

DISTINCTIVES OF GRACE

INTRO

(Explain the original intent to study the book of 1 Peter. Use MacArthur's answer to the question "What is the most asked question of all that Grace to You receives?" Election is the first main doctrinal topic in 1 Peter.) Simultaneously, Debbie and I have been noticing that many of you seem to continue to have many questions about such controversial doctrines as election. It is also apparent that the reason many like MacArthur are doing more "topositional" teaching recently, (versus "expositional" verse by verse Scriptural studies), is that the church itself is no longer "the church of the living God, the pillar and support or foundation of the truth." (1Tim. 3:15) Therefore, many doctrinal issues that were once commonly accepted by the Bible believing church are now either ignored, misunderstood, corrupted or even attacked. As MacArthur once expressed, the last thing he ever anticipated was that he would be defending the Bible from attack from the "church." So it is almost an emergency situation to regain and rebuild the basic and fundamental doctrines, before we can again focus upon the details and specifics that come from close expositional studies.

So we have prayerfully considered what God would have me to teach in this special time, and determined that perhaps a real (as opposed to "felt") need may be a review and brief study of the foundational and distinctive doctrines that are both Biblical and contemporary issues today. I believe more than ever before, the church of the living God must seek to once again become that "pillar and support of the truth." We cannot do so if we do not know what the Bible teaches, believe it, teach it and live it out to God's glory.

- 1. What are the doctrinal distinctives of Grace Fellowship? In other words, what distinguishes our beliefs from others who might also claim to be evangelical Protestant Christians, or even Bible believers, or even good Baptists? Are these distinctives critical or important, or are they merely another means of dividing Christ's church with man-made philosophies, traditions and denominationalism? Are these just like other differences in belief about worship styles (traditional or contemporary), sign gifts (conservative or charismatic), baptism (immersion or sprinkling, believer's or infants), church government (elder, deacon, committee, congregational rule), etc.? If they are so important, why don't (more) others also focus upon them, teach and believe them? Are these new teachings or just odd slants of the Christian faith that are rarely seen elsewhere? (History of the Faith)**

From the beginning of time, God has been revealing Himself to His creation including mankind. From the very beginning, He has been dispensing TRUTH. Mankind, Satan and his demons have worked hard and continually to distort, twist and stop this (gospel) truth, but it cannot be stopped or overcome. We must see history as a "stream of truth" from God, seek to know it and live within it, both as individuals and churches. As an analogy, we might think of a tree with its roots in God. The "sap" of truth which brings life grows the tree taller and taller from age to age. Many branches may develop, but the ones that remain connected to the life source (the "vine") remain true and a very real part of the tree, closely following each other as they reach for the sky. But the world, Satan and men

continue to graft in error and untruth, producing branches that may even take away from the “truth tree.” But these false branches are not a part of the stream or tree of truth, and eventually will fall away, be gathered and burned up.

(Discuss and illustrate the stages of the true faith from Adam until now, progressing from Garden Faith, to Abrahamic Faith, to the Law, to the True Jewish Faith, to Christ, to the Apostolic Faith, to the New Testament Faith, to the “catholic” Faith, to the Reformed Faith. Discuss differences between historic Calvinism and the caricature called Calvinism, between historic Protestantism and broad grouping of the same, between historic Baptists and modern day Baptists.)

2. **How does it change us as a church or us as individuals to hold to and believe these distinctives? Is this course needed or desired?**
3. **The Greater 5 and the Lesser 5! What are they?**
The Greater 5: The Solas: Scripture Alone, Grace Alone, Faith Alone, Christ Alone, For God’s Glory Alone (The Cambridge Declaration)
The Lesser 5: The Doctrines of Grace, or the 5 Points of Historic Calvinism Total (Radical) Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited (Specific) Atonement, Irresistible Grace (Effectual Call), Preservation (Perseverance) of the Saints
4. **Why are these so controversial, even inflammatory, even among those who claim to also believe the Bible? Why are these so hard to believe, much less understand or apply? Should we even try to understand them? If so, how?**
5. **The correct view of God – High and Biblical**
A. W. Tozer in *The Knowledge of the Holy*, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

Consider Colossians 1:15-17 as an example of the just the creative power and nature of God. 15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. 17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

The *declaration* of creation: Three-fold about Him!

1. *He created* all things! (v. 16)
2. *He is before* all things! (v. 17)
3. *He holds* all things together! (v. 17)

Consider the astronomical world :

The earth has a diameter of almost 8000 miles, and our moon about 2000 miles.

Saturn's diameter is over 74,000 miles, and Jupiter's is almost 89,000 miles.

But the Sun has a diameter of almost 865,000 miles!

The sun is so big that over 1.3 million earths could fit inside it,
with room left over for 4.2 million moon's!

We are so far away from the Sun, it takes light almost 8.5 minutes to reach us,
traveling at 186,000 miles per second. The nearest other star is so far away that
its light takes over 4 years to reach us, over 24 trillion miles!

Yet the Sun, and earth's orbit are dwarfed by the size of some stars:

The red giants Antares and Betelgeuse are over 560 and 900 times as big as our
Sun! If the star Betelgeuse were placed in the spot our star, the Sun, occupies it
would consume the orbits and planets of Mercury, Venus and Earth!

Each galaxy has hundreds of billions of stars, and there are (at least) hundreds of
billions of galaxies. In fact scientists have estimated the number of observable
stars at over 10 to the 25 power: 10 million billion billion!

Equal to the number of grains of sand on all the beaches of the world!

Who produced all of this? "Well... once there was nothing, then there was everything in
one point of space, then there was a "big bang!" Hah!!!

No wonder Isaiah says:

Isaiah 40:22-26 ²² It is He who sits above the vault of the earth, And its inhabitants are like
grasshoppers, Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain And spreads them out like a
tent to dwell in. ²³ He *it is* who reduces rulers to nothing, Who makes the judges of the
earth meaningless. ²⁴ Scarcely have they been planted, Scarcely have they been sown,
Scarcely has their stock taken root in the earth, But He merely blows on them, and they
wither, And the storm carries them away like stubble. ²⁵ **"To whom then will you liken
Me That I should be *his* equal?"** says the Holy One. ²⁶ **Lift up your eyes on high And
see who has created these *stars*,** The One who leads forth their host by number, He
calls them all by name; **Because of the greatness of His might and the strength of
His power** Not one of *them* is missing. (NASB)

Consider all the life on earth. The thousands and thousands of numbers of each species,
the thousands and thousands of each species of plants and animals. Even the wonder
and complexity of our own bodies: consisting of over 10 to the 14 power or 100 trillion
individual cells! A 747 Airplane has only about 6 million parts, over half of which are
fasteners. So it is much more logical for a scrap yard of parts to evolve into a 747, take
off and fly than for a human being to evolve from a pool of primordial soup! In fact, we
have more bacteria in our intestines than the number of all the people who have ever
lived on earth!

Who created all of this? "Well... once there was a puddle of water with the just the right
mix of matter and energy, and the first cell was born! Then...everything else just naturally
evolved!" How stupid can we be?

Romans 1:23: "Professing to be wise, they became fools!"

Now, consider the **invisible creation**:

Genesis 2:1 ¹ Thus the **heavens** and the earth were completed, **and all their hosts**.

Nehemiah 9:6 ⁶ "Thou alone art the LORD. **Thou hast made the heavens, The heaven of heavens with all their host**, The earth and all that is on it, The seas and all that is in them. Thou dost give life to all of them And the heavenly host bows down before Thee. (NASB)

Wow!!! Not to even mention His nature and power in love, wrath, mercy, justice, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, providence, etc. etc....

Isaiah 55:9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. (NASB)

Romans 11:33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable are His ways!

Let God define Himself; do not impose our attitudes and concepts about God onto God. God is God, not Who we think God is! Perhaps the most forgotten and overlooked aspect of God is His Sovereignty!

(Reference Verses about God's Sovereignty and Questions about God's Sovereignty. Discuss)

6. The correct view of man – Low and Sinful

Man is always seeking new ways to compliment and elevate himself, even to the status of a god. If he lowers God enough and elevates himself enough, then the vast gulf that exists between him and God disappears in his mind and with it the need for God.

Self-help, the power of positive thinking, untapping the potential in you, the basic goodness in man, man's ability to progress scientifically, humanism, and many other means of man worshipping himself are more popular today than ever before. Plus the culture of shifting blame to others, making each of us victims of our culture and nature, and explaining away sin as relative and subjective helps man to remove any sense of sinfulness or guilt.

7. Is God confused or His word conflicted? What is the difference between a contradiction, paradox and mystery? Does God have more than one will? Are all teachings of the Bible somewhat difficult? Why are some Biblical doctrines so controversial, hated and rejected? The question of "WHY GOD?"

Contradiction – A statement or teaching containing parts that are logically incongruous or incompatible. Real contradictions cannot exist, especially in Biblical truth or the mind of God; they violate the laws of logic. Therefore contradictions are an impossibility!

Paradox – An apparent contradiction that upon closer scrutiny or with more information can be resolved. Paradoxes do not violate any laws of logic. They are merely “seeming contradictions.”

Mystery – Things which are true but we cannot understand. These things may be understood later with more information or examination, or after they are revealed to us.

It is easy to confuse mysteries and contradictions. But mysteries are capable of being understood, while contradictions are not. All contradictions are mysterious; not all mysteries are contradictions. Mysteries may be true; contradictions may never be true!

- **“Truths in Tension”** - Dual truths from the Scriptures that often seem to us to oppose each other, but may actually serve to increase or emphasize each other all the more!

Deut. 29:29 (NASB)

"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.

2 Peter 3:16 (NASB)

as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in **which are some things hard to understand**, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

8. Are all teachings of the Bible somewhat difficult?

YES. We just don't see them as so, or do not want to see them as so. Many are so comforting to us, or we have been exposed to them for all of our lives, so we accept things that are mysterious or paradoxical even as if they are not!

9. Why are some Biblical doctrines so controversial, hated and rejected?

Because some get too close to attacking us or our views of God we have created to soothe us. Election is the most pride crushing doctrine, so it is also the most hated. No other teaching destroys any thought of our ability to save ourselves as it does. But others are equally paradoxical, mysterious or hard to understand.

Examples:

1. The Trinity – three in one, one in three, both one and three
2. The Hypostatic Union of Christ – both 100% man and 100% God

3. Christ's desire or will to both hide and reveal truth to His children: Luke 19:41-42 & Luke 10:21

Luke 19:41-42 (NASB)

And when He approached, He saw the city and **wept over it**, [42] saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! **But now they have been hidden from your eyes.**

Luke 10:21 (NASB)

At that very time **He rejoiced greatly** in the Holy Spirit, and said, "**I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to babes.** Yes, Father, **for thus it was well-pleasing in Thy sight.**

4. **The evil and Satanic act of Judas's betrayal (Mat. 26:24, Luke 22:3), and its use by God to accomplish His plan (Acts 2:23). The same with the leaders of Jerusalem (Acts 4:27-28).**

Matthew 26:24 (NASB)

"The Son of Man is to go, **just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man** by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! **It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.**"

Luke 22:3 (NASB)

And **Satan entered into Judas** who was called Iscariot, belonging to the number of the twelve.

Acts 2:23 (NASB)

this Man, **delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed** to a cross **by the hands** of godless men and put Him to death.

Acts 4:27-28 (NASB)

"For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, [28] **to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur.**

5. **God hardening the hearts of people to sin more and yet to accomplish His "larger" purposes. Pharaoh (Exo. 4:21, 8:1, 9:12, 10:20,27); Sihon King of Heshbon in Canaan (Deu. 2:26-30); Kings of Canaan to be conquered by Joshua and Israel (Jos. 11:19-20); even in Israel's hardening to bring about the salvation of all peoples and nations (Rom. 11:7-8, 25-26, 31-32; Mark 4:11-12,)**

Exodus 4:21 (NASB)

And the Lord said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but **I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.**

Exodus 8:1 (NASB)

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and say to him, **'Thus says the Lord, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me.**

Exodus 9:12 (NASB)

And **the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart**, and he did not listen to them, just as the Lord had spoken to Moses.

Exodus 10:20, 27 (NASB)

But **the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart**, and he did not let the sons of Israel go.

[27] But **the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart**, and he was not willing to let them go.

Deut. 2:26-30 (NASB)

"So I sent messengers from the wilderness of Kedemoth to Sihon king of Heshbon with words of peace, saying, [27] 'Let me pass through your land, I will travel only on the highway; I will not turn aside to the right or to the left. [28] 'You will sell me food for money so that I may eat, and give me water for money so that I may drink, only let me pass through on foot, [29] just as the sons of Esau who live in Seir and the Moabites who live in Ar did for me, until I cross over the Jordan into the land which the Lord our God is giving to us.' [30] "But Sihon king of Heshbon was not willing for us to pass through his land; **for the Lord your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, in order to deliver him into your hand**, as he is today.

Joshua 11:19-20 (NASB)

There was not a city which made peace with the sons of Israel except the Hivites living in Gibeon; they took them all in battle. [20] **For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, to meet Israel in battle in order that he might utterly destroy them, that they might receive no mercy, but that he might destroy them**, just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

Isaiah 42:18 (NASB)

Hear, you deaf! And look, you blind, that you may see.

Romans 11:7-8 (NASB)

What then? That which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened; [8] just as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, Eyes to see not and ears to hear not, Down to this very day."

Mark 1:15 (NASB)

and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Romans 11:25-26 (NASB)

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in; [26] and thus all Israel will be saved;

Romans 10:1, 21 (NASB)

Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. [21] But as for Israel He says, "All the day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people."

Romans 11:31-33 (NASB)

so these also now have been disobedient, in order that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy. [32] For God has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all.

[33] Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

6. God sometimes desiring to restrain evil and sin and sometimes not. Contrast the story of King Abimelech with Sarah (Gen. 20:6), and the story of the sons of Eli (1Sam. 2:22-25)

Genesis 20:6 (NASB)

Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also kept you from sinning against Me; therefore **I did not let you touch her.**

1 Samuel 2:22-25 (NASB)

Now Eli was very old; and he heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting. [23] And he said to them, "**Why do you do such things, the evil things** that I hear from all these people? [24] "No, my sons; for the report is not good which I hear the Lord's people circulating. [25] "If one man sins against another, God will mediate for him; but if a man sins against the Lord, who can intercede for him?" But **they would not listen to the voice of their father, for the Lord desired to put them to death.**

NOTE: The same word used above for *desire* as used for *pleasure* in:

Ezekiel 18:23 (NASB)

"Do I have any **pleasure** in the death of the wicked," declares the Lord God, "rather than that he should turn from his ways and live?"

Ezekiel 18:32 (NASB)

"For I have no **pleasure** in the death of anyone who dies," declares the Lord God. "Therefore, repent and live."

Ezekiel 33:11 (NASB)

"Say to them, 'As I live!' declares the Lord God, 'I take no **pleasure** in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?'

SO, sometimes God *does not* take delight in the death of the wicked, and yet in some sense He *does*!

Deut. 28:63 (NASB)

"And it shall come about that as the Lord delighted over you to prosper you, and multiply you, so the Lord will delight over you to make you perish and destroy you; and you shall be torn from the land where you are entering to possess it.

1 Samuel 2:25 (NASB)

"If one man sins against another, God will mediate for him; but if a man sins against the Lord, who can intercede for him?" But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for the Lord desired to put them to death.

7. Basically this is the story of the Bible and God's plan through the ages:

- a. **Adam & Eve were commanded not to sin, and yet that was God's plan**
 - b. **The people were to live righteously in Noah's day, but God used their rebellion**
 - c. **The sin of Joseph's brothers was used in God's larger plan to use what they meant for evil for good.**
 - d. **Etc.**
- **Based upon above examples, consider the concepts of "sovereign will" or "will of decree" or "secret will" as contrasted to "moral will" or "will of command" or "revealed will." Does this mean that God has more than one will? Is He confused or conflicted?**
 - **Examples from lives of George Washington and his death warrant issued for Major Andre; and from General Stonewall Jackson and a young VMI student who became a soldier (son of a pastor friend) from Pennsylvania that deserted.**

The real issue is that God is God and we are not. Would we take more comfort in a God that we could understand? Isn't part of the power of the word its wonder? It is God's Word, not ours! If we understood everything, we would be equal to God!

Real faith is taking God at His word and believing it. Do we as children always understand our parents? Can we likewise trust God for that which He has told us but we still do not understand? There is such a rest and freedom in doing so!

Psalm 46:10 **“Cease striving and know that I am God;** I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”

- **The Question of WHY GOD?**

Do we have the right to question God Why? What are we doing when we move into this realm of questioning? (Getting into God's business!)

(Ex. of Job in Job 38:1-42:6)

Psalm 46:10 “Cease striving and know that I am God

DISTINCTIVES OF GRACE

GRACE ALONE (*Sola Gratia*)

After the gospel is fully revealed, and the Apostles are writing the letters to the church, they all invoke a form of greeting and blessing that becomes universal and common for them all. Paul, in *every one of his letters*, has some form of “grace to you” or “grace be with you all” or “grace and peace to you” (etc.). The writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews 13:25 “Grace be with you all.” Peter, in his two epistles, wrote “May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure.” (1Pet. 1:2), and “Grace and peace be multiplied to you...” (2Pet. 1:2). The Apostle John also writes “Grace, mercy and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love” (2 John 1:3) and “Grace to you and peace” and “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all” in his book of Revelation. *WHY?*

Why would so many of our church fathers write about “**grace**”? Why would C. H. Spurgeon write one of his most important works and title it “All of Grace,” and refer to his view of parts of the gospel’s teaching as the “doctrines of grace?” Why did John Newton in 1779 write the lyrics to the hymn *Amazing Grace*, and why is it probably the most beloved and well known of all hymns? Why did 15 men, after much discussion, prayer and thought, finally decide upon “Grace Fellowship” as the name of this new church? Why did we name ministry of the WGRW radio station “Grace Radio?” Why did I even name our last daughter Abigail Grace, and why did Carlton name his first Hannah Grace? *WHAT is so important about grace? Or, what is so amazing about grace?* (Personal note: The concept of grace or what I might define as a “grace orientation” has totally changed my life and my doctrinal positions on most all of the Bible’s teachings.)

The Doctrinal position called “**Grace Alone**” refers to the teaching that **we are “justified” by grace alone**, and more specifically, that we are “**sanctified**” **by grace alone**. Another way of saying the same thing is that God alone saves us, and that we do not contribute any merit or works to the process of God’s declaration of our being justified,” or of God’s work of making us holy and set apart after we are saved. Most Christians (at least claim to) believe that they are saved by the grace of God. But what does that mean? Why is this so controversial if **all** believe in it?

The doctrine or teaching called Faith Alone referred to the *means* or *instrument* of salvation or justification. **Grace Alone** refers to the **basis** or **source** of our justification or sanctification. Why then is it significant to note the prepositions “by” and “through” that precede “faith” and “grace” in **Eph. 2:8**? Explain the difference. Why is it irrelevant if faith is a “gift of God” or not if we are saved **by grace through faith**?

To understand this doctrine, we must first **define the terms** involved. The Bible is a story of salvation of a very unique and special nature. There is nothing else which gives us a

perfect comparison or analogy. (No illustration of grace comes close to the real thing!) One of the many “Bible words” used so much by church goers and genuine Christians alike is **grace!** In many ways it could be called the *keyword of Christianity!* Only with it can any or all of the Biblical doctrines be understood, and without it none of the major doctrines, especially salvation, can be explained or understood.

- **“Grace”** in the Bible:
 1. Old Testament – Hebrew roots *hen, hanan, chesed, raham* are used as nouns, verbs and adjectives for concepts that could be translated “grace.” These mean favor, grace, loving-kindness, affection, mercy and compassion as nouns; and to be gracious, show favor, loving-kindness, affection, or mercy and compassion as verbs.
 2. New Testament – Greek root **charis** is a noun meaning a gift which causes joy, pleasure, or gratification; a kindness granted; a benefit; a favor done without the expectation of return; a gift from God! Its various related forms (as nouns, verbs or adjectives) similarly refer to gifts or gifting or favor without reason, merit or works and based upon the initiative of God alone.
- **“Grace”** is at opposition to, in tension with, and the antithesis of **“works”** (*erga*) in the Bible. These two concepts are **mutually exclusive**. So it affirms the initiative and gift of God based upon His loving-kindness, mercy and nature; but also denies that it is based upon merit or is deserved in any way by the recipient.
- **“Alone”** emphasizes the source and giver is the active agent in the gift and its effects. God alone is at work in grace. He alone is the *cause* and the *content* of our justification, sanctification and glorification.
- **“Sanctification”** comes from the verb “sanctify”, and literally means to set apart for special use or purpose, that being to make holy or sacred. Therefore, sanctification refers to the state or process of being set apart, i.e. being made holy by God. If justification is the “new birth,” then sanctification might be viewed as the “new growth!” Other ways to view sanctification might be growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, being conformed to the image of Christ, being transformed by the renewing of the mind, being made into a new creation in Christ, our “walk with God,” or being strengthened or maturing in the faith.
- The concept of **“grace alone”** brings up the two opposing concepts called **monergism** and **synergism**. These two concepts focus on **who** is responsible or at work in the actions of grace, specifically as they relate to our justification or salvation. **Monergism** declares that God alone is at work in our salvation, and that we are simply recipients of His grace. **Synergism** teaches that both God and

man have parts to play and are at work in salvation. Do the practices of the modern church match up with its professions about grace? Explain.

- **Consider these questions** on the basis of what the Bible teaches:
 1. How can grace be so misunderstood and even disbelieved in Christianity? Why is it so hard to understand? Why is it so hard to fully believe and accept?
 2. Is faith a gift or a work? Does faith precede grace or does grace precede faith? Why is the answer to the first question important to the second?
 3. What is the *order of salvation*? Based upon Romans 8:29-30, what is the order of the “chain of grace” of our salvation?

The Cambridge Declaration declared in 1996 that *Sola Gratia* (Grace Alone) was in need of re-affirmation due to **“The Erosion of the Gospel.”** This statement went on to say:

“Unwarranted confidence in human ability is a product of fallen human nature. This false confidence now fills the evangelical world, from the self-esteem gospel, to the health and wealth gospel, from those who have transformed the gospel into a product to be sold and sinners into consumers who want to buy, to others who treat Christian faith as being true simply because it works. This silences the doctrine of justification regardless of the official commitments of our churches.

God’s grace in Christ is not merely necessary but is the sole efficient cause of salvation. We confess that human beings are born spiritually dead and are incapable even of cooperating with regenerating grace.”

They then presented their *Thesis Three: Sola Gratia*

“We *affirm* that in salvation we are rescued from God’s wrath by His grace alone. It is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that brings us to Christ by releasing us from our bondage to sin and raising us from spiritual death to spiritual life.

We *deny* that salvation is in any sense a human work. Human methods, techniques or strategies by themselves cannot accomplish this transformation. Faith is not produced by our unregenerated human nature.”

- So, the question comes down to “What is the nature of our salvation and all its phases?” or more specifically, “WHO is responsible for our salvation and all its phases?” (i.e. if it is all of God, then it is an unmerited *gift* and is not based upon anything by or from us) When Jonah had been three days and nights in the belly of the great fish, he prayed in repentance and understanding that “Salvation is from the **Lord!**” (Jonah 2:9) Is that really and totally true or not?
- Consider the basic logic and reason of the argument: (Make **diagram** with triangle representing the Triune God with lines from each corner to groups A and B, representing all men who will ultimately be lost and go to hell, and all men who

will ultimately be saved and go to heaven, respectively.) Present the modern American Evangelical view that: 1) The Father loves all men equally and has designed and desires all men equally to come to Him in salvation; 2) The Son gave Himself and died on behalf of all men equally, and His atonement is both sufficient and efficient for all; and 3) The Holy Spirit draws and woos all men equally without distinction. ***What is wrong with this picture?*** It is obvious that the grace of God displayed and given in the love of the Father, the life and death of the Son, and the testimony and drawing of the Holy Spirit is all **insufficient to save alone or else all men would be saved!** What is it that saves if God's grace is not the efficient cause of salvation? It becomes based upon what a person *does*; his *decision* for God becomes a *work*! ***Who*** gets the ***glory*** for that?

- Read the account of Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus in **John 3:1-8**.

[1] Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; [2] this man came to Him by night, and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." [3] Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." [4] Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" [5] Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. [6] "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. [7] "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' [8] "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

- What is the physical analogy Jesus uses to try to teach Nicodemus about salvation? What is God's part and what is man's part in this analogy? What other implications can be taken from considering the nature and results of a physical birth? Who does what?
- Read **John 6:35-45, 60-65**.

[35] Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. [36] "But I said to you, that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe. [37] "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. [38] "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. [39] "And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. [40] "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone

who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

[41] The Jews therefore were grumbling about Him, because He said, "I am the bread that came down out of heaven." [42] And they were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, 'I have come down out of heaven'?" [43] Jesus answered and said to them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. [44] "No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. [45] "It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be TAUGHT OF God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me.

[60] Many therefore of His disciples, when they heard this said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?" [61] But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble? [62] "What then if you should behold the Son of Man ascending where He was before? [63] "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. [64] "But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. [65] And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father."

- Who is at work here in this teaching? What is the result? How is this teaching received? What is the basis of its reception or rejection?
- Read **John 1:9-13**.

[9] There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. [10] He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. [11] He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. [12] But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, [13] who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

- Where is the grace in this passage? Who is giving what to whom?
- Read **John 11:38-44**.

[38] Jesus therefore again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. [39] Jesus said, "Remove the stone." Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days." [40] Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you, if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" [41] And so they removed the stone. And Jesus raised His eyes, and said, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou heardest Me. [42] "And I knew that

Thou hearest Me always; but because of the people standing around I said it, that they may believe that Thou didst send Me." [43] And when He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." [44] He who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings; and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

- What was Lazarus' contribution to this "reviving?" How "gracious" was the act of Jesus?
- Read **Eph. 1:1-12.**

[1] 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: [2] Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[3] 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, [4] just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love [5] He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, [6] to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. [7] In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, [8] which He lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight [9] He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him [10] with a view to an administration suitable to the fulness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth. In Him [11] also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, [12] to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

- What does God do here? What do we do? What is the result for us? For God?
- Read **Eph. 2:1-10.**

[1] And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, [2] 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 of disobedience. [3] 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. [4] **But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, [5] even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),** [6] and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, [7] in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches

of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. [8] For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; [9] not as a result of works, that no one should boast. [10] For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

- What is our state, nature, and master before God's grace? What does God grace us with in place of each of these? What is the result?
- Consider **grace from a three fold perspective of what it is and what it does.** These three aspects of grace could be :
 1. Grace as **love** – Mark 5:22-43, Eph. 2:4, Luke 15:20, Rom. 5:8, John 3:16
 2. Grace as **power** – 1Ths. 1:5, Rom. 1:16, Eph. 2:5, 2Cor. 5:17
 3. Grace as **a free (but irresistible) gift** – Rom. 3:24, 5:10-21, 6:23, 11:6; Eph. 2:8, 3:7, 4:7; 2Tim. 1:9, Titus 3:4-7
- Now consider the conversion and life of **Paul**, the Apostle. Read Romans 8:1, 9:1-22, 1Cor. 15:9-10. How can we see the grace of God at work in Paul's justification and life as power, love and a free gift?
- What about *beyond* the initial point of conversion or justification, what place does grace have in **sanctification**? (Col. 2:6, 2Pet. 3:18) How is it different (from justification) and yet the same in its importance and impacts? In other words, how do we develop and mature as Christians?
- Most teaching and books on the Christian walk or growth might best be described as "how to" or "self help." They present formulas or techniques for how to study the Bible, pray, worship, handle marriage or family issues, handle financial issues, handle work or career issues, etc...

1. Who makes us grow? **GOD!** (Paul said:)

1 Cor. 3:6-7 (NASB) I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. [7] So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, **but God who causes the growth.**

2. What kind of growth is this? (Go back to John 3:1-8 for the analogy of physical birth. Birth is a cause for great joy initially, but great concern later if not followed by healthy and steady growth!)
3. In what ways or how do we grow? Growing in grace means becoming like Christ! Jesus, who grew in grace is the *source* of spiritual growth. Jesus, who grew in grace, is the *example* of spiritual growth. Since He was a man, He needed to grow spiritually. (Consider how Jesus grew.)

Luke 2:40 (NASB) And the Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

[51] And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

[52] And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

So, **How did Jesus grow?**

In the fruit of the Spirit

In the disciplines of life

In obedience to God

In experience (communion) with God and men

In the knowledge of the Scriptures

In the fellowship of God's people

4. Who are some more Biblical examples of growing in grace, and what can learn from them?

Daniel – “Growing faithfully” (he followed God wholeheartedly, he made an early commitment, his first victories were preparations for the later tests, he was a man of prayer, he was a student of the word [both “legs” of the “walk”])

Peter – “starts and stops, fits and failures” (growth is not the same with every Christian, growth can be present despite failure, growth cannot be judged by externals and standards)

Timothy – “coping with yourself” (trials of youth, weak conscience overcome by early training, Scriptural teachings, prayer, and discipleship by another)

- A. W. Pink said: “Just as the sinner’s despair of any hope from himself is the first prerequisite of a sound conversion, so the loss of all confidence in himself is the first essential in the believer’s growth in grace.”
- **What are the practical applications of this doctrine? Does it make evangelism easier or harder? Does it make living by grace (sanctification) easier or harder? Explain.**
- **Consider what may be meant by a “grace orientation” for a Christian. Is this a requirement to be saved? How would that impact his view of any teaching or doctrine? How would that impact his daily life and walk with God? How would it impact his view of heaven (eternity with God) and his future glorification? How would it impact his view of modern evangelicalism and its**

teachings? (Discuss Modern American evangelicalism and its methods, traced back to Finney and the Second Great Awakening.)

- From beginning to end, **the revelation of God is one of “GRACE!”**

Genesis 1:1 (NASB) In the beginning **God** created the heavens and the earth.

Rev. 22:21 (NASB) The **grace** of the Lord Jesus be with all. **Amen.**

The Grace of the Triune God: (A. W. Pink)

- God the Father = the Fountain of all grace
He purposed in Himself the everlasting covenant of redemption
- God the Son = the only Channel of grace
- God the Spirit = the Distributor of grace
The Gospel = the Publisher of grace!

“Grace and truth were fully revealed and perfectly exemplified when the Redeemer came to this earth, and died for His people upon the cross. **It is through Christ the Mediator alone that the grace of God flows to His elect.**”
A. W. Pink

“Grace is a provision for men who are so fallen that they cannot lift the ax of justice, so corrupt that they cannot change their won natures, so averse to God that they cannot turn to Him, so blind that they cannot see Him, so deaf that they cannot hear Him, and so dead that He Himself must open their graves and lift them into resurrection.”

G.S. Bishop

All God does He does for His GLORY!

All God does for us, He does by His grace!

DISTINCTIVES OF GRACE

Faith Alone – *Sola Fide*

Martin Luther said that Faith Alone is “the article with and by which the church stands, without which it falls.” “This doctrine is the head and the cornerstone. It alone begets, nourishes, builds, preserves, and defends the church of God; and without it the church of God cannot exist for one hour...” “The article of justification is the master and prince, the lord, the ruler, and the judge over all kinds of doctrines;...”

The doctrine of justification by faith alone is the central affirmation of historic evangelicalism. This teaching is the basis for evangelical Christianity. It addresses the *means* by which God declares sinners to be righteous before Him.

This doctrine is the distinctive doctrine of all Protestant Christians, which is the central issue of many that separates us and our beliefs from all other forms of “Christianity,” such as the Romans and the Eastern Orthodox.

- **But what does it mean that we are justified by faith alone?** To understand this concept, we need to reflect on both the nature of justification and the character of faith.
- **Justification** – a legal and spiritual declaration of our relationship to God and His laws, stating that we are completely forgiven and righteous before Him. This is essentially synonymous with **salvation**. “To justify” translates the Greek word *dikaioo* and simply means “to declare righteous.” It can even be used of people *toward God!*

Luke 7:29 (NASB) And when all the people and the tax-gatherers heard this, they **acknowledged God's justice** (“**declared God just**” – ESV, “**justified God**” – RSV), having been baptized with the baptism of John.

- **Faith** – in the noun form simply means “belief” or “trust.” It is a translation of the Greek root *pistis* as a noun, or *pisteou* as a verb. It means to be persuaded, convinced, won over, made certain, received or believed.
- **Watch section 2953 to 3308 of *Martin Luther*** (Note ending scene where he writes in “*sola*” for “alone” after faith in Romans 1:17, which is a quote from Habakkuk 2:4. This was the verse that God used to bring Luther to salvation. His German translation of the NT did add “alone” to Rom. 3:28.)

Read Articles 1 & 2 of Chapter 11 (Justification) in the 1689 London Baptist Confession:

Justification then involves both a *negative* and a *positive* aspect. The negative is the pardon of our sins and its penalty being applied to Christ. The positive is the imputation of God’s righteousness to us. We are at once “righteous and yet at the same time a sinner.”

Romans 3:21-28 (NASB) But now apart from the Law **the righteousness of God** has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, [22] even **the righteousness of God through faith** in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; [23] for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, [24] **being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus**; [25] whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood **through faith**. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the

sins previously committed; [26] for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, **that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.** [27] Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but **by a law of faith.** [28] For we maintain that **a man is justified by faith** apart from works of the Law (or *alone*).

- But *how can* God be simultaneously just and the justifier of the ungodly?

2 Elements are involved (one negative and one positive)

1. The ungodly are **forgiven**. It is an act of free grace, by which God pardons or forgives our sins.

Romans 4:7-8 (NASB) "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been **forgiven**, And whose sins have been covered. [8] "Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not TAKE INTO ACCOUNT." (Quote from Psa. 32:1-2)

2. But the above pardon is not enough by itself. *Why?* Pardon alone would only produce a clean slate, but not a holy or righteous person able to stand before God. We would simply be restored to the state Adam had before the fall. We must also be **made or declared righteous**.

Romans 5:19 (NASB) For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One **the many will be made righteous**.

- This mystery and miracle of God's grace is rooted in the Person and work of Jesus Christ!

Romans 4:22-25 (NASB) (Speaking of Abraham) Therefore also **it was reckoned to him as righteousness**. [23] Now not for his sake only was it written, that it was reckoned to him, [24] **but for our sake also**, to whom it will be reckoned, **as those who believe** in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, [25] He who was **delivered up because of our transgressions**, and was **raised because of our justification**.

- But since all this has to do with Christ, it is apart from and outside of *us*! So *how* can we actively appropriate this grace unto us? More correctly, how does **God** appropriate this grace unto us and **declare** us to be forgiven and righteous?

The means or channel of God's grace is **FAITH!** Notice back in Romans 3 we are said to be justified "*through* faith" (3:22, 25), and "*by* faith" (3:28, 30). But we are *never* said to be justified "on account of" or "on the basis of" faith! *Why?*

Faith then is *not* the *material cause* of justification, but rather the *instrumental cause* of justification. As with Abraham, in Romans 4, his justification came not through *works* (4:1-8), nor through *sacramental administration* (4:9-12), but simply by faith!

- Therefore, **what is the nature of faith?** Can it have any merit or initiation by the believer and still be *faith*? What other “act” of man can be totally “non-meritorious?” Why is this significant and important?
 1. Since our justification is in Christ, it can be ours only through a personal relationship with Him. Since we put our faith *into* Christ, we are united to Him also. Faith is *personal* and *relational*!
 2. Faith’s very nature is *active* in receiving Christ, but simultaneously *passive* (or better, *receptive*) in relation to the justification that we receive! Self is abandoned, not exalted. Therefore, (as per Rom. 3:27) “Where then is boasting? It is excluded.” Faith is *non-meritorious*!
- Thus, *faith* is linked to *grace*! “By faith” actually implies “by grace,” because of the very nature of true faith! So, **is the value of faith tied to the “faither” or the “faithee?”** Is its value and merit based upon the one who believes or trusts, or the One in Whom they believe or trust? Therefore, faith takes its character and power from its **object**, not from itself.
- **Illustration** of great faith in thin ice versus little faith in thick ice over a frozen lake. Which is better?
- **Summary** of the **character** of **saving or justifying faith**:
 1. **Faith contributes no merit** and gains its value from **its object**. *Can we call faith a work?* If we do, it is a “non-meritorious” work!
It is not faith that saves, nor even faith in Jesus Christ that saves, but Jesus Christ saves us through faith!
It is not the attitude of faith, nor the action of faith, or the aspect or nature of faith that is important, but **what?** the **object of faith**!

Forsaking **All I Trust Him!**

- Illustration of the Navigators of a “Gospel Train”:

The “engine” of facts	It pulls the load and supplies the power!
The “coal car” of faith	It feeds the train and enables it to go!
The “caboose” of feelings	It is nice to have, but is along for the ride!

2. **Faith is a gift of God.** Observe parallel between faith and suffering from:

Philip. 1:29 (NASB) For to you **it has been granted** for Christ's sake, **not only to believe** in Him, **but also to suffer** for His sake,

Note that both faith and suffering are granted to us by God. He gives the suffering, but we suffer. He likewise gives the faith, but we believe!

Ephes. 2:8 (NASB) For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, **it is the gift of God**;

Note here that the words for both grace and faith are masculine, but the pronoun for “it” is neuter. So the reference is to both elements, even the whole of salvation, being a true **gift** of God!

Notice that Paul even prays for the gift of faith from the Father and the Son:

Ephes. 6:23 (NASB) Peace be to the brethren, and love with **faith, from** God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Yet, does this “gift” aspect mean that we are not actively involved in faith? Why?

3. Faith is capable of degrees. The NT speaks of:

- little faith (Mat. 14:31)
- great faith (Mat. 15:28)
- sincere faith (2Tim. 1:5)
- strong faith (Rom. 4:20)
- overcoming faith (1Jo. 5:4)

4. Faith has dimensions or elements. The Reformers spoke of three:

- notitia** – the reception of knowledge of God’s revelation, the facts or data, and involves the senses and the mind; **to acquire the truth**
 - assensus** – this refers to the mental assent or acceptance of these facts or revelation, and involves the mind and the will; **to acknowledge the truth**
 - fiducia** – this refers to a personal trust or reliance on the revelation received and accepted, and involves the will and the affections or emotions; **to appropriate the truth personally**
- Therefore, total or true faith involves the total **soul** (mind, will and emotions) of the believer. (**Example of a chair**: Receiving the facts that it will hold your weight, then accepting the facts that it will hold your weight, and then applying the facts and acceptance to actually trust yourself to the support of the chair by sitting in it!)
 - Apply these dimensions or elements to the “faith” of the demons or Satan. (James 2:19) What elements do they have? What element is missing? How does that relate to “professing” but not “possessing” believers today?
 - What is the distinction of **Rome’s view of justification** through faith and ours? The distinction is in the term **“alone!”** They believe that faith is necessary for justification, but not by itself. Faith must also be accompanied by works, sacraments, and the merit of the saints and the church.

- From our current study of Galatians, how are we often guilty of the same error? What do we add to faith?

- **Faith and Works**

What is the relationship between faith and works? Is there not an apparent contradiction in the NT teachings here if we hold to “faith alone?” Does not the NT teach that we are to be judged according to our works?

1 Cor. 3:12-15 (NASB) Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, [13] **each man's work** will become evident; for the day will show it, because **it is to be revealed** with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. [14] If **any man's work** which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. [15] If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.

2 Cor. 5:10 (NASB) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be **recompensed for his deeds** in the body, **according to what he has done, whether good or bad.**

Ephes. 6:8 (NASB) knowing that **whatever good thing each one does**, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.

- **The Contrast of James:**

James 2:14-26 (NASB) What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? [15] If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, [16] and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? [17] Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. [18] But someone may well say, "You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." [19] You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. [20] But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? [21] Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? [22] You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; [23] and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God. [24] You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone. [25] And in the same way was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works, when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? [26] For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

- We know that God's Word is not in contradiction, so what is the reconciliation of Romans to James, or Paul to James?

- He is contrasting two different hypothetical persons who both claim to have “faith.” But notice the contrast in the two “faiths”:

Faith A is :

Without deeds	(vv. 14, 18, 20, 26)
In contrast to deeds	(v. 18)
In itself, unaccompanied by actions	(v.17)
Alone, by itself, isolated from deeds	(v. 24)

Faith B is:

Shown by what it does	(v. 18)
Accompanied by actions	(v. 22)
Consummated by actions	(v.23)

This is really a contrast between the granting of faith to Abraham in Gen. 15 (addressed in Romans), and the manifestation of that faith in Gen. 22 (addressed here in James)

In Gen. 15:6 “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.” That is exactly what Paul quoted and had in mind in Romans 4:3. But then James notices that in Gen. 22:1 “that God tested Abraham” by commanding him to offer up Issac as a sacrifice. What was God testing? His faith! Paul renounces “justification (before God) by works,” but James confirms “justification (before man) by works.” Paul is teaching that faith alone unites us to Christ for righteousness. James is teaching that the faith which unites us to Christ does not remain alone. It bears the fruit of love and obedience, or it is *dead faith* (v.17), *devil faith* (v.19), and *devoid faith* (useless) (v.20).

- So, what is the conclusion of James? True faith, which alone justifies, does not remain alone in our lives, but is expressed and justified before men by what a man does, not by what he presumes or professes.

Article 2, Chapter 11 of the 1689 Confession: **Faith** is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and **is no dead faith, but worketh by love!**

Thesis Four of the Cambridge Declaration: (Sola Fide)

We **affirm** that justification is by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone. In justification Christ’s righteousness is imputed to us as the only possible satisfaction of God’s perfect justice.

We **deny** that justification rests on any merit to be found in us, or upon the grounds of an infusion of Christ’s righteousness in us, or that an institution claiming to be a church that denies or condemns sola fide can be recognized as a legitimate church.

DISTINCTIVES OF GRACE

CHRIST ALONE (*Solus Christus*)

The Cambridge Declaration includes a thesis statement about Jesus Christ, and specifically about this fourth of the five “solas” of Reformed Theology: *Solus Christus*, or **Christ Alone**. It states “We *reaffirm* that our salvation is accomplished by the mediatorial work of the historical *Christ alone*. His sinless life and substitutionary atonement *alone* are sufficient for our justification and reconciliation to the Father. We *deny* that the gospel is preached if Christ’s substitutionary work is not declared and faith in Christ and His work is not solicited.”

While it is hard to make any one of these great “sola” statements more important than another, we have come to one that is certainly central and essential to all five and indeed the whole of God’s revelation in His Scriptures. Without the teaching or doctrine of Christ, we have no faith at all. **Without Christ, there can be no Christianity!** (You would just have “ianity”, which is worse than insanity!) More specifically, without Christ there can be no salvation, no access to God or heaven!

The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 includes a chapter on Christ the Mediator. The first statement therein says, “To give effect to His eternal purpose God chose and ordained the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, in accordance with the covenant into which they had entered, to be **the mediator between God and man**; also to be the **prophet, priest, king, head and saviour** of the world.”

In the last (10th) statement of that chapter, it further explains “Christ’s threefold offices are necessary for us. **Because of our ignorance we stand in need of His prophetic office**; because of **our estrangement from God and the imperfection of our services at their best, we need His priestly office** to reconcile us to God and render us acceptable to Him; because **we have turned away from God and are utterly unable to return to Him, and also because we need to be rescued and rendered secure** from our spiritual adversaries, **we need His kingly office** to convince, subdue, draw, sustain, deliver, and preserve us, until we finally enter His heavenly kingdom.”

What we consider is part of theology called “**Christology**.” This is derived from the two Greek words *Christos* meaning “anointed one” or “messiah” and *logos* meaning “word, concept, or thought.” So Christology is **simply the study of the Christ**, Jesus, the Son of God, Messiah and Anointed One.

So certainly, this is a most serious and important truth to consider. Our approach to it could be any one of many, as “from Him and through Him and to Him are *all things*.” So how can we even narrow the subject down enough to even begin to address it?

Let’s first consider **how most of the world approaches this whole issue** and the Person of Christ Himself. In fact, if they are honest, *most* of the world has this same approach and belief, even in “Christian America!”

It might be illustrated by this exchange between the TV talkshow host, Phil Donahue, Dr. Albert Mohler (President of Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, and Rabbi Shmuley Boteach (author of “Judaism for Everyone”).

(Read excerpt of Donahue Show transcript.)

- **Is Jesus Christ the only way to God? Is Christ alone the way to God and heaven?**

Before we answer, let's be sure we understand the question. Is it possible for non-Christians or someone who has no trust in Jesus Christ to go to heaven when they die?

In the example provided by Phil Donahue, **what about a “good” sincere practicing Jew?** Someone who was born into a Jewish family, raised by Jewish parents, always taught only the Jewish religion, never had an opportunity to hear the gospel about Jesus, never heard the gospel call and never rejected it. He lived a “good” life, always endeavored to obey God's law as taught him by the Jewish religion, suffered for his faith and race, and finally put to death as an innocent victim of the Nazi hatred of the Jews. Is it fair that he would die at the hands of a God hating and Jew hating Nazi and go to hell for eternity, when he did not chose his parents, he did not have a choice about being raised in the Jewish faith, he lived a good life of obedience to the Jewish religion, he never said or did anything unkind or uncaring to anyone, he never heard the good news about Jesus, and he never rejected its call.

Is it fair for him to have no other option, no second chance after he dies, no hope of any relief from an eternity of torment? **And yet, the Nazi** who killed him, lived an evil sinful life, hated God and all men, murdered thousands with no remorse, and then heard the gospel and gave his life to Christ just before he dies. He **goes to heaven** for an eternity of joy with God, while the Jew suffers forever in hell???

In fact, a prominent pastor, national Bible teacher with a doctorate from Dallas Theological Seminary, who is even a featured speaker for the conservative National Religious Broadcasters, (Anthony Evans) wrote a book (*Totally Saved*) about salvation with the comment **“God...would not be just if He held people accountable for that which they cannot do, and for knowledge they do not possess.”** Doesn't this apply to the hypothetical Jew in the above illustration? This same author went on to say **“People no longer go to hell because of what Adam did.” “They go to hell for what they do. God took care of Adam's sin on the cross. He paid for original sin.”** According to this author, only one sin is actually damnable, namely a deliberate, conscious rejection of God's revealed truth, ... a rejection of the gospel and way of salvation. He further writes **“The only thing God will not tolerate is people who willingly suppress His truth and reject His salvation.”** He explains his position that people can be saved apart from the gospel of Christ that **“The premise is this: God's invitation to all people to respond in faith assumes that those who have been invited have the capacity to respond. To put it another way, God's command to believe is only applicable to those who can heed it.”** He goes on to assert that some of those who have no access to the gospel are earnestly seeking God and that He is obliged to save them apart from the gospel. He writes **“When it comes to salvation, God always makes a way for those who seek Him.”** He cites Scripture as support for this position:

Jeremiah 29:13 (NASB) 'And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. (actually a promise to Israel of the access in prayer to God while in exile in Babylon)

Hebrews 11:6 (NASB) And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. (for believers, the proper perspective and approach to living by faith)

He even says that **"A person can be saved without knowing Jesus' name, but not without Jesus' provision for sin."**

And yet **this teaching is commonplace in many churches**, even many conservative evangelical churches that claim to believe in the inerrancy of the Bible. Have we not all heard it taught that God holds us responsible only for the truth we have received. That, for us who have heard the gospel about Jesus, we must accept or reject Him; but for those "innocent" people who have not heard, God must have another plan. It would not be fair for God to send them to hell without somehow giving them a fair chance, another option. This position not only answers the question about the good and sincere Jew, Muslim, Buddhist, etc., but also solves the problem of the innocent heathen, the American Indians before the white men came, the lost tribes in the remote parts of the world or others who have never heard the good news about Jesus. So it lets us feel good about **God's "fairness"** and comfortable about the people in such categories.

- But what does God say about this issue? **What is the Scriptural position?**
- 1. **Is there more than "one way"** or another by whom we might be saved?

Ephes. 2:12 (NASB) remember that you were at that time **separate from Christ**, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and **strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God** in the world.

John 3:36 (NASB) "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he **who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.**"

John 8:24 (NASB) "I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins; for **unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins.**"

John 14:6 (NASB) Jesus said to him, **"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.**

Acts 4:12 (NASB) "And there is **salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.**"

2. What does God say **about the certainty of this salvation in Christ alone**? Is there any chance of it not happening, any factor it depends upon? Is it “effectual” or “possible?” Does it depend upon us or is there any chance of it being irrevocable, undone or not being permanent?

Romans 8:30 (NASB) and whom He predestined, these He also called; and **whom He called, these He also justified**; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

John 6:37 (NASB) "**All** that the Father gives Me **shall come to Me**, and the one who comes to Me **I will certainly not cast out**."

Rev. 3:5 (NASB) '**He who overcomes** shall thus be clothed in white garments; and **I will not erase his name** from the book of life, (as city officials often did then with undesirable citizens) and **I will confess his name before My Father**, and before His angels.

1 John 5:5 (NASB) And who is the one who overcomes the world, but **he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God**?

John 10:27-28 (NASB) "**My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; [28] and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand**."

2 Thes. 2:13-14 (NASB) But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because **God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation** through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. [14] And it was for this **He called you through our gospel**, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. What about those **who understand something of God in His natural revelation** of creation, or **who earnestly “seek”** God, or those **“good” people** who just have never heard about Christ? Does He make a way for any of them?

Romans 3:11-12 (NASB) There is **none who understands**, There is **none who seeks for God**; [12] All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is **none who does good**, There is **not even one**."

- Besides, no one can even respond without being enabled by God. (Because we are dead in our trespasses and sins.)

John 6:44 (NASB) "**No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him**; and I will raise him up on the last day."

John 6:65 (NASB) And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that **no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father.**"

- Besides, consider these additional points that refute this position:
4. IF it were true that sinners could be saved by some other means or without knowledge of Jesus Christ, and that God held them in innocence until He allowed them that opportunity, then the best thing for Christians would be to keep the gospel to ourselves. If we tell them about Jesus, then they are responsible and damned. Yet we are commanded to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." (Mark 16:15) If it were true that men are held in innocence until they know and understand the gospel truth (remember that the gospel is a stumbling block to some and foolishness to the rest of the world), then the missionary and evangelism efforts of the church are cruel acts that are sending millions to hell!
 5. Adam and Eve prove that no one can ever come to God through natural revelation, or even through being "good" or "innocent" or "close" to God. They had perfect minds in a perfect creation for hundreds of years, and yet God had to speak to them and give them specific instructions. They also walked in close fellowship with God and were innocent of all sin except one, and yet God had to visibly and audibly present the gospel (in the *protoevangelium* of Gen. 3:15, which even then was based upon Christ alone) for them to be saved.
 6. Romans 1 teaches that the actual outcome of natural revelation (inside by conscience and outside by creation) is always insufficient to bring man to salvation (and actually only brings condemnation), and that mankind is so depraved that we cannot discover God in nature (and actually suppress the truth in unrighteousness). Man can only become more depraved, more condemned, invent more false religion and idols of creation, and become fools from natural revelation. Natural revelation is to leave us without excuse, and (when enabled by God's Spirit) convict our consciences and reveal His nature.
 7. 1 Corinthians 1 teaches that the gospel is a stumbling block to many and foolishness to the rest of the world. It not only takes special Divine revelation to be saved, but it depends upon the Spirit of God to be understood and applied. 1 Corinthians 2 adds that no one knows the things of God but God, and that He must reveal them to us by His Spirit. As James 3:15 teaches, any "wisdom" of the world does not come from God above, but is actually from demons!
 8. **Actually, there is another way of salvation and access to heaven!** Jesus in Matthew 19:16-26 had an encounter with a rich young man. He first pointed out

the fact that there is only One who is good. But since the young man did not believe him, (and thought himself to be good), He went on to illustrate another “way” for him to be saved and gain eternal life. He just simply had to perfectly obey every commandment all his life and never sin! This is presented as “possible” but harder than pressing a 1500 pound camel through the eye of a sewing needle! So, we are more confirmed that Jesus is the only way, when we see what is necessary for fellowship and access to a perfect and holy God. We must be perfect and holy as He is, and that is ***impossible*** for us to do ourselves.

- So the **conclusion** must be that man ***cannot be saved apart from Christ alone!*** The special and Divine revelation that is found in the Word and the His word is the only true “good news” that can save and keep saved!
- ***What about you?*** Are you trusting in anything other than Jesus Christ for your salvation and access to God? If you think about it, there are really only ***two religions*** in the world: **human attempts** and **Divine accomplishment**. Anything other than trusting in **Christ alone** for your salvation is really depending on your own efforts, goodness or actions to save yourself. We must cling to Christ alone, abandoning everything else. (I have told many that if He is not the only way, then I will spend eternity in hell, as I have no other hope!) What about you? Pray about what are you really trusting in for your salvation? (Jesus plus family, church, decision, baptism, living a good life, etc.) Do you really have a living growing and real relationship with God through Jesus Christ alone? If you sense God convicting you of your need for only Him, if you sense God calling you to Himself, if you sense an understanding of the good news of His gospel that you have never had before, that is not from yourself – it is the grace and mercy of God in your life. Respond to Him, believe in Him, trust in Him alone, and He will save you securely forever!
- **But what about us? As Christians,** what is the meaning of Christ alone for us *after salvation*?
- 1. **First,** we must **be sure we know the historical Christ of the Bible**. Many false views of the Person of Christ have been embraced by many ever since He came. For example, some heresies since the first century include:

Arianism treated Jesus Christ as the supreme of God’s creatures, and denied His Divine status; making Him created and not equal to God.

Docetism treated Christ as a purely Divine being Who only had the “appearance” of being human; denying His human nature.

Ebionism treated Christ as a purely human figure who had special gifts from God; denying His Divine nature.

Even today, most problems in “Christian” religions relate to an inaccurate view of Christ and His work. What are some examples?

2. **Second**, we must **be sure that we embrace the true Christ and Him alone!**

Paul F. M. Zahl said “The prism through which all light concerning God is reflected is Jesus Christ. This means that *Christology* is the beginning and the end, better, the starting point and summary of all Christian thought. Christology is the subject of theology.” Jesus Christ is our “all in all” (1Cor. 15:28)

We must come to the point that we realize that **Christ is** the issue of every debate, the solution to every problem, the source of every need, the peace that overcomes the world, the hope that never fails, the faith that overcomes all, the love that makes us like God, the way through any challenge, the truth that overcomes any error and sets us free, the life that overcomes any deadness, and the glory that enables us to enjoy God forever. Such also frees us and enables us to be used for real ministry to others. How does this work itself out practically?

- Example of our conversation with some Christian people about homosexuals that are friends of theirs and claim to be Christians. I focused on refuting their claims and “hammering” them with the truths of Leviticus 19, Romans 1, etc.. Debbie however calmly said that they should keep Christ the issue – share Him and make Him the issue, *not* their homosexuality.
No one can deal with any issue (morality, politics, family, relationships, etc.) until they “deal” with the Christ of the Bible! **He is the ultimate issue** behind every other one!

Ephesians 2:6 says we are already “**raised up with Him and seated with Him** in the heavenly places.” Colossians 3:1-3 explains further, “*Since* you have been raised up with Christ, **keep seeking the things above**, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **Set your mind on the things above**, not on the things that are on earth. For **you have died and your life is hidden with Christ** in God.”

This **does not mean** that we are to become irrelevant mystics who have no use for this world (“too heavenly minded to be any earthly good”). But most Christians are so worldly in their view of Christ and His relationship to them, that they are no different from the world or its unbelievers. Rather it means that we are oriented in our outlook **toward God** rather than humanity (*including ourselves*), the **eternal** rather than this present age, **holiness** rather than happiness, **glorifying God** rather than demanding that God meet our felt needs. Only this kind of orientation will make us “salt” and “light” in the world,

becoming a distinctive testimony to Christ as we are conformed to His image and made into “imprints” (Titus 2:7) or examples for others.

If we have Christ, then what else do we want or need? When we can come to the place that we realize that the one who has Christ plus nothing else is just as rich as the one who has Christ plus everything, then we can really live as He intended.

Perhaps this is the issue of the **Reformation** that was not emphasized enough? In the struggles to regain truth in the church, the Reformers rightly focused upon the essential truths of Scripture alone (as the sole authority), faith alone (as the sole means by which God makes us righteous and justified), and grace alone (as the sole basis for our justification and sanctification). They rightly re-established **systemization** of these Biblical truths. But the danger of systemization is that we can drift into *systems of truth* being the focus, instead of a **Person of Truth** being the focus! The Bible is a systematic revelation of truth, but more importantly, it is a record and revelation of the **Living Word of Truth – Jesus Christ!**

Christ Alone sums up Christianity and the entire faith! This by no means detracts from the fullness of God – orthodox Biblical Trinitarianism – it simply means that Jesus Christ is the central figure and Mediator of God’s dealings with man. His work involves all aspects of the Christian’s life (the Christian quadrilateral): **history, doctrine, experience, and community**. We cannot take away any one of these and still have Christianity.

- But what can happen if we get too focused on any one of these aspects and forget the One Who defines what they should be and makes them all relevant?

Scholastic people can get sucked into a historically centered faith. Thinking people can get sucked into a doctrinally centered faith. Emotional people can get sucked into an experience centered faith. Relational people can get sucked into a community centered faith. *But they (individually) are not the foundation of our faith, and any of them out of balance upsets the foundation of our faith!* **Jesus Christ is the (chief) cornerstone and foundation of our faith!**

2 Cor. 4:6 (NASB) For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give **the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.**

The same creative almighty God who created *ex nihilo* (out of nothing), is the One Who has created light out darkness in our hearts (souls) to give us the knowledge of the glory of God in Jesus Christ alone! As we behold the face and beauty of Christ, we behold and come to understand the glory (essence of Who He is) of God Himself!

SCRIPTURE ALONE

DISTINCTIVES OF GRACE

FOR GOD'S GLORY ALONE (*Soli Deo Gloria*) – Part 1

- **Introduction**

We have finally arrived at the end of our study of the “Distinctives of Grace!” We have looked at all five of the points of the Synod of Dort (1618-1619) in response to the Remonstrance, or those opposing traditional and Biblical church teaching of the day based upon what they perceived to be the teachings of Arminius. These responses were grouped into five main points. Later these points became known as the five points of Calvinism (as opposed to Arminianism), and were cutely identified by the acrostic from the national symbol of where the Synod (or church court) was held (viz. Holland), or TULIP. These also are called the five points of the Doctrines of Grace to distinguish between systems of belief that allow for man’s salvation apart from God’s grace alone.

We have also looked at four of the five “sola statements” from the Reformers and what is called Reformed theology. These five statements (Scripture alone, Grace alone, Faith alone, Christ alone and for God’s glory alone) summed up the distinctions of the faith and theology of those “protesting” the Roman church’s system and teachings, and still stand

today as perhaps the best, most concise and defining way to distinguish the Christian faith from all others; and more specifically, to distinguish true Biblical Christianity and theology from all other forms of Christianity. They are the bedrock of our faith, the source of our hope, the cause of our peace and the motivation for our love.

As discussed, the five (TULIP) points of Calvinism may be legitimately debated by Bible believers, when their meaning is misunderstood by the terms or stereotypes, when they are made trite and simplistic by modern redefinition, and especially when they are used for abuse by those who go beyond the Bible and make them into a system or ideological system that defines the Bible. We have tried to see these in their original intent and meaning, as responses to errors and a system invented by the Arminians, which are forever subject to the Bible and its proper interpretation. Properly understood, they may help group some of the more neglected aspects of what the Scriptures teach about God's plan of salvation. But, the point remains and is acknowledged, that sincere, good, Bible-believing Christians can and do line up on both sides of some of these points (of Calvinism).

However, the five "solos" are much more foundational and fundamental to our faith. Hence, there is (or *should* be) much less debate or disagreement on these by those claiming to be truly committed to the Scriptures as God's Word. They truly should be shared by all who claim to be Christians apart from the Roman church and its theology.

With the five points of Calvinism, it has been rightly affirmed that if we really understood only the first one (Total or *Radical* Depravity), and if we were (Biblically and logically) consistent, we would be forced to affirm all the other four. *Likewise*, the five "solos" can be viewed as being only *one!* If we are forced to pick one that leads to all others and forces us to agree with the other four, it would have to be *solus Deo Gloria*, "*for God's glory alone!*" If we began here, rather than ending here, we would surely still end here also!

And yet, this is perhaps the one most misunderstood, with (at first thought) seemingly the least direct Biblical support, and perhaps the one usually just added on as an "Amen" to the others. We can teach and expound for days on end about any of the others, but what does this one mean? ("You know – it means all the glory goes to God alone! What else do you want to know?) Even among those who accept the traditional "reformed" view of the Bible, the full meaning of this statement is often missed and not understood. In addition, this is the statement that has almost no argument from any Christian, (except a rank modern liberal). No one criticizes those of us who hold to it by saying, "the problem with you guys is that you are always trying to make sure God gets the glory for everything!" And yet, the full meaning of "for God's glory alone" really is the essence and core of what sets "reformed" theology apart from all other forms of Christianity. It actually succeeds where all others fail; rather than just a verbal commitment to God's glory; it offers a view (the *only* view) of the Scriptures that actually succeeds in giving God all the glory for all things!

- **Definitions**

As always, we must first be sure that we understand the terms involved.

Glory is used as both a noun and a verb in the Bible. Although the terms are used relative to both man and God, our focus here is obviously God and God alone, so we need to focus upon its meaning as related to God.

1. Old Testament

In the OT, the words used most for God's glory (as a noun) and for the verb "to glorify" (God) stem from a root with a very interesting meaning.

kabowd, kaw-bode'; rarely **kabod, kaw-bode'**; from Hebrew 3513 (kabad); prop. **weight**; but only figurative in a good sense, **splendor or copiousness** :- **glorious** (-ly), **glory, honour** (-able).

(from Hebrew) **kabad, kaw-bad'**; or **kabed, kaw-bade'**; a primitive root; **to be heavy**, i.e. in a bad sense (*burdensome, severe, dull*) or in a good sense (*numerous, rich, honorable*); **causative to make weighty** (in the same two senses) :- abounding with, more grievously afflict, boast, be chargeable, × be dim, glorify, be (make) glorious (things), glory, (very) great, be grievous, harden, be (make) heavy, be heavier, lay heavily, (bring to, come to, do, get, be had in) honour (self), (be) honourable (man), lade, × more be laid, make self many, nobles, prevail, promote (to honour), be rich, be (go) sore, stop.

"Kabod" refers to the great physical weight or "quantity" of something. It often refers to both "wealth" and significant and positive reputation. It can also indicate the position or honor of an individual. When applied to God, the word represents a quality corresponding to Him and by which He is recognized.

2. New Testament

In the NT, the words used most for God's glory or the action of glorifying God also stem from very interesting root words.

doxa, dox'-ah; from the base of Greek 1380 (dokeo); **glory (as very apparent)**, in a wide application (literal or figurative, object or subject) :- **dignity, glory** (-ious), **honour, praise, worship**.

(from Greek) **dokeo, dok-eh'-o**; a prolonged form of a primary verb **doko, dok'-o** (used only as an alternate in certain tenses; compare the base of Greek 1166 (deiknuo)) of the same meaning; **to think**; by implication **to seem (truthfully or uncertainly)** :- **be accounted**, (of own) **please** (-ure), be **of reputation, seem (good), suppose, think, throw**.

As above, the root word ("*dokeo*") from which "*doxa*" comes, primarily meant "to think" or "to recognize", thus *doxa* meant thought or opinion, especially favorable. Thus in a secondary sense it also meant reputation, praise, honor, splendor, light, perfection, etc.

3. Summary Concept and Meaning of "Glory"

Therefore, we might think of the concept of the glory of God as His “weight” or “worthiness”, God’s favorable opinion, the true apprehension of God, or *what He is in unchanging essence and essentially!* It could also be viewed as *the outward manifestation of all the attributes of God!*

“To glorify (God) might be described as *an acknowledgement of Who God is and who we are!* (There are 2 sure things: There is a God, and you are not Him!)

- **Glory and Worship**

From the above, we can immediately see how worship must accompany glory and they parallel each other. To recognize the glory of God or to glorify God must lead to *worship* of God! Worship cannot occur without recognizing the *glory* of God! After all, *worship* is ascribing to God His “worth” (or *glory*)!

The Cambridge Declaration has stated it well:

“Wherever in the church biblical authority has been lost, Christ has been displaced, the gospel has been distorted, or our faith has been perverted, it has always been for one reason: our interests have displaced God’s and we are doing His work in our way. The loss of God’s centrality in the life of today’s church is common and lamentable. It is this loss that allows us to transform worship into entertainment, gospel preaching into marketing, believing into technique, being good into feeling good about ourselves, and faithfulness into being successful. As a result, God, Christ, and the Bible have come to mean too little to us and rest too inconsequentially upon us.

God does not exist to satisfy human ambitions, cravings, the appetite for consumption, or our own private spiritual interests. We must focus on God in our worship, rather than the satisfaction of our personal needs. God is sovereign in worship, we are not. Our concern must be for God’s kingdom, not our own empires, popularity or success.”

- **The Ultimate Motive & Compulsion**

The first question of *the Westminster Confession of Faith* (Catechism) defines the central issue for all things in our lives, when it asks “What is the chief and highest end of man?” The answer is “Man’s chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy Him forever.” (Psa. 73:24-28, John 17:21-23)

John Calvin began his *Institutes* with an interesting paradox. He says that in order for us to understand Who God is, we must first understand something of who man is.

A. W. Tozer in *The Knowledge of the Holy* states that “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” In other words, we must think rightly about God in order to think rightly about ourselves and vice versa.

That the glory of God is the ultimate motive and end is true not only for worship, which is our ultimate priority, but also in our outreach ministry to the lost world and in our nurturing ministry to the church.

The Motive -	The Glory of God -	The Great Compulsion
Is manifested	and achieved in	
The Mandate -	Exalting the Savior -	The Great Commandment
And in		
The Mission -	Extending the Kingdom -	The Great Commission
And in		
The Method -	Equipping the Saints -	The Great Commitment

Seeing and being captivated by the glory of God makes us long to align ourselves with the purposes of His love, fulfill His purposes, and perform His works pre-established for us.

● Scriptural Proofs

1 Chron. 16:28-31 (NASB) Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

[29] Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name; Bring an offering, and come before Him; Worship the Lord in holy array.

[30] Tremble before Him, all the earth; Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved.

[31] Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; And let them say among the nations, "The Lord reigns."

1 Chron. 29:11 (NASB) "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Thine is the dominion, O Lord, and Thou dost exalt Thyself as head over all.

Psalms 148:13 (NASB) Let them praise the name of the Lord, For His name alone is exalted; His glory is above earth and heaven.

Romans 11:36 (NASB) For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

Romans 16:27 (NASB) to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.

1 Cor. 6:20 (NASB) For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

1 Cor. 10:31 (NASB) Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Ephes. 3:21 (NASB) to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

2 Thes. 1:11-12 (NASB) To this end also we pray for you always that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power; [12] in order that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 4:11 (NASB) Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Jude 1:25 (NASB) to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Rev. 7:12 (NASB) saying, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen."

Rev. 15:4 (NASB) "Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name?
For Thou alone art holy;
For all the nations will come and worship before Thee,
For Thy righteous acts have been revealed."

- **Our Problem with the Glory of God – Illustration and Explanation**

Since we are approaching the celebration of the coming of Jesus Christ into the world, putting on flesh, to live a perfect life, die on the cross and be raised from the dead, let us think about **WHY?** Why did God the Son do all that? Why did He humble Himself to flesh, suffer among us, die on a cruel cross, and three days later resurrect?

Some possible and correct (Biblical) answers in the Christmas context:

Matthew 1:21 (NASB) "And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is **He who will save His people from their sins.**"

Matthew 1:23 (NASB) "Behold, the virgin shall be with CHILD, AND SHALL BEAR A Son, and **they shall call His name Immanuel,**" which translated means, "**God with us.**"

Mark 1:8 (NASB) "I baptized you with water; but **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.**"

Luke 1:32-33 (NASB) "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord **God will give Him the throne of His father David;** [33] **and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever;** and His kingdom will have no end."

John 1:29 (NASB) The next day he saw Jesus coming to him, and said, "Behold, **the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!**

John 3:16-17 (NASB) "For **God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son**, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. [17] "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but **that the world should be saved through Him.**

What about other verses like:

Isaiah 53:5 (NASB) But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.

Philip. 4:13 (NASB) I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Philip. 4:19 (NASB) And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

- ***So, why did He come and die?***

One of the reasons that it is so hard to communicate or understand Biblical reality to modern, secular people is that the secular, fleshly mindset and the Biblical mindset start and move from radically different points. The difference is basically one of **man-centeredness versus God-centeredness**. It is **ME-ology against Theology!**

The secular and fleshly mindset is the one we were born with, the one that our flesh promotes constantly, the one that is reinforced and exalted by the world system or secular society every minute of every day, and the one that Satan and his demons are appealing to in every attack. Paul called this "**the mind that is set upon the flesh**" (in Rom. 8:6-7 that is "death" and "hostile toward God"), and described the "**natural man**" as one who "does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them" (1Cor. 2:14). It is the mindset that Satan appealed to in Eve in the garden when he said "Indeed has God said...??" (questioning Who God was and His word), and when he said "For God knows that ...you will be like God..." (appealing to her pride and self-worth).

What the secular mindset sees as problems are seen as problems because of how things fit or don't fit with the center – that is man (or us)! It is all about man, his rights, expectations and needs. And what are seen as failures or successes are seen as such because of how they fit with man's rights, needs, or expectations. This mindset is so

much a part of us that **we take it for granted and don't even know that it is there.** That is **until it collides with another mindset** – the one in the Bible!

The Biblical mindset starts at a radically different starting point, namely God! It acknowledges that God is the basic reality in the universe. He existed before it or we did, He made it and us, and He is the issue, the most absolute reality! It starts with God Who has rights as the Creator of all things. He has goals as the Ordainer and Planner of all things. He has purposes as the Divine Sovereign over all things. So this Biblical mindset moves from this point and interprets the world and all that happens in it in light of God, His character, rights, goals, and purposes (whether known or unknown)!

So, back to the first question about why God sent His Son or why He came, notice how we immediately go to the reasons that relate to and revolve around us. And even may make some more (incorrect) reasons that apply to us to make us feel even better and worth more to God. Also, we should note that **not only does the answer** depend more upon God than us, but **even the question or problem is dependent upon Him** first rather than us. What determines the basic problem of the universe is not how to preserve man's rights (like self-determination or to have eternal life) and solve his problems (suffering, sickness, poverty, sin, the wrath of God, etc.)

Consider the two perspectives of the two mindsets in relation to the central event in human history – the death of the Son of God on **the cross**.

Romans 3:23-26 (NASB) for all have sinned and **fall short of the glory of God**, [24] being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; [25] whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.

This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; [26] for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

We are trying to go beyond justification and reconciliation and other means of our salvation, and get to the bottom of it all. This is what C.E.B. Cranfield called “the innermost meaning of the cross.” Or, we could ask, **“Did Christ die for us or for God?”**

So, from the text, why did God put Christ forward or publicly display Him as a propitiation? So the problem or issue was that God seemed or appeared to be unrighteous, and He wanted to vindicate or clear His name. He wanted to demonstrate the absolute perfection of all His attributes, of justice and mercy (justifying sinners), of righteousness and grace, of wrath and mercy, of judgment and love.

What created this “problem” or issue is in the second half of v. 25, “**because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed.**” God had been for centuries demonstrating forbearance and patience with the sins of man, not reacting as His character demanded and we deserved.

Psalm 103:10 (NASB) **He has not dealt with us according to our sins,
Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.**

Consider the **example of David**. How he despised God and saw that his sin was against God, even before it was against Uriah and Bathsheba. And yet, God pardoned and “took away” his sin. How could He do that and be true to His nature? (THAT is “not fair!”)

2 Samuel 12:7-13 (NASB) **Nathan then said to David, "You are the man!** Thus says the Lord God of Israel, '**It is I** who anointed you king over Israel and **it is I** who delivered you from the hand of Saul. [8] '**I also gave you** your master's house and your master's wives into your care, and **I gave you** the house of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little, **I would have added** to you many more things like these! [9] '**Why have you despised the word of the Lord by doing evil in His sight?** You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the sons of Ammon. [10] 'Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' [11] "Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your companion, and he shall lie with your wives in broad daylight. [12] 'Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun.' " [13] Then David said to Nathan, **"I have sinned against the Lord."** And Nathan said to David, **"The Lord also has taken away your sin; you shall not die.**

How many believers wrestle in mental anguish of the mystery of how a holy and righteous God can be kind to sinners? How can He send the rain on the just and the unjust? How can He forgive them when their sin is a threat to His righteousness?

Back in Romans 3:23, we see our sin as in conflict with the glory of God. Notice that sin is equal to “falling short of the glory of God.” That is the essence of sin, **failing to love God’s glory above everything else**. Imagine David’s reaction to Nathan saying he had despised God Himself. (He might have said, or You weren’t even in the picture.) **Yet, God and His glory was *the issue!***

Consider how we all have turned the gospel into a Divine delight in *us*, or into a Divine endorsement of our delight in many lesser things than God and His glory, like our delight in being made much of. Consider this question by John Piper in *God is the Gospel*, “**Do**

you feel more loved because God makes much of you, or because, at the cost of His Son, He enables you to enjoy making much of Him forever?”

Most people cannot even imagine an alternate understanding of feeling loved other than feeling made much of. “But if His love for us is at bottom His making much of us, **who is really being praised?** We are willing to be God-centered, it seems, as long as God is man-centered. We are willing to boast in the cross as long as the cross is a witness to our worth.” Remember that we are talking about the *goal* of the gospel, not the *means*. (Many other means are certainly true and Biblical, but are not the ultimate goal – to see and savor God Himself!)

- Illustrated by parenting – If our children were asked what are your parents teaching you, or what is the goal of their training; they might respond “well, they want me to learn to brush my teeth, make up my room, not fight with my sister or brother, etc. When in reality the ultimate goal for us their maturity and independence as adults, and mature disciples for Christ. Those other things are just means to help train toward the goal. They are still important and true, it’s just that the bigger picture is not preached or explained so much. Likewise, much of the Scriptures are practical and about the means to God’s end or goal, which is always ultimately His glory and, for us, our participation in it.

The problem is also exposed in the question **“If you could have heaven, with no sickness, and with all the (family and) friends you ever had on earth, and all the food you ever liked, and all the leisure activities you ever enjoyed, and all the natural beauties you ever saw, all the physical pleasures you ever tasted, and no human conflict or any natural disasters,...could you be satisfied with heaven if Christ was not there?”**

Are we being taught in such ways that the answer is always a NO? Do we pray and meditate in such a way to answer NO? Do we worship and praise God in such a way that the answer is NO? How should we change? What should we do?

DISTINCTIVES OF GRACE

FOR GOD'S GLORY ALONE (*Soli Deo Gloria*) – Part 2

In part one last week, we saw how **this “sola” statement is the most foundational and primary to all the others**. If we begin with the glory of God alone, we will also inevitably end there. The teaching of this “sola” statement is **the most distinctive yet universal, final and yet foundational element** of all Reformed and Biblical doctrine.

And yet, we also noticed that this is **perhaps the one most misunderstood**, with (at first thought) seemingly the least direct Biblical support, and perhaps the one usually just added on as an “Amen” to the others. Even among those who accept the traditional “reformed” view of the Bible, **the full meaning of this statement is often missed and not understood**. And yet, the full meaning of “for God’s glory alone” really is the essence and core of **what sets “reformed” theology apart from all other forms of Christianity**. It actually succeeds where all others fail; rather than just a verbal commitment to God’s glory; **it offers a view (the only view) of the Scriptures that actually succeeds in giving God all the glory for all things!**

We also observed that the root words for “**glory**” help define it as God’s “**weight**” or “**worthiness**”, God’s favorable opinion, the true apprehension of God, or *what He is in unchanging and perfect essence and essentially!* It could also be viewed as **the outward manifestation of all the attributes of God!** As a verb form, “to glorify “(God) might be described as *an acknowledgement of Who God is and who we are!* We looked at some of the many Scriptural supports for this doctrine.

Seeing and savoring such glory inevitably leads true believers to **worship!** It not only drives us to **the ultimate priority (worship)** in life, it also fulfills **the ultimate purpose (glorifying and enjoying God)** in our life! It is the *Great Compulsion* of all true believers.

Most importantly, we saw how **we are handicapped from seeing and savoring the glory of God by our perspective and mindset.** As sinful, selfish, fallen and finite creatures we still **struggle with the “natural man”** that “does not accept the things of God” because they are often foolishness to us and we cannot understand them. This secular and natural mindset is focused upon our own rights, expectations, and needs; not God’s rights, goals, or purposes. We must receive and develop **the Biblical mindset that interprets the world and all that happens in it in light of God,** His character, rights, goals, and purposes (whether known or unknown)!

So we are struggling to have the right mind, the right perspective, the right focus and center (namely GOD) to attempt to understand some of these very deep and fundamental issues. In doing so, we can answer all of life’s important questions, such as: **“Where did we (and all creation) come from?” “What kind of God made us (and all there is)?” “Why did God make us (or anything there is)?” “What is our ultimate purpose in life?” “How do we achieve our ultimate purpose?”**

1. The Nature of God – Who is He?

If we are to be “God-centered,” **we must begin with GOD!** If we examine the nature of God from His Own revelations (natural and special), we are forced to acknowledge that He is **glorious!** His glory stems from the overwhelming and overflowing beauty of the sum total and perfect harmony of all His attributes and characteristics working together. God is perfect in holiness, justice, wisdom, power, grace, mercy, and love (to name just a few). **God is glorious and worthy of all glory!**

2. The Motive of God – Why does He do what He does?

God is not only glorious in His nature, His perfection and all His attributes; He is motivated by His glorious nature. His holiness demands that He love most that which is best – namely Himself! That is why there is no love that is not rooted in the ultimate love of the Father for the Son, the Son for the Father, the Spirit for the Son, etc. His righteousness demands that **His ultimate loyalty and motive for all He does is the manifestation and maintenance of His glory!**

- In other words, **all that God does, He does for His Own name sake.**

Ezekiel 36:20-23 (NASB) "When they came to the nations where they went, **they profaned My holy name**, because it was said of them, '**These are the people of the Lord; yet** they have come out of His land.' [21] **"But I had concern for My holy name**, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations where they went.

[22] "Therefore, say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God, **"It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name**, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. [23] **"And I will vindicate the holiness of My great name** which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. **Then the nations will know that I am the Lord," declares the Lord God, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.**

- God **created all things** for His glory.

Psalms 19:1 (NASB) **The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.**

Psalms 104:31 (NASB) **Let the glory of the Lord endure forever;
Let the Lord be glad in His works;**

Isaiah 6:3 (NASB) And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, **The whole earth is full of His glory.**"

- Specifically, **God created man** for His glory.

Isaiah 43:7 (NASB) Everyone who is called by My name,
And **whom I have created for My glory**,
Whom I have formed, even whom I have made."

Isaiah 43:21 (NASB) **"The people whom I formed for Myself,
Will declare My praise.**

- God **redeems sinful man** for the praise of His glory.

Ephesians 1:5-6 (NASB) He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, [6] **to the praise of the glory of His grace**, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

Ephesians 1:12 (NASB) **to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.**

Ephesians 1:14 (NASB) who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, **to the praise of His glory.**

Romans 3:26 (NASB) **for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness** at the present time, **that He might be just and the justifier** of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Romans 15:7 (NASB) Wherefore, accept one another, just as **Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.**

- God **empowers believers to live** for His glory.

1 Cor. 10:31 (NASB) Whether, then, you eat or drink or **whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.**

1 Peter 4:11 (NASB) Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, **let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ**, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

- God's **ultimate goal for His people** is that they might see and enjoy His glory forever. (as in the Westminster Confession)

John 17:24 (NASB) "Father, I desire **that they** also, whom Thou hast given Me, **be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory**, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world.

1 John 3:2 (NASB) Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, **when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.**

Psalms 27:4 (NASB) One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek:
That **I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,**
To behold the beauty of the Lord,
And to meditate in His temple.

- God's **ultimate goal for earth** is that it be filled with the glory of God.

Numbers 14:21 (NASB) but indeed, as I live, **all the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord.**

Habakkuk 2:14 (NASB) "For **the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord**, as the waters cover the sea.

- Illustration of an object lesson (1" motorcycle handlebar mount for a Garmin 76C GPS) – Anything made has a purpose in mind in its making. *Teleology* is the study

of purposes or ends. Every time we act, we do so with a purpose in mind or seeking a particular goal.

3. God's ultimate goal for creating, governing and redeeming is His glory!

(Glory is the purpose and the Bible is the Owner's manual!)

Go back to the passage in Isaiah 43, and read it in context:

Isaiah 43:1-7 (NASB)

But now, **thus says the Lord, your Creator**, O Jacob,
 And **He who formed you, O Israel**, "**Do not fear**, for I have redeemed you;
 I have called you by name; you are Mine!
 [2] "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
 And through the rivers, they will not overflow you.
 When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched,
 Nor will the flame burn you.
 [3] "For I am the Lord your God,
 The Holy One of Israel, your Savior;
 I have given Egypt as your ransom,
 Cush and Seba in your place.
 [4] "Since **you are precious in My sight**,
Since you are honored and I love you,
 I will give other men in your place and other peoples in exchange for your life.
 [5] "**Do not fear**, for I am with you;
 I will bring your offspring from the east,
 And gather you from the west.
 [6] "I will say to the north, 'Give them up!'
 And to the south, 'Do not hold them back.'
 Bring My sons from afar,
 And My daughters from the ends of the earth,
 [7] **Everyone who is called by My name**,
And whom I have created for My glory,
Whom I have formed, even whom I have made."

The main point is to encourage God's people (Israel) **to not fear** what man or nature can do to them, (as commanded in vv. 1 & 5). After each command He gives an argument to support the command. In vv. 1-4, He reminds them of what He has done for them in the past. In vv. 5-7, He reminds them that the judgment of being dispersed into captivity is not His final word for them.

Verse 4 gets into **the heart of God** – What moves Him to help His people? As John said in 1 John 4:8, **God is love**, and that means that no matter how deep we probe into the heart of God we will never arrive at a layer that is not love!

But that raises another question. In order for them to be precious and loved, they had to be created and called.

- **What was His motive before they were a people, before He created or called them? Verse 7 gives the ultimate answer – God created Israel for His glory!**

That is the motive behind all that He does! He created Adam & Eve for His glory. Then man fell and He started His plan of redemption in time for His glory. He allowed the sinfulness of man to be completed until the tower of Babel. What made God angry and pour out some of His wrath on them, confounding them with languages?

Genesis 11:4 (NASB) And **they said**, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and **let us make for ourselves a name**; lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."

They (like Eve and Adam in the garden) **sought their own glory** and in pride wanted **to make a name for themselves**, instead of exalting God's name and glory. So God continued His plan in His sovereign choice of a single man, that would become a people:

Genesis 12:1-3 (NASB) Now the Lord said to Abram,

"Go forth from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father's house,
To the land which I will show you;
[2] And **I will make you a great nation,**
And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
And so you shall be a blessing;
[3] And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse.
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Man was made to rely on God and give Him glory. Instead man chose to rely on himself and seek his own glory. So God chose to bring forth a nation from one man and achieve His purpose through that man and his descendants. And so the cycle continues to this day. Man continually refuses to align himself with this goal, but God continues to create and call and redeem to see His purpose through to the end!

- Notice that God is **not using man to make Himself more glorious** (because He cannot be more “full”). It is rather that **His glory is somehow increased and manifested in and by us!**

Isaiah 43:21 (NASB) **"The people whom I formed for Myself, Will declare My praise.**

Isaiah 44:23 (NASB) **Shout for joy, O heavens, for the Lord has done it!
.....For the Lord has redeemed Jacob And in Israel He shows forth His glory.**

Isaiah 48:9-11 (NASB) **"For the sake of My name I delay My wrath,
And for My praise I restrain it for you,
In order not to cut you off.
[10] "Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver;
I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.
[11] "For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act;
For how can My name be profaned?
And My glory I will not give to another.**

This is even more dramatically described in **Ezekiel:**

Ezekiel 36:21-32 (NASB) **"But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations where they went.**

[22] "Therefore, say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God, **"It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name,** which you have profaned among the nations where you went. [23] **"And I will vindicate the holiness of My great name** which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. **Then the nations will know that I am the Lord,"** declares the Lord God, "when **I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.** [24] **"For I will** take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land. [25] **"Then I will** sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; **I will** cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. [26] **"Moreover, I will** give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and **I will** remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. [27] **"And I will** put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. [28] **"And you will live in the land that I gave** to your forefathers; **so you will be My people, and I will be your God.** [29] **"Moreover, I will** save you from all your uncleanness; and **I will** call for the grain and multiply it, and **I will** not bring a famine on you. [30] **"And I will** multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field, that you may not receive again the disgrace of famine among the nations. [31] **"Then** you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations. [32] **"I am not doing this for your sake,"** declares the Lord God, "let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel!"

- **So, we are saved totally by God and God alone. And we are saved for God's glory alone! He will not share it with another!**

As expressed profoundly in Romans:

Romans 9:22-24 (NASB) What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? [23] **And He did so in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, [24] even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.**

Notice three dramatic points here:

1. We are **“vessels of mercy”** – This means **we do not deserve to be saved!** God is not saving us because of us or what we did. He is saving us on the basis of His mercy toward us! This should eliminate any and all boasting and pride. Mercy produces mercy and receives mercy again.
Matthew 5:7 (NASB) "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.
 2. We are **“prepared beforehand for glory”** – This means that **we did not make ourselves fit** to know His glory, He did! Our ability to see and savor any of God's glory is all because of His mercy and grace!
 3. We are to **“make known the riches of His glory”** – This does **not mean a simple intellectual knowledge while feeling indifferent!** Oh, how it would change our lives to live in such knowledge that we are made to know the glory of God, to taste and see the glory of God, to treasure to glory of God, and to enjoy the glory of God!
- **Therefore, we are to glory God alone *inwardly* as we see ourselves (our existence), our salvation, our worship, our delight and our purposes only in light of His purpose to bring more glory to Himself! Oh, that we might live in knowledge and possession of this fact!**

As Moses prayed in Exodus 33:13 and 18, we should pray and seek to “know the ways of God, that we may know God and find favor (grace) in His sight” and that God would “show us His glory!” It is internal and personal, intellectual knowledge and intimate passion!

- **What would change if we did live and think this way? Could we be satisfied with anything except God Himself as our treasure and goal?**

This ultimate motive and purpose is also achieved **outwardly**:

4. **God's glory alone is also our ultimate motive in obedience and good deeds.**

Christ Himself said:

Matthew 5:16 (NASB) "Let your light shine **before men** in such a way **that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.**

Peter said:

1 Peter 2:12 (NASB) Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, **so that** in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, **they may on account of your good deeds**, as they observe them, **glorify God** in the day of visitation.

Paul taught the same in Titus 3:14, and James taught the same in James 1:27.

- **But HOW do we live in such a way as to glory God alone in our deeds? How do we do all things as to glorify God (1Cor. 10:31)?**

Go back to the passage in Peter's epistle:

1 Peter 4:10-11 (NASB) **As each one has received a special gift, employ it** in serving one another, **as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.** [11] Whoever speaks, let him speak, **as it were, the utterances of God**; whoever serves, let him do so **as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified** through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

As taught in Galatians, the gospel is to **free us** to live for God! The truth is to set us free, not to put us into bondage again. So let us think, speak, and live in such a way that is relying upon Him. **Our dependence upon him ensures that He alone receives the glory** (for us and for others).

- Do we wake each day and view the principle of "for God's glory alone" as a **burden** or "law" or requirement? Or do we wake and view the principle as a blessed **freedom and privilege**, granted and gifted by God, empowered and sustained by God?

This manner of living is the only way to live for **eternal rewards** versus temporal ones. Only those things done in Christ, or more specifically – done by Christ in and through us, will bring glory to God and last for eternity. That is the message of 1Cor. 3:4-15.

God gets glory not from our religious exertion and efforts, but from our **relational reliance** upon His strength; when we serve as one who serves with the strength that

God supplies. Also note how the outward living to His glory compliments and strengthens the inward living to His glory! These are both interdependent and related.

God will Himself to glorify
Is not a weight
To make us sigh
For it is wings
To make us fly! (John Piper)

Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi: (second half)

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

DISTINCTIVES OF GRACE

SUMMATION: THE CONSEQUENCES OF REFORMED THEOLOGY

We have finished our study of the five great “sola” statements of the Reformation and the five points of the doctrines of grace or Calvinism. We have seen the Scriptural basis and support for each of these, the development of them from Christian history (the Reformation and the Synod of Dort in particular), the impact for us and all men in our lives, the impact on our view of God and the praise and glory He alone deserves. These are truly great studies in the great and sovereign God we worship and serve, His nature and His plan of salvation, the nature of man and its impact on his salvation, and many other areas.

All ideas have consequences! Certainly, the most important ideas (namely theological theses or doctrines) have very grave and important consequences!

- ***What are the distinctive consequences of these distinct ideas?***
- ***What makes “reformed Biblical protestant evangelical Christian theology and practice distinctive from all other forms of Christianity, or even from all other forms of protestant Christianity?”***

Consider **the origin of sin and its consequences:**

Genesis 3:1-13 (NASB) Now **the serpent** (*Satan*) was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, **"Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"** (*Satan challenges God's authority and sovereignty!*) [2] And the woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; [3] but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it **or touch it**, lest you die.'" (*She adds some to God's word for effect!*) [4] And the serpent said to the woman, **"You surely shall not die! [5] 'For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'**" (*Satan doubts, distorts, and denies God's word!*) [6] **When the woman saw** (*perception in deception, or the lust of the flesh in 1John 2:16*) that the tree was good for food, and that it was **a delight to the eyes** (*the*

lust of the eyes), and that the tree was **desirable to make one wise** (*the boastful pride of life*), **she took from its fruit and ate** (*personal choice to sin and reject the authority and sovereignty of God*); **and she gave also to her husband with her** (*led her mate into sin also*), **and he ate.** (*Adam was responsible for her sin and his!*) [7] Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that **they were naked** (*exposed in more ways than one!*); and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. (*A futile attempt to hide or cover their sin and shame!*)

[8] And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and **the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord** (*They did not want to see God or be reminded of His sovereignty over them!*) God among the trees of the garden. [9] Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" [10] And he said, "I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." [11] And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" [12] And the man said, **"The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate."** (*Adam blamed the woman!*) [13] Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, **"The serpent deceived me, and I ate."** (*The woman blamed the snake – the devil!*)

- **What can we already see in this first sin about the natural state of man after the fall, and the sovereignty of God?**

We are in the fallen state of radical or total or complete depravity. What is the natural thinking of our fallen minds about our importance or choices over God's?

J. I. Packer said that "Arminianism is "natural" in one sense, in that it represents a characteristic perversion of Biblical teaching by the fallen mind of man."

- **What does that mean? How does Arminianism represent our natural fallen thinking?**

After six months of debate in court in 1618 and 1619, the Synod of Dort condemned the teachings and views of the Remonstrance as *unbiblical* and as really part of the *Pelagian heresy*!

- **Was this "fair" or accurate to brand Arminian teaching as "heretical?" Why or why not?**

It is interesting that the word **heresy** comes from a Greek root (*hairesis*) which literally means "choice", which in turn comes from a root meaning "to choose!" Its most basic meaning is a choice of beliefs by a faction that rejects and counters the established dogma or orthodox ("straight") position from the Scriptures.

Although error and heresy was not anything new to the true church, this controversy and error marked the beginning of liberalism in the modern church. The disease of unbelief grew into all areas of theology.

“Calvinism represented the consistent, logical, conservative orthodoxy; Arminianism an elastic, progressive, changing liberalism.” Phillip Schaff

The disagreement in the Synod of Dort is summarized in the five points we have studied. The issues in the Reformation could be summarized in the five solas we have studied. Although the range of issues for both are wide and varied, and many disagreements went outside these main points, the theological were these we have studied.

Perhaps, these ten could be more narrowed to be **summarized in two main issues**:

1. **The correct (low) view of man – Totally depraved and sinful in nature**
2. **The correct (high) view of God – Totally sovereign and glorious in nature**

As we have seen, the five points of the doctrines of grace can all be developed and understood in light of the first point about the condition and nature of man, (dead and sinful). Likewise, the five solas of the Reformation can be developed and understood in the light of the principle of “for God’s glory alone!”

Let’s examine some of the **distinctive consequences** of these ideas and teachings that develop from **classic** (Biblical) **Reformed and Calvinistic theology**. In other words, how do (or how *should*) these distinctives separate those who hold to them from all other veins or streams of protestant Christianity? For example, consider the impacts and distinctives in certain key areas such as:

1. **Scripture, (the doctrine of):**

The ultimate reason that the Synod of Dort labeled the positions of the Remonstrance as being heretical was they understood their view of man’s “free will” opened up the theological “can of worms” about many issues. One of the most important was the doctrine of the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures.

- **Consider, if their view of man’s free will is correct, how can God superintend man’s words so carefully and completely?**

If God allows absolute freedom and allows the writers of Scripture the absolute freedom to make absolute choices, then we can only expect **mistakes** in the Scriptures. The nature of human freedom means that mistakes would inevitably occur! The Arminian says that free will must operate on its own, and that Divine sovereignty must respect human free will.

- So how can we be sure that the writers of the Bible did not sometimes (if not most of the time) exert their own free will apart from the sovereignty of God, therefore putting mistakes in the Bible?

On the other hand, if we have a sovereign God Who exercises His good providence and control for the purpose of His glory and mercy on His creatures, then we can expect times when He does not allow freedom in order for a particular task to be accomplished. Specifically, He would superintend every background element, every unique characteristic, every word, every *jot and tittle* to produce the Word of God without error!

- **If the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible is questioned, all manner of other errors inevitably follow. What might some of those be?**

Some of the leaders of the Remonstrance ended up questioning (even denying) the Deity of Jesus Christ. It did not stop there either, as the disease of error crept into the church and the culture she is called to disciple. The deadly cancer of humanism naturally followed, as some logically reasoned that, if man is not completely fallen, then it logically followed that he is able of ascertaining truth; philosophical, scientific and theological through his unaided reason.

Thus, the so called “age of enlightenment” began! This culminated in the skepticism and naturalism of philosopher David Hume (18th century) and the scientific theories of Charles Darwin (19th century).

2. Salvation, (soteriology):

We have studied the vast and deep impacts on the plan of salvation and the doctrine of justification from these distinctive positions.

- **How would the modern American church change its presentation of the gospel and its evangelism efforts, if it believed these distinctives? How would the response to the gospel and its presentation change in such an environment?**

Consider the current focus upon entertainment, emotional appeal, and even cheap tricks to get someone to “decide” for Jesus. Also consider the many shallow and false decisions that are made for Him each day, and how the gospel is corrupted and cheapened.

3. Church government (ecclesiology):

We should note that the primary system of church government in early America was the Presbyterian form with elders and deacons in representative positions serving the members. The local churches were also autonomous and not subject to an ecclesiastical hierarchy nor a state church (as in England). This was true of most all Puritan congregations, all Presbyterian congregations, and even most Baptist congregations (at least until the 20th century).

- **How would the modern American church be different today if this was the majority belief and church structure?**

4. **Mankind (anthropology):**

A man-centered view of man has led to a warped view of man and anthropology. Man is no longer seen as a created being, but as the source of knowledge and principles. They are self-generated and intrinsically true because of personal freedom and choice. The concept of an external objective absolute truth that flows from our Creator rather than ourselves is lost. We no longer seek the truth outside of us which is divine and sovereign, but that which is within us and depraved.

- **How is the lack of this distinctive position seen in the view of mankind and the solutions to his problems?**

5. **Personal choice and responsibility:**

- **How do we see the impact of the exaltation of human choice over God's sovereignty in the area of personal choice and responsibility?**

Man's free will choice not only rules in the areas of salvation and church issues, but leads to his sovereignty in all other areas like marriage, family, art, education, finances, law, sexuality, etc. Left unchecked, this free will has led to the insanity of our age – “true for you, but not for me”, the right of choice becoming exalted to enable one to choose death for their baby in abortion, the right of choice in sexual orientation (even against God's design and creation), the right to choose any lifestyle and force it upon the rest of society no matter the consequences (gay marriage, polygamy, pedophilia, bestiality, etc...), and any other corruption that the depraved human mind can dream up!

Likewise, the exaltation of free will and personal choice has made personal responsibility for those choices disappear. Since truth and standards are personal and relative, no one is responsible for their own actions or choices. Hence, murderers are victims of their environment or parenting, laziness is supported and encouraged by the state, and all men are taught that their own choices are sovereign and yet not responsible. Scripture teaches us that God is sovereign and we are responsible!

6. **Politics and government:**

Calvinism and reformed theology guided many of America's founders and kept them from entrusting power to the state. Instead they bound the state with the checks and balances of our three branches of government. Calvinism and Presbyterianism really influenced the “great experiment” that produced America. So, from that standpoint, this is the most influential strain of theology in all of history of man's government.

Isaiah 33:22 (NASB) For the Lord is our **judge**, The Lord is our **lawgiver**, The Lord is our **king**; He will save us—

One of the scriptural principles from which the founders got their system of division of power and its checks and balances.

Jeremiah 17:9 (NASB) **"The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it?"**

Since they understood the nature of man to be depraved and not trustworthy of the ultimate power and authority in government, they founded it upon a system of laws that were framed within the principles expressed in a controlling document, the constitution. Just as the Scripture alone was the sole authority for the Christian, the constitution (which was based upon the Scriptures) was the sole authority for the American.

Once men or government move away from the classic reformed or Calvinistic view of a sovereign God, they move toward a more humanistic statism, a reliance on other men and institutions, and toward a "Messianic state" that will save them and solve all problems in a utopia. This leans toward an individualistic, mass equalitarianism, democratic system. This may sound good to us as Americans, but it really leads to chaos with everyone struggling to rise above another, eventually leading to some form of tyranny (by a man, the army, the courts, etc.).

On the other hand, Calvinism leans toward a republican state with a division of powers, representative government, checks and balances, based upon the rule of law (from a constitution).

(Insert quotes from historian Page Smith in the Origins of the American Revolution)

- **How would America be different today if most of its leaders still believed as the founders did (in a reformed and Calvinistic Christianity)?**

7. Social and cultural standards

- **What current social and cultural standards are the results of this drift from the distinctives of a reformed view of the Scriptures? How do we view the church life versus the work life or the family life? What about church literature, media or entertainment versus that of the world? From where do the standards and morals come, versus where they should come?**

SUMMARY:

- **What is the "antidote" for all these problems and errors?**

We (as Bible believing Christians and churches) should believe, understand, teach, practice and demonstrate the distinctives of a Biblical worldview and lifestyle. We would proclaim the glorious truths of a sovereign God Who deals in grace and mercy with sinful men:

Daniel 4:25 (NASB) ... until you recognize that **the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whomever He wishes.**

Hebrews 12:29 (NASB) for **our God is a consuming fire.**

Romans 1:18 (NASB) For **the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men**, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

Romans 3:25 (NASB) ... This **was to demonstrate His righteousness**, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;

Ephes. 2:1 (NASB) And **you were dead in your trespasses and sins**,

Mark 10:27 (NASB) Looking upon them, Jesus said, "**With men it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.**"

SOLI DEO GLORIA!