

Divine Sovereignty - The "I" in TULIP

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[0 : 00] What I would like to explain is that the passage that you are going to be reading is right at the conclusion of an extensive sermon, or message if you will, that Stephen will have delivered to the Sanhedrin. Stephen has 70 men. I don't know that they were all 70, were all present, but the Jewish Sanhedrin is the official council of Judaism.

These are the religious leaders, movers, shakers, etc., Sadducees, priests, Pharisees, and they have Stephen on trial. It is a kangaroo trial. It is a trumped-up court and trumped-up charges. They have actually gone out and paid people to lie and make accusations against Stephen that, of course, are not true, but the accusations will be that he's guilty of blasphemy, and the penalty for blasphemy is stoning to death, and as you read the end of the chapter, Stephen will be stoned to death. But before he is, he is given an opportunity to have his final say, and what he does is he recounts the whole history of the nation of Israel. If you ever want to read an abbreviated form of the nation of Israel from the time Abraham was called up until the time of the present there in the book of Acts, just read Acts chapter 7, and it gives you the whole thing. But where we are going to begin reading is with Stephen's conclusion, and to get the full effect of it, you need to read all of the verses previous to that, but that would be some 50 verses, and I don't know that we are up to that as a congregation. So I want you to keep in mind that the conclusion that Gary will be reading is his summation of the whole thing and his delivering a scathing indictment against the leadership of Israel and the nation of Israel in general for having crucified their Messiah. So, Gary, if you'll come and lead us then beginning with verse 51. Acts chapter 7 verses 51 through 16.

You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit.

You are doing just as your fathers did. Which one of the prophets did your fathers did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the righteous one, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become. You who received the law as ordained by angels and yet did not keep it. Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him. But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

And he said, Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.

[3 : 44] But they cried out with a loud voice, covered their ears, and rushed at him with one impulse.

When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him. And the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, Lord, do not hold this sin against them.

Having said this, he fell asleep. And while you're there in that same passage, I want you to note again the statement that is made in verse 51, right at the beginning of the passage. Stephen says, You men who are stiff-necked, this was an accusation that was frequently leveled against the Jews during our Lord's ministry, as well as the ministry of the apostles.

If someone is stiff-necked, that means they refuse to be turned. They will not repent. They will not change. And it is a curious expression.

And then he calls them uncircumcised in heart. Well, what in the world does that mean? We all know what physical circumcision is and how it was a requirement of Judaism that a boy-baby be circumcised on the eighth day.

[5 : 43] And this very much involved the cutting of the flesh of the body. It was a physical thing. But the circumcision of the heart simply means, and let me put it this way, what the circumcision of the

flesh was supposed to indicate was that this one who had been circumcised is entered into a covenant relation with Jehovah.

And if a Jewish baby boy was not circumcised on the eighth day, he was not considered Jewish. He was not a bona fide Jew.

He would not be admitted to the covenant of Israel. He would be like an outcast. So it was unthinkable that Jewish parents would not circumcise a son on the eighth day because as far as they were concerned, that indicated that he was in the fold.

He was a covenant member of the nation of Israel. However, the circumcision of the body did nothing for the circumcision of the will or of the heart.

And the circumcision of the heart means that as the outward circumcision of the flesh indicated a devotion or dedication to God, the expression, the circumcision of the heart was a purely mental, intellectual, volitional thing whereby the individual surrendered their heart to the Lord, not just their body but their mind, their emotions, their will.

[7 : 23] It was a kind of total dedication. So it was one thing to have been circumcised on the eighth day as a member of the Jewish people, but that did not mean you had a circumcised heart.

And it wasn't until the heart, mind, body, soul, everything was yielded unto the Lord in obedience to him that was considered the circumcision of the heart.

And then he goes on to say, you were uncircumcised in heart and ears, that is, your ears are not willing to hear, your heart is not willing to believe. You are always resisting the Holy Spirit.

And that's what we're going to be talking about this morning. Resisting. What is it that you resist will? With, but your will. That's the only thing we've got to resist with.

And when you dig your heels in, and I'm using a physical expression about digging your heels in, you can dig your heels in mentally and emotionally.

[8 : 28] And it's the same thing as a stiff neck, a head that will not be turned. It means you make a fist and you clench your teeth and you say, no, that's resisting.

That digging your heels in. And Stephen says, this is exactly what you do with God. And not only that, but you do it perpetually.

And when Jesus encountered the scribes and the Pharisees, he said, this people, this people honor me with their lips.

You talk a good religion. But their heart is far from me. That's the emotion.

The will is far from me. And that's what Stephen is charging these people with. So the topic of the morning has to do with resistance.

[9 : 28] And in the scope of Calvinism, which we have been considering, we have looked at the T. And the T in the tulip stands for total inability.

And the U stands for unconditional election. The L is for limited atonement. The I is where we are this morning. It is called irresistible grace.

Stephen charged the Sanhedrin with resisting the Holy Spirit. Our Calvinist friends say that if you are one of the elect, you are a recipient of the benefits of the death of Christ because Christ died for you.

He did not die for everybody. He didn't die for the sins of the whole world. He died only for those who will ultimately be saved. This is the teaching of Calvinism.

And that's why it's called limited atonement. Sometimes it's called particular atonement. And if you buy the total inability of man to respond, then the only way you can get anybody saved is if God takes all of the initiative and God chooses certain ones to be saved because if he didn't, nobody would ever be saved.

[10 : 56] Now, this is what election is in the Calvinist frame. And this is what I told you I taught here 30 years ago. And I've come to just repudiate it and reject it.

And that's why I'm doing this series is because I am retracting what I taught earlier. I do not believe that we are unconditionally elected. I never did believe in limited atonement.

But if you buy the idea of man's inability to respond, that is, when man is confronted or hears the gospel, if he is not one of the elect, he can't respond.

It's impossible for him to respond because it is being elect of God that makes it possible for him to respond. Otherwise, nobody would be saved. So, if you buy total inability, that is, man's inability to respond, and then you see unconditional election, otherwise no one would be saved, and limited atonement because that is the basis upon which their salvation is secure, then you have to make

the grace of God irresistible.

And in the same way, in the same way that someone who is not elect cannot believe, someone who is elect cannot resist believing.

[12:19] And for him, it is called irresistible grace. So, if you are elect under Calvinism, if you are one of the elect, you will believe because you cannot do anything else.

Your will doesn't even matter. You will be made to be willing. That's the idea of irresistible grace. And it just kind of goes along with the thinking and the philosophy of it because if grace is not irresistible, you would resist.

But because you are elect, you cannot resist. You have to say yes to the gospel. You have no alternative. And then the perseverance of the saints is a logical conclusion to that as well.

So, this is where we are. And I have some propositions for you. We are continuing our consideration of connections.

And our focus is on the connection of connections. How God and man connects is the single issue of greatest importance to every human being.

[13:33] I don't care who you are, how old you are, what your station in life is, what your abilities are, what your future is, what your past is. None of that matters. None of that matters compared to the issue of greatest importance to every human being.

And that is, how does the creature and the creator connect? How do we come into a relationship with God?

The need for God and man connecting presupposes that they are not connected. The reason they are not connected is because of a disconnect that occurred from the original connection.

Now, we all are familiar enough with the simple thing that we utilize and benefit from every day in many ways called electricity.

And we all know what happens when a connection is made and when a connection is broken.

Because once the connection is broken, the contact is over, there is no more togetherness, there is a loss of power, the situation has changed.

[14:50] And what needs to happen is there needs to be a reconnection so the energy surge will be there once again and we can benefit from it.

And this disconnection is commonly referred to as the fall. It consisted of the fall away or the fall from the original position and condition or call it, if you will, a fall away from the original connection.

So it resulted in a disconnection. And that was that under which the original humans, Adam and Eve, were created. As God created them, they were connected.

And their rebellion and sin resulted in a disconnect spiritually. They became alienated and estranged. This disconnect our parents incurred because of their rejection of God's authority and the subsequent impact of it extended to all of their progeny.

And that's us. All humans born after Adam and Eve were born with the nature of the parents before them. This nature included the death gene.

[16:16] Think of that. The death gene. We all have one. Now, I'm not suggesting scientifically and biologically that if our makeup were to be examined under electron microscope that a scientist would be able to say, aha, there it is.

There's the death gene. That's the little rascal that's responsible for everybody dying. Now, all we have to do is eliminate the death gene and nobody else will die.

Well, I'm not suggesting that the death gene exists in that scientific mode, but I am saying that there is a death-like gene that is resident within each and every one of us and it is going to take a toll on us because you're going to die.

We're all going to die. And the only exception will be those who will be translated in the moment in the twinkling of an eye they will not see death when Christ returns and the trumpet shout is heard and we are changed.

We don't know if that's going to be this generation, next generation, or 20 generations in the future, but eventually it is going to happen. And until that time, we are nothing but a repeat of Genesis 5 and we were talking about that just this morning.

[17:46] That's the and he died chapter. And you read as you go through Genesis the genealogy that's given and so-and-so and so-and-so begat sons and daughters and the verse ends, and he died.

And then so-and-so and so-and-so they had sons and daughters and he died. And so-and-so had sons and daughters and he died. And you go all the way through chapter 5 and it's the and he died chapter. They all end that way except this one guy and his name was Enoch.

And it comes to Enoch and it changes dramatically. It says an Enoch walked with God and he was not for God took him.

Now it doesn't say that he didn't die and we don't know how God took him. We talked about that a little bit. Was it a Elijah-like thing where God sent a chariot down to whisk him away?

We don't know. We aren't given any details but Enoch definitely breaks the mold. He's different from everybody before him because they all and he died and he died and Enoch walked with God and he was not for God took him.

[18 : 55] And some Bible scholars and I'm not prepared to dispute this some Bible scholars believe that Enoch was a type of a rapture in the Old Testament. That one day there will be a generation who walk with God believers and they will not die.

But they will be taken and that may very well be what this is referring to. So this disconnect means that all humans born after Adam and Eve have the same nature as Adam and Eve and we might call death akin to genetic defect.

genetic defects occur and there are damaged chromosomes in the conception process that can pass certain diseases and weaknesses on to the next generation and it is all part and parcel of the fall of what took place.

while we're thinking of that and while we're close by I want you to just look at one reference in Romans chapter 5 if you will come over from the book of Acts to the next book.

Romans chapter 5 which is a very familiar passage but I want to get it on the table because it is germane to what we're talking about now. Romans 5 and verse 12 where the apostle says therefore just as through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin and so death spread to all men because all sinned.

[20 : 49] This sober reality is not only the reason for our death but it alone remains the only consistent explanation for the world and its inhabitants being as they are.

You want to know why do we have the kind of world that we have? You'll find the answer only in the scriptures. You will not find it in a scientific laboratory or you will not find it from a philosopher's pen. Much as we may enjoy and benefit from both of those, science can only tell us certain things as regards how. They can never begin to tell us why.

I was reading an interesting article in a book by John Lennox, an English scholar, and he was answering Stephen Hawking's conclusion.

Stephen Hawking, many of you are familiar with this man. He's generally considered to be the world's most brilliant physicist. he's an Englishman.

[22 : 00] He has been incapacitated with Lou Gehrig's disease for about the last 30 years. And it's very, very few people who are able to live as long as he has lived with Lou Gehrig's disease.

But it is generally considered the world over that the man has an absolutely brilliant mind. All of the world's physicists adore Stephen Hawking.

And his latest conclusion is this. Because of the existence of the law of gravity, our universe was quite capable of creating itself.

Therefore, the presence of a god was simply not necessary. Now, this is a very, very brilliant man. I mean, the likes of which has an IQ that could buy and sell mine with change left over. But to reach a conclusion like that, and I wondered the same thing when I read that statement.

[23 : 14] And then John Lennox posed a question in the book that he had written in reputation of that about the universe being able to create itself.

Now, just think of this. Think of the logic of this. If the law of gravity, with which we are all familiar, and by the way, no scientist anywhere can tell you why the law of gravity works or how.

They have no answers. All we know is it does, and it's in place, and we are utterly dependent upon it. But if the existence of the law of gravity makes it possible for the universe to create itself, then the only logical question is, well, where did the law of gravity come from?

How did it get here? Why does the law of gravity exist? And for that, of course, he has no answer. It is amazing how brilliant someone can be in certain areas and how deficient in other areas.

And we find this spelled out in 1 Corinthians 1 where Paul elaborates on that. But this is what we are dealing with. When it comes to understanding and explaining why the world is the way it is, why

do people engage in genocide?

[24 : 45] genocide? Why do whole races of people seek to eliminate other people? The Holocaust. Why did the Hutus, why were they so insistent on eliminating the Bantus?

Fellow Africans, just like themselves, same skin color, just like themselves, but they're from a different tribe. That means they don't deserve to live.

And do you realize that between those two tribes they succeeded in eliminating a million people?

Mostly with machetes?

I'm not talking 500 years ago. I'm talking 30 years ago. This is humanity. This is what it has come to. This is what we are.

How did we get this way? How do you explain this? Aren't we supposed to be getting better and better? Shouldn't we be more civil than the generations before us?

[25 : 51] Shouldn't we be more kindly disposed to our fellow human being? What is it about people that enables them to enjoy inflicting physical pain on other people and making them die a slow agonizing death?

How could you do that to another human being? what possesses people that makes it possible for them to do that? The very ugly answer is the very truthful answer.

It lies in the heart of unregenerate people to do that. It's terribly depressing. It's terribly shameful.

The cruelty that human beings are willing to inflict upon other human beings.

sin. Let me tell you, that only comes from understanding the heinousness of sin. And very few people even want to hear it or talk about it.

We're uncomfortable with it. We'd rather deny it. We make jokes about it. But it is a very present reality. And it's responsible for the disconnect. And because we are born into a state like this with this kind of capability, this is why we desperately need to be reconnected.

[27 : 11] And the scriptures call that being reborn. Man is born wrong and needs to be reborn. This is the whole basis of the rebirth.

And this connection, how is it affected? Who affects it and why? And here is where the tulip comes in. I do not believe this explanation of the connection to be true, though I once did and once taught it enthusiastically here at Grace Bible Church some 30 years ago.

And I do not now. But I offer my sincere apologies for having done so. My major regret is that I can't have the same congregation back to make the retraction.

Many of you were here then, but many have also gone on. And I feel badly about that, but I'm asking heaven to square it for me. So, if you accept the T, the U, and the L, then the I of the tulip becomes the only logical possibility for God's completion of anyone's salvation or coming to Christ. because there is no way that points one through three of the tulip can be realized without the irresistibility of God's gracious call.

[28 : 36] Those elected and called have no alternative but to submit to the grace that is clearly irresistible. Because, they reason, if man can resist, he will resist and nobody would be saved.

So, the only way that God can secure the salvation of anyone is, first of all, he picks them for salvation.

He elects them. We are not told on what basis he elects them. All we know is it has nothing to do with human merit. So, what is it?

Is there some great raffle in the sky whereby people are picked? How does God choose? We are not told that. Calvinists believe only that he is. And by the way, we have not dealt with any of the passages of scripture that seem to say this about being chosen in Christ and being elect in him. And they are there and we are going to look at them. Just as soon as we finish the tulip, we are going back over this. And we are going to show you how and why I came to the conclusion that I had to absolutely reverse myself because these things that Calvinism teaches is simply not supported by scripture.

[29 : 57] The thing that gives them stature is that they are held and espoused by very respectable men, very intellectual men, very influential men, beginning with Augustine in the fourth century.

he was a man of towering intellect. He had a profound influence upon John Calvin and upon Luther and upon others and as a result, whole denominations have bought into their teaching and it's become the backbone for the Church of England, for all of the Reformed churches, for all of the Presbyterian churches and this has gone on through hundreds and hundreds of years.

These ideas have prevailed. this was, I don't know if you're aware of it or not, but this was part and parcel of Puritan theology. When the pilgrims came over here in 1620, they came with a full bore of five-point Calvinism behind them.

I don't know if you're aware of that or not, but they did and they had the Geneva Bible. This was before the King James was even produced or popular, even though it came out in 1613, the pilgrims were here in 1620.

Nonetheless, they didn't come with the King James Version and it wouldn't have made that much difference, but they came with what was known as the, I just mentioned the name of it, I can't, the Geneva Bible.

[31 : 25] It was given that name because it was originally produced in Geneva, Switzerland. And Calvinism is very roundly supported in the translation and the text and the way they are rendered in the Geneva Bible.

people and the pilgrims came here in 1620 with full compliment of the tulip and Calvinism under their belt and they believed it and taught it and it prevailed in New England for several years and eventually people started peeling off from it and people began rejecting the doctrine and other denominations sprung up in opposition to it and so on.

but originally it was pretty deeply entrenched and that was commonly believed in Europe and transferred to the United States and it was in force here for a long, long time.

Here's the problem. And the problem I see it with Calvinism is that they have simply overlooked and understated the dynamic that God has given to us as human beings called the human will or human volition.

If volition means anything and all we mean by volition, same word from which we get the word volunteer and all volition means is you have a will, you have a volition.

[32 : 46] That means you have the power to make choices. You can do A or you can do B or you can do C. It's up to you. You have the ability to make that choice and because you have the ability to make that choice, you are therefore responsible for the choice you make.

Nobody else is responsible for your choices. You are. Now, if volition means anything, then God's grace cannot be irresistible.

You can resist it. People do resist it. People die resisting God's grace. God's grace. And all it means is you say no to the deity and what he has provided.

And you do that with your volition, with your will. You do it because you choose to do it. Now, our Calvinist friends would say no. You resist God because you can't come to God anyway because you are not elect.

so there is no way that you can say yes to God because only if you are one of the elect can you say yes to God.

[34 : 07] Now, curiously enough, and this is to me one of the major fallacies of Calvinism and what they embrace. Curiously enough, they have somehow come up with a conclusion that children who belong to the elect are also elect.

Why do you suppose that is? Why do you suppose they arrived at that conclusion? Think about it as a parent. Is there anything that you value more and care more about than the eternal destiny of your children?

Do you not need the comforting factor to assure you that your children are elect and safe in God just as you are? And yet, at the same time, the Calvinist will say, yes, we believe that.

However, the election of the parent does not guarantee the election of the children. Well, then how else can you say that the children are elect? How else can you say that the children are destined for heaven and not for hell?

The thing begins to break down. There is no logical consistent way that you can maintain the tenets of Calvinism, especially when you inject into it the volition that God has given man. And let me tell you something.

[35 : 35] The will, the volition that God has given man, enables man to do some really terrible, terrible things.

Think about that. Did God know that when he gave man volition? Of course he did. God wasn't blindsided by that.

But let me tell you, this indicates to me the incredible importance that God places upon human volition that he has entrusted to human beings.

This is not a small thing. This is a very, very big thing. It becomes the whole basis for human accountability. It's the will you have. In no way are we going to be able to blame anything on somebody else when we are responsible.

And God is going to hold us responsible. Volition is a very, very big item. And I am convinced that God is so committed to the integrity of human volition that he is long suffering enough to stand aside and allow man to do some really terrible, terrible things to his fellow man.

[36 : 57] And God does not stop it. He does not intervene. He does not prevent it. Now this drives a lot of people crazy when you're talking about God this way because they cannot conceive of their being an utterly holy and powerful God who is willing to allow atrocities, murders, rapes, genocide take place.

Why doesn't God do something? Why doesn't he step in? Why doesn't he put an end to this? Why doesn't he wipe out this wickedness and this evil? And the only reason he doesn't is because he is committed to the volition that he has given us, even with our abuse and misuse of it.

Because a being without a volition is a virtually worthless, unaccountable being. It is volition that makes us not only evil as we can be, it is volition that also makes us compassionate and tender and sweet and caring and loving and sacrificing.

And the sad news is you can't have one without the other. It would be a farce if God gave us nothing but a limited volition so you can only do the kind of things you ought to do.

And you don't have the ability to do those bad, hurtful, ugly things. That isn't volition at all. Do you see what God has entrusted to the human race?

[38 : 46] And yet in no way, shape, or form can God be accused of contributing to evil. He is separate, apart from evil.

God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts he any man. But if he is going to make us free moral agents, he has to give us the ability to do really ugly things.

And we do. It's not a pretty picture, but biblically it is an accurate one. God's grace is resistible.

You can say no to Jesus Christ. Christ. And I know you can say no to Jesus Christ, because almost all of us do.

We say no before we say yes. Well, does that mean then that maybe in some ultimate kind of way, God's grace is irresistible?

[40 : 07] Well, I wouldn't completely discount that. Let me explain to you what I mean. You may very well begin this process of reestablishing the disconnect.

You may begin that by hearing the gospel and resisting it. You probably did. I did.

When Barbara and I met in the summer of 1956, it wasn't long into our relationship. But this good old fashioned girl began quoting and sharing with me a few verses of scripture.

Talked a little bit about salvation, about going to heaven and whatnot. And you know where it went with me? Right over my head. I looked into that beautiful face and all I saw was what I wanted to see and I couldn't care less about religious stuff and church and all that just didn't register at all. But she kept at it and yet I couldn't see God for the stars in my eyes. The romantic thing. And it just didn't register with me.

[41 : 24] And she would give me some scripture verses and some little tracks and I would read them and I would say these are nice and ho hum and lay them aside and that was the end of that. But you know what was happening all the while?

All the while God was building a case in this resistant heart. God was providing me with information because information is what is required to make an intelligent decision.

You need information. And I was in spiritual gestation. You know when a baby is conceived it begins gestating in the womb of his mother.

And it takes it about nine months to arrive at a full gestation ready to be born. Well I am convinced that in the hearts of most people there is a gestation period too.

From the time you first hear the gospel when the seed is originally sown. It may not register at all. You may not think about it at all. But line upon line precept upon precept and sometimes it takes years.

[42 : 39] It may be years past. And all the while God is building and adding to the case and adding to the case and giving you more and more information. And all the while things are beginning to make more and more sense.

And it was that way with me. And then that day December 8th 1956 when we sat in that pastor study this spiritually gestating baby was due to be born.

And when he looked at me across that desk and Pastor Harold Sweetman said, Marvin, would you like to hear about the gospel of Jesus Christ and how you could go to heaven?

You know what the thought was that occurred to me? Well, of course, who in the world wouldn't want to hear that? Nobody in their right mind would turn down that opportunity. Who wouldn't want to hear that?

And he explained to me the gospel and I still don't remember what verses he used or what scripture I just don't remember any of that. But I do remember I was doing some real serious thinking.

[43 : 48] And then he said, would you like to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior right now? And my immediate thought was, well, of course, who wouldn't?

Who wouldn't? You know what I did? I passed from earlier being able to resist the gospel to a state of being unable to resist the gospel.

In other words, it wasn't that I could no longer say no, it's just that I could no longer justify saying no. Because the information was such that the case was just overwhelming. And in that sense, I did find the grace of God to be irresistible.

But I don't think that's the way the Calvinists mean it. They mean it in the sense that if you are not elect, you will resist the grace of God.

[45 : 04] If you are elect, you cannot resist the grace of God because that's the eye of the tulip and it is irresistible grace.

The difference is considerable. And in order for our volition to be intact, in order for man to be fully man, fully capable of saying yes and fully capable of saying no, God leaves him in that state.

And in his graciousness, he may orchestrate matters and see to it that we get more and more information that makes it more and more likely for us to receive Christ. I don't know about that.

I don't know what spiritual dynamics are taking place in the background and the life of anybody. but I do know that God is very gracious. That's for certain. And to what extent are we elect?

To this extent. If you are in Christ, you are one of the elect. Do you know why we know that? We know that because Jesus Christ is referred to as God's elect son.

[46 : 27] Christ the son was chosen, elected, selected by the father to come into this world and do for us what he did.

God chose him. Didn't choose an angel. He chose him. And he enclosed him, his son, in human flesh and came into this world to become one of us and to die in our place.

Christ is the elect son of God. And if you are in Christ because you have believed on him as your personal savior, you are elect because all who are elect are elect in Christ.

And let me explain it this way. You understand, do you not? that when Paul said, I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me.

We are in Christ, we are co-crucified with him. That means it is just as if we were there on that cross with him, undergoing and suffering the same penalty that he did.

[47 : 39] And all that he accomplished in that death is treated as if we accomplished that, as if we were there punished him.

But we weren't even thought of that. But in Christ we are in him in the same way that we are in Adam. We are inseparably connected with him. As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

So we are crucified with Christ. And Paul says we are raised with Christ. And we are glorified with Christ.

And we are also elect in Christ. We share in his crucifixion. We share in his burial. We share in his death. We share in his resurrection. We share everything in him so that we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

And because Christ is elect, if you are in Christ, you are elect. That's the basis of our election. That's the conclusion to which I've come after an additional 30 or 35 years of the study of scriptures.

[48 : 41] And we are fully accountable, responsible individuals. We are charged with culpability for the wrong decisions we make.

And we will be rewarded for the right decisions we make. All because God's volition that he has given to us is intact.

And I've come to another conclusion and that is this. God has to be incredibly long suffering to stand aside and not intervene in some of the shenanigans that humans engage in down here and the way we kill each other off with our weaponry and our scientific advancements.

He is honoring the volition that he gave to us because if God is going to step in and override our volition every time an individual is about to make a wrong or a disastrous decision then that makes a mockery of the volition that he has given us.

So it's a very powerful and important thing. you need to guard your will with all you've got and be reminded that the will you have is given to you for decision making and everybody who finds their life in great difficulty is almost always the cause of wrong decisions on their part.

[50 : 26] Sometimes it's wrong decisions on the part of somebody else like a parent to a child. And if the will that we have is used for the purpose of making decisions then it becomes absolutely critical about the information you take in because that information will be the basis for the decisions you make.

Guard your mind guard your heart be careful what you let into it because that's what you're going to process and formulate the decision for carrying out.

Very powerful concept. This is a very simple one. There's nothing profound about this but it is really really important and I want you all to understand it so very well. We've got five minutes.

Is there a question or comment? Anybody? Well, okay, if there isn't, I'm going to let you go five minutes early if you keep it under your hat.

Don't tell anybody who wasn't here. Would you stand please? Father, these are sobering things that we've been considering but we ought to have sobering things to contemplate every time we get together because life is a serious matter and yet in the midst of its seriousness you have made more than ample provision for us.

[52 : 02] We are not automatons nor robots. We are not pre-programmed. We are free moral volitional creatures and we need to be ever so careful how we handle our volition and the things we say yes to and no to.

If there's anyone here today who has perhaps through some new insight come to an awareness that they lack a connection, there was a time in Adam when there was a connection and then the disconnect happen.

There's a great need for reconnection. We pray that the information that has been given this morning will penetrate hearts and if there is someone out there in spiritual gestation right now, we pray that this may contribute to that in such a way that they will find the grace of God offered to them through Jesus Christ to be logically irresistible.

we continue to uphold the Keplinger family in prayer and we thank you for the sufficiency of a wonderful gospel and the assurance that we have for brother Ron being absent from the body and present with the Lord.

Dismiss us now we pray in your name Christ. Amen.