Steve Whitacre

**SESSION 1: What Is It, Why It Matters[[1]](#footnote-1)**

1. **WHY THIS CLASS?**
2. The The purpose of this class is: to introduce and review some aspects of Reformed Theology so that we might better understand how *God saves sinners through Jesus Christ* and how that makes *saved sinners live for the Savior.*

“*She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”* (Matthew 1:21, ESV)

“I believe… in one Lord Jesus Christ… who **for us men and for our salvation**, came down from heaven…”[[2]](#footnote-2)

1. Three Primary Goals:
	* 1. Goal One: To God Be the Glory Forever.

“*Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.*” (Romans 11:33–36, ESV)

“What is the chief end of man? Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

* + 1. Goal Two: To Understand What Scripture Says. We want to ask: what does Scripture say? Particularly, we’re here to understand what Scripture says about the roles of God and man in salvation.

“It is not the goal of systematic theology to impose on the Bible a system derived from a particular philosophy. Rather its goal is to discern the interrelatedness of the teachings of Scripture itself.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

* + 1. Goal Three: Transformation. The study of Scripture and doctrine ought to never be a merely intellectual exercise.

“*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but* ***be transformed*** *by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*” (Romans 12:1–2, ESV)

1. **WHAT IS REFORMED THEOLOGY?**

One way to describe Reformed Theology: 5 “solas”

Scripture alone (*sola Scriptura*)
Faith alone (*sola fide*)
Grace alone (*sola gratia*)
Christ alone (*solus Christus*)
Glory to God alone (*soli Deo Gloria*)

**A DEFINITION: A Bible-based, God-centered view of salvation: a salvation that originated in the sovereign grace of God, that was won by Christ through his death, applied by the Spirit in the new birth, and received by faith for the glory of God alone.**

Calvinism vs. Arminianism.

* + 1. Jacob Arminius (1560-1609). A Dutch theologian who, along with “his followers [the Remonstrants] stressed the free and therefore self-determining will of man.”[[5]](#footnote-5)
		2. John Calvin (1509-1564). A theologian who ministered in Geneva for most of his life, Calvin’s teaching on the sovereignty of God in salvation has been used as shorthand for the view that “salvation is by grace from beginning to end.”

		We need to be wise about titles like Calvinism and Arminianism.

“*For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not being merely human? What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God’s fellow workers. You are God’s field, God’s building.*” (1 Corinthians 3:3–9, ESV)

1. **THE CLAIMS OF ARMINIAN THEOLOGY**

The Remonstrance (1610)

1. Conditional election. “God elects or reproves on the basis of foreseen faith or unbelief.”[[6]](#footnote-6)
2. Indefinite atonement. “Christ died for all men and for every man, although only believers are saved.”
3. Human ability. “Man is so depraved that divine grace is necessary unto faith or any good deed.”
4. Resistible grace. “This grace may be resisted.”
5. Defectible grace. “Whether all who are truly regenerate will certainly persevere in the faith is a point which needs further investigation.”

“At the heart of the Arminian position lies the insistence that divine sovereignty must somehow be accommodated to human capability.”[[7]](#footnote-7)

1. **THE FIVE POINTS OF CALVINISM**
2. The Synod of Dort *(1618-1619)*
	* 1. Total depravity (radical depravity). “Rather than signifying that the unregenerate person is wholly evil in everything he does, total depravity teaches that nothing he does is ever completely good… In this sad and perversely sinful state we have no inclination to see God, and therefore *cannot* seek him or even respond to the gospel when it is presented to us.”[[8]](#footnote-8)
		2. Unconditional election (unconditional election). “‘Unconditional’ indicates that this decision is made apart from anything God might foresee in the sinful creature. If election were based on anything that the sinner might be or do, then ultimately salvation would depend on human merit… Faith in Christ is not the cause of election but one of its results.”
		3. Limited atonement (particular redemption). “What Reformed people want to say by these words is that the atonement had a specific object in view, namely, the salvation of those whom the Father had given the Son before the foundation of the world, and that was effective in saving those persons.”
		4. Irresistible grace (efficacious grace). “God’s grace is irresistible and invincible; the Spirit never fails to accomplish his saving purpose in the mind, the heart, and the will of God’s chosen people.”
		5. Perseverance of the saints (persevering grace). “The perseverance of the saints really is the *preservation* of the saints, for their perseverance depends on God’s preserving grace.”

Note: this is *not* the order of the original Canons of Dort. These doctrines were originally ordered: Unconditional election, limited atonement, radical depravity/effective grace, and perseverance of the saints. Another way to think about the doctrines of TULIP:

* Sovereign grace conceived (unconditional election)
* Sovereign grace merited (particular redemption)
* Sovereign grace needed (total depravity)
* Sovereign grace applied (irresistible grace)
* Sovereign grace preserved (perseverance of the saints)[[9]](#footnote-9)

“To fully appreciate the glory of God in the doctrines of grace, it helps to recognize the role of each person of the Trinity in the Five Points of Calvinism. Elections is the choice of God the Father. The atonement is the sacrifice of God the Son. The grace that draws us to Christ and enables us to persevere to the very end is the work of God the Holy Spirit. Thus salvation is all God’s work from beginning to end—the coordinate work of the triune God—as it must be, if we are to be saved. Consider: ‘if we are actually dead in our sins (radical depravity), then only God could choose us in Christ (unconditional election), only Christ could atone for our sins (particular redemption), and only the Spirit could draw us to Christ (efficacious grace) and preserve us in him (persevering grace). Therefore all praise and glory belong to God alone: ‘For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever!’ (Rom. 11:36).”[[10]](#footnote-10)

1. **REFORMED THEOLOGY FOR REAL LIFE**
2. What reformed theology does to us
3. Reformed theology *humbles* us

*“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.*” (Deuteronomy 29:29, ESV)

1. Reformed theology *transforms* us

“*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*” (Romans 12:1–2, ESV)

1. Reformed theology *comforts* us

“*Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.*” (Hebrews 2:8, ESV)

1. Reformed theology *motivates* us

“*Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*” (Philippians 2:12–13, ESV)

“The essence of the Calvinistic life is living in such a way as to glorify God… Here is the ultimate surprise in Calvinism for many people: the glory of God and the enjoyment of man are not antithetical, but are correlated in the purposes of God… Biblical theology that exalts God in His sovereign grace and glory opens the door for man to enter into a quit different order of reality. Here is offered the experience of, and delight in, the rich pleasures of restoration to fellowship with God, transformation into the likeness of Christ, and anticipation of being with Christ where He is in order to see Him in His glory.”[[11]](#footnote-11)

**RECOMMENDED READING:**

* James Montgomery Boice and Philip Ryken, *The Doctrines of Grace*
* Joel R. Beeke, *Living for God’s Glory*
* Stephen J. Nichols, *The Reformation: How a Monk and a Mallet Changed the World*

1. This outline is adapted from chapter 1 of *The Doctrines of Grace*, by James Montgomery Boice and Philip Graham Ryken. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Excerpt from the Nicene Creed, A.D. 325, revised A.D. 381. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. R.C. Sproul, *Grace Unknown*, 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Boice and Ryken, *The Doctrines of Grace*, 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. These titles and descriptions are from Boice and Ryken, *The Doctrines of Grace*, 27–28. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Boice and Ryken, *The Doctrines of Grace*, 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The quotations under each of these five headings are from Boice and Ryken, *The Doctrines of Grace*, 29–32. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Joel Beeke, *Living for God’s Glory*, 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Boice and Ryken, *The Doctrines of Grace*, 32–33. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Sinclair Ferguson, in Beeke, *Living for God’s Glory*, 393–94. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)