

Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

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[0 : 00] The passage we'll be looking at this morning does have a number of references to divine sovereignty.

And this morning we'll be looking at the first chapter of Ephesians, and we'll be reading verses 1 through 12 in chapter 1 of Ephesians.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.

In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

[2 : 01] In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished on us.

In all wisdom and insight, He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention, which He purposed in Him, with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose, who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end, to the end, that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.

Thank you. In this particular passage, as well as in some of the other passages that will follow in Ephesians, we discover some of the most profound and deep theological truths that are anywhere in the Scriptures.

and it is safe to say that great theological minds down through the centuries have held varying points of view regarding these.

[4 : 03] I cannot stress too much what is at stake, because the principal thing that is at stake is that which concerns us most, and it has to do with the manner in which we are brought into a relationship to the God who made us.

Hence, our eternal destiny is at stake as it is set forth in these passages. So, what I intend to do this morning, and this will be primarily by way of introduction, because it will take some time to really get all of these things on the table, and I would urge any of you, if for any reason, that you are not going to be able to get the complete series because you're going to be away for whatever reason, part of the time, that you be sure to get the CD that will deal with the subject matter that you missed, because it could be a very critical part that you are missing if you are not here.

So, please attend to that. I'm going to give you some propositions upon which we will be basing the series that we'll be following, and these things need to be gotten on the table as well, so you'll know exactly up front just where we are coming from.

This is very basic in some ways, very basic material, and yet, in some ways, it's very, very deep. We're going to be talking about some of the themes that are in here, predestination, election, foreordination, etc.

I know that some of those terms are kind of scary, and we automatically think they're over our head, but they are really not that difficult to grasp, and we will be breaking them down, and I think that utilizing the overhead will simplify it even more.

[5 : 58] So, for the record, let me state these propositions, if we may, and we'll get underway. Passing on the truth that we have learned to others is the God-ordained manner of evangelizing

and of spiritual instruction following salvation.

In other words, my calling, the calling of every pastor, is supposed to be to take in the truth of God, digest it ourselves, understand it ourselves, then disseminate it, and give it out to the flock.

That's the way the principle works. It isn't just the New Testament truth. It was done that way in the Old Testament as well. This is the basic means of instruction for believers.

However, giving out this spiritual instruction is predicated upon what we have learned and are passing on is, in fact, true.

If it is based upon a true and proper understanding of Scripture, then, of course, what we pass on is true.

[7 : 14] But, is it based upon a true and proper understanding of Scripture? If not, what else could it be based upon?

There's only one thing left. And that is, it's based upon a misunderstanding of Scripture. And how do we arrive at a misunderstanding of Scripture?

It's very simple, I can assure you. From within our own mind and from the minds of others who themselves misunderstood Scripture and still passed it on to others.

And in almost every instance, this was done unintentionally and unknowingly. But it is still done. Because believing something to be true, however passionately we believe it to be true, is no guarantee of its truthfulness.

Sincere intentions do not matter. What is not true does not become true because our motive or intent was sincere when we proclaimed it.

[8 : 32] If it was wrong, it's wrong. And believing it doesn't make it so. And being honest and sincere about it doesn't make it true.

Every preacher, and I've shared this with you in the past, but it is so important and germane to this that it bears repetition, every preacher I've told you through the years has two great fears, or at least should have.

One is that people will not believe what he says. And the other is that people will believe what he says. They are both very legitimate concerns.

For pastors, to stick with what the scriptures say, is no problem at all. The problem is not with what the Bible says, but in what it means.

Interpretation is key and critical. And the proper interpretation of scripture is not obtained, as some would suggest, by simply praying over a passage and asking God for light.

[9 : 45] I've done that plenty of times. But that doesn't mean that's the way we get light. In fact, while it may sound somewhat spiritual to say, well, I know that's what it means because I prayed about it and that's what God revealed to me.

The fly in that ointment is the fact that you've got another pastor in another church around the corner who may have prayed over that passage longer than you did. And he came up with a different conclusion.

What do you do then? The understanding and interpretation of scripture is not gained by praying over it. And God hasn't promised to reveal the truth of the passage to those who do pray over it. Not that there's anything wrong with praying for guidance and direction when we come to the scriptures. All I'm saying is that is not a replacement for hard intensive study investigation and comparing scripture with scripture.

While praying about it may sound a lot more spiritual, it may in fact be something that we ought to give second place to.

[11 : 02] The scriptures are for our study and investigation. and if the proper interpretation could be gained simply by praying about it then I would be in favor of that.

Some think that's what divine illumination means but that isn't what it means at all in my estimation. It is the spirit of God that has inspired the word of God. The revelation that we have has come to us through the spirit of God inspiring men who wrote the word of God.

And the manner in which we are to discern its truth is by careful comparison of scripture with scripture and not using as a cop out something like well I know that's what it means because I prayed about it.

You know when somebody says that it kind of ends the argument because to argue with them it would be the same as arguing with God himself when they say God revealed this to me.

Well my response to that is maybe he did getting into the scriptures and comparing scripture with scripture and allowing the Bible to be its own best interpreter and in light of that we have shared with you a number of times and encouraged you to have your own copy of this and have it readily available Miles Coverdale of 1535 it shall greatly help you to understand scripture if thou mark not only what is spoken or written but of whom and to whom with what words at what time where to what intent with what circumstances considering what goes before and what follows after this is the sanest thing that I have ever read for the interpretation and the understanding of scripture and as I've often said there were only some way that we could get all of the clergy to key on this particular emphasis so many of the things that divide Christians would simply disappear overnight because this to me is the way that truth is arrived at the proper and the right meaning and understanding of scripture is that which was in the mind of the writer when he was inspired of

[13:17] God to write it that is the meaning of the passage and it is often obvious and yet at times it is not at all obvious requiring considerable study and comparing all of scripture with all of scripture the Bible was inspired and given of God in such a way that a mere reading of it does not convey an automatic understanding of it as I've said it requires careful and thoughtful consideration and comparison this is the study of scripture and several months ago we developed a series I don't recall now how extensive it was but we spent several sessions on it dealing with the issue why do Christians disagree doctrinally how is it that good people intelligent people well intentioned people who really seek to know the meaning of scripture and they love the

Lord just as much as you and I do and yet they arrive at completely different interpretations than what we see the scriptures teaching and on the basis of those interpretations and the amount of followers that these people are able to gather behind them whole denominations are formed positions are taken divisions are made and who knows how many different denominations sects splits splinters whatever we have right here within this nation much less throughout the whole world and in virtually every one of those cases the founders who promulgated those doctrines and teachings did so out of a sincere desire to communicate truth they really believed that what they were communicating was true and yet we know that they cannot all be true now it may be that they are all wrong but they can't all be right because logic simply will not allow for that so somebody has to be wrong

I have never taught anything in the 40 years that I've been here at Grace I have never taught anything that I believed to be untrue such of course would be deplorable and unconscionable but I want you to note carefully I did not say I have never taught anything that was not true I didn't say that I have never taught anything that I did not believe was true and of course I still feel that way about it and I should and any pastor who doesn't ought not to be in the pulpit because to consciously and deliberately teach something that you know is not true defeats the whole purpose of the pastorate and I've told you from time to time that I'm confident

I teach some things that are not true simply because I'm human and my understanding of even the basic things of scripture can be wrong learning is nothing more than a perpetual ongoing search for truth that's what learning is it's the only way we can weed out error is to overcome it with truth this presupposes of course the existence of truth in general and moral truth in particular so we are to be always on the hunt and when you find something you know you have believed to be wrong what must you do about it you must repent of it you must change your position and do what you can to correct any damage caused by it somewhat embarrassing of course it is involves a public retraction involves a kind of built in apology but is there anything worse than having to admit publicly that you have been wrong about something that you taught as true several years ago is there anything worse than that there sure is and that is the refusal to do so we all have image problems ego problems but tell me now haven't you always suspected right along that your pastor was less than perfect didn't you have some sneaking suspicion of that well

I am going to confirm your suspicions so I thought about this long and hard before I decided to do it and one of the things that troubled me and I'll let you know what that was this okay Marv so you're saying your position regarding election foreknowledge predestination etc you've reversed yourself and now you say that what you taught us years ago was not true okay what else have you taught us that is not true that's a very legitimate logical question and my answer is

[19:47] I'm looking I'm on the hunt I am forever trying to discern things that I may have taught that were not true and you know this is one of the advantages of a lengthy pastorate because if you're in a pastorate like a lot of places you're there for three or four years and gone you never have a

chance to correct anything or to make it right so having been here as many years as I have I do have an opportunity although I must admit that it does somewhat concern me that there are a number of folks to whom I taught these things years ago and they're not here now some of them have moved out of state some of them have moved to another church some I about over the next few weeks as we discuss these areas because so far as you are concerned so far as any human being is concerned these things could not be of greater importance so

I would encourage and enlist your very careful and undivided attention as we engage these matters and the overhead is set up here and I don't know of a better place to begin other than right at the beginning and this will give you an idea of where we've been and where we're coming from and essentially this has to do with two great theological camps that have existed for several hundred years and they go back at least to the times of Augustine Augustine was a fourth century church father he was obviously a very brilliant individual he was in North Africa and as a young man demonstrated extreme cognitive abilities and intellectual abilities and he grasped things quickly but as a young man he was also given to a very profligate and wanton lifestyle and it concerned his mother a great deal and by the way his mother

Monica was a believer and she prayed fervently for her son Augustine and one day he announced that he was going to Rome of course Rome was the center of the world at that time and the motivation that he said he for going to Rome was because he just wanted to experience everything engage in everything and sin if you will to his heart's content and there wasn't anything that was available anywhere that wasn't there in Rome so his mother prayed fervently for him as he went off to Rome but when he got to Rome eventually he came across a man by the name of Ambrose and Ambrose was the bishop of Milan in Italy and of course we are talking about a virtually almost entirely Roman Catholic concept as Christianity existed at this time and this is fourth century stuff and eventually

Augustine was led to a saving knowledge of Christ by Ambrose bishop of Milan and he began giving himself to intensive study and investigation of the scriptures and eventually years later he became the bishop of Hippo and very influential he ended up writing the city of God and the confessions of Saint Augustine and they are real treatises of tremendous intellect and thought and it is obvious that Augustine was one of the most brilliant individuals of his day maybe one of the most brilliant men who ever lived I don't think that is too much disputed and Augustine perhaps more than anyone else developed the concept surrounding the doctrine of election and essentially it was a desire to set forth the absolute sovereignty of

God and I don't know that anybody was ever better motivated or more sincere than a man like Augustine he saw some concepts of God that probably none none of us see and it caused him to come to these conclusions and one of the areas that most profoundly affects all of us is this area of unconditional election or sovereign election and in essence it says this that God is so sovereign so in charge of everything that it is he and he alone who decides who is ultimately going to be saved and who is going to be lost and the way he determines that is that he makes the choice we don't know what criteria he used to make the choice we are confident and

[26 : 21] Augustine emphasized this that God's choice of individuals whom he elected to salvation had nothing whatever to do with their merit or their desserts or their station in life or their morality or anything else we are not told on what basis God made his choice we are just told according to Augustine that he makes the choice you don't and you never did and boiled down what this means is if you are one of God's elect you will be in heaven with him throughout eternity if you are not you won't be it doesn't make any difference what you believe how you live or anything else that has nothing to do with it in other words God is in complete control of everything in essence you do not have any say in the matter at all none if you are elect you will be saved if you are not elect you will not be saved and it doesn't make any difference what you believe or don't believe this he believed no doubt was necessary in order to make

God the absolute sovereign and in trying to investigate this as thoroughly as I can and as limited as I can with a finite mind that I've got and one that I'm sure would not begin to compare with Augustine's it it it does put all of the emphasis on God but at the same time it seems to detract from or completely negate any human responsibility for anything it very much smacks of puppetry on the part of man so from the get go you are either predestined to heaven or you are predestined to hell and what you think about it say about it or do about it doesn't make any difference it is God's decision and God's decision alone that's called unconditional election and it is the second part of

the tulip now this is famously reduced to the word tulip simply because of the way it works out I'm sure that Calvin himself probably never heard of tulip and he didn't develop it but his followers did down through the years and it just so worked out that because of the doctrines involved it spells the word tulip what oh okay well put that down and the T of the tulip means total depravity total depravity is the doctrine that man is so corrupt that he is absolutely unable in any way shape or form to respond to anything spiritual he is dead in trespasses and sins and if he is dead he can't respond he does not have the ability to respond so the

Calvinist position and by the way I'm using Calvin and Augustine kind of interchangeably because Calvin didn't come along until the 1500s and he too was a Roman Catholic priest John Calvin embraced the teachings of Augustine and by the way in the Catholic church today there is the Augustinian order named after Saint Augustine and Martin Luther was an Augustinian monk he was of that same order so Augustine was kind of like the patron saint of the Augustinian order and in the Roman Catholic priesthood there the Benedictine order from Saint Benedict there's the Augustinian order from Saint Augustine there's the Franciscan order from Francis of Assisi all of these have their various church fathers and different orders in the Roman Catholic priesthood are named after these men and taken into them well

I don't remember which one exactly it was that John Calvin was I wouldn't be influenced by Augustine and not only that but just about every other Christian theologian was too there was such an endearment and such a high and holy respect for the mind the intellect and the conclusions of Augustine that no one would dare contradict him or go against him and why does anybody today and why does a puny upstart like Marv Wiseman living in the 21st century who does he think he is to go up against the likes of Augustine and Calvin well I feel much like the apostle Paul I who am less than the least of all saints to me is this grace given and by no manner of form would

[32 : 11] I put my intellect against Calvin or Augustine I mean I know my place and it isn't even close to these guys but I do have one enormous advantage that they did not have and that is I have almost a couple of thousand years of history that I can draw upon that they did not have these men Augustine Calvin men like that they were trailblazers they didn't have the benefit of the information that we have that we've obtained over the last few hundred years so that's one thing that really tips it in our favor total depravity simply means and I'm just going to go through these and we'll define them more carefully later total depravity simply means that because man is dead in trespasses and sins he is spiritually unable to respond even if

God should call him he can't answer because and the analogy that is used is that you can sit beside the coffin of a corpse and issue all kinds of orders to them and they will not obey any of them because they don't have the capability of doing it they're dead and the analogy of physical death is brought over to spiritual death and the assumption is because man is spiritually dead in trespasses and sins he can't respond either so in order for anybody to respond God has to make it possible for them to respond and he has to take the initiative in that because not only are you spiritually dead you don't even know you're spiritually dead you don't even know enough to care that you're spiritually dead so what God does is he quickens you he makes you spiritually alive you may not know when it happened you may not know where it happened you may not know how it happened you may not even know that it happened but he does and based on his selection of you the criteria of which we do not know was used he quickened you or made you alive and that gave you the ability to respond when you heard the gospel and the thinking is that life precedes belief you will believe on the

Lord Jesus Christ because you have been made alive and you are capable of doing so so in the Calvinist scheme the Augustinian scheme salvation begins with God for reasons of his own choosing you as opposed to somebody else and he made you alive he quickened you in your spirit and then that enabled you to believe when you heard the gospel now throughout scripture and we will see this the order is just reversed the Bible makes it quite clear that you believe and life is the result and we will see a number of passages that convey that the order is important so what they do is they reverse the order and why would they do that once again it is to extol the sovereignty of God your salvation begins with

God's electing you you had nothing to do with it you need to understand that that's the Calvinist position you were chosen in him and that's why you responded to the gospel and you were saved you had nothing to do with it that's the Calvinist position essentially and that's what unconditional election is all about unconditional election is another way of saying God chose you without you

without any apparent justification for doing so that's what makes it unconditional election in other words there were no conditions for you to meet that would result in God's choosing you it's unconditional he just chose you because he chose you well why should he choose me we aren't told there's no place in scripture where we are told why he chose anybody we're just told that he did and the

Calvinist Augustinian response was God has his reasons but he's not obligated to share them with you they are secret things that belong unto the Lord and consequently this means if we are totally depraved and cannot respond but then we are unconditionally elect in Christ this also focuses on a limited atonement and what that means is simply this Christ died on the cross for the sins of the elect and the elect only only those who ultimately are chosen by God in Christ are going to be saved and they are the only ones for whom Christ died now this would constitute probably a very small percentage of the world's population what about all the rest of the people well

[38 : 19] Christ did not die for them when he died on the cross he died only for the sins of the elect and their thinking is this way that if Christ died for the sins of the whole world every single human being then all of those people who end up ultimately lost and unsaved are people for whom Christ died for nothing they see the wastefulness in the atonement of the death of Christ and they are convinced that God's efficiency would be much greater than that that God would not allow Christ to die on behalf of a whole lot of people who ultimately end up perishing apart from Christ that would be unthinkable and their remedy is for all of those who perish outside of

Christ he didn't die for them anyway so there is nothing lost on the part of the efficacy of the death of Christ that means a limited atonement and it simply suggests exactly what it says the atonement was limited now what about passages like and he is the propitiation for our sins and not ours only but also for the sins of the whole world what do you do with that we'll see there are some very slick maneuvers and ways of getting around it I frankly I thought they were valid at one time but I no longer think so and these are the changes that I'm bringing to you and the I in the tulip is irresistible grace that simply means as it suggests that the grace of

God extended to the individual whom God has elected and has chosen is irresistible that means if you are elect in Christ you will not be able to resist the gospel you will respond to it simply because you have no choice God's greater than you are and God's more powerful than you are and when he presents his gospel to you if you are elect you don't have an option you will believe because you were programmed to believe and you cannot not believe oh you may believe you may not believe at first but eventually you will believe because you don't have any choice he will wear you down and his grace is irresistible so you have no choice in the matter you see each of these again throws all of the emphasis on the person of God and that's what they're really seeking to demonstrate the absolute sovereignty of

God in everything even to the extent of making you devoid of a will because God is in charge and if there is anything that Augustine and Calvin wants to demonstrate more than anything else and they do it through this it is the absolute sovereignty of God and when we define the word sovereignty we simply mean God's absolute total rule over everything not only his ability to do so but his right to do so that's all encompassed in the sovereignty of God he not only has the power and the wisdom he has the right by virtue of who he is to call the shots in everything and he does in everything so all of this is designed to extol the sovereignty of God and then the P has to do with the perseverance the perseverance of the saints and the perseverance of the saints is simply another term for the security of the believer if if you are elect you will persevere because in the first place you have no choice it's

God's doing and God's choosing and you will persevere that means you will be faithful to the end in your faith and in your belief because the perseverance of the saints is guaranteed because of the aforementioned parts of the tulips so all of these things together which is famously referred to and has been for probably the last few hundred years as the Calvinist tulip so now when you hear in conversation somewhere the word tulip connection with Calvinism you'll know what each of those letters stand for acrostically total depravity unconditional election limited atonement irresistible grace and the perseverance of the saints now I personally have never been a five point Calvinist and somebody if somebody adheres to all of these he is referred to as a five pointer or a five point [44 : 05] Calvinist and yet you know when you read some of the writings of Calvin and I've got most of his commentaries and by the way I think he was a wonderful exegete outstanding Calvin he had some quirks about him but don't we all someone said everybody's normal until you get to know

them and Calvin had some quirks about him and some things that were very unflattering and militant wise toward non Christians but he still had a towering intellect no doubt about it and we do not see anywhere where Calvin developed this tulip this is something that his followers have done over the years different theologians etc and when I became a believer 1956 and within a year I was enrolled as a student at Cedarville College it was Cedarville College then now it's a university but this was back before the earth crushed hard and it was just a college but this was a controversial issue there and there were kids and faculty

Calvinism and predestination and all the rest and nothing has changed they still do and these arguments go on all the seminaries and all the colleges all over the country and if you are a five point Calvinist you are in pretty heady company and some of my heroes were five point Calvinist how many times have you heard me talk about Charles Haddon Spurgeon he was a five pointer I mean he bought the limited atonement thing too and don't you think that I am going to think twice before I am willing as an upstart to contradict Charles Haddon Spurgeon you better believe it didn't come to these changes easily but

I never was I never was a five pointer I never could buy this because there are just too many places where scripture will not allow for it I just cannot say that God so loved the world of the elect that he gave his only begotten son so that whosoever is elect should not perish but have everlasting life I just can't do that and when you say in first John 2 2 and he is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole elect world it isn't there and I don't think it's fair to put it there now they don't go so far as to write it in but they say but that's what it means it means the world of the elect but could not the spirit of

God accurately conveyed what he meant so that it wouldn't be ambiguous at all in my estimation it isn't ambiguous it's quite clear so yours truly has never been a five point Calvinist but for many many years I was a die hard four pointer and probably the greatest reason that I was was because I had and still do have such tremendous respect for those minds and those intellects that did embrace these five points or at least four points I knew how inadequate I was and still am compared to them and their achievements and the books and the commentaries they have written and the respect that they've commanded for so many years why

I just felt like and in some respects still do feel like a slimy little upstart compared to these guys who am I to question what Spurgeon taught but the one thing and you know there are emotional attachments as well the man who led me to Christ out in Ellensburg Washington December 8 1956 was a well read man and he was a four point Calvinist I suspect that sometimes he may have been a five point but he wasn't able to maintain that position he was a four pointer I think as well but I had such great respect for him and I had a deep personal emotional attachment to him because this was the man God used to bring me to Christ and my thinking as a young Christian then was well whatever

[49 : 40] Pastor Harold Sweetland believes about this I have such confidence and trust in him that I know it must be right and I just automatically identified with that and I say that to say this we all have a whole lot more influence over people than we think we do and we really need to be careful how we use it we are all influenced by others how many in addition to myself have been impacted and influenced and in most ways in a very positive fashion by men like Calvin and Charles Haddon Spurgeon and George Whitefield and others that we could name him the way that this information is conveyed is from one person who passionately believes it to others who have confidence and trust in him and they get on board too because if that's what he believes that's okay with me and

I've warned you about that position and you ought not to think that way because here I am right now retracting something that I once said was so and if you bought it then you're wrong too so what has changed my mind and that is when I bought into these positions I was a younger man more impressionable more vulnerable more susceptible to the intellect and the conclusions of these great respected men in the past and I did not have 40 years of scripture study and investigation behind me then but I do now and as a result of being here for 40 years and going through the New Testament verse by verse every now and then these things would surface in my mind and I would say now wait a minute how can this be because I've always thought I've always learned and Spurgeon and Calvin and Augustine and who am I but it just kept piling up and finally I got to the place of where I just could not deny it any longer and I had to come to the conclusion you know what I've been wrong about this I listened to these guys and read these guys and adopted their positions because I had such great respect for them and I'll tell you what honestly I still do I just

because somebody is wrong about something doesn't mean they're wrong about everything and just because somebody is right about something doesn't mean they're right about everything we are all in a state of flux ongoing investigation we all are to be adding to what we know so that we are more and more confirmed in what we believe or we are more and more dissuaded from what we believe now in politics you call these people flip floppers you know every now and then a politician is reminded of but last year you said thus and so and they use that in every way they can to be detrimental against him and

I guess what they're saying is if you're a politician you should never change your mind about anything well that's pretty stupid really because that means for that's not what repentance is repentance is probably needed more by Christians than it is anybody someone thinks if you're a Christian you've already repented you never need to repent again the rest of listen every day goes by I repent about something and all that means is you change your mind you change your mind but you need a basis for changing your mind why should you change your mind because now you know something that you didn't know before

I feel sorry for these guys that go off to Congress we've got you know Jim Jordan here one of our own went off to Congress as a freshman several years ago and I haven't talked to him about this and if he were here now I'd still be saying the same thing but when one is running for office like Congress he takes certain positions in the public he says I'm for this I'm for that I'm not for this I'm not for that elect me and I'll do this and so on this is just standard political fair Republicans and Democrats do it they've always done and always will do it but many times they are speaking on the basis of what they know right now when they're not in office they're running for office but when they get to Washington follows a whole lot of revelations you learn this and you learn that and you learn something else and then you're saying well you know what

[55 : 19] I had to change my position on some things because when I was saying I believe thus and so about this and I didn't know then what I know now but what I have learned since I've gotten here colors my position on that now I'm sure say things negative things sometimes about the president or about congress well how can they be so stupid why did they do this why did they do that and how can he possibly make a decision like that you've got to remember you don't have access to the information that they have and if you knew what they knew you might feel the same way about it that they do but you don't life's learning whether it's theological political or what is all based on the assimilation of information what you get and the reliability of the source and when you consider the source really really reliable like

Augustine or Calvin take it to the bank but it isn't always so they can be wrong too now I'm going to leave you with this question okay Marv so now you're saying you reversed yourself and now you're saying you no longer believe this and so but now you believe this how do we know this is true how do we know you aren't making a mistake in the position you're taking in reversing yourself maybe you ought to stick to your guns and stay with the stuff after all you've got these huge broad shoulders of Augustine and Spurgeon to stand on doesn't that give you some solid ground yes it does yes it does but not nearly as solid a ground as this and I'm sure that Spurgeon and Calvin would be the first to agree this is the only real authority it is not they it is this so this has just been as I said an introduction and we are going to look at these things more carefully and

I think you will be somewhat enlightened and you know what all this is going to be information and you are going to have to process it and reach your own conclusion about these things this is why it is so important to attention to the information that you're getting and the source from which you're getting it and you know this this is so basic and so listen this even goes back to a simple principle in the neighborhood where a mom may say to her kids listen I don't want you running around with those kids why not what's wrong with them they're cool they're a bad influence on you and you know that works in every facet of life from the neighborhood and the kids that you associate with to the crowd you hang out with to the theology you embrace and endorse we all influence each other this is why James said in

James James 2 I think it is my brethren be not many of you teachers knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation I tell you it is a responsibility that I do not take lightly and that's why I'm telling you how I've reversed myself on some of these things now never have been a five point Calvinist always been a four point Calvinist now I've only got two points left my Calvinism has gotten whittled down ultimately the only thing I am really really sure of is that I know I'm saved and I can't be lost apart from that I don't know much so we'll explore these things over the next few weeks

I think you will find them very very enlightening and very comforting too would you pray with me father we recognize that you and you alone are the source of all truth and while we may admire and we do great men great intellects that have gone before they do not compare with what you revealed in scripture and we don't want to be remiss by flying to them rather than flying to the scriptures this is our only really authoritative record and we know that these great men with whom we now disagree in some of these points we know that they would be in concurrence with this as well so for information that we have received and for years of study and conclusions that have been reached we are grateful and we recognize we are still in process we have not arrived we have not even begun to arrive but we trust we are making some progress thank you for what you will be pleased to reveal in

Christ's name Amen