

Divine Sovereignty - The "T" in TULIP

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] And if you will note carefully, these passages were not all taken from the first chapter of Romans, although some of them were. But the first, second, third, fourth, fifth statement down in bold print, the emphasis is placed upon bringing about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for his name's sake.

Now, this is in the first chapter of Romans. And if you come down to the next to the last verse, Paul said, I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed.

And this comes from chapter 15. And the reason that is so important is because the apostle is making the connection between the reason that God raised him up and his ministry.

And it is simply this. God raised up Paul the apostle for the express purpose of bringing the Gentiles, and they are, of course, non-Jews, to bring the Gentiles to the obedience of faith.

And I want to explain right at the outset, before I give you some historical propositions, I want to explain the importance of this obedience of the Gentiles.

[1 : 37] There are two ways of looking at this, and it's absolutely critical as to which one you buy into, because it can contribute to your whole scheme of theology.

Is the obedience of faith to which Paul wants to bring the Gentiles, is faith the act of obedience itself, or is obedience the result of faith that he is looking for?

Because both of those are realities, yet only one is intended by the apostle. And what is actually hanging in the balance is this.

It has to do with human personal responsibility. How valid is it, as opposed to God's sovereignty? In other words, does man have a part in this?

And the average person would respond by saying, well, of course man has a part. He is responsible to believe. But historic Calvinism says, no, man has no part.

[2 : 44] He does not even have the ability to believe. And therein lies the rub. So we're going to examine this in connection with Calvinism, and also in connection with what I have referred to as my changing my position regarding these things.

And I have reversed myself from what I taught you some 25 or 30 years ago regarding various points of Calvinism.

Now, a lot of people, they could care less. That's just because they are so out of it. They don't even know what the issue is. And I'm not going to try to bring everybody up to speed.

But this is really, really important stuff. And yet, I'm sorry to say this, but it has all the earmarks of being incredibly boring.

But I can promise you this. It will not at all be boring if you will allow yourself to see the implications and the significance.

[3 : 52] We are going to be dealing with some issues that I suppose have the tendency to just go over the heads of some people.

And I don't say this to flatter you, but I feel if anybody is going to be able to grasp this, you will be able to.

So let me give you some historical propositions to try to put all of this in perspective, and then we'll look at the first T in the tulip. The very most critical of issues between God and man are going to be on the table here for the next several weeks.

There will be simplicities, and there will be profundities. No issue is as controversial among Christians, and no issue is so vital as this.

And those Christians with whom this is not controversial, they just don't understand the issue. Because if they did, they would make it an item of controversy.

[4 : 59] They would see the significance of it. The epitome of all Bible doctrine is found in what God has communicated through his word. I don't think there would be much dispute about that, regardless of what camp one might come from.

The epitome of all Bible doctrine is found in what God has communicated in his word. Yet, what was it precisely that God communicated?

Removed from the apostolic age, we enter the age of the church fathers. Now, the apostolic age, or the apostolic age, however you wish to pronounce it, simply refers to that era of time wherein the original apostles lived and ministered.

So we're talking about first century realities. If our Lord came on the scene somewhere around 30 A.D., and the apostles whom he selected joined him and lived for the next few decades, possibly John being the one who lived the longest as the eldest, perhaps living up into the 90s, they would have all been in the first century.

But once you remove yourself from the apostolic age, that is, once all 12 apostles that our Lord selected, and the apostle Paul, once they have all died and passed off the scene, then you enter into an historical period that is referred to as the age of the church fathers.

[6 : 43] Now, in a sense, I suppose we could call the apostles church fathers as well. But we are talking about those individuals who came on the scene who were, of course, profoundly influenced by the apostles and by the scriptures, causing them to take the positions that they took.

And the church fathers, of course, are several, and some of them, such as Polycarp and Justin Martyr, were contemporary to and students of John the Apostle, who was the last surviving member of the 12.

Then there were other recognized church fathers, such as Irenaeus and Tertullian and Ignatius and Athanasius and Clement and Eusebius and Papias, and I'm just listing a few.

I suppose I don't even know what the total number of church fathers would be. I suppose scholars would argue over it, but there may well have been 50 or more. These were all influential individuals who were believers, who subscribed to the authority of scripture, who wrote lengthy treatises about scripture.

They wrote commentaries on scripture. They preached the gospel. They were missionaries. They were men, many of them, of great intellect and great dedication to the Lord. They are commonly referred to as the church fathers.

[8 : 06] They all lived and ministered within the first 100 to 300 years following the death of Christ. They are often appealed to for their authority as church fathers, yet they often, and this is really important, while they are often appealed to as an authority, they also often disagreed one with another.

If you are at all familiar with Roman Catholicism, and particularly the rigorous academics, that those who are going to be inducted into the Roman Catholic priesthood, their training, teaching, etc., they make frequent appeal, reference to, incite the church fathers.

They spend huge amounts of time studying the writings of the church fathers, and many of them, of course, are able to quote them extensively.

So why is it that the church fathers often disagreed among themselves about the interpretation of scripture? Why is this?

Have you ever asked yourself, why were not the scriptures written in such a way as to avoid the ambiguity that we find in so many passages?

[9 : 39] Why didn't God inspire the scriptures so that everyone reading it would just get the obvious meaning that was intended up front, without all of the ambiguity and the possibility of it meaning this, or the possibility of it meaning that?

Why wasn't it inspired in a more deliberate, straightforward way, so as to head off all of the potential arguments and wrangling about it?

Why don't the text say, more specifically, exactly what is meant? Why the ambiguity? Have you ever thought about that? Don't you think that the spirit of God could have eliminated a lot of human disagreement, wrangling, studying, accusations, charges, counter charges, etc., if everything had been spelled out in scripture very, very explicitly?

Just kind of written like an insurance contract. Have you ever read an insurance contract lately? You won't find anything more tedious or more boring than that.

And I am satisfied that while the spirit of God could have done that, inspiration brought scripture into existence in such a way that that would not be a reality.

[11 : 10] And I think it is deliberate. The scriptures are communicated to us in a way that requires diligent comparison and study and linking this with that so that you just don't get it all when you go through it.

Someone has said that the Bible is like a novel and it's depicting the story of redemption. And it is. It is. It is like a novel.

But it is utterly unlike a novel because once you read a novel, you've got it. You know by the time you finish that novel that the butler did it or whatever.

And all the mystery is removed. It's not like that in scripture. There are areas of passage, passages that are open to legitimate disagreement.

And there are places where it could mean this or it could mean that. And I am convinced that is by design. God did it that way deliberately so that it would require diligent study and comparison on our part.

[12 : 25] And when you talk about differences of opinion that arise and camps that are formed from those differences of opinion, well, some have a lot more influence than others.

And this is largely what we're talking about. I told you at the outset, the reason I am bringing this series and revealing to you how my personal position and interpretation of some of these great truths has changed, it's all due to influence.

We all influence each other. Each generation is influenced by another generation. And that's just the way human nature works.

But as regards influence, one was yet to arise on the scene who would arguably be appealed to the most often and quoted with greater confidence than any other.

And his name is Augustine of Hippo, or as some pronounce it, Augustine. However you pronounce it, we're talking about the same man, whether it's Augustine or Augustin.

[13 : 37] Just based on this man's writings alone. Some 15 extensive volumes. And this was back in the days when people had to write with great labor and great diligence anything that was going to be written.

And Augustine had to have had an absolutely out-of-sight intellect and IQ. He was definitely a very brilliant man. He was a bishop of Hippo City in North Africa.

And he was tremendously influential. Over several centuries, men of influence and giftedness have arisen. They were influenced by their predecessors.

And they themselves would profoundly influence those who came after them. And perhaps the most notable of these was, as I've mentioned, Augustine. A fourth century philosopher and theologian.

He lived between the years 354 and 430 A.D. This means Augustine has been dead for nearly 1600 years.

[14 : 48] But his influence is profound and it remains. Now, for a lot of people, and I say this because it just irritates me to no end. It irritates me because I get irritated when I know what people deprive themselves of and what they could be enjoying and understanding.

But they just, just write it off. Hey, this old guy's been dead 1600 years. What could I possibly care about anything he had to say? He's long gone. History. Who cares?

You know. But if you don't understand that history is the only viable explanation you have of the present.

And the future will be determined by the present. This is the way it works. This is the way it's always worked. Every generation is influenced by the generation previous to it.

And if you want to know how we got where we are and the meaning of it, you have got to study history. It is terribly, terribly important.

[15 : 55] We are talking about the history of humanity. We are talking about God's dealings with humans over the years and decisions and paths that were taken that have influenced and produced where we are and what we are right now.

Everything in our past has gone into the mix and it has all turned out what we have now. Not just here in our country, but worldwide.

And we need to appreciate that and understand it. Among Augustine's greatest admirers was John Calvin.

Calvin was a contemporary of Martin Luther. Another, these were reformers in the 16th century. And that which they wanted to reform was the Roman Catholic Church, of which they were a part. They were both priests in the Roman Catholic Church. The church had fallen into massive corruption, both morally, financially, and politically.

[17:02] In many respects, the Roman Catholic Church had corrupted itself, much like the Jewish religious establishment had corrupted itself, that which existed during the time of Christ and Paul the Apostle.

Judaism, when Christ came on the scene, had fallen into an abysmally low level of religiosity, formalism, etc.

And there was little in it that could commend itself to the true worship of God at all. And this is the scene that Christ walked into. This is also what John the Baptist walked into.

There was a priesthood in Israel that was in place only because the Roman government put it in place. It was a traitorous kind of priesthood.

They were turncoats to their own people. They had cushy positions and perks and benefits that were given to them by the Roman Catholic, or by the Roman, not the Church of Rome, but the government of Rome that dominated them at the time.

[18:17] And they had just taken advantage of the people, and it was just a sad, sad situation. These are the people that John the Baptist called, you generation of vipers.

It is not nice to call people that. You sons of snakes. That's what he called them, because that's the way they were behaving. Who warned you to flee from the wrath that is to come?

And he really lowered the boom on. And when you read what Christ said to these religious establishment figures in the encounters that he had with them, you whitewashed sepulchers.

A whitewashed sepulcher is that which looks pretty good on the outside, but do you know what it is inside? It's full of putrefying, decaying, dead bodies, as rank and foul as they can be.

That's what you are on the inside. And that's how Christ described the religious establishment of his time. That's exactly the kind of shenanigans that were going on, only these were not Jews.

[19:23] This was the Roman Catholic establishment at the time. This is what Calvin and Luther and Melancthon and others sought to reform.

They loved this church, did not want to leave the church, wanted to clean it up. The only problem was the church hierarchy liked itself just the way it was, and they weren't about to change anything. So, the Reformation was impossible. Nothing remained to be done other than separation. And this was the start of the Reformation. And out of that Reformation, the Protestants came.

The Protestants were people who stood up in opposition to what vile excesses were taking place in the Roman Catholic Church and denounced them and revealed them and preached against them. And they were soon labeled a sect of Protestants because they were always protesting something. Only today, someone said we put the emphasis on a different syllable and we call them Protestants.

[20:42] But it's exactly the same thing. And it all began because of the excesses that were taking place in that church. Each new generation has at least a slight edge over the previous when it comes to the acquisition and implications of knowledge.

Every generation from time immemorial has benefited and built upon that of the previous. Augustine and Calvin, 1100 years later, extolled and insisted upon a view of God's sovereignty that virtually eliminated man and man's choice in the issue of human salvation.

This idea necessitates the total depravity of man or the inability of man. And that's where we're going to start today because this is a really very, very critical issue.

And why should you be concerned about it? Because it concerns you. It has to deal with you. It has to deal with you and your personal relationship or lack thereof to God for all eternity.

Not just here and now, but for that which is to come. And so much of this centers around this term, total depravity.

[22:02] Now, we have just briefly given you the meaning of tulip. This is called the tulip. And by the way, Calvin did not originate the tulip.

This was something that was devised by his followers many years after his death. And what they did is they took the central tenets of Calvinism and saw that they kind of arranged themselves into an acrostic of spelling tulip.

And these are referred to as the five points of Calvin. This is not all that Calvinism is about, but these are the biggies. And if you understand this, you'll understand the essence of Calvinism.

And these points are embraced today by all who would consider themselves Calvinists. And that would include virtually everybody in the Reformed Church.

That would include most Presbyterians. Although a lot of Presbyterians today don't even know who John Calvin was. I mean, they're just not, you know, they're not terribly educated.

[23 : 15] And the same is true of Baptists. And the same is true of people in non-denominational churches like ours. Because so many people today, once they have a personal relationship with Christ, they think that's all that matters.

They don't care about anything else. And you need to care about everything else. Because it's all part of the mix. And you need to see how all of these things relate and interrelate in order to have a better appreciation and understanding of everything.

Of life. Of everything. So, these five points comprise the tulip. And they are total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints.

These five points comprise the bulk of the teaching of Calvinism and what it really is about. And I want to deal with the very first one.

That's the T in total depravity. Because everything that follows is dependent upon that. And rather than total depravity, I would refer to it as total inability.

[24 : 33] Total inability. Augustine, who influenced Calvin more than anybody else.

And there probably wasn't anyone that came after but wasn't influenced by Augustine. This term, total depravity, was formulated to express the idea that man in his fallenness is completely unable to do anything to render himself acceptable to God.

God. The word depravity, I think, conveys the wrong meaning. But it's the one that's most commonly used. When you think of somebody being depraved or totally depraved, you tend to think of the dregs of society, don't you?

Somebody who is really a real gutter snipe is somebody that's totally depraved. But that's not the meaning of the term at all.

And that's not the way we ought to refer to it. Let's think of it in terms of total inability. That is, man in his fallen state does not have the capability even to respond to stimuli.

[26 : 09] Morally or spiritually. He is totally unable to respond. Consequently, if man is going to be saved, God has to enable him to respond.

Otherwise, he cannot be saved. And this total inability or total depravity finds its playing out in the very next item of the tulip.

And that is the U, which is unconditional election. And these actually have to, really all five of them have to be served together. So, we're going to see the connecting links between them.

But because man is totally unable to do anything to affect his salvation, that is why his election has to be unconditional.

What do we mean by election? We mean selection. We mean God picks certain individuals for salvation. They have nothing to do with it.

[27 : 22] Absolutely nothing. They are totally unable to do anything. God picks them or selects them. And he does so unconditionally.

That means it isn't in connection with their behavior or lack thereof, their belief or lack thereof or anything else. We do not know what the criteria is for God electing anyone.

He has reserved that to himself. But Calvinists believe that if it were not for God selecting or electing individuals completely apart from themselves, nobody would be saved.

So, the only way that God could guarantee and assure the election of any or the salvation of any is if he has everything to do with it from start to finish and you have nothing to do with it.

And I mean nothing. Now, this is the Calvinist position. And many Christians today and down through the years have had real difficulty with this because they feel that there is a necessity for belief.

[28 : 38] There is a necessity for faith. There is a necessity for responding to what God has done in Christ. But the Calvinists come back and say, no, wait a minute. You can't respond.

You don't have the ability to respond. And they use the analogy of physical death. And on the surface, it sounds somewhat plausible.

We all know that when someone is physically dead, they do not have the ability to respond to any stimuli. You can call their name.

You can sing to them. You can threaten them. You can do whatever you want. But they're dead. They're not going to respond. Because the ability to respond is not within them. They're a corpse. They can't respond. They are utterly, totally helpless. And the analogy of the physical is brought over into the spiritual.

[29 : 35] And the Calvinist says that just as a corpse is physically dead and cannot respond, you, as a human being, in Adam, are spiritually dead and you cannot respond.

So, even if God were to call you, you can't answer. You don't have the ability to answer. It just isn't within you. Nobody does. So, what God has to do.

Now, I'm not saying this is what I believe. I'm saying this is what I used to believe and this is what I taught. In order for God to be able to save anybody, He has to, first of all, make them alive.

He regenerates them. They are the elect. Those whom He regenerates. How does He decide whom to regenerate? We have no idea.

All we know is that the individual had nothing to do with it. God did not see something in you that made you appealing or attractive to Him. So, He decided on that basis to make you alive.

[30 : 51] That isn't the way it works. And the reason I am convinced, and I've read, I don't know how many volumes on this over the last 50 years, but I've read a lot about it, and I'm convinced that the rationale for this and the desire for this is to exalt the sovereignty of God and to downplay the responsibility of the individual.

And in doing this, I'm sure that our Calvinist friends feel that they are really, this is one of their ways of really giving God all the credit.

I mean, He gets all the credit. You get zilch. You don't have any credit. God gets all the credit. And it is thought that in seeing salvation this way and human election this way, it elevates the absolute sovereignty of God, that He is totally sovereign over everything.

And when you made a decision for Christ, you think you did that. You didn't do that. He did that for you.

You didn't have the ability to do that. So, their thinking is that spiritual life, which God breathes into the individual and makes you alive, you receive life from Him.

[32 : 18] And having received life from Him, that is what gives you the ability to believe. So, you believe because you have life.

Now, that's a very, very important point. Many Christians respond to the idea of election, and they try to settle it this way. They say, well, we are elect according to the foreknowledge of God, predestination, etc.

And what this means is that God looked down through the ages to come, and He knew what you would do when you were confronted with the gospel.

He knew that you would believe, so on that basis, He elected you. But our Calvinist friends would say, no, that is wholly inadequate, because that still has salvation originating with the individual, and the individual choice, and God makes His choice based on your choice.

And, of course, they repudiate that idea. So, the issue is, at what point are we made alive? Now, what the scriptures seem to teach, but I always previously found a way around it, I don't find a way around it anymore.

[33 : 38] Well, what the scriptures really, I think, are teaching, and the position that I'm taking now, is one that even on the surface seems quite obvious, and that is that belief precedes life.

We believe, and as a result of believing, we are quickened, or made alive in Christ. So, it is just the reverse order of what Calvinism says it is.

And this means, then, of course, that those who oppose this idea of Calvinism and unconditional election, we are saying that man, even though he is totally unable to commend himself to God, he is totally unable to do something that God would approve of, and thus accept him, he is not unable to respond.

He has the ability to respond. So, what we're talking about is spiritual death. How dead is dead? If you carry the physical analogy over into the spiritual, and you embrace that as the Calvinists do, then you're pretty much locked into their conclusion that you will not respond, you cannot respond, because the ability to respond isn't within you, unless God chooses you and makes you alive.

The question is this. Can you carry the analogy of physical death over into spiritual death? Nobody argues with the fact that a corpse does not respond to any stimuli.

[35 : 25] It doesn't matter what it is. Heat, cold, noise, or anything. Dead is dead physically. Does it work that way spiritually? And what is the definition of spiritual death?

Well, the only biblical definition that I can come up with as regards spiritual death and what it is, it doesn't have to do with a cessation of existence or an inability to respond to stimuli.

I think the scriptures regard spiritual death as separation. James chapter 2 says, The body without the spirit is dead.

Spiritual death is not an inability to respond to any stimuli. Spiritual death is separation. When Adam and Eve rebelled against God in the garden, and they took upon them this sinful nature, they became separated from God.

Emotionally and spiritually separated from God. And they tried to separate themselves from God physically. Remember? They hid from Him. And He sought them out.

[36 : 48] They were coming from a period, from a place of spiritual death, where they were separated from God, and no longer enjoyed the connection or the fellowship that they had previously.

But I think it is a mistake to equate spiritual death and physical death. And if what I am saying is true, and I believe it is, because this is what I'm teaching now, you say, Well, Mark, you believe what you taught before, too.

How do you know this isn't wrong? Well, all I can say is, over the last 40 years that I've been studying this, I've come to some new conclusions. And that's why I am retracting now what I taught earlier, because I just don't feel that I can support it.

So, what I am saying is that we are spiritually separated from God. But that does not mean that we have no capacity to respond to God.

Because if we do not, if we do not have the ability to respond to God, I do not understand how there can be any accountability.

[38 : 04] We can be accountable only for things for which we are responsible. If we are not responsible, we can easily say, Not my fault. I couldn't help it.

It was beyond me. I am not responsible. In the passage that we read earlier, if you will look at your scripture sheet again, in the text that we read this morning, from Romans 1, and the...

1, 2, 3, 4, the fifth phrase down, in bold print, Through whom we have received grace and apostleship. To what end?

To what end? What's the purpose, Paul? To bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for his name's sake.

Now, what this is implying is that the Gentiles were living in a sphere of disobedience from the get-go.

[39 : 17] That's where they were. And it was in order to bring them, the Gentiles, these are non-Jews, in order to bring Gentiles from the sphere of disobedience to God to obedience to God.

God raised up Paul, the apostle, and gave him this message to preach to the people. Now, the question is, these people to whom Paul is going to preach this message, do they have the ability to respond?

And our Calvinist friends would say, of course, and you know, one of the big objections to Calvinism is, well, if what you say is true, if God has elected people, they are going to be saved regardless, because that negates the necessity for preaching the gospel, and our Calvinist friends would come right back and say, no, that gives us an even greater impetus to preach the gospel, because when we preach the gospel, we can assume that there are some people out there who are elect, whom God has already made alive, and when you proclaim the gospel, they will believe, because they have the ability to believe, because they are elect, and there are others out there who will hear the message, and they will reject the message, and the reason they're rejecting the message is because they're not elect and they can't believe.

So you preach the gospel, and there are some who will believe, and as you read through the scriptures, just about every time the gospel is preached, guess what? There are some who believe, and some who don't.

And the Calvinist would say, aha, those who believed were elect, those who didn't, weren't. So, to what extent do we have the ability or the responsibility to believe?

[41 : 04] And that brings us to this question. to bring about the obedience of faith. Once one has exercised personal faith and trust in Jesus Christ, it does impact their life.

It does make a change in their life. God does not save us to leave us like he found us. Christ comes in and makes a difference.

Makes a difference in our worldview, makes a difference in our attitude, makes a difference in our value system, and all of these things come into play. And, that would simply indicate that this obedience that is being spoken of here, this obedience is a result of faith.

Because you obeyed, or because you believed, you now enter into a sphere of obedience from disobedience. In other words, once you become a believer, you clean up your act.

things change. Different values, etc. Old things passed away, new things have come, and this obedience is a predictable result of having faith.

[42 : 20] That's a possibility. Or, and you know when I talked earlier about the ambiguity of scripture, why does it have to go so it could be either way?

Why can't it just be one? Well, we've got that perfect situation here. Does the obedience of faith mean that faith or believing is the obedience that is in question?

In which case, that means that everyone who is an unbeliever is living day by day, hour by hour, whether they know it or not, whether they believe it or not, if they are an unbeliever, they are living in the sphere of disobedience.

And when they believe, that belief is an act of obedience. And that is what Paul is getting at here.

To just bring them from disobedience to obedience, and you do that by proclaiming the gospel, and they believe. And the moment they believe, they move out of the sphere of disobedience into the sphere of obedience.

[43 : 36] And it's interesting that Paul opens his epistle with this in chapter 1 and verse 5, through whom we have received grace and apostleship, and this is the reason we did.

It is to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for his name's sake. Now, look down near the bottom, the second paragraph from the bottom, and this is found in Romans 15.

It is interesting that Paul opens Romans with this issue, and he closes Romans with this issue, as if he wants to remind them at the closing of his letter what his ministry is all about.

And he says, for I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed.

Is this sentiment that I just read connected with the one we read earlier up near the top of the page in Romans chapter 1?

[44 : 43] Well, I think it's a virtual repeat. I think he's saying the same thing. He's emphasizing the same thing. Now, I want you to turn to Ephesians chapter 2, and I'll leave you with this thought, and we'll pick it up here in our next session.

Ephesians chapter 2. And let's begin with verse 1.

To whom is Paul writing? Ephesians. What about them? They're Gentiles. They're not Jews.

They're Gentiles. And he tells them as he opens chapter 2, you Gentiles, you people there at Ephesus, you were dead in your trespasses and sins.

Now, I think we can assign to this verse spiritual death. He's not saying you were physically dead, but he is saying you were spiritually dead. In other words, he's saying you were separated from God.

in which your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons or the offspring of disobedience.

[46 : 20] among them, we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath even as the rest.

But God being rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ.

By grace you have been saved. Well, we've barely scratched the surface, but I trust that you can see how important the issue is. It is very, very important.

Bottom line is this, God is sovereign, no question about it, but man is responsible, no question about that.

I do not believe that the time is ever going to come when anyone stands before their maker and says, it's true. I didn't believe on the Lord Jesus Christ because I wasn't able.

[47 : 27] I wasn't elected and I wasn't empowered to do so. Couldn't help it. Not my fault. I am not responsible. And yet, according to Calvinism, they are still going to be judged for their unbelief

when it seems that they had no choice but unbelief.

So, where is the justice in that? I frankly fail to see it. I think bottom line is this, God's sovereignty extends to the length that he was not willing that any should perish.

So, what did he do about it? He gave his son so that none would needlessly perish. And, as a result of that, he has incorporated a message to be proclaimed and an offer to be made to people that they are able to respond with their volition.

It seems to me, if a man does not have the capacity to say yes to God, neither would he have the capacity to say no to God.

But, we all know that it works that way. It works both ways. We are accountable, we are responsible, and we are going to be held accountable for our belief or our lack thereof.

[48 : 57] I do not believe anyone will be able to say, I couldn't believe because I wasn't made alive, didn't have that option. We do have that.

And, this point I want you to consider. perhaps the most priceless thing that God has given to human beings is human volition.

That becomes the very basis for accountability is we have the capacity to make choices, to choose one thing over another.

That's what makes us accountable. And, if God is going to remove human volition so that choice, human choice is no longer on the table at all, it seems to me he has to effectively override that premier gift that he has given to man called human volition.

I do not believe he has done that. I think that God goes to great lengths of long suffering today to protect the volition that he gives to us as individuals.

[50 : 06] It is only because of God's long suffering that he does not move in and override man's volition, especially when it comes to some of the heinous acts that he commits, some of the perpetrations of genocide and things like that.

The only reason that God doesn't step in and intervene, and sometimes he does, very rarely, sometimes he does, but the reason he doesn't in the main is that he allows man to take his natural course is because God respects the volition that he has given to us, and he's going to hold us accountable for our use of it.

These are really weighty things, and I know I've waxed on and on about this, but it's been a burden on my heart, and I want to reverse this thing, I want to clarify, and you know something?

Let me just share this with reading over, I'll give you the essence of this next week, in reading over some of the principles of Calvinism, and especially in connection with Augustine's confessions, which is a pretty brilliant piece, Confessions of St. Augustine, guess what else he wrote? not just the confessions of Augustine, but the retractions of Augustine.

[51 : 34] I thought, wow, Augustine had retractions? Yes, he did, and he said that he wanted to clarify these things before he passed on, I thought.

Wow. On that, let's stand, please. Father, you have given us your word, and we are accountable and responsible for taking it in, and for reaching the conclusions that Scripture dictates, and we want to be a people who are like the Bereans, search the Scriptures.

We respect the intellect, and the spirit, and the effort of men like Augustine, and Calvin, and Luther. these were tremendous individuals, and we want to give them their due, but we recognize that they are not God, and they cannot speak with the authority of Scripture, nor can we.

So we just pray that you will give us inquisitive minds that will diligently search these things out, and try to reach a conclusion that is solidly based on the authority of Scripture.

[52 : 46] Scripture. Thank you for the patience of these people, and for their willingness to engage this study, and we pray that it will be not only profitable, but very practical as well.

In Christ's name we ask it. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.