

# Divine Sovereignty II

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Thank you, Gary, and if you were perhaps noticing particularly those passages that we just read, both set forth in bold relief the principles of the sovereignty of God, how that he does that which is in accordance with his own pleasure and goodwill, and at the same time it conveys the idea of human responsibility.

These must be maintained because both are very essential ingredients of the revelation that God has given. God is sovereign. That means he is the absolute potentate.

That means that he is the ruler and possessor of all. It means he and he alone is in complete charge and authority of all that happens, and that truth must be balanced by the aspect of human responsibility.

We are not automatons. We are not robots. We have been bestowed with volition. That means the power to exercise a choice, and we are accountable for the choices that we make.

The scriptures teach both of these, and they teach them very, very clearly. No doubt, however, we do sometimes have difficulty coordinating the sovereignty of God with the responsibility of man, and sometimes we have been beset with the question of where does God's sovereignty leave off and human responsibility begin, and those are not always easy questions to answer.

[ 1 : 3 5 ] So, we have scarcely gotten underway with this new subject matter of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. We are to exercise great comfort in the fact that God is sovereign.

We are also to exercise great diligence in the fact that we are responsible and we are accountable. So far, we have had but an introductory session, and in that session I related how my personal understanding and earlier teaching has changed.

It's not an easy thing for me to admit or acknowledge, because it is somewhat disturbing to the male ego to say, you remember what I taught you back in the 1970s and the 1980s, only to have some reply, yes, Marv, I remember very well.

And then to follow that up by saying, well, disregard that. I was wrong. Not an easy thing to say, but it would be far worse if I were to know it and not admit it.

That would compound it even more. I explained to you how my original ideas and teaching had been arrived at as a much younger man and what I taught you here at Grace Bible Church in the 1970s and in the 1980s.

[ 3 : 0 7 ] Not about everything, but about this one particular thing that we're talking about. And in the main, it has consisted in an about face.

And I'm talking particularly about the concept of Calvinism as we taught it then. Calvinism has five points.

Well, actually, it's very, very involved, but it has been reduced for simplicity's sake to the acronym TULIP, T-U-L-I-P.

And we explained that the TULIP stands for total depravity. The U stands for unconditional election. The L is limited atonement.

The I is the irresistibility of grace. And the P has to do with the perseverance of the saints. Those are referred to as the five points of Calvinism.

[ 4 : 06 ] Calvin didn't actually develop those. He developed a lot of the theology around which those are centered. And adherents have more or less popularized some of the things that Calvin taught by categorizing those as the five main points.

And they all speak very, very clearly regarding God's responsibility and sovereignty and man's responsibility and his accountability.

So these are areas in particular in which my own personal convictions have changed. But I want to explain to you the rationale for the change.

Because it's very, very important. Very important. And what I am going to share by way of an explanation applies to the whole of life and in every sphere of life and in every subject, not only in spiritual matters, but in political matters, in academic matters, in just about every sphere of life you can think of.

These principles by which I came to adopt a position that I later rejected are very important.

[ 5 : 21 ] Very important. The way I arrived at these positions in the first place that caused me to teach what I did regarding Calvin and these doctrines is largely due to the undeniable and inevitable influence that people and their positions have upon the rest of us when it comes to forming our opinions.

This has always been so for good or ill. And you know where it begins, of course. It begins in the home. No one has greater influence on children than parents.

Parents begin educating and teaching their children at a very early age before they're even out of diapers. Principles of right and wrong, values, norms, standards, ethics, and everything else.

They begin communicating these things to their children. We do so as a responsibility of parenthood. It is one of the primary jobs that we have as parents.

However, a diligent heart does not guarantee that what is communicated is truthful or is wise.

[ 6 : 45 ] We all know there are examples of excellent parenting. There are examples of horrid parenting. Those of us who have the highest regard for the Bible as the Word of God would all like to think our positions are derived from what the Bible clearly teaches.

And this may or may not be true. Probably some of each. The problem is, there is that which the Bible teaches.

And there is that which men say the Bible teaches. And they are not always the same. Sometimes they are poles apart.

Those seriously regarding the Bible of necessity believe they are teaching what the Scriptures teach. And no one is questioning sincerity.

No one was more sincere in his persecution of early believers than was Saul of Tarsus, who later admits to having done it.

[ 8 : 07 ] But he said, I did it ignorantly and in unbelief. But Paul, or Saul, really thought he was right.

The night that Christ was betrayed, when he established the Lord's Supper, had that final meal with the disciples, Jesus turned to the apostles and said to them, The time is coming when men who kill you will think they are doing God a service.

And that's exactly where Saul of Tarsus was coming from. When he sought to root out these fellow Jewish believers who had embraced Jesus as the Messiah, He saw them as a cancer on Judaism.

And he took it upon himself to wipe them out. And the only thing that prevented him from completing the task was that dramatic Damascus Road experience that not only changed Saul of Tarsus forever and converted him into Paul the Apostle, but it changed the direction of untold millions or billions who would come after him through the efforts of this man, Paul the Apostle.

Out of respect for the intellect and the ability and the reputation of men we admire, we sometimes adopt the conclusions they have reached about the teaching of the Bible.

[ 9 : 49 ] After all, they are supposed to be the experts. They are supposed to know what they're talking about. And if it comes from the sacred desk, can't you put it down as true?

After all, they are the authorities. And this, of course, is placing undue confidence and trust in the conclusions of good and godly people that is not warranted.

It would be a wonderful thing if a man could just come to the pulpit and really want, diligently want, to teach nothing but the truth.

And that desire absolutely guaranteed that everything he said would be 100% true. But it doesn't work that way.

And what this means in part is, however authoritative or respected you may have as a man in the pulpit, that does not dismiss you from the responsibility of exercising the brain that God has given you and the volition that goes along with it to search these things out for yourself.

[ 11 : 08 ] So let's go for a moment at least to Acts chapter 17. And you'll see this age-old principle that is a favorite passage of believers, particularly believers of the grace persuasion, all over the globe.

And you know what we're talking about. Very familiar in Acts chapter 17. But I just want to establish the principle and get it on the table as an official item.

Acts 17, and may we begin with verse 10. This is an event that occurred on Paul's second missionary journey.

He has just penetrated into the continent of Europe. Prior to that time, the gospel had been confined to Asia Minor.

Now, with Paul crossing over as a result of the Macedonian vision, come over into Macedonia and help us. Macedonia, of course, is northern Greece. And when they crossed over that slim body of water, the Bosphorus there, and entered Europe, it wasn't long until they are in verse 10 of Acts 17.

[ 12 : 25 ] And here's what we read. And the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. And when they arrived there, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

And that, of course, was standard operating procedure for Paul because he knew when he went to the synagogue, he would have an educated audience to address.

He knew that in the synagogue there would be a congregation of Jews. And these Jews would be very, very familiar with their scriptures, the books of Moses, the Psalms, the prophets, etc.

He would be talking to people who were already up to speed theologically and doctrinally. They had been worshipers of the one true God, Jehovah, as opposed to all of the pagan deities that the others worshipped.

So Paul knew he could go in there and he would be on the same level with them. He could communicate with them. He could use terminology in expressing himself theologically, and they would get it.

[ 13 : 33 ] They would know exactly what he's talking about. They had a reference point. However, when he goes to Athens, beginning in verse 16, and there he addresses, and I'm not going to take the passage, but I just want to show you the contrast.

He addresses the Athenian philosophers on Mars Hill, and these are a bunch of intellectual Greeks who have no knowledge and no appreciation of the Jewish Old Testament at all.

And what's more, they probably don't want any. They were all steeped in Athenian philosophy. They were already steeped in the teachings of Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, great philosophical minds, great thinkers, great concepts, great ideas, and they would go to the Areopagus up on this hill, and there all day long, they would pit their intellects one against another in debates and argumentation and everything eloquence that went with it.

That's the group that Paul is going to address on Mars Hill. But he can't speak to them like he would speak to his own fellow Jews in the synagogue because they don't have the Old Testament frame of reference.

They wouldn't know what in the world he was talking about. So he uses an entirely different approach. And if you want, you can read in your leisure the approach that Paul took in chapter 17.

[ 14 : 58 ] He doesn't go back into the Old Testament and deal with the kind of things that he does when he's talking to the Jews in the synagogue. So let's read on here. We are in Acts 17, and we read that he went into the synagogue of the Jews in verse 10.

Now these Jews here at Berea were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica.

Noble-minded means they were more considerate, more open, more available to new information, they had minds that were not closed, but minds that were open.

Some minds are closed and bolted shut. But these minds are willing and able to consider something contrary to what they had always believed.

That's got to be very refreshing. Because many people are not like that. They are closed-minded. And these people, these people at Thessalonica were closed-minded, and they are contrasted with these folks at Berea, because we are told that they received the word with great eagerness.

[ 16 : 18 ] Now that doesn't mean that they bought it all. Doesn't mean that they were naive, just some kind of intellectual pushover, so that they were suckers and believed every new line that came along.

Not at all. But it does mean that they were intrigued, they were fascinated, they wanted to hear more. And look at what they did. They received the word with great eagerness, examining the scriptures daily.

Now the only scriptures they had was the Old Testament. What we are reading from here in the New Testament didn't even exist then. All they had was the Old Testament.

But, when Paul stood up and made his delivery about the person of Jesus Christ, and who he was, and who really sent him, and what he did, what he accomplished when he died on that cross, these people looked at each other and said, Can this be?

Is this right? Is this man on track with this? What did you say that reference was again? Psalm what?

[ 17 : 35 ] Let's look that up. And they would look it up. And many of the references, we aren't told exactly what references Paul used, but we do know that he preached Jesus was the Messiah.

And the Old Testament is loaded with messianic references to the person of Christ hundreds of years before he was ever born. But, they couldn't make sense of him.

They didn't understand him. When they would read one of the Psalms, it says, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies a footstool. What in the world does that mean?

The Lord said to my Lord, What kind of double talk is that? And Paul explained it. This is a reference of the triune nature of God.

And this is the Father saying to the Son, who is equal in deity, Sit thou, my Son, at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.

[ 18 : 35 ] What? Are you kidding me? Can that be what that means? And when Jesus was encountering the scribes and Pharisees, he said, You know, it is an interesting expression.

How is it that the Son of David, the Messiah, Jesus said, Jesus is saying to the group, I understand that you do not believe that I am the Messiah.

I understand that. I know you do not think I am the one sent from God. But tell me this. When the Messiah does come, whose son will he be?

And they said, well, he will be David's son. He will be the son of David. No question about that. Scriptures make that very clear. That the Messiah will come through the line of Judah.

And David the king has been dead and buried a thousand years. But when the one who is the Messiah comes, he will be the son of David. And they all agreed on that.

[ 19 : 47 ] They just didn't agree that Jesus of Nazareth was the son of David. But he was. And you can see it for yourself in the genealogies of Matthew chapter 1 and Luke chapter 4.

He is unquestionably a direct descendant of David the king. And then Jesus goes on to say, well, now, if the Messiah is going to be the son of David, how is it that David calls him Lord?

And you know that had always been a conundrum to the Jew? Reading that hundreds of years before. If David wrote it, and he probably did, a thousand years before the Messiah came.

How is it? What is this? Is this some kind of double talk? How is it that David's son can also be David's Lord?

That doesn't make any sense. And it didn't make any sense to the Jews who read it. And I am confident that this is probably one of the several portions that Paul gave these Jews in the synagogue at Berea.

[ 21 : 06 ] And all at once the light started coming on. Wow. This is really... Is this guy for real?

Is this true what he's saying? Because, as the truth plays out, Jesus Christ really is the son of David.

And those who welcomed him on his entry into Jerusalem were right on when they said, Hosanna! Hosanna to the son of David!

They had it right. And yet, he is David's Lord? How can he be the son of David born generations later, a thousand years, and still be David's Lord?

It's because he was before David. In the same way that he was before Abraham in 8.58 of John. Before Abraham was, I am. Before anybody was.

[ 22 : 15 ] He is the I am. And that little passage, this is probably another... I'd love to have known the details of what Paul preached in the synagogue here. We aren't told what it was, but I have to believe that he touched on these messianic references.

And unto us, Isaiah said in chapter 9, Unto us a son is given. Unto us a child is born.

Is that the same way of saying the same thing twice? No! Unto us a son is given. He doesn't say a son is born.

A son is given. What's the difference? Huge difference. Because the son was never born. And when the scriptures refer to him as the firstborn, that's not firstborn in time.

That's firstborn in rank or station. Joseph. Joseph was Jacob's firstborn son.

[ 23 : 32 ] Well, no, he wasn't. Reuben was the firstborn. And then Simeon.

And then Levi. Where did Joseph come in? Joseph was number 10. He wasn't the firstborn son. But in rank or station, Joseph was elevated above all the others and was given the coat of the inheritor.

And that's what rankled the brothers, all of whom were older and jealous because they'd all been passed over for supremacy. Daddy gave it to his pet, Joseph.

Joseph. Joseph was his firstborn in rank. And that's the way Jesus was firstborn, not in point of origin.

In point of origin, he had no point of origin. He always was. But, as the son was given, the child was born.

[ 24 : 39 ] Isaiah says, and it's a beautiful thing. I can't help but believe that Paul pointed that out. In his deity, Jesus never came into being because there was no time when he was not.

But in his humanity, he very obviously had a definite beginning. And it was with the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem. So don't mix them up.

Don't think the son was born and the child was given. Oh, no, no, no, no. The Spirit of God is very precise in assigning these. It is the son who is given, the child who was born.

Jesus was given in his humanity, in his deity. He was born in his humanity. So, I'm sure I can just see these Jews in this synagogue here at Berea.

Bring out that other scroll. We want to check this. And they were looking and flipping these things furiously and looking into this. It's a beautiful thing. Nothing takes the place of examining the Scriptures.

[ 25 : 52 ] They were examining the Scriptures daily. Daily. They would have their sessions. Can we meet here again tomorrow at the same time? Yeah, I'll be here. No, I can't make it.

I've got to work. Blah, blah, blah, blah. Well, I'll be here. And they all got together and they come every day to see whether these things were so. Listen, it doesn't matter what Paul the Apostle says as regards his opinion or his ideas or anything else.

All that matters is what he says backed up with Scripture. Now, if Paul was the authority then just write it down.

Everything he says is fine. But he's not the authority. And Paul would be the first one to tell you he's not the authority. God is the authority.

God is the only authority. So they are going to the Word of God and they are looking to see whether these things were so. And look at verse 12. And many of them not all of them because many were not convinced many were still holding up.

[ 27 : 06 ] Many were saying I'm not persuaded. I don't buy it. But many of them therefore believed along with a number of prominent Greek women and men.

But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the Word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also.

Now they're not concerned and upset because the Word of God had been proclaimed. Nothing wrong with that. But what upset them and concerned them was that the Word of God was proclaimed by Paul because Paul is going to put his take on it.

And that's what concerned them. they came there likewise agitating and stirring up the crowds.

You know truth wherever it's proclaimed truth always has a hard road to hoe. Always has.

[ 28 : 16 ] And the reason is because error is so prominent. There's a lot more error out there than there is truth. about everything.

Two plus two is four and that's the truth. Do you know how many erroneous answers can be given to that same equation?

It's almost infinite isn't it? Someone has said that a lie can get clear around the world while the truth is still putting its boots on.

That's true. Lies just permeate. And they were stirring up the crowds and then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea and Silas and Timothy remained there and so on and so on.

well this passage is all about influence in people propagating information that is received and assimilated and accepted or rejected.

[ 29 : 37 ] This is all of life and it works this way in every sphere in the home, in the neighborhood, in politics, in religion, in academia. This is all about the expression of information and the persuasive powers of people to sell an idea or a concept.

And sometimes people buy it, sometimes they don't. We all need to be Bereans. Question, aren't we supposed to have an influence and persuasiveness about us?

Isn't that a good thing? Certainly, of course. And this is what compounds the problem.

Because we are dependent somewhat upon the ability and the persuasive power of people to explain ideas and concepts and to sell it, if you will.

This is the way every movement, every cause, every idea, this is the way it spreads. This is the only way it spreads. These are the only legs that it has.

[ 30 : 52 ] It's the expressions that human beings give to ideas and concepts and they throw them out there and people either get on board or they scrap it. And you usually have some of each, and just about every con, there are some of each right here this morning.

There are some of you who are listening with rapt attention to what I'm saying. There are others who think, how much longer has this got to go to one? It's that way in every audience. No reason why it should be any different here.

People are influenced because we all have volition, and the appeal is to the will, because I know you've got one. And I am charged to direct it and to try and channel it in a certain way.

And I am supposed to be doing that because that is God's way. Question is, is it? The answer, not always.

Not always. That's why I've had to reverse myself, as I said earlier about some of the things I taught you about Calvinism in the 70s and 80s.

[ 32 : 05 ] God's love. So, what you hear from Marv, from this pulpit, you take it with a grain of salt.

You don't buy it because I say it. You buy it only if you can check it with the scriptures and find that it comports with what the word of God says. And if it doesn't, you have an obligation to not only reject it, but you have an obligation to let me in on it because I want to know too.

People are influenced. We are all subject to being influenced. People spend billions and billions and billions of dollars just to influence you.

But wait! Call in the next 15 minutes and you get that. every day, day in and day out. You know what they're trying to do?

They're trying to appeal to your will. They know you've got a volition and they know you've got a credit card. And they want to get to both of them. That's the way it works.

[ 33 : 17 ] Someone has said, all advertising is legal lying. And the more I watch their commercials, the more I'm thinking, you know what? That's pretty much right on.

All advertising is legal lying. How come that thing, how come that miraculous thing you sent for, which they would double the order and send you to them, how come it never works for you the way it works for that guy that does it on TV?

Man. We are all subject to being influenced. Personality and likability of a teacher is highly influential.

And admiration of a teacher's intellect is extremely compelling, whether in a university classroom or a pulpit.

If you like the guy, you're more apt to listen to what he says. And you're more apt to buy it. And if he has a charismatic, persuasive personality, you just kind of automatically believe that everything he says is true.

[ 34 : 26 ] it may not be true at all. He may be that guy behind the curtain who's working that machine, you know, when he says, pay no attention to the man behind the curtain, Dorothy.

Yeah. Human powers of persuasion have moved continents and entire generations of humanity, powerfully, sometimes positively, with wonderful and powerful benefits, and sometimes negatively, with devastating and direst of consequences.

Example, Paul the apostle and the gospel he preached with the writings of the New Testament he was inspired to pen. The benefits and eternal consequences of Paul's influence are eternally incalculable.

Generations and civilizations have been impacted through the influence, the human influence of this man, Paul the apostle.

I know God was behind it, but God is pleased to use and choose human vessels, not because he's limited to them, not because he has to, but because he chooses to.

[ 35 : 53 ] And humanity is enormously blessed and honored to be a vehicle that God chooses. Negatively, the influence works the same way.

Powers of persuasion, influence, work the same way. the likes of Karl Marx, Lenin, and Stalin resulting in the wretched deaths of 50 million plus of their own countrymen.

To say nothing of the power and influence persuasive ability of Adolf Hitler, Hitler, who caused another 50 million people to die in World War II, most of whom were not military.

They were civilians. 50 million. Adolf Hitler had a captivating, persuasive way about him.

you see him delivering those fiery speeches at Nuremberg and other places, and tens of thousands of Germans, intelligent people, stood out there in that crowd with their Sieg Heil!

[ 37 : 27 ] Sieg Heil! They were into it. I mean, this guy was charismatic and persuasive and influential, and they just, bought it. That's the power of human influence.

And to a lesser degree, that captivated my mind and heart when I was a young man in my twenties as your pastor at the time. I had my heroes who had great persuasive ability, Spurgeon.

to this day, I'd give my right arm up to about here to have heard Spurgeon preach just one sermon. He must have been something.

And the guy left behind shelves, loads of books. This is a man who had his Sunday sermons printed on the front page of the London Times newspaper on Monday morning.

Can you believe that? He had a way with the English language and a way of expressing it that just brought thousands of people to hear him.

[ 38 : 44 ] And he'd never been to seminary even. It's amazing. How are you going to gainsay that something that somebody with that kind of popularity and persuasive ability has, how are you going to say, ah, Spurgeon, eh, he's all wet?



Well, I didn't. I jumped on the bandwagon. If that's what Charles Spurgeon believed, that's good enough for this. Huh.

Calvin? Augustine? Are there greater intellects that have existed anywhere that can compare with the IQs of St.

Augustine? and John Calvin? Who is this theological pipsqueak to say that anything that these intellectual spiritual giants say is wrong?

You just buy it. You want to be in good company, don't you? You want to be in the majority, don't you? Sure you do.

[ 39 : 51 ] Well, given humanity's checkered past that has emitted great quantities of both light and darkness, the amazing power of influence of one or a few on great masses and generations of people is established without fear of contradiction.

words mean things and people utter words to people who hear words and they get the message whether it is true or not.

Politically, this rages on about us every day via the media and political campaigns of all parties and it's all about influence because if you don't influence them toward you, you won't get their vote.

It's all about influence. Sometimes the charge is even leveled influence peddling and it affects all parties.

Sadly, it often has nothing to do with what is true but only what you can convince people is true.

[ 41 : 18 ] It doesn't have to be true. Just get enough people to think it's true and you get the same result. Do you see how that works?

And does it ever work? Does it ever work? on many occasions, the speaker may be fully aware that what he is saying is clearly not true but that doesn't matter if he can persuade a significant number of people that it is true.

It doesn't necessarily have to have anything to do with the truth. It's just perception. Can you sell the idea?

can you make them think it's true? Now, of course, the speaker is coming from one of two positions and we're talking about politics or religion, it doesn't matter.

He's always coming from one of two positions. He's either just flat out lying and he knows he is lying which is absolutely despicable and unconscionable but it happens.

[ 42 : 36 ] And then there is the other where the speaker really thinks he's saying what's true but it isn't true. And that was Saul of Tarsus. And he said, I did it ignorantly and in unbelief.

I was really stupid about this. I thought I was right but I was really wrong. Oh, man, I was convinced I was right but I was wrong. I want to leave you with this one reference in 2 Corinthians chapter 4 and it is so very, very important.

Take this home with you and chew on it if you will. 2 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 3. Well, let's start with verse 2. And since verse 2 is so good, we'll start with verse 1.

Therefore, Paul says, since we have this ministry, this ministry that had been given to him as an apostle, as we have received mercy, in other words, he is saying, I am on the receiving end of the mercy of God, we do not lose heart.

That means we don't give up, we don't throw in the towel, we don't quit, but we, Paul and his colleagues with him, we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness, that is, not living a duplicitous lifestyle, or adulterating the word of God.

[ 44 : 07 ] Why would anyone adulterate the word? That means change it. That means add to it or take from it. That's what you do when you adulterate something, you contaminate it.

Why would anyone do that? Well, it's very simple, because you want to influence people. You want to make the word of God say what you want it to say, and make them think that that's what God is saying to them.

Then you'll get their cooperation and their obedience. But if they think it's just you, well, they may not go along with it at all. But if you can convince them that this is what God says, oh, well, if you go against that, that's going against God himself.

not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, even if our good news is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.

This is, it is veiled to those who are in the process of spiritually dying as I speak, and they don't even know it. that's those who are perishing, in whose case the God of this world, none other than Satan himself, has blinded the minds, that means the thinking capacity, the powers of logic.

[ 45 : 31 ] Man's power of logic and intellect is warped by the fall. We all reason with a warped logic.

This is precisely why the grace of God is rejected by so many. It is not humanly logical. And it isn't. It isn't.

It is humanly illogical to think that you can receive eternal life just by believing on Jesus Christ as your personal Savior without doing anything, without giving anything, without promising anything, without attending anything, just simply believing and thrusting yourself upon the finished work of Christ.

No works, no merit, no dessert, no anything. Just simply by faith alone. That does not compute with human logic.

Human logic says you have to work at it, you have to try harder, you have to be deserving, you have to do good deeds, you have to attend this, you have to give that, you have to do this, you have to do that. That's logical.

[ 46 : 44 ] Nothing logical about grace. It's completely illogical to humanity, but it's very logical to God, and that's all that matters.

Wow. Influence. Power. It's all part of the mix, and every time you hear a message, and every time you hear a TV program, every time you hear a TV commercial, every time you hear a politician speak, every time you are part of an audience for anything, somebody is trying to influence you.

Beware. Keep your guard up. Use your brain. Don't put your brain on the shelf, no matter how much you like the guy.

make it comport with Scripture. Questions or comments will take five minutes if there are any.

Anybody? Got a roving mic back there? And by the way, as you probably are well aware, I did not get to the T in tulip, which deals with total inability or total depravity, but next week we trust we'll do that.

[ 48 : 01 ] Is there a quick question or comment? Anybody? Anybody? Well, if there are no questions or comments, that means you are thinking dinner.

So let's stand. Shall we stand? Father, we are aware of the awesome, awesome responsibility of communicating to people with the intent of influencing, and yet this has an honorable and an admirable side to it because we are called to do this very thing.

We are called to speak the truth in love, and we are also called to beware of error because there's so much of it out there.

We want to be Bereans, and we confess that there are times when we are too readily influenced, when we ought not to be.

We are too eager to buy something. Sometimes it's because we're just mentally lazy ourselves, and we don't want to take the time and trouble to check it out, so we just buy it, and we ought not to do that.

[ 49 : 15 ] We are so grateful that you have given us your word, this revelation, that we can search and compare scripture with scripture, and like these wonderful Bereans, see whether those things spoken are really true.

Each of us, because you've given us volition, has a responsibility to do that, and we want to be diligent in fulfilling it. Thank you again for this marvelous book that we have.

We bless you for it, in Christ's name. Amen.