eight he says the following about the future role of the Spirit:

*And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.*

That mankind is lost and dead in sin before he is saved is clear according to the biblical record. Ephesians 2:1 says, “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked.” Man was born a sinner and cannot save himself. It further seems clear from Romans 2 that man knows he is a sinner. He knows that there is something wrong with him, especially when he cannot even keep his own standard of self-proclaimed righteousness. We are all born sinners as we all know ourselves to be so.

So, how is it that man knows he is a sinner? According to John 16, one of the ways in which man discerns he is a sinner is through the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. Yes, our God-given consciences can convict us of this truth as well but so does the Spirit of God. Our conscience convicts us enough to condemn us, but this does not lead to salvation. When the Holy Spirit gets involved in convicting man of his sin, then begins the steps of leading the sinner to salvation in Christ. While man got himself into the sinful situation he finds himself in, it is the work of the Holy Spirit who will get him out, and it begins with convicting him of that sin. It is the conviction of sin by the Spirit that begins the salvation of a sinner.

### ***The Role of the Holy Spirit in Unconditional Election***

Within the doctrine of unconditional election God the Father is the primary acting agent in the Godhead. Ephesians 1:3-6 teaches that it is the Father who has chosen “us in him before the foundation of the world,” that He has done so “in love” and “to the praise of his glorious grace.” The Father accomplishes this through the work of the Son, Jesus Christ, in whom “we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses.”

This passage in Ephesians is one of the classic passages on the Trinity and salvation. The Father plans and the Son accomplishes that plan. But what about the Spirit? In regards to unconditional election, the Holy Spirit is the agent within the

Godhead who *applies* the work of the Son to the life of the Elect and adopts them as sons or daughters of God. Ephesians 1:13-14 states:

*In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promise of the Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*

If the Spirit of God did not seal us with Himself then the work of the Son would not stick in our lives and the plan of the Father would have failed. This is how the persons of the Godhead work together in bringing about our salvation. Without all of them, it would not happen. The Son accomplishes the plan of the Father, and the Holy Spirit applies that work to the life of the believer. Without the application of the Holy Spirit, the accomplishment of the Son would have stopped at the resurrection and so would have the plan of the Father.

It is because of the application, by the Holy Spirit, of the work on the Son in the life of the believer that the Son's work goes beyond the resurrection, and that of the plan of the Father as well. Ephesians 1 makes it clear that the Godhead planned redemption "before the foundation of the world." The Holy Spirit willingly pledged His cooperation with the plan of the Father to apply the work of the Son on the cross and in the resurrection to the lives of those whom the Father elected to salvation.

### ***The Work of the Holy Spirit in Limited Atonement***

Perhaps the hardest place to see the work of the Spirit in the doctrines of grace is in the atonement. The atonement was carried out by the Son according to the plan of the Father (Eph. 1). One might wonder how there is room for the Holy Spirit on the cross. Or is it at the cross that the Holy Spirit is fulfilling His role in relation to the atonement? In a similar way to how the Holy Spirit works in relation to the electing plan of the Father, so does the Spirit in relation to the atonement work of the Son. Just as the Spirit applies the electing plan of the Father in the life of the believer, so He does with the atonement work of the Son. As mentioned before, the Son accomplishes our salvation and the Holy Spirit applies it to the life of the believer. The relationship within the Godhead between the Son and Holy Spirit is clearly at work when it comes to the atonement.

Not only is the sealing work of the Spirit in Ephesians 1:13 speaking of the saving plan of the Father, it is also speaking to what the Son accomplished on the cross. The Holy Spirit takes residence in the life of the believer because of what the

Son has done for him/her on the cross. Just like if the Holy Spirit does not seal, then the plan of the Father has failed, so it is with the work of the Son. If the Holy Spirit does not seal us, then the work of the Son on the cross was in vain. The precious blood of Jesus Christ would have been spilled for naught.

On the cross the Son accomplished our redemption and, as He takes up residence in our lives, so the Holy Spirit applies the saving work of the Son's work on the cross to our lives. There is a chain of work between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is the work of the Spirit that brings the work of the Father and Son to reality in the life of the believer.

### ***The Work of the Holy Spirit in Irresistible Grace***

It is at this point that the irresistible work of the Holy Spirit within the doctrines of grace is most obvious. Irresistible grace is also referred to as the effectual calling of the Holy Spirit. Effectual calling teaches that the Holy Spirit supernaturally draws to salvation those whom the Father has chosen to salvation in the Son, in such a way that they do so willingly because they cannot resist it. Any initial resistance a person might have to the call of the Holy Spirit, through the gospel, is eventually overcome by the grace of God and the person makes a profession of faith in Christ as Lord and Savior.

In John 6:44, Jesus says, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him," and previously in verse 39 Jesus says, "And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day." If the Father has planned before creation who His elect sons and daughters will be then it stands to reason that He will put into place the necessary conditions for those people to become His children. Part of those conditions is the drawing power and work of the Holy Spirit.

It is through the Spirit that the Father draws those whom He has elected for salvation to Himself. The grace of God in salvation is so compelling that when the Spirit begins His drawing work on a person to salvation, that person will eventually give themselves over to it willingly. This does not mean that a person will never resist the drawing work of the Holy Spirit, but that they will eventually cease resisting.

### ***The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Perseverance of the Saints***

Perhaps the second most obvious place in the doctrines of grace that the Holy Spirit is at work is in the perseverance of the saints. This doctrine teaches that no matter the doubts or sin in a believer's life, they will persevere in their faith in Christ for salvation until their death and will enjoy God forever in Heaven. They cannot lose the salvation to



which they have been elected to by the Father, which has been accomplished for them by the Son, because of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Once again we return to Ephesians 1 for guidance on how the Spirit ensures the completion of our salvation. We are told that we are “sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it.” It could not be any clearer than that. It is because of the sealing work of the Spirit that our salvation is guaranteed.

Notice that there are two aspects to our salvation mentioned in those verses: *our present salvation* and *our future salvation*. We are saved *now* in that we are saved from the *power of sin* in our lives as we live for Christ, and we will be saved in the *future* in that we will be saved from the *presence* of sin in our lives (both inside of us and around us). Though we are saved now we have yet to experience the fullness of our salvation until sin is removed from the world in the new creation.

It is the sealing work of the Spirit in the life of the believer which ensures that believers will not just experience the saving power of Christ in regards to the power of sin in our lives now, but that we will endure to the end so that we can experience the final phase of our salvation. This is the Day in which we will live in the new creation with the Father, Son, and Spirit without the presence of sin to hinder our relationship with God. The Spirit enables us to persevere through this life so that we can enjoy the presence of God for all of eternity in the new Heaven and Earth. The Holy Spirit gives the power to persevere through our salvation in this life so we can enjoy the fullness of salvation in the next.

### ***Final Thoughts***

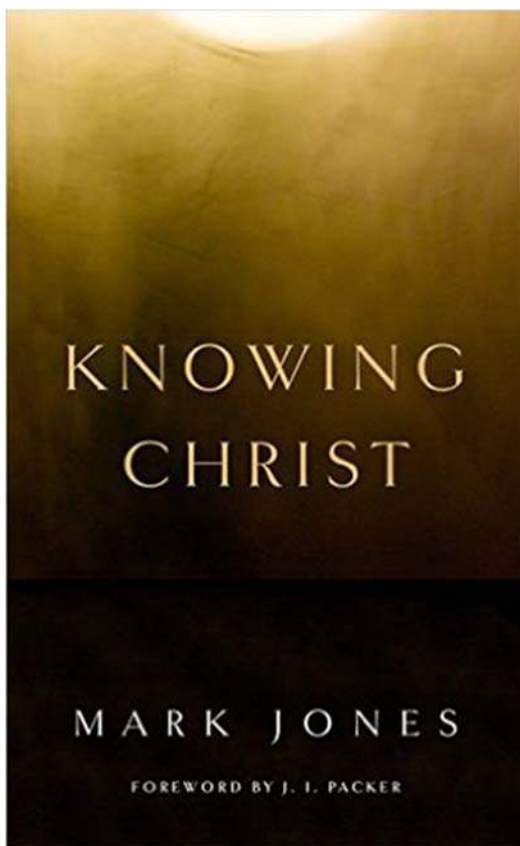
By now it ought to be clear that the Holy Spirit is not just at work in a part of our salvation, but in all of our salvation. He is not at work in just a part of the doctrines of grace but in all of them. Though He is the One whom the Father draws us to Himself through (irresistible grace), and the One who ensures we finish the race to the end (perseverance of the saints), He is also at work in much more than that.

The Holy Spirit works in every aspect of the doctrines of grace. From beginning to end, the Spirit is working in concert with the Father and Son to bring about the plan and work of redemption in the life of those whom the Father has chosen to be the beneficiaries of the saving work of the Son. Whether He is center stage or working in the background, the Holy Spirit has His fingerprints all over our salvation to the praise of God!

## A Book Review:

### *Knowing Christ*

By Dave Jenkins



**Few issues are as important as understanding the Christ-centered nature of the Scriptures. When we consider who Christ is**—what He came to do and accomplished in His death and resurrection, and what He continues to do as our Mediator, Advocate, Intercessor, and High Priest—truthfully our jaws should drop, and we should stand in awe of the grandness and awesomeness of Him. Often, as Christians, we can pledge allegiance to Christ and say all the right words. But truthfully, when was the last time our hearts were moved to tears at the thought of what Christ did for us on the Cross or what He continues to do for us? It's one thing to say we love the Bible and read it daily, but it's quite another to live in submission and obedience to the Word of God. Knowing Christ and being known by Him are perennial issues every person and generation must wrestle with. This is why I enjoyed the new book, [\*Knowing Christ\*](#), by Mark Jones.

**Jones explains the purpose of the book**, “Is to look at the person of Christ and give readers—particularly those in the church- a reason to love him more. We can only love him more by knowing him better- which takes us

beyond conceptual to relational knowledge. ‘To know’ in the Bible can very often mean to have a concern about something that involves the understanding of the mind, the movement of the will, and the application of the heart. ‘To know’ means ‘to know with particular interest’ or ‘to set one’s affections upon’. Let us then approach this study with wide-open hearts longing to know Chris who first loved us” (xv).

From this foundation the author explores Christ's declaration, dignity, covenant, incarnation, divinity, humanity, faith, emotions, growth, reading, prayers, sinlessness, temptations, humiliation, transfiguration, miracles, sayings, death, resurrection, exaltation, intercession, Christ's people, Christ's wrath, and the names and offices of Christ. This [book](#) follows in the footsteps of *Knowing God*, by J.I. Packer, a book that many consider one of the best Christian books of the 20th century. To make a sequel to such a great book requires a great deal of skill, knowledge, and ability. I read this book very carefully for that reason, not because I don't think Mark Jones isn't a good writer; I think he is. He certainly "knows his stuff", as they say. I read this book carefully because of my esteem of Packer's book and because Dr. Packer endorsed this book. Dr. Packer's endorsements as it's been noted by others are treasures in themselves, and to write a follow-up book to anything he has written should be considered one of a Christian writer's greatest honors.

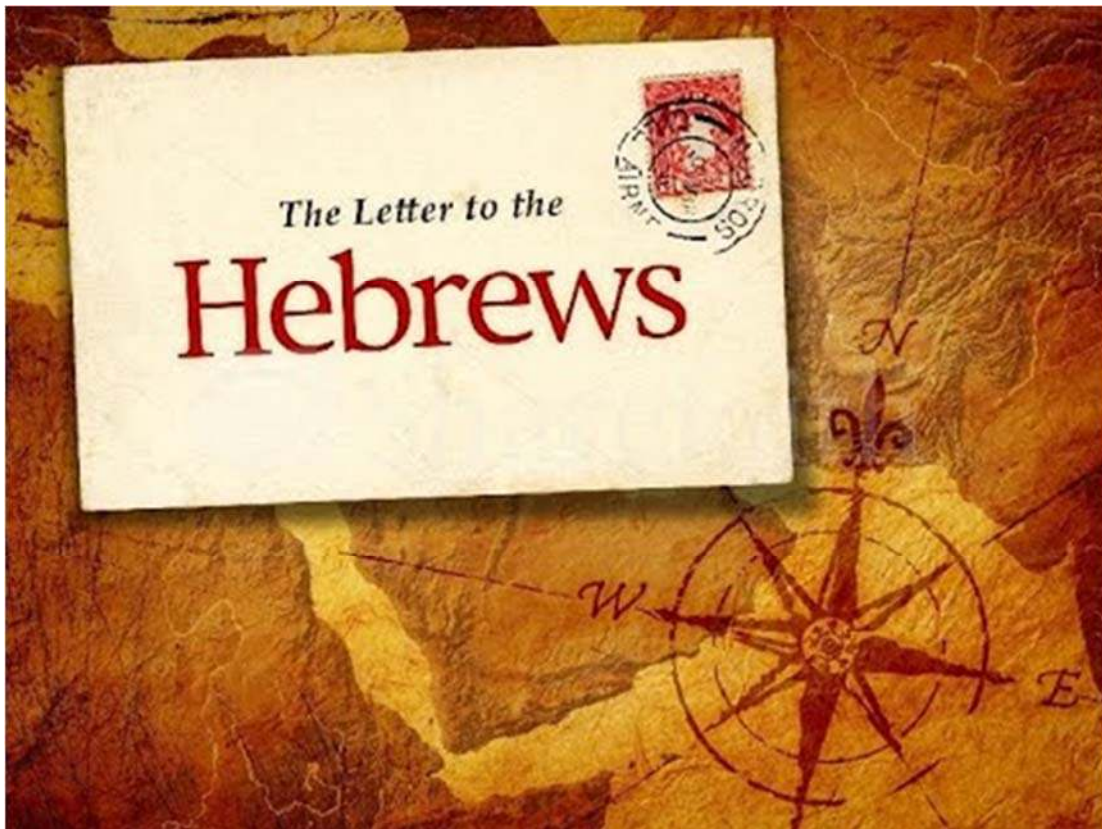
"*Knowing Christ* is a treasure trove of biblical teaching."

***Knowing Christ* is a worthy sequel to *Knowing God*. While one focuses on who God is and what He's like, a topic that many people fail to understand**—equally misunderstood in our culture is who is Christ and what He demands. As Mark opens the Scriptures, he helps his readers understand the doctrine of Christ—that is, not just some parts of the work of Christ, but the totality of that work—not in academic language but in the language of the people. Charles Spurgeon was famous for preaching the Word of God in the language of the people. Mark Jones, while a scholar, is also a pastor. Here in this book, he writes to help the lay person understand the doctrine of Christ.

*Knowing Christ* is a treasure trove of biblical teaching, Reformed Theology, and practical insight into the Doctrine of Christ. Whether you are a new or seasoned Christian, this book has something for you. I highly recommend this critical study and believe Christians will be helped to grow in their understanding of Christ for the purpose of growing in Him. Pick up this [book](#) and grow in the riches and majesty of Christ.

## **Assurance and Perseverance: An Examination of Hebrews 6:1-8**

By Dave Jenkins



**The controversy surrounding Hebrews 6:1-8 is many fold.** From those who believe that it teaches that the salvation of God's people is conditional, to those who believe it doesn't—over the history of the Church there has been a lot of various interpretations advanced. It is not in the scope of this article to address all of those interpretations, nor even to address all the various nuances and qualifications that readers may want. Rather, the scope of this article is to look briefly at Hebrews

6:1-8 and some of the issues it raises by looking at the implications the text raises for our Christian life and ministries today.

The controversy surrounding Hebrews 6:1-8 seems to stem from the meaning of several keywords such as “instruction about washings” (vs.2), “enlightened” (vs.4), “fallen away” (vs.6), and “restore again to repentance” (vs.6). From here on out, I will focus on explaining the meaning of these keywords in not only their proper context, but how they fit in the framework of the Book of Hebrews as a whole. After explaining the keywords in their context, I will then propose a solution to the difficulty of this passage. Hebrews 6:1-8 meets the people of God at their greatest need with the Gospel, by wooing His people to draw not away from but deeper into the Gospel for greater assurance and confidence in their salvation.

### **“Instruction about Washings” (vs.2)**

F.F. Bruce teaches that this phrase “instruction about washings” is not about Christian baptism. He notes that the word translated washings is in the plural in the Greek (*baptismoî*), the Greek noun employed in the New Testament for Christian baptism, but *baptismos*, which in its two indubitable New Testament occurrences refers to Jewish ceremonial washings. Dr. Guthrie agrees with F.F. Bruce noting the same that the plural baptisms in the Greek makes the interpretation problematic regarding “washings” being about Christian baptism. Dr. O’Brien agrees with Dr. Guthrie and F.F. Bruce that “instructions about washings” is not a reference to Christian baptism, but about various Jewish practices of washing. In the Old Testament Levitical system, there were many ceremonial cleansings, which were outward signs of heart cleansing (Ex. 30:18-21; Lev. 16:4, 24, 26, 28; Mark 7:4, 8). The New Covenant calls for an inner washing (Titus 3:5) that regenerates the soul.

### **“Enlightened” (vs.4)**

F.F. Bruce explains that this phrase “enlightened” means the light of the gospel has broken in upon these people’s darkness, and life can never be the same again; to give up the gospel would be to sin against the light, the one sin, which by its very nature is incurable. Dr. Guthrie agrees with this interpretation but adds to the discussion by explaining that those who were “enlightened” refers to their initial exposure to the gospel or early instruction in Christian doctrine. Dr. O’Brien concurs with F.F. Bruce and Dr. Guthrie but expands on what both men have written noting that



“enlightened” means that one may enjoy something of God’s grace at the beginning without the completing grace of perseverance. Being enlightened describes the initial entrance into Christian community through explanation of the Christian faith (Heb. 10:32).

### “Fallen Away” (vs.6)

As noted by F.F. Bruce, the writer of Hebrews as did the Old Testament law explained the difference between inadvertent and willful sin. The context here shows that the willful sin, which he has in mind is deliberate apostasy. Dr. Guthrie agrees, and adds to F.F. Bruce’s point that the verb “fallen away” (*parapito*) can mean simply to “go astray,” but the harshness of the descriptions that follow (“crucifying the Son of God” and “subjecting him to public disgrace”) demand that it be understood in terms so serious as that of rejecting Christ.” Dr. O’Brien agrees with both Dr. Guthrie and F.F. Bruce, but explains that the readers of Hebrew ought not to forget the final end of the apostate, and unless they are careful, apostasy is where their culpable negligence (5:11; 6:12) could lead).

The Greek “fallen away” occurs only here in the New Testament. In the Septuagint (LXX), it was used to translate terms for severe unfaithfulness and apostasy (Ezek. 14:13; 18:24; 20:27). It is equivalent to the apostasy in Hebrews 3:12. The seriousness of this unfaithfulness is seen in the severe description of rejection within this verse: they re-crucify Christ and treat Him contemptuously (10:29). Those who sinned against Christ in such a way had to hope for restoration or forgiveness (2:2-3; 10:26-27; 12:25). The reason is that they had rejected Him with full knowledge and conscious experience (6:5-6). With full revelation they denied the truth, concluding the opposite of the truth about Christ, and thus they had no hope of being saved. They can never have more knowledge than they had when they rejected it. They have concluded that Jesus should have been crucified, and they stand with His enemies. There is no possibility of these verses referring to losing salvation. Many Scripture passages make it clear that salvation is eternal (John 10:27-29; Rom. 8:35, 38, 39; Phil. 1:6; 1 Peter 1:4-5). Those who want this verse to mean that believers can lose salvation will have to admit it would then also say that one could never get it back again.

**The author of Hebrews speaks of falling away, not falling into sin.** For example, Judas fell away from Jesus and never returned to him; Peter fell into sin, but soon afterward saw the resurrected Jesus. The two concepts, apostasy and backsliding, must never be confused. In Hebrews 6:6, the author refers to apostasy; he has in mind the person who deliberately and completely abandons the Christian faith. John Owen notes that falling away must consist of all the essential principles and doctrines of Christianity.

Apostasy does not take place suddenly and unexpectedly. Rather it is part of a gradual process, a decline that leads from unbelief to disobedience to apostasy. And

when the falling away from the faith happens, it leads to hardening of the heart and the impossibility of repentance. The author using the example of the Israelites has shown the process that results in apostasy (3:18; 4:6, 11). If the Israelites in the days of Moses deliberately disobeyed the law of God and “received its just punishment” (2:2; 10:28), “how much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot” (10:29). The author chides them for being slow to learn (5:11), lazy (6:12), and feeble (12:12). Continually he exhorts them to strengthen their faith (4:2; 10:22-23; 12:2). If their faith continues to weaken, they will fall pretty to unbelief that leads to disobedience and apostasy.

### **“Restore Again to Repentance” (vs.6)**

Dr. Bruce notes that those who repudiate the salvation procured by Christ will find none anywhere else. Dr. Guthrie agrees with F.F. Bruce but adds to his discussion by stating that the apostate in effect has turned his or her back on the only means available for forgiveness before God. Dr. O’Brien agrees with this explanation and adds to the discussion by pointing out that Hebrews is making the point that it is impossible to restore someone to repentance.

In the preceding verses (5:11-6:3) and the following verses (6:9-12), the writer uses the first and second personal plural pronouns “we” and “you”, but in verses 6:4-6 the third personal plural pronouns “those” and “they” occur. Second, the subject of the verb to be brought back is missing. The writer does not reveal the identity of the implied agent. Is he saying here that God does not permit (6:3) a second repentance? Or does he mean that the person who has fallen away from the living God cannot be restored to repentance because of the sinner’s hardened heart? Although the writer does not provide the answer, both questions ought to receive an affirmative response.

The use of the pronoun “we” in the broader context of Hebrews 6:4-6 demonstrates that God never fails the believer who in faith trusts in Him. God makes “the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised” (6:17), and He does so by swearing an oath. The heirs of the promise are the author and the readers of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

**Is the Christian Church unable to bring a hardened sinner back to the grace of God?** The writer of Hebrews does not provide an answer in the context of the passage. In another connection, however, he repeats the general sentiment of Hebrews 6:4-6 and writes: “If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left” (Hebrews 10:26). The author does not say anything about restoring a hardened sinner; what he refers to is the impossibility of removing sin because the person sins deliberately. The word delib-

“The heirs of the promise are the author and the readers of the Epistle to the Hebrews.”

erately receives all the emphasis in the original Greek because it stands first in the sentence. If a person who is familiar with “the elementary teaching about Christ” sins deliberately, restoration by way of repentance is an impossibility.

**The writer of the epistle gives two reasons for this: “to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again” and they are “subjecting him to public disgrace.”** The author here is using a metaphor;

those who have fallen away do not literally crucify the Son of God and put him to open shame. Note that the writer uses not the personal name Jesus or the official name Christ, but rather the appellation Son of God to express on the one hand the divine exaltation of the Son and, on the other hand, the utter depravity of the sinner who has turned away from, as well as against, the Son of God.

“As the Jews wanted Jesus removed from this earth and thus lifted Him up from the ground on a cross, so the apostate denies Jesus a place, banishes Him from this earth, and metaphorically crucifies the Son of God again.”

The one who has fallen away declares that Jesus ought to be eliminated. As the Jews wanted Jesus removed from this earth and thus lifted Him up from the ground on a cross, so the apostate denies Jesus a place, banishes Him from this earth, and metaphorically crucifies the Son of God again. Thus, he treats Jesus with continuous contempt and derision and knowingly commits the sin for which, says

the author of the epistle, there is no repentance (Hebrews 6:6) and no sacrifice (Hebrews 10:26). The sinner can expect God’s judgment that will come to him as a “raging fire that will consume the enemies of God” (Hebrews 10:27).

### **Solutions to the Difficulty of Hebrews 6:1-8**

The picture given in Hebrews 6:1-8 is a somber one. It depicts professing believers, likely church members, who are not saved but fall away into a hopeless state. Reformed theology has traditionally and wisely shunned the use of the term “eternal security”, but has instead emphasized the “perseverance of the saints”, which is the emphasis of the writer of Hebrews. Iain Murray notes the distinction by telling of a Calvinist who was surprised to find one of Wesley’s preachers in agreement with this teaching. The Calvinist stated that he did not think they taught the perseverance of the saints. The Wesleyan replied, “O Sir, you have been misinformed; it is the perseverance of sinners we doubt.” He was right—it is the saints who persevere those who trust and walk with God are safe and secure.

**Where then do believers look for assurance?** Believers can and should look to the unchanging character of God and the certainty of His promises. Believers can and should look to the once-for-all work of Jesus Christ, which is sufficient for all one needs. Believers should not look to themselves, to the strength of their faith, to the protection of various spiritual disciplines or methodologies, however useful they may be. It is not oneself or any regiment that depends on human strength that assures the believ-

ers salvation, but rather God, who said, “I will never leave you or forsake you.” So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear.” That is the writer’s conclusion in Hebrews 13:5-6. In assurance, as in all else, “Salvation belongs to the Lord” (Jonah 2:9).

Assurance is something that comes from the knowledge of God and His promises, and is thus the result of the exercise of faith. The same is true of security; it is through faith alone that believers are secure. Security comes from trusting in Jesus Christ, from persevering to the end in the power of the Lord. Philippians 3:12, “I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me” (NIV).

**Therefore, like a soldier in war, believers should not stand still but take up the offensive.** Believers are called to press onward in faith, which is the way of perseverance and the route to hope and joy in the Lord. If believers stumble or fall, they can call out to the Lord who is rich in mercy; He will lift them up. This is the best way to give thanks to God for His great gift of salvation; the way to honor Him before the eyes of this world and to make one’s life worthwhile as the believer bears fruit—real fruit that will last forever and be a blessing to many.

### A Final Thought...

Hebrews 6:1-8 meets the people of God at their greatest need with the gospel by wooing His people to draw not away from, but deeper into the gospel for greater assurance and confidence in their salvation. Perseverance of the saints does not mean that everyone who claims to have received Christ as his Savior, participates in Christian work, and manifest various gifts is “eternally secure” (Matt. 7:1-23). The church includes hypocrites who demonstrate the external signs of persevering saints but lacks the marks of true Christians. Those marks, according to the Belgic Confession, are: 1) receiving Christ by faith as the only Savior, 2) avoiding sin, 3) following after righteousness, 4) loving the true God and one’s neighbor, 5) not turning aside to the right or left, 6) crucifying the flesh with the works thereof, 7) fighting against infirmities, and 8) continually taking refuge in the passion and obedience of Christ (Art. 29). The church also includes people like Demas, who seem to be godly but whose departure from the truth and the church reveal that they never really were in saving union with Christ (2 Tim. 4:10; Heb. 6:4-6).

Hebrews 6:4-6 warns believers not to fall away, but does not affirm the apostasy of saints; rather, it urges believers to persevere in faithfulness to God and His revelation of the New Covenant in Jesus Christ. The Lord God uses solemn admonitions to keep His people from backsliding and away from a host of dangers. The Reformed doctrine of perseverance is that a regenerate soul will persevere through the trials of life and continue to believe and repent. He/she will slip and fall, develop bad habits, wrestle with doubt, but through it all, he/she will keep on going even as he/she began. All believers slip and fall into sin, but no true believer stays down. Just as God gave him faith and repentance unto initial conversion, so He supplies him with faith and repentance all along the way to heaven (Canons of Dort, Head V, Art. 7).

**Believers who have come to Christ by grace remain wedded to Christ,** knowing they are in Him by grace. Perseverance and Assurance are the two sides of grace. The believer cannot persevere in grace without growing in assurance, and they cannot grow in assurance of faith without perseverance.

The doctrine of perseverance is not just a pretty ribbon that completes the package of Calvinist soteriology. Perseverance involves intense Christian watchfulness and discipleship. It requires pilgrim warfare in a world that aims to distract the mind and rip open the heart. It embraces major issues of life and death, including the believer's eternal security in glory. Frances Roberts says, "Perseverance is the rope that ties the soul to the doorpost of heaven." John Blanchard concludes: "Glory for the Christian is more certain than the grave. God has never torn up a Christian's birth certificate. It is possible to fall in grace, but not to fall from grace. The Christian can be as certain of arriving in Heaven as he is that Christ has already ascended there."

Because the believer's perseverance depends on the One, who does the work of salvation, namely, the triune God, every believer is a jewel of Christ and can never be lost. Malachi 3:17 states, "They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him." Thomas Brooks adds, "Earthly jewels sometimes get separated from their own, Christ's jewels, never. Earthly jewels are sometimes lost, Christ's jewels never. Earthly jewels are sometimes stolen, Christ's jewels, never!" "In the final analysis, the hope of true believers resides not in our feeble hold of God but in his powerful grasp of us," Bruce Demarest writes. "The stability and constancy of our spiritual lives rests not in our human powers but in God's eternal purpose and infinite resources." God's purposes, God's promises, God's powers, God's provision, God's protection—what comfort that gives.

**Perseverance is ultimately the result of the work of the Spirit in believer's hearts.** The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, coming down to believers from the Reformation must be preserved at all costs. Believers must neither abandon it nor compromise with those who wish to do so. Perseverance opens the way for assurance. Rooted in God's grace, objective perseverance makes possible subjective assurance, which is rooted in the believer's conscience. If a Christian does not believe in the perseverance of the saints, he/she cannot be sure he/she is going to Heaven. He/she may know he/she is in a state of grace, but he/she has no way of knowing whether he/she will continue in that state. Assurance is wedded to the doctrine of perseverance.

Perseverance increases assurance. Those who persist in works that spring from faith will attain high levels of assurance, which is why believers must persevere to the end in faith, holiness, and obedience. To deny the necessity of perseverance is to deny the clear Scripture teaching on the subject (Matt. 7:13-14; Luke 18:15; John 8:31-32; 15:6; Rom. 6:22; 8:22-23; 1 Cor. 15:1-1; Col. 1:21-23; 2 Tim. 2:11; Heb. 2:1,3; 3:13-14; 12:14). Such a denial will weaken the resolve of the believer to run the Christian race, which, in turn, will open him/her to the chastening hand of his Father (Heb. 12:1-13). Perseverance encourages the believer to live in hope. As believers persevere, they become in-



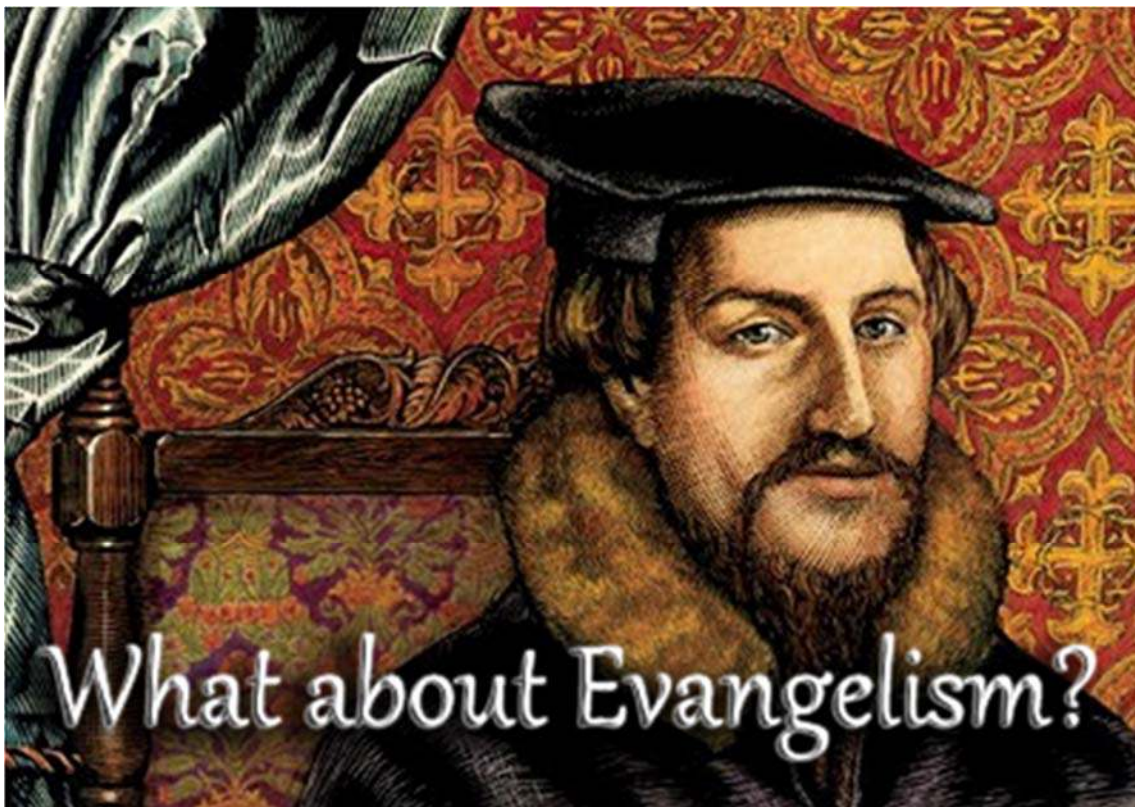
creasingly confidence of victory in Christ and their future with Him in glory (Romans 5:1-11).

**References:**

- F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Rev. Ed. NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 141.  
George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews*. NIVAC (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1998), 205.  
F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Rev. Ed. NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 148.  
F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Rev. Ed. NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 148.  
George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews*. NIVAC (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1998), 218.  
Peter. T. O'Brien, *The Letter To The Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2010), 220.  
F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Rev. Ed. NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 149.  
George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews*. NIVAC (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1998), 219.  
Peter. T. O'Brien, *The Letter To The Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2010), 225.  
John Owen, *An Exposition of Hebrews*, 7 Vols. (Evansville, Ind.: Sovereign Grace, 1960), vol. 5, p. 86.  
F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Rev. Ed. NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 149.  
George H. Guthrie, *Hebrews*. NIVAC (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1998), 220.  
Peter. T. O'Brien, *The Letter To The Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2010), 220.

## Evangelism, Missions, and Calvin

By Wei Feng Ho



**The name *John Calvin* is a controversial one that evokes a broad range of reactions from different people around the world.** To some, he is the tireless, larger-than-life, second-generation French reformer who changed the world forever with his Reformation ministry in Geneva. To others, he is the ruthless dictator of Geneva responsible for the deaths of men like Michael Servetus. Even though he was not the first to teach and write about it, Calvin will always be associated with the doctrine of predestination, and many argue this meant Calvin didn't care at all about evangelism and missions work.

One scholar in his book on Calvin's teaching, said, "Certainly he [Calvin] displayed no trace of missionary enthusiasm." This may not just be a critique of only Calvin but other Reformers that shared his theological position. American missiologist Ralph Winter once said of the Reformers, "[they] did not even talk of mission outreach." This sentiment against predestination is still around today like scholar Philip Hughes noticed when he said, "We are all familiar with the scornful rationalization that facetiously asserts that his horrible doctrine of divine election makes nonsense of all missionary and evangelistic activity." However, Calvin (the one "Calvinism" is named after) is understandably targeted in this way since he is one of the important historical proponents of the Reformed view on predestination.

But is this a fair critique of Calvin's teaching and overall ministry? Did Calvin not display any trace of missionary enthusiasm? It is this author's view, as well as many

"Contrary to those who believe Calvin's doctrine of predestination and election would make evangelism nonsensical and useless, Calvin's writing doesn't show this supposed contradiction or weakness."

others, that if one were to look fairly at the work and results of Calvin's ministry, that is an entirely inaccurate critique of Calvin. Calvin's ministry not only changed Geneva, but was also led to several other European countries (and even Brazil!) receiving pastors and missionaries that Calvin trained, taught, and sent out. This will be argued for in first looking at what Calvin taught about evangelism and missions and then looking at the

impact Calvin directly had on global missions. It will be clear that not only did Calvin have some "missionary enthusiasm" and care about "missions outreach", but he was responsible for an enormous wave of missionary movement in his time!

### Calvin's Teaching on Evangelism and Missions

The amount of published works produced by Calvin is extraordinary. While he is usually most well-known for his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin published theological treatises, several commentaries, as well as his sermons on particular books of the Bible. He also wrote copious amounts of letters to all kinds of people as part of his work. Theologian B.B. Warfield once called Calvin, "the great letter-writer of the Reformation age." A brief study of Calvin's corpus of published work shows that Calvin certainly had a lot to say about the works of evangelism and missions.

Contrary to those who believe Calvin's doctrine of predestination and election would make evangelism nonsensical and useless, Calvin's writing doesn't show this supposed contradiction or weakness. Calvin firmly taught that believers are to obey God's command to share the gospel to all people so that some might believe and be saved. To know those whom God has predestined is not something for us to know, we are to obey God in His command to evangelize and trust that in the end, He will save those whom He has chosen. He wrote this in his treatise on predestination, "Since we do not know who belongs to the number of the predestined and who does not, it befits us so to feel as to wish that all be saved. So it will come about that, whoever we come

across, we shall study to make him a sharer of peace...even severe rebuke will be administered like medicine, lest they should perish or cause others to perish. But it will be for God to make it effective in those whom He foreknew and predestined.” Calvin shows here that he was a pastor that wanted his people to have hearts for the lost and desire people to be saved through responding to the gospel and this required people to tell them the Good News.

**However, one might think, “Calvin is only speaking here of those we happen to come across, what about those in other cities and countries?”**

Did Calvin care not just for “Jerusalem” but also “Samaria and the ends of the world?” Calvin apparently loved the gospel and taught his people that the gospel treasure was not merely something to keep to oneself but to share with the whole world. In his concluding prayer on a sermon on 1 Timothy 2:3, he prayed, “Seeing that God has given us such a treasure and so inestimable a thing as His Word, we must employ ourselves as much as we can, that it may be kept safe and sound and not perish. And let every man be sure to lock it up securely in his own heart. But it is not enough to have an eye to his own salvation, but the knowledge of God must shine generally throughout the whole world.” Calvin is saying here that while we should guard the good deposit that we’ve been entrusted with, we should not be satisfied until gospel truth shines throughout the world. On the very next verse, in his commentary, Calvin wrote, “The Apostle simply means, that there is no people and no rank in the world that is excluded from salvation; because God wishes that the gospel should be proclaimed to all without exception. Now the preaching of the gospel gives life; and hence he justly concludes that God invites all equally to partake of salvation. But the present discourse relates to classes of men, and not to individual persons; for his sole object is, to include in this number princes and foreign nations. That God wishes the doctrine of salvation to be enjoyed by them as well as others, is evident from the passages already quoted, and from other passages of a similar nature...Now the duty arising: out of that love which we owe to our neighbor is, to be solicitous and to do our endeavor for the salvation of all whom God includes in his calling, and to testify this by godly prayers.” This is not Calvin advocating for Universalism but rather it is part of God’s plan for all sorts of people from around the world to know salvation be it kings or peasants and that the Church has a responsibility to tell the world of Christ’s saving power and pray for them.

He goes on to say in the next verse, that for people to disobey God in this way to “shut out any person from the hope of salvation.” Continuing in his sermon series on 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy, Calvin says, “God wants his grace to be known to all the world, and he has commanded that his gospel be preached to all creatures; we must (as much as we are able) seek the salvation of those who today are strangers to the faith, who seem to be completely deprived of God’s goodness.” But lest we think Calvin is balancing out his predestinationism with some “free-will theology”, it is clear that, for Calvin, the extension of Christ’s Kingdom happens chiefly by God’s power, not by human effort. In his commentary on Matthew 24:30, he says that this happens not “by human means but by heavenly power that the Lord will gather His Church.”

This was not just something he briefly mentioned during his teaching on the letter of 1 Timothy, Calvin taught on the importance and necessity of evangelism and missions from the Old Testament as well. While commenting on Micah 2:1–4, Calvin spoke of the unfinished Great Commission: “The kingdom of Christ was only begun in the world when God commanded the gospel to be everywhere proclaimed and...at this day its course is not yet complete.” Here Calvin again emphasizes the necessity of the gospel going forth anywhere in the world as God had commanded the disciples.

As important as this was for the Church, Calvin knew that often the saints are discouraged when the results from evangelism aren't readily seen. Here are his comments on Genesis 17:23: “So, at this day, God seems to enjoin a thing impossible to be done, when he requires his gospel to be preached everywhere in the whole world, for the purpose of restoring it from death to life. For we see how great is the obstinacy of nearly all men, and what numerous and powerful methods of resistance Satan employs; so that, in short, all the ways of access to these principles are obstructed. Yet it behooves individuals to do their duty, and not to yield to impediments; and, finally, our endeavors and our labors shall by no means fail of that success, which is not yet apparent.” Calvin admits that this is seemingly an impossible thing, and there is much opposition to the gospel in this world, but Calvin, ever the pastor, reminds his readers that our labor for the sake of the gospel will not be in vain! But what about Calvin's view of God? Critics have called out Calvin and his view of God as making him a “cruel tyrant grudgingly allowing some to be saved.” Calvin says in his commentary on Ezekiel 18:23, “God certainly desires nothing more than for those who are perishing and rushing toward death to return to the way of safety. This is why the gospel is today proclaimed throughout the world, for God wished to testify to all the ages that he is greatly inclined to pity.”

### **Calvin's Practice of Evangelism and Contribution to World Missions**

Not only did Calvin teach that evangelism was a necessary, God-ordained duty for believers and that the gospel was to be preached to all peoples, but he also practiced it as well. He evangelized to his congregation, and the city of Geneva and the complete transformation of the city is well documented. This gospel transformation of Geneva led by Calvin resulted in much evangelism and reform throughout Europe. The missionary activity that came out of Calvin's Geneva is a strong apologetic against any critique that Calvin lacked any missionary zeal. In light of his entire life of ministry, Frank James called him “a man with a strong evangelical heart.” In fact, it could be argued that during Calvin's time, he helped change Geneva into a major European missionary sending city during the Reformation. Philip Hughes says that Calvin's Geneva became a “school of missions” which had as one of its purposes: “to send out witnesses who would spread the teaching of the Reformation far and wide... It [Geneva] was a dynamic centre of missionary concern and activity, an axis from which the light of the Good News radiated forth through the testimony of those who,



after thorough preparation in this school, were sent forth in the service of Jesus Christ.”

**Michael Haykin, of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, agreed with Hughes** and said Geneva under Calvin, “became the missionary center of Europe in this period of the Reformation. Calvin sought to harness the energies and gifts of many of the religious refugees so as to make Geneva central to the expansion of Reformation thought and piety throughout Europe. This meant training and preparing many of these refugees to go back to their native lands as evangelists and reformers.” In God’s providence, many Protestant refugees fled to the safe haven of Geneva and Calvin and his Genevan church ministered to all of them. Calvin personally taught many of these men, and they were sent back to their homeland as pastors, evangelists, reformers, and missionaries knowing that death and martyrdom were likely. They had experienced gospel ministry in word and deed under Calvin’s ministry, and many of them would go back home to continue the Reformation. John Knox, a key figure and reformer in the Scottish Reformation, spent time with Calvin in Geneva and called it “the most perfect school of Christ that ever was in the earth since the days of the Apostles.” Calvin was concerned for the Reformation’s progress, not only in Geneva but in France, Scotland, England, Italy, Germany, Spain, Poland, Hungary, the Netherlands, and even Brazil as those that Calvin taught and trained were shown to have to go to each of those places to reform and plant new churches.

Most the refugees that went back home after being in Geneva were French. Calvin never forgot his home country and was concerned for the evangelization of his homeland. Derek Thomas uses historian Robert Kingdon’s numbers when he says, “The growth is nothing short of astounding: in 1555, there were five Reformed churches in France. Four years later, there were almost a hundred. Three years later, the number had reached 2,150 with a total membership estimated at 3 million (out of a total population of 20 million).” While complete records were not always kept due to religious persecution that began in 1562, the *Register of the Company of Pastors in Geneva* lists 88 names of missionaries that were sent from Geneva to different cities in France. It’s very likely that many more were sent, but no records were kept for the sake of the safety of the missionaries. Calvin was a spiritual father and pastor for many of these church planters and did all that he could to encourage and support them. Five young French pastors, who were trained in Lausanne, Switzerland, were caught as they tried to get back to France to start a ministry. Calvin wrote this to them when he learned of their imprisonment:

*“As soon as you were taken, we heard of it, and knew how it had come to pass. We took care that help might be sent you with all speed, and are now awaiting the result. Those who have influence with the prince in whose power has God put your lives, are faithfully exerting themselves on your behalf, but we do not yet know how far they have succeeded in their suit. Meanwhile all the children*



*of God pray for you as they are bound to do, not only on account of the mutual compassion which ought to exist between member of the same body, but because they know well that you labor for them by maintain the cause of their salvation. We hope, come what may, that God will give a happy issue to your captivity, so that we shall have reason to rejoice."*

Calvin continued to write to them during their imprisonment to encourage their faith. But after desperate efforts to save them, they were still condemned to die. Calvin wrote to them a farewell letter:

*"Now, at this present hour; necessity itself exhorts you more than ever to turn your whole mind heavenward. As yet, we know not what will be the event. But since it appears as though God would use your blood to seal His truth, there is nothing better for you than to prepare yourselves for that end, beseeching Him so to subdue you to His good pleasure, that nothing may hinder you from following whithersoever He shall call...Since it pleases Him to employ you to the death in maintaining His quarrel, He will strengthen your hands in the fight and will not suffer a single drop of your blood to be shed in vain."*

### **One Last Thought...**

"Far from being disinterested in missions, history shows that Calvin was enraptured by it," says Frank James. And after taking a brief look at what the Calvin believed, taught, and did in this paper, I hope that you would agree as well. Just because John Calvin taught a Reformed view of predestination didn't mean that he never taught about evangelism. Quite the opposite as we have seen that Calvin wrote and preached on it often all over the Bible. He taught on the universality of Christ's Kingdom which meant that the free offer of the gospel was for all people and that it was the duty of believers to proclaim this gospel to all people. He taught of a God mighty to save and full of mercy. He trained up men for gospel ministry, men were so taken by the gospel that Calvin preached that they would risk everything to go back to their homeland with the light of the gospel, and we know some of them were indeed martyred.

God did such a work through Calvin that the Reformation roared on into several other European countries and many churches were planted. Even if one were to disagree with Calvin's theology on salvation, it is quite clear that Calvin cared about evangelism and missions and practiced it. But Calvin wasn't evangelistic and missions-minded despite of his Reformed views, rather as Frank James and many other people argue, he was evangelistic and missions-minded because he was Reformed. Here's his fitting quote to conclude: "Calvin was missions-minded because he understood the transformational character of the gospel. He understood that when God saves a person, it makes a profound difference in that person's life and in the lives of others. If Calvin is taken as a model, Reformed theology ought to produce not only the best theologians, but also the best pastors and missionaries. These convictions reveal the true Calvin be-

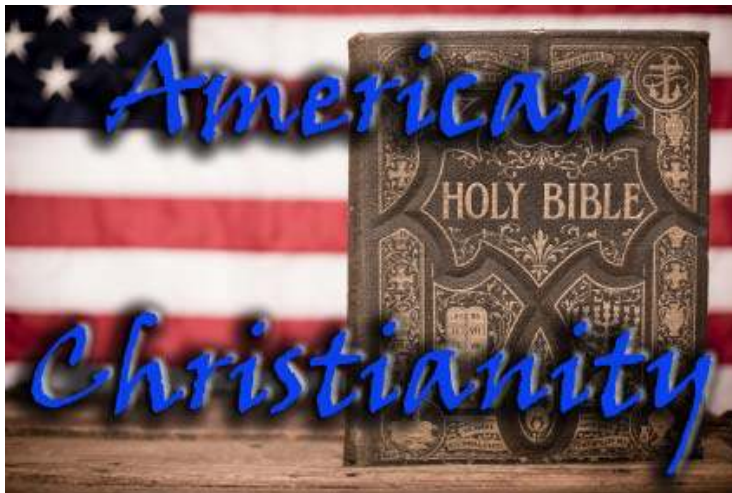
hind the image.”

#### References:

- A. Mitchell. Hunter, *The Teaching of Calvin, A Modern Interpretation*. (Glasgow: Maclehose, Jackson, and Company), 1920.
- Ralph Winter, “The Kingdom Strikes Back,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1992), 18.
- Philip E. Hughes, “John Calvin: Director of Missions,” in *The Heritage of John Calvin*, ed., J. H. Bratt (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1973), 42.
- B.B. Warfield, *Calvin and Augustine*. The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Philadelphia, PA, 1956. p. 14.
- John Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, trans. J. K. S. Reid (London: James Clarke and Co., Limited, 1961), 9.
- Frank A. James III, “Calvin the Evangelist”, *Founders Journal* 75, 2009, 6.
- John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries, Ephesians – Jude* (Wilmington, DE: Associated Publishers and Authors), 2172.
- Idid. 2173
- John Calvin, Sermon 13 on 1 Timothy 2:8. (as cited in Michael A. Haykin, “A Sacrifice Pleasing to God: John Calvin and the Missionary Endeavor to the Church”, *Andrew Fuller Center*.)
- John Calvin, Commentary on Matthew 24:3 (as cited in David B. Calhoun, “John Calvin: Missionary Hero or Missionary Failure?” *Presbyterion* 1979. 18)
- John Calvin, Commentary on Micah 2:1– 4. (as cited in Derek Thomas, “John Calvin and Missions”, *Puritan Reformed Journal* (July 2009)).
- John Calvin, Commentary on Genesis 17:23. (as cited in Haykin)
- Ryan Van Neste, “Calvin on Evangelism and Missions”, *Founders Journal* 33, 1998, 15-21.
- John Calvin, Commentary on Ezekiel 18:23. (as cited in Van Neste).
- James, “Calvin the Evangelist.” 3.
- Philip Hughes, ed. and trans., *The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1966), 25.
- Haykin, “A Sacrifice Pleasing to God,” 14-15
- Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. VIII (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1910, 1984), 518.
- Haykin, “A Sacrifice Pleasing to God.” 15.
- Robert M. Kingdon, “Calvinist Religious Aggression,” in *The French Wars of Religion, How Important Were Religious Factors?*, ed. J. H. M. Salmon (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath and Company, 1967), 6.
- Alistair McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin: A Study of Western Culture* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 182.
- T.H.L. Parker, *Portrait of Calvin*, (Minneapolis: Desiring God, 2009), pg.122-123
- James, “Calvin as Evangelist.” 6.

## Reforming According to the Word of God for the Spread of the Gospel

By Dave Jenkins



**Over the past six months, I've prayed extensively about the topic of the Doctrines of Grace. I**

prayed that this issue would be biblical, theological, practical, and equip our readers to understand the heartbeat of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. As this article is the last article you'll read in this magazine before you flip over to the recommended books list,

learn about who the writers are, and how to read more of our previous magazine issues, and while I have your attention, I want to write to speak to you directly.

You see, I sincerely believe that Reformed Theology is biblical, that it is firmly rooted in the Word of God. I believe that church history teaches us the truth of Reformed Theology. I believe that a thoroughly biblical and theological Reformed Theology represents the best biblical and theological work that the Church has ever produced. Most of the great men of the Church have been Reformed in their doctrine and theology—men like Charles Spurgeon, John Owen, John Knox, John Calvin, and the list could go on and on. These were men who loved the gospel and preached it fearlessly. They declared the truths of the gospel with great care, compassion, and love for the glory of God and the good of all men that they might know Jesus.

**In our day we are seeing a resurgence of Reformed Theology,** and there is the same danger of men who embrace a systematic theology first and then a biblical theology later. Reformed Theology has always been a biblical theology, not only a biblical theology, but rather the best of biblical theology informing or fueling if you will systematic theology. It's one thing to say, "We are reforming according

to the Word” and pledge allegiance to that idea, but it’s quite another actually to do that in practice.

For example, many Reformed people today say they love the Doctrines of Grace, but if you go on most “Reformed blogs” and read the comment sections, the question becomes, “Where are the fruits of the Spirit?” And even more so, “Where’s the humility?” Reformed people say, “We love the Doctrines of Grace”, but these doctrines should humble us and lead us to greater love for our brothers and sisters in Christ, not less. It should lead to helping our brothers and sisters grow in their doctrinal and theological understanding, but not at the expense of alienating others for a theological label.

**When I mention that I’m a Five-point Calvinist a lot of people are turned off by that label.** The look they give me and the attitude they have towards me at that moment is that I’ve lost my mind—how dare I betray them like this? You see, in the United States, Calvinism has a bad name. It is associated with Hyper-Calvinism, which is characterized by those who believe an extreme viewpoint that states and limits who God can save. Those who are classically Reformed don’t limit who God can save. Charles Spurgeon wisely preached to all men and called them to believe.

The general call goes out to *all men*. This is exhibited when the pastor preaches and calls for people to believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. He explains what the gospel is and then calls for a response to the gospel. Most of American Christianity today focuses only on the general call. We tell people to walk an aisle, come to the alter, and pray a “sinner’s prayer”, then

“In American Christianity, we focus on the general call of God to the exclusion of the specific call of God.”

they are saved. When we do this, we can unwittingly promote false conversion instead of true salvation. We must understand that the general call is not all that has to happen. Yes, people have to hear the gospel, but the Holy Spirit is the only one, according to the Bible, that can open the eyes of the blind and grant new hearts, new desires, and new affections for God and His Word. In other words, only the Holy Spirit can produce the New Covenant in people. Yes, people must respond to the summons of the Spirit, but even that is because of the *Spirit’s work*. This is why the general call of the gospel must be matched by the specific call of God.

In American Christianity, we focus on the general call of God to the exclusion of the specific call of God. This is tragic because the consequence of this is that we often engage in gimmicks—using the latest and greatest in technology, or fancy games, or other such things, instead of trusting in the power of God to save and sanctify a people for His possession and glory.

In American Christianity, we also have many people who focus only on their *experiences*. They then claim these experiences (or feelings) as normative for all Christians, even when asked for a Bible verse or where they got this idea, they can’t provide biblical reasoning. As American Christians, we have a cheap substitute of Chris-

tianity. Instead of biblical Christianity, we want a cozy, feel-good, help-and-motivate-me type of Christianity. This type of Christianity is no Christianity at all. Christianity is not *how you feel* today, “your best life now”, “your greatest encouragement today”, or anything such thing. Such ideas about Christianity are not only wrong, they are among the greatest lies that Satan has ever told to humanity. Such ideas tickle our ears, but lead us away from God. Instead, as Christians, we need to be *biblical*. We need to be balanced in our approach, first adhering to what the text says by understanding what the biblical passage means, and then seeking to apply its teaching to our lives.

**We are living in a biblically illiterate culture, where many people can’t even recite the Ten Commandments!** We are living in a time where there is more access to resources from the best scholars, pastors, and theologians in the Church past and present, but we are perishing for lack of understanding and knowledge. It has been accurately stated that we (American Christians) are a mile wide and an inch deep. In most parts of the world, Christians have no access to a Bible. In my office alone I have over a dozen Bibles, and probably at least another five placed randomly around my house. Every day I open my Bible and read it. I often listen to the Bible while driving around town. Reading your Bible is a good start, but it’s not the end-all-be-all of your Christian faith. You must *apply* what you learn. You must find a good Bible-believing church that teaches the Word faithfully, where you can find a small group and get plugged in with other people.

Many Reformed people are all about community. They would urge you to become members of a local church, and I’m for that too. My concern for the Reformed Movement as we move forward, and the Lord continues to bring people into it—men and women of all ages, who are hungry for the truth of the Word—is that we love others and more abundantly. This includes not only knowing the right answers, but also growing in our relational and spiritual maturity.

**Reformed Theology has great doctrine and theology, but it has not always had the best reputation for being loving, gentle, and kind.** It has often focused on heady ideas to the exclusion of loving people. My concern,

Yes, I believe that knowing answers to people’s questions is important because 1st Peter 3:15 tells us to “always have an answer for the reason for our hope.”

and the reason I wrote this article, is that we (you and I) not to be one of *those* Calvinists. I plead with you to be one of those who are on fire about the truths that you are learning and sharing, but do so in love. My sincere prayer is that God will not only fan the flames of this movement into a blazing fire, but that He would cause us to be people who love sound theology and sound practice. I want to see you, whether as a young or seasoned Christian, grow past just knowing the right answers, and into applying that theology into your daily life.

I want you to understand that the Christian life is more than just having the right answers to people’s questions. Yes, I believe that knowing answers to people’s questions

is important because 1st Peter 3:15 tells us to “always have an answer for the reason for our hope”. The Bible also has a lot to teach us about how we live our lives. John 13:35 tells us that the world will know us by our love. More and more I’m concerned that many Reformed Christians love the title “Five-point Calvinist” more than they do the title “Christian”. To some people, the title “Christian” just isn’t good enough anymore. That is what we are. We are first and foremost Christians before we are anything else. We are followers of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was virgin born, who was born without sin, who never sinned, who died the most brutal death ever known to man, died in our place for our sin, and rose again.

**I’m concerned that many Calvinists love Reformed Theology to the exclusion of loving the name Christian.** I’m concerned that we are more interested in only engaging our own “theological tribe” with our insights rather than reaching out to others and engaging them. I’m concerned that we are so focused on patting one another on the back that we have forgotten our priorities. Our mission, as Christians, isn’t to be the best *Calvinist* we can be, it’s to be a *Christian* who loves the gospel, obeys the commands of God by the grace of God, and who purposefully lives in the community under godly authority.

I’ve been a Christian now since I was five years old. In February of this year, I turned thirty-five years old. In the thirty years of walking with Christ, I have not always made the best and most godly decisions. I have made many mistakes. I have hurt people I shouldn’t have. I have been quick to speak and slow to listen, instead of slow to speak. I have not always stood fast on the gospel. I am, as Luther said, both a saint and a sinner. I keep coming back day-by-day to the realization that Piper articulated so well a few years ago at Together for the Gospel that I would not remain a Christian one second without the saving grace of God. God is the Gospel.

The gospel that we love to preach and proclaim is the same gospel that calls us to maturity. In the New Testament, we are taught what to do because we have believed in the Risen Lord Jesus. This is why the fruits of the Spirit are so important. We are to model love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. These are to be characteristics of our lives as Christians. Often as Reformed Christians, we are more known by what we *know* than by our *character*. In my reading of the New Testament, I’ve never seen a verse that says that we will be judged by all we *know*. Instead, when I read the New Testament, I see that we will be judged by our *deeds*. This means that our character matters. This is especially true for Christian leaders, pastors, and teachers of the Word.

In this article, I’m calling for us to believe the *right doctrine*, which is vital. As you turn the page and conclude this magazine issue, I am praying that God will challenge you and stretch you. I am praying that the doctrines you’ve learned about in this issue will humble you. I’m also praying that if you become haughty, that God will humble you. God resists the proud but exalts the humble (1 Peter 5:5).

**I know it’s hard to see all the problems going on, perhaps even at your local church and think,** “I know the answer for that”, but it takes real maturity to pray, to speak when appropriate, and to lead people lovingly. As Reformed Christians, we know a great deal, but it’s not just our *knowing* that matters. We need



to adopt a posture of humility. We need to be identified as knowing the right answers, yes, but also knowing how to model our doctrine and theology by growing in our relational and spiritual maturity. People recognize that we know a lot about the Bible. Knowing a lot about the Bible is great, but not at the expense of hurting people by dogmatically jamming our doctrine down their throats.

Instead of being known for being Bible-thumping know-it-alls, I pray that we will begin to identify areas of potential growth in our Christian lives. It is more than okay to admit that there are things we still don't know. In fact, to admit that is humbling. It's also theologically accurate. Lastly, it's a sign of maturity to admit what we don't know and where we are growing.

**As Reformed Christians, we have a lot of areas where we need to grow. What I've mentioned here in this article are areas I'm growing in as well.** You see, even though I've walked this road almost my entire life, I still have room to grow. It's not enough to know the right answers! We need God to help us to love our fellow brothers and sisters of various theological traditions. We need God to help teach us to be loving and to be taught by others of various theological persuasions. All the while we need to hold on to the Bible as the final authority for faith and practice, even as we grow to become recognized as Christians who know the right answers, and who apply our theology to our daily lives. We need lastly to be authentic and real about where we are growing so people can see Christ being formed in us. Then they won't think of merely as adhering to a system of theology. Instead, people will see us as they should as people who love the Bible and are seeking to model a consistent Christian worldview and life view to the glory of God.

## Recommended Books on the Doctrines of Grace

This season at Servants of Grace, we've been considering the topic of the Doctrines of Grace. We are living in a time when many people are either learning or rediscovering what the gospel is and the importance of a biblical understanding of the gospel. With this issue of *Theology for Life Magazine*, it was our hope that readers would grow, not only in their understanding of these biblical truths and their impact for our Christian lives and ministries.

If you've found this subject interesting and want to study the issue further, please check out the recommended reading list below. These books are at the top of this genre in both excellence and readability. I promise you'll find them worthwhile. Please note that this list is provided in no particular order.

- [What is Reformed Theology?](#) by R.C. Sproul
- [The Reformation](#) by Stephen Nichols
- [The Doctrines of Grace](#) by James Montgomery Boice
- [Rebels Rescued a Students Guide to Reformed Theology](#) by Brian Cosby

I hope you'll enjoy this further reading list! For additional resources, feel free to check out <http://servantsofgrace.org>.

In Christ Alone,  
Dave Jenkins  
Executive Editor of *Theology for Life Magazine*

# God deserves to be worshiped by your family in your home.

Gathering together for worship is an indispensable part of your family's spiritual life. In his book *Family Worship*, Donald S. Whitney offers practical guidance for leading your family in daily worship through reading Scripture, praying together, and singing songs.

"This book will equip you to lead your family in worship, without fear or awkwardness or intimidation. This book could change your home."

**Russell Moore**, President, The Ethics & Religious  
Liberty Commission



## About the Authors:



### ***Michael Boling***

Michael Boling lives in Belleville, IL, a suburb of St. Louis, MO with his wife Erica, adopted daughter Alissa, two cats Molly and Sweetie Pie and horse Beckham. Michael holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Religion (Biblical Studies) from Liberty University and is currently closing in on completing a Master of Arts in Religion (Biblical Studies) from Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary. He is an avid reader and the Managing Editor of Servants of Grace.



### ***Wei Feng Ho***

Wei Feng Ho serves as the college and career ministry intern at Westminster Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Atlanta, GA. He is currently working on his M.Div degree at Reformed Theological Seminary, Atlanta.



### ***Craig Hurst***

Craig Hurst is a husband, father of three, and working on bringing another child into his family through adoption. He loves to play sports and read theology of all disciplines. He attends Grace Community Church in Howard City, MI where he and his wife serve in the youth group and other areas of need. He is working on his MA in Theology at Calvary Baptist Theological Seminary in Lansdale, PA.

## About the Authors (Cont'd):



### ***Dave Jenkins***

Dave Jenkins is the Executive Director of [Servants of Grace Ministries](#), and the Executive Editor of [Theology for Life Magazine](#). He and his wife, Sarah, are members of Ustick Baptist Church in Boise, Idaho, where they serve in a variety of ministries. Dave received his MAR and M.Div. through Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary.



### ***Brian Cosby***

Brian Cosby (Ph.D. Australian College of Theology) is pastor of Wayside Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Signal Mountain, TN. He is Visiting Professor of Church History at Reformed Theological Seminary, Atlanta, and holds degrees from Samford University (B.A.), Beeson Divinity School (M.Div.), The North American Reformed Seminary (D.Min.), and the Australian College of Theology (Ph.D.).



### ***Jason Garwood***

Jason Garwood serves as Lead Pastor of Colwood Church in Caro, MI, and is the author of *Be Holy: Learning the Path of Sanctification*. Jason and his wife have three children. He blogs at <http://jasongarwood.com>. Connect with him on Twitter: @JasonGarwood.

## Servants of Grace Ministries

[www.servantsfograces.org](http://www.servantsfograces.org)

[www.theologylife.org](http://www.theologylife.org)

<https://www.facebook.com/Servantsofgrace>

<https://twitter.com/servantsofgrace>

<https://plus.google.com/u/0/117692857314421653518/>

Executive Editor: Dave Jenkins

E-mail: [dave@servantsofgrace.org](mailto:dave@servantsofgrace.org)

Design Development Coordinator & Copy Editor:

Sarah Jenkins

Email: [sarah@servantsofgrace.org](mailto:sarah@servantsofgrace.org)