

THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE

INTRODUCTION

Irby Wallace, III

✉ irbywallace3@gmail.com

🌐 ponderingthefait.com



What are the Doctrines of Grace?

- They are the way we describe man's condition both before and after the fall and how God saves man from their fallen condition
- The doctrines of grace are a *soteriology* (a study of salvation)
- The doctrines of grace are usually associated within Reformed Theology, often called Calvinism
- Though John Calvin was a major influence during the Reformation, he in no way was the only theologian influencing the theology of the Reformation nor did he invent these doctrines

Doctrines of Grace and Baptist in America

- A vast majority of Baptist Churches in the American colonies around the time of the Revolutionary War and after were churches that held to Reformed Theology
- Those churches were called Particular Baptists because they held to a particular atonement view
- The other types of Baptists were General Baptists who held to a general atonement
- As the Baptist denomination spread into the southern regions where we live, the Particular Baptists were the dominant type of Baptists in the South

Doctrines of Grace and Baptist in America

- Early American Baptists adopted the *Second London Baptist Confession of 1689*
- In the *Second London Confession*, Baptists utilized the Presbyterian's *Westminster Confession*, correcting it where correction was needed
- As American Baptists began to make their own confessions, their confessions were very reliant upon the *Second London Baptist Confession*
- Some of these Baptist confessions were the *Philadelphia Confession* (1742) and the *New Hampshire Confession of Faith* (1833)
- Additionally, before the SBC wrote the *Baptist Faith and Message*, SBC seminaries and most SBC churches held to the *Abstract of Principles* (1858) which was influenced by the *Second London Baptist Confession*

To TULIP or Not to TULIP

- In modern times, the doctrines of grace are often summarized by an acrostic called T.U.L.I.P.

T – Total Depravity

U – Unconditional Election

L – Limited Atonement

I – Irresistible Grace

P – Perseverance of the Saints

To TULIP or Not to TULIP

- TULIP is a summary of the *Canons of Dort* which were a response to the Armenians' (the followers of Jacob Arminius) *Articles of the Remonstrance* in 1610
- TULIP was invented in the early 1900s and was not used before then
- Since the invention and popularization of TULIP, many Christians who hold to Reformed Theology will refer to themselves as “4-point Calvinists” or “5-point Calvinists” (sometimes even “3-point Calvinists”)
- This kind of language is new to Reformed Theology

To TULIP or Not to TULIP

- The reality is that TULIP is **not** a sufficient way of summarizing the doctrines of grace
- Reformed Soteriology is much more vast than what these 5 phrases can accomplish
- TULIP is another type of “soundbite theology” where we try to summarize complex topics into short statements
- These statements are often hijacked and straw-manned by opponents of Reformed Soteriology and have created much confusion for people on these doctrines
- A Calvinistic Baptist can preach in a church that would consider itself “anti-Calvinistic” and never use any of the words associated with Calvinism and they would receive numerous “amens”

Doctrines of Grace

- As such we will be covering the following doctrines of grace:
 - The Holiness of God
 - Creation, Fall, and Nature of Man
 - God's Foreknowledge, Predestination, and Election
 - The Atonement
 - Regeneration
 - Justification, Faith, and Grace
 - Sanctification
 - The Preservation and Perseverance of the Saints
 - Glorification

Complication and Disagreement

- It is no secret to anyone who is a Baptist that these doctrines have been a hot topic recently in our area and will continue to be into the future
- Why? There is a mystery woven into soteriology that Christians have major differences about:

God is absolutely sovereign and man is completely responsible. We have no idea how those two things work together.

Complications and Disagreement

- As for me, I am completely convinced from scripture of the things I will be teaching in this course
- You may not end up agreeing with me and that is perfectly fine
- At least by the end of this you will understand why I believe the way I do

Preliminary Questions

- Why did God save you?
- Did you deserve to be saved?
- Does God owe grace to anyone?
- Does God have to save anyone?
- Does God have to save everyone?
- Does God have to offer salvation to everyone?

Sovereignty and Providence

- *Sovereignty* is God's right and power to do whatever He pleases
 - God is the absolute ruler of the universe and it is within His rights to do as He pleases with what is His
 - Think of how an earthly king has the right to rule over the boundaries of his kingdom, he has sovereignty over all within that kingdom
- *Providence* is the way in which God brings about whatever He pleases
 - While God is the absolute ruler, He is also holy, wise, loving, merciful, and just
 - His providence is the way He rules over what is His
- Providence is the way in which God expresses His sovereignty

How sovereign is God?

- Non-Calvinists are fine with God's sovereignty except when it comes to man's will around salvation
- Let us think about all the areas that non-Calvinists are accepting of God's sovereignty:
 - In Creation and the sustaining of His Creation (you cannot even take a breath without God providing it)
 - God has a plan for your life and has already numbered your days
 - God is sovereign over everything we do and everything happens for a reason
 - The death of a child
 - Tragic natural disasters
 - Tragic accidents

How sovereign is God?

- Let us think about all the areas that non-Calvinists are accepting of God's sovereignty:
 - They are fine with the fact that "every knee will bow and every tongue will confess" (Phil. 2:10-11), even though that will be against that person's will
 - In the New Heaven and New Earth, all sin will be wiped away and we will not longer be able to sin meaning that something will happen to our "free will"
 - They are fine to pray and ask God to save someone even though they do not believe that God can go against their will
 - Some will even believe a person can only be saved if God draws them and they cannot come to God on their own knowledge and power
 - They believe that a Christian cannot "lose their salvation" even if that believer wanted to because God has sealed them forever

How Sovereign is God?

- The two major areas of tension are:
 - The sinful state of mankind
 - Whether we are saved because God chooses whom He will save or because we choose Him
- These two areas of soteriology are impacted by how you read scripture and define some of the words in scripture
- Additionally, your entire soteriology will be changed by how you view these two areas of doctrine
- This is why we call things like Calvinism a *soteriological system* because each part works together to form a whole system of beliefs