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The Distinctive Points of Calvinism



God's Sovereignty and Man's Salvation - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg examines the distinct points of Calvinism, a theological perspective that emphasizes God's sovereignty over all things. He notes that Calvinists believe in total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints. In contrast to Pelagianism and Arminianism, Calvinists believe that all of one's actions and life events are predetermined by God. However, some non-Calvinists refute the claims made by Calvinists and suggest that faith precedes regeneration in the salvation process. Gregg acknowledges that the nuances of the labels are not important, but the interpretations of the verses in relation to salvation are significant.

Transcript

This morning we're beginning a series of talks and studies in the scripture. This series is called God's Sovereignty and Man's Salvation. Now this series is actually going to replace a series by the same title that I did many years ago.

And when I say many, I think it's probably been 15 years since I taught the series. In fact, it's not even correct to call it this series. It's this subject.

But the series is different. I had extensive notes and nine lectures before on the subject, the general subject that we're talking about. And I've reworked all those notes, or most of them, and this series will be somewhat different.

I hope it will be more succinct and I hope it will be very clear. Because we're dealing with subjects that are controversial among Christians. It's a shame that there are controversies among Christians, but we don't have to be controversialists just because we engage in an examination of controversial subjects.

And the subject of God's sovereignty and the subject of man's salvation are obviously two of the central concerns that Christians would have. One has to do with what kind of God are we serving, and the other has to do with exactly what is involved in our being reconciled to God. And being brought into the correct relationship with God.

Now, I believe everyone in this room, no doubt, is in a reconciled relationship with God. I know we're all Christians here. And yet, many Christians understand differently how or why it is that we have come to be saved.

And this has to do with how God's sovereignty as a concept interplays with our own choices and our own free will. Because when we talk about sovereignty, at least in the minds of many people, the word sovereignty refers to how God is orchestrating things in the world. And one view of sovereignty, which we usually call the Calvinist view, although it really goes back before Calvin's time, one view views sovereignty of God as what we more properly call meticulous providence.

Meticulous meaning in every little detail. And providence meaning God's intervening to make things happen. There are many people who have actually said there are no coincidences, nothing happens by chance, everything is ordained by God.

And this would be the idea of meticulous providence. Now, all Christians believe in providence. All Christians believe that God intervenes in the world.

The Incarnation is the most striking example of God's intervention in the world, where he came and lived among us himself. But throughout the Bible we read of God's providences. We read of him blessing his people, providing for his people.

We read of him judging sinners. God is active in the world. And he does this from the standpoint of his sovereignty.

But the question is, is he involved in everything that happens? And in particular, did I become a believer because God determined that I would and made it happen? And somebody else, my neighbor, is not a believer because God determined that they would not be. And he made that happen. This is the question of meticulous providence.

We believe in the providence of God. But do we, or does the Bible require us to believe in this meticulous form of providence? This meticulous providence is the form of sovereignty, or the definition of sovereignty, that is held generally by the Calvinist viewpoint. And this series of lectures is going to be evaluating the biblical basis for Calvinist and non-Calvinist theological constructs.

And so, I'll let you know at the beginning, I'm not a Calvinist myself. The opposite of a Calvinist, some people think the opposite is an Arminian. The words Calvinist and Arminian are common labels that are given to certain Christian groups.

And an Arminian is so named after a man who was a professor in Holland at a Calvinist seminary, or Calvinist university. And he began to question some of the things that his Calvinism affirmed. And he modified his views, he felt, according to scripture, and came to differ from the Calvinist way of looking at things on several points.

And so, those who are not Calvinist today are usually called Arminians, and this is true whether they know anything about Jacob Arminius or not. Most people who are called Arminians have never read anything that Jacob Arminius wrote, and would not be able to verify at all whether they believe what he believed or not. They simply are not Calvinists.

Now, that partially would explain who I am. I would be called an Arminian only because everyone who's not a Calvinist is usually labeled as an Arminian. I have the complete works of Arminius on my shelf, and I've read some of them, but I haven't read enough of Arminius to know how much I agree with him or disagree with him.

The views I have from the 50 years or so of studying the Bible that I've been engaged in have been formed simply from my reading of the Bible. I don't know if I had been in Arminius' position 500 years ago whether I would have reached views contrary to Calvinism, too. I suspect I would have, at least if I was capable of thinking freely enough about it, and that's what he did.

Because I'm not a Calvinist, any Calvinist would call me an Arminian, or something worse, because the opposite of a Calvinist isn't really an Arminian. The polar opposite of Calvinism is called Pelagianism. Now, Pelagius was a British monk in the 4th century who taught that man's free will, now let me just say this, we don't know everything he taught.

Much of what we are told about Pelagianism comes from his enemies representing his views. So, we'll just say that allegedly Pelagius taught that God isn't sovereign at all over man's salvation, that man is even born without a sinful nature, that man is born neutral, and therefore capable of living a good life if he would choose to do so. That everything is determined by human free will.

Now, whereas Calvinism more or less denies human free will in many cases, and we'll talk about that because not all of them talk the same way about free will, but Calvinism basically makes all the choices in history God's choices. Pelagius tended to make all the choices man's choices, and these are the polar opposite viewpoints. Now, Arminius was somewhere in the middle, and therefore Arminianism isn't really the polar opposite of Calvinism.

Pelagianism is the polar opposite of Calvinism. But Arminianism is sort of a middle ground. And there are some people who haven't really studied these issues out much, but they've heard enough to know that they're not quite Calvinist and not quite what they consider Arminians, so they call themselves Calminians or something like that.

They'll just make up a word for it, thinking that they're finding some middle ground between Calvinism and Arminianism. But that's not really where the middle ground is. The middle ground is between Calvinism and Pelagianism, and Arminianism is the middle ground.

Now, I'm not here to support Arminius' views because I don't think I agree with Arminius on all points. I'm certain that I don't. I'm just interested in examining what the scripture teaches on the subject of God's sovereignty and man's salvation.

And I would not be engaging the Calvinists as I have for the last few years in this manner if not for the fact that they fired the first shot. When I grew up, I was raised sort of quasi-Calvinistic myself. I was a Baptist, and although we didn't really understand what Calvinism really taught, some of the things we as Baptists taught were kind of similar sounding to some things Calvinism teaches.

And therefore, we thought of ourselves as moderate Calvinists. When I got older, I realized that Calvin's actual teachings, which is called the Reformed teaching, is really quite different from really anything I believed as a Baptist. And most Baptists who think of themselves as two-point or three-point or four-point Calvinists aren't really any-point Calvinists at all.

They just have views that sound kind of similar when they're expressed to the views of Calvinism. But when you really understand what Calvinism teaches, you'll find that there are much fewer Calvinists than think they are. And I came to realize that when I grew up and went into the ministry and began to dialogue with people of other theological views, I realized that Calvinism was really something very different than what I had ever believed.

And the Calvinists would agree with this. They would say that I was an Arminian all the time, that I was a Baptist. Anyway, I would have never really entered into controversy with Calvinism because I didn't see it as a major issue to contend about.

As far as I was concerned, Calvinism only deals with questions behind the curtain, behind the scene. All Calvinists, or most Calvinists at least, believe that we are obligated to be obedient to God, to follow Jesus, to love one another, to do good works. I mean, this is what the Christian life is supposed to look like, and Calvinists live that life the same as Arminians do.

Calvinist preachers preach just like Arminians in terms of preaching the necessity of living a holy life. And that's all that really mattered to me. So I thought, well, I don't care.

As long as this man is living a holy life and I'm living a holy life, I don't care if he thinks something went on behind the scenes and I think something different went on behind the scenes. It's all academic. It's not an issue to me.

But I did disagree with Calvinism all along, but I just thought it's not that big an issue. It was not until the 80s that, especially I think with the writings of R.C. Sproul and his book, *Chosen by God*, that Calvinism kind of really became an aggressive movement in evangelicalism. I'm quite sure R.C. Sproul is a good Christian man, and I've listened to

his teachings on many subjects, not just Calvinism.

I've read some of his books. I've listened to probably over 50 of his tapes back when there were tapes. And I liked a lot of his teaching.

But the one thing that Sproul will be remembered for probably is that he brought Calvinism into a major controversy with the rest of evangelicalism through introducing it. In fact, there's a Christian satire magazine that used to be called the Wittenberg Door. Many of you are not old enough or were not in the right places to ever encounter this magazine.

It's sort of like a mad magazine of Christianity. Not exactly. It wasn't so much cartoons, but parodies and satirical articles.

This is a Christian magazine, but it lambasted just about everything in the American evangelical world that could be ridiculed. Many years ago, they ran an article about R.C. Sproul, and they had a picture of him dressed up as a football player running and trying to make it to the goal, and he was carrying a tulip. The reason for the tulip is because Calvinism is usually, in popular minds, reduced to five unique propositions of Calvinism, which are called the five points of Calvinism.

In English, these have traditionally been labeled total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints. We'll go through that slower in a moment, but the acrostic for those is T-U-L-I-P, and therefore, tulip has become the well-known acrostic for the five points of Calvinism. I was, in the early 80s, running a Bible school in Oregon, minding my own business, kind of, and some people appeared on our campus who wanted to push Calvinistic thinking on our students, which I'm certainly always eager to have my students consider all sides of an issue.

I had no objection to my students hearing the Calvinist position. But these people were aggressive, and sometimes, I have to say it, nasty. They just felt, some Calvinists feel, that if you're not a Calvinist, you're hardly a Christian.

In fact, I'm sure that this would not be fair to characterize all Calvinists, this one, I would not do so, but a great number of Calvinists I've met clearly feel it's more important to convert Arminians to Calvinism than to convert sinners to Christ. At least given the zeal with which they do the former compared to the latter. And, like I said, I never really saw the issue as that important.

I always felt like it's just dealing with things in the background. You know, Calvinists and Arminians both agree that you have to live a holy life, and that you have to do so until you die. And that if you die apostate from God, you're not saved.

Calvinists believe that, and Arminians believe that. Calvinists believe that if you are truly born again, you will persevere in holiness and obedience to God until you die. In fact, it is

the very doing of that that proves that you're one of the elect.

If you are a Christian for a while, and then you fall away and die falling away, that proves to the Calvinists that you never were saved in the first place. You're not really one of the elect. Because if you were one of the elect, you would certainly have persevered.

So, in Calvinism, you actually have to persevere to the end. Well, Arminians say the same thing. You have to be faithful until death.

You can't fall away and hope to be still a Christian while you're falling away. And so, really, the practical issues here are the same. A Calvinist and Arminian are both going to agree.

We need to live a holy life. We need to follow Jesus. We need to persevere until death.

I figure, well, that's all that matters, isn't it? The only difference is, if I persevere until death, I believe that that had something to do with the decisions I made. A Calvinist believes it had everything to do with the decision God made. Well, one person's right and one person's wrong, no doubt.

But if we both persevere to the end, what does it matter? And if someone doesn't persevere to the end and falls away from Christ and dies in unbelief, the Calvinist believes that person's lost because they were never saved. The Arminian believes that person's lost because, although they were saved, they aren't anymore. So the person's in hell anyway, whether he's a Calvinist or Arminian.

And it really doesn't really make that much difference. All the rest is academic. At least that's what I thought until the Calvinists arrived on my campus.

And to them it was not merely academic. It was almost a matter, certainly a matter of heresy versus orthodoxy to them, and almost a matter of salvation versus non-salvation in some cases. Which really surprised me.

But it forced me into dialogue with people like this. And since that time, I've had occasion, that was many years ago in the 80s, I've had occasion to publicly debate a number of very well-known Calvinists. Many of which have written some important books defending Calvinism.

I've debated them on my radio program. I've debated them in their own churches. I've debated them on college campuses.

And in the course of doing so, I've had the occasion, of course, not only to understand better what Calvinism is, but how Calvinists reason and how they argue. Because they're arguing with me in these debates, and I've heard their arguments many times. Besides the fact that I've read books by virtually every major Calvinist author that's writing

today, as well as some of the older ones.

That doesn't mean that I'm really an expert, but it means that there are the basic things that Calvinists affirm, I'm very familiar with, and I know why they affirm them. So what I want to do in these lectures is actually look at the affirmations of Calvinism about the subject of God's sovereignty and man's salvation. And cross-examine them scripturally.

In the course of doing so, we're going to look at just about every verse in the Bible that Calvinists use to affirm their points. As well as verses of the Bible that those who are not Calvinists use. I'm going to be a little inconsistent in my wording.

Sometimes I'm going to slip into calling the non-Calvinist view Arminianism. That's just because it's the convention of speech in Evangelicalism. If you're not Calvinist, you're usually called an Arminian.

Now, if you're an Arminian, the Calvinists might call you a semi-Pelagian. And that's because they're trying to insult you. Because they consider Pelagius to be a heretic, and if you're semi-Pelagian, you're half a heretic.

But the truth is that semi-Pelagianism is another doctrine other than Arminianism. There have been church fathers who taught something that was actually called semi-Pelagianism, and it wasn't the same as Arminianism. We won't worry about that.

The nuances of these different labels are not important to me. The real issue is what does the Bible teach? And when we find what the Bible teaches, does it align more with what the Calvinists are saying on the subject, or with what people who are not Calvinists are saying? So, I actually prefer to refer to the contrary view as non-Calvinism, not anti-Calvinism, because frankly, even Arminius was not a contentious man. Calvinists many times are, but I'm not going to, that's just because they're following Calvin, who was a very contentious man, I suppose.

But Arminius was called the quiet Dutchman. I was reading an encyclopedia entry about Arminius, and saying that he was known to be a very peaceable man, a very non-contentious kind of character. But he was hounded to his death, I think he was 49 when he died prematurely, and his nine orphaned children felt like he died prematurely because of the stress he was under from those who were hounding him, who were the Calvinists at the university where he taught.

I'm not going to lay that at the door of the Calvinists for killing Arminius, but I will say this. It's been my experience, which is limited, that Calvinists very often are eager to contend, eager to argue, eager to attack, even. Not all Calvinists can be blamed for this, but it's commonly the case, and Arminians that I've encountered generally are of an opposite spirit.

They usually don't mind if someone wants to be a Calvinist or not. They're not out to

push Arminianism, they just don't agree with Calvinism. But that's not good enough for some.

The contention mostly, I have to say, mostly comes from the Calvinist side, and this lecture series is sort of an answer to that, but I hope it won't be a contentious one. By the way, I have run into a few contentious Arminians. There's one book on my shelf written by somebody, he had to self-publish it because the spirit was so bad in it, but he's an Arminian.

He always refers to Calvinism as a heresy and another god and so forth. And to tell you the truth, there are some of us who secretly think that could be true, but we don't think it's very generous to talk that way. The point is, the Bible does teach one thing or the other, and it's not as ambiguous as people think it is.

There are verses, individual verses, that are indeed ambiguous, and that's going to be the challenge. Some verses, when you read them, sound like they could support a Calvinist view, and some, when you read them, sound like they don't. Now, it's important to note that the Bible doesn't speak two different ways.

The Bible doesn't have two different viewpoints it's presenting. There's only one truth about the subject, and the Bible is consistent about it. It's simply that some verses are obviously being misinterpreted, either by the Calvinists or by the non-Calvinists.

Someone's not getting it right. And so, my desire is going to be to look at all the verses relevant, all the Calvinist texts and all the non-Calvinist texts, specifically to these subjects, and try to find out from the context and from biblical exegesis, if we can, which side really is using the Bible in a correct way. And although I've made it known that I'm not a Calvinist, it's not my desire to attack or to demonize Calvinists at all.

I just want to cross-examine some of the arguments they make. Let's look at the second page of your notes, or actually the first page after the title page. Here, I've just outlined, without any defense, but just as an introduction to what the five points of Calvinism are, I've given the distinctive points of Calvinism and of non-Calvinism.

The five points of Calvinism were not delineated by Calvin himself. He wrote exhaustive works, and these five points are in them, but he never reduced his theology to five points. This was done after his death, actually by Calvinists who were responding to Arminians, because the Arminians were the first to come up with the five points, the five points of Arminianism.

And at the Council of Dort, the Calvinists came with their response, basically contradicting the five points of Arminianism with their own five points of Calvinism. So, in a sense, the five points of Arminianism predated the five points of Calvinism. The Calvinistic points were simply enunciated as they were, as an affirmation of Calvin's

views on points about which Arminius had disagreed.

Nonetheless, most people don't even know the five points of Arminianism, don't even know there are five points of Arminianism, they just know the five points of Calvinism. And I'm going to give you the five points of Calvinism first, although Arminius' points were earlier, just so you'll know what it is that's being cross-examined here. The first point, which starts with T, remember the tulip is the acrostic, total depravity or total inability.

This is discussing the natural state of man from birth, his sinfulness. Now, I assume we all believe something or another about original sin, that people are born affected negatively by the principle of sin. But that's not just what total depravity is.

When I was a Baptist, I would have said I believe in total depravity, because I didn't know what it meant. I just thought it meant everybody's a sinner. Of course everybody's a sinner.

The Bible says all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. There's no question that all people are sinners. So I would have felt that total depravity was not a controversial point.

I now consider it to be one of the most controversial points that Calvinists assert. To put it in Calvinistic words, total depravity means this, that the fall left man totally dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God. And thus, incapable of responding to the gospel.

Faith in God is out of the question, unless God sovereignly creates a new life or regenerates in the sinner. This regeneration precedes faith. Faith is not what man contributes to salvation, but it's God's gift to the sinner.

Now, what this means is, the fall has so disabled us that faith is impossible for us. Faith in God is impossible for us. We are dead in trespasses and sins.

And dead people can't do things. They can't believe, they can't repent. And therefore, according to Calvinism, you can't become a believer until God causes you to be born again.

Thus, the very controversial claim is that regeneration, which is a big word for being born again, coming alive, spiritually, regenerated, born again, these are terms the Bible uses. Calvinism teaches that regeneration precedes faith. Now, non-Calvinists say no.

Faith precedes regeneration. If you believe, you will be saved. Not, if you are saved, you will believe.

And therefore, this is a very important point, because not everybody is regenerated. And that would mean that only those who are regenerated can believe, if Calvinism is true.

Everybody else can't.

Not just because they don't want to. They can't. It's not a possibility for them to believe or to repent.

And that means that salvation is not available to them. Salvation is not an option for them. Unless God regenerates them first.

But obviously, he doesn't regenerate everybody. So, that leads to the second point. How then does anyone get regenerated? Well, God picks who he's going to regenerate.

And he's elected to regenerate some, but not all. He could regenerate all, because God's sovereign. He can do whatever he wants to.

If he wished to, he could turn everyone into a Christian. But instead, he has a secret plan that involves saving some and damning others. Both of these sides of his sovereign plan are to glorify himself.

Calvinists believe that God glorifies himself by saving the elect and by damning the reprobate. The opposite of elect is reprobate, in Calvinistic speech. So, that God is actually glorified in damning the reprobate, even as he is glorified in saving the elect.

So, that God, who could save all, because he's the one who unilaterally and sovereignly regenerates those he wants to, he just doesn't want to regenerate all. He wants some to be saved and some not to be saved. And Calvinists have a hard time saying this.

Modern Calvinists do. Now, Calvin had no trouble saying that. The older Calvinists who wrote the Westminster Confession of Faith didn't have any trouble saying that.

The old Puritan writers who were Calvinists, they had no trouble saying that. But modern Calvinists find it a little hard to come out and say they believe that God wanted the majority of mankind to burn in hell. And he didn't want to save them.

And they'll even sometimes object to a non-Calvinist saying that. Now, all the original Calvinists had no trouble saying that, but it was a different mood of the age at the time. It sounds so ungenerous in modern times.

We're so democratic. We're so modern. We're so post-enlightenment.

The idea that God would unilaterally choose to save some and unilaterally choose to damn others just doesn't sit well. And so many Calvinists actually deny double predestination, as it's called. Calvinism taught, that is Calvin himself, and early Calvinists taught, that God positively chose to save some and positively chose to damn others.

That's original Calvinism. Modern Calvinists usually hold to a view that God positively chose to save others and just didn't do anything about the rest. He just passed over

them.

They were on their way to hell. He just didn't interfere. He just let them go their merry way.

In other words, that makes it sound like God didn't really, he's not really at fault for them going to hell. He didn't determine that they would. They're on their way there and he just didn't do anything about it.

He saved the ones he wanted to and left the rest to go to hell. Now some of us are not so easily satisfied with that kind of explanation. Because it's obvious that if God saved everyone he wanted to and he didn't save them, then he didn't want to save them.

And if he's the one who made all the choices, and Calvinism certainly teaches this is so, God is the one who chose who would be saved and who wouldn't. Then he has clearly chose who wouldn't as he chose who would. And therefore, if there's any predestination to salvation, it's double.

Double in the sense that he predestinated who would be saved and who would be lost. This view of double predestination is sometimes called equal ultimacy by modern Calvinists and they deny it. They say, no, God just decided who would be saved.

He didn't decide who would be lost. But this is not being honest. Or at least it's not being consistent.

Obviously, if there's a world of mankind all lost, and God can save anyone he wants to, he could save them all if he wants to, but he chooses to save these ones and not those. Then he chose those others to be lost. You might step back a little bit and say, well, he just let them go their way, but that was his choice to do, and he knew if they go their way, they're going to be lost.

So you can't really get away from the fact that in Calvinism, God doesn't love everybody and doesn't want everybody saved. Now Calvinists sometimes admit this. Many Calvinists say God doesn't love the reprobate.

He only loves the elect. They're his people. He doesn't love those who are not.

Other Calvinists say, no, he does love the reprobate, and that's why he has us preach to them, because he wants them to be given a bona fide offer of salvation. But they're saying this at the same time they're saying that these people have no possibility of being saved unless God regenerates them, and he doesn't choose to do that. So there's some serious inconsistency here that has often been noted by those who are not Calvinists, which Calvinists themselves seem to be willing to live with.

They call it a mystery. In fact, Calvin used the word mystery a great deal in his writings.

How could God have preordained everything that happens and still holds man responsible for what happens? It's a mystery.

How could God be said to love even the non-elect when he's just not saved? It's a mystery. You see, what they do this way, this gets them off the hook in a way. If someone says, but wait a minute, this doctrine of unconditional election you're talking about, it seems to contradict the place that says that God so loved the world.

And instead of saying, yeah, we need to deal with that, they say, well, it's a mystery. Just affirm our views, and anything that contradicts it is a mystery. And this is how it often is.

Many things that the Calvinists affirm seem to clearly contradict other things the Bible says, and they know those verses are there. And instead of saying, well, we need to find a way to harmonize that, many Calvinists say, well, it's just a mystery, you have to live with the mystery. Well, we do have to live with some mysteries, but we don't have to create them.

We don't have to create mysteries that aren't in the Bible. You see, the mysteries are caused by the affirmations of Calvinism, which are, to my mind, not biblical affirmations, and are contrary to what really are biblical affirmations. And once you've got the Calvinist affirmation, it is indeed in conflict with the biblical one, and it's a mystery that's created by the Calvinist affirmations.

It's not a mystery the Bible has in it, and this is going to be my assumption going into this. Now, why is it called unconditional election? Because sinners have to be regenerated by God before they can meet any conditions, before they can believe, before they can repent, before they can do anything toward God. God has to first choose the ones he's going to regenerate and allow to do that.

And he can't do that on any conditions on their part because they can't meet any. They're dead in trespasses and sins. And therefore, God chose certain sinners to be saved before the foundation of the world solely by an exercise of his sovereign will.

God's choice was not conditioned upon any foreseen response of faith, according to Calvinism. Repentance or obedience on the part of the sinner, since the sinner is incapable of such actions. In fact, God provides faith and repentance to the individuals that he has chosen.

These acts are the results of God's choice, not its cause. In other words, God didn't choose to save those who believe, but he chose some people and then he made them believe. He chose that he'd save them, then he regenerated them and put faith in them so that they would inevitably believe.

That's what unconditional election teaches. Now, the third point is limited atonement. And this view, even the words limited atonement are kind of great on most people

because it means that Jesus didn't die for everybody.

That the atonement of Christ, what he accomplished on the cross was not for everybody. It's limited to only the elect. Only the elect are atoned for.

And some Calvinists have backed away from that usage, that term somewhat, and they like the word particular redemption, which sounds more positive. And basically, the difference between Calvinism and non-Calvinism here is the Calvinist believes that when Jesus died, he did not simply make salvation available for mankind. His death actually saved the elect.

They were saved by his act. And if he had died for everybody, then everybody would be saved. So he can only have died for the elect and not for the others.

In Calvinistic language, since God never intended that all men should be saved, Christ died only to redeem the foreknown elect. His death did not only make salvation available to the elect, but actually secured everything for their salvation particularly and guaranteed their particular redemption and salvation. Now, Calvinists make a cogent point, it seems to me, when they say, well, everybody believes in a limited atonement.

The Calvinist believes it's limited in terms of the number of people that are taken into it. They say the Arminian thinks it's limited in its power to save. If Jesus died for everyone, but everyone doesn't get saved, then his atonement was limited in its effect.

If he intended to save everyone and everyone didn't get saved, then there's some limitations on the atonement in that sense. Its effects are limited. And so, in a sense, you know, both sides do have some kind of limitation placed on the atonement.

But the non-Calvinist believes that Jesus really died for everybody. And because he did, we can in good conscience say to any sinner, Jesus died for you. Now, many Calvinists will say, you can't tell any sinner that Jesus died for them.

The Bible says he died for his church. He died, he gave his life for his sheep. He laid down his life for his friends.

He died for us. And they say, you don't know if any given sinner that you're talking to is one of the elect or not. No one knows that.

And if Jesus only died for the elect, you can't honestly tell your neighbor that Jesus died for you. You can't even honestly tell them that God loves you. Because your neighbor might not be one of the elect.

This is the true consistent practical outworking of this doctrine, which many Calvinists have no problem saying very clearly. Others back away from saying it quite like that. But the essence of this doctrine is Jesus didn't die for everybody.

God didn't want to save everybody. And therefore, since we don't know who he did and didn't want to save, who knows, maybe he didn't want to save you. Maybe you're only deceived.

Maybe you only think you're one of the elect. If Jesus didn't die for everybody, then how do we know he died for anyone in particular? We know he died for someone, but who they are, only God knows. That is seen as a troublesome proposition for many Christians, including me.

I find it troublesome. The fourth point is irresistible grace. What this means is that even though the outward call of the gospel goes out to all men and can be resisted, there is a special inward call that God extends only to the elect, which is never resisted.

This call works in the sinner the ability and the desire to come to faith and repentance, thus precluding any possibility of resistance. What this means is if you're really one of the elect, you will get saved. Period.

You have no real choice in the matter. Because although the non-elect hear the call of the gospel outwardly, and they resist it because they're sinners and can't believe, can't repent, if you're one of the elect, you not only hear the outward call, but there's an inward call of God that you sense that draws you irresistibly to Him. And if you are one of the elect, you will inevitably come to Christ.

You don't really have what we would normally think of as a free choice about it. Now Calvinists sometimes say it is a free choice because God puts the desire in your heart, and then you freely choose to follow Him. Some Calvinists admit there's no free will in Calvinism.

Others say otherwise. They say, no, there's free will. God puts it in you to will.

Well, is that free then? Doesn't free will mean that I could say yes or no? Isn't that what you call free will? That's what I call free will. I could either say yes or no. I'm free.

But to the Calvinists, the elect are not free to say no. But they don't want to because God puts it in their heart to say yes. What's more, the unregenerate are not free to say yes.

But that's okay because they don't want to. Okay, so they freely choose to say no, and they have no option of saying yes. The elect, on the other hand, freely choose to say yes when God puts it in their heart to do it, and they have no option of saying no.

Irresistible grace means that the elect will inevitably and irresistibly be drawn to God by this inward call. And now when you talk about, you know, the Bible indicates that God's calling many who don't come. For example, when Jesus said, I would have gathered your children as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not come.

They said, well, that's the external call. That's not the internal call. That's not the effectual call that he gives to the elect.

Well, that's a very convenient thing to say because the Bible doesn't talk about an inward call, an effectual call. These are words they add to refer to a particular theological category that they've created. The Bible doesn't create that category in a specific or clear way.

Calvinism creates the category of the effectual call to distinguish from the outward call. The outward call goes to everyone, but the effectual call draws only the elect. But the Bible often talks about people being called.

It just doesn't distinguish between an outward and inward call. That distinction is a Calvinistic theological imposition on certain passages, as we shall see. It's a necessity of the theological system.

Now, it may be justified, but we have to understand it is a necessity. The last point of Calvinism is perseverance of the saints. Now, this is like irresistible grace.

Irresistible grace says if you're of the elect, you'll necessarily come to Christ. It also means you'll necessarily persevere as a Christian. You will not fall away.

If a person serves God for a while, as I've known some who've served God for 25, 30 years, and then they fall away and they die in unbelief, they never were saved. That 25 or 30 years that they were serving God, that was all fake. They weren't ever really saved.

Now, this, of course, raises questions. How can I know I'm saved then? If there's people who have served God like I do for decades, but then shortly before they died, they fell away and proved they never were Christians, then I can't really know if I'm really a Christian until I die faithful. Now, sometimes Calvinists ironically say that only their view gives real assurance of salvation.

In my opinion, their view is the one that deprives you of assurance of salvation if you're consistent. You can convince yourself that you're one of the elect if you want to, all the while acknowledging that other people who seemed to be as elect, as much as you seem to be, they fell away and proved they never were elect, raising the reasonable question, well, maybe I only seem to be too. Maybe I only think I am.

This is problematic for some. I would find it problematic if I believed this doctrine was taught in Scripture. Now, the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is that all the elect will necessarily persevere in saving faith.

Since that faith was never in their own power to generate in the first place, but was from first to last God's gracious gift, whom God has chosen as his own, he mightily preserves

in the faith so that the salvation of the elect is eternally secure. Now, I'm going to say that for each of these five points, there are verses that sound like they say these things. I'm not going to say this is just a total disregard for Scripture.

Far from it. Calvin was quite a student of Scripture. And he wrote commentaries, exhaustive commentaries, on every book of the Bible except the book of Revelation, showing that he did have some wisdom.

And he had a lot of wisdom, no doubt. But the point is, he was quite a biblical exegete. In fact, Calvinists claim that their view is the view of biblical exegesis.

Now, do you know the word exegesis? Exegesis comes from the Greek. It means to read out of a passage. When you read a passage and you read out of it its actual intended meaning, by consideration of its original language and vocabulary and proper understanding of the grammar and the context and things, so that you're really getting the meaning from a passage that the author intended, that process of drawing from the passage, out of it, the meaning is exegesis.

It's in contrast to what we call eisegesis. Eisegesis is the opposite, reading into a passage what you think it should say or what you want it to say. Now, Christians, I'm afraid all Christians, and probably myself included, practice both of these, although exegesis is the only responsible way to come to the truth.

Obviously, we want to know what the biblical writers under inspiration intended to say and intended to convey, and therefore exegesis is the process of, as honestly as possible, drawing out of the text what they intended to say. Eisegesis is where you come to the text already having decided what the truth is about it, and you shoehorn it into that text, whether it's natural to do so or not. In my opinion, although Calvinists often boast that they are the ones who exegete the scriptures, in their writings I find that they are very guilty of eisegesis of many texts.

And they would say the same about me, just to be fair. They would say, I'm the one who's eisegesis. And so that's what we have to be careful about, to know who's treating the text fairly, and who's simply using the text to prove a point they've already decided is true.

Now the non-Calvinist five points would be, number one, free will or human ability. Though no man can come to God without God's first drawing him, this we acknowledge, yet man's free will allows him to decide whether to cooperate with the prevenient drawing of God or to resist it. The fall has affected man's nature significantly, but not to the point of rendering him incapable of choosing to receive the grace of God.

It's possible for us to recognize that sin has damaged human nature significantly, without going so far as to say we are at the point where we can't even say yes or no to God

freely. We believe the Bible teaches, in many places, that people are fully responsible to make the choice to believe and to repent, and are blamed if they don't, blamed by God. God doesn't take the blame for that.

When Jesus marveled that the people of Nazareth had little faith, he apparently thought they could have had better faith. Jesus apparently didn't know that those people had little faith because God didn't give them faith. And that when he marveled at the centurion's faith, he said, oh great is your faith, I've never seen this kind of faith as in Israel.

He apparently didn't know that that's just not so marvelous at all. God gave this man faith and didn't give Israel faith. If God's doing all the giving of the faith, then it's no marvel that some people have some and some don't.

Except we might marvel that God didn't give it to everybody. But that's not what Jesus is marveling at. The Bible seems to indicate everywhere that God blames people for their choices, as if they really had choices.

As if everything they did was not preordained by God unilaterally. And although man has been damaged by sin and rendered incapable of saving himself for sure, yet that damage has not been so extreme as to prevent man from saying yes to God or no to God. That's still a genuine choice that God allows men to make.

And that's what the first point of non-Calvinism would have heard. It's the opposite of total depravity or total inability. Second point, election conditioned upon faith, not unconditional election.

God chooses those who believe. Though God has elected to save all who are in Christ, He has not determined which persons will actually come to be in Christ. This decision rests with the individual.

God foreknows which individuals will choose to believe and to persevere in Christ, and He elects to include them as His children based upon this foreknowledge. This is the non-Calvinist view. It seems to have very clear scriptures in its favor, but then the Calvinist views have their scriptures that they think prove their point too.

We're going to look at all these in due time. Third point, universal redemption or general atonement. Christ's death makes salvation available to every man, but in itself does not secure the salvation of any individual.

It provides a means of reconciliation between man and God that does not guarantee that any particular person will be in fact agreeable to the terms of reconciliation. The fourth point, the Holy Spirit can be resisted against the doctrine of irresistible grace. The drawing of God is persuasive, but does not preclude the resistance of sinful and rebellious man, so that not all whom God would draw to salvation actually realize this

salvation and experience.

There seem to be many scriptures that indicate this, though of course they have to be looked at because even the Calvinists know about these scriptures, and they explain them differently than let's say I would, so we have to look at those things. Finally, five, falling from grace. Salvation is by faith alone in Christ.

It is possible to cast off faith, and a person having done so is not any longer in the state of grace. This is the non-Calvinist view, that you are kept by the power of God through faith, and as long as you believe in God, as long as you believe in Christ, in the way that saves a person, that faith saves you and keeps you, and therefore you need to keep the faith, because those who would depart from the faith are departing from the relationship that they entered through faith. This is the teaching of the non-Calvinists, that essentially just as there was a free choice in coming to Christ, there is also a free choice in staying with Christ.

That the person who had as much free choice to decide to become a Christian has the same choice to not remain a Christian if they want to leave. What this means, of course, is that anyone could theoretically fall away, and this is why Calvinists sometimes say that Armenians have no assurance of salvation. But if you think about this, I have assurance of salvation, because all it takes for me to be saved is to continue to believe in Christ, and that's perfectly within my power to choose.

Why should I choose not to believe in Christ? There's no power on earth that can make me not believe in Christ if I choose to believe in Him. So my faithfulness to Him is simply a matter of, of course, not simply because I believe the grace of God sustains us in this too, but we still have free choice. As long as I choose to believe Christ, and why should I ever choose otherwise, I have no, I have absolute assurance.

It's true, I do believe that if I would depart from Christ, if I would apostatize, if I give up my faith, that I would no longer be saved. But I think, why would I ever want to do such a thing as that? I have no, I can't imagine. Now, some might say, well, you might do it under torture.

Now, even torture can't make you stop believing something. Torture might get you to say something that you don't want to say, or don't even mean, but it can't change what you really believe. Your beliefs are pretty much your choice to believe.

This is what Armenians believe. And you can choose to believe in Christ, so you can be secure. The Calvinist, as I pointed out, can't be entirely secure, because he might seem to be saved and be fully convinced that he's saved, but defect in the end because he wasn't really elect, and he won't really know if he is saved until he has persevered to his death bed, to his last breath.

So, while the Armenian believes you can lose your salvation, they believe that nobody has to. You can remain in Christ, if you wish. And he doesn't force anyone to remain in him who doesn't want to.

And you can know, therefore, that if you're following Christ now, and you believe in Christ now, you really are saved. A Calvinist doesn't have serious, real grounds to know for sure that he is saved now, even though he appears to be. It might be a delusion.

And we'll see that Calvin himself even said that. Calvin was not as much sold, I think, on some of these points as the Calvinists were a generation or two later. But Calvinists, these did come largely from Calvin.

But before him, they came from Augustine. And this is an important thing to note. What we're calling Calvinism is really more properly called Augustinianism.

St. Augustine was the most influential Christian theologian in history. He lived in the late 4th century and the early 5th century, straddling the year 400, before and after the year 400. And Augustine was actually a Greek philosopher.

He was a Manichean before he was converted. And he lived a very sinful life, but he had a saintly mother named Monica who prayed for him and prayed for him and prayed for him. And he finally got saved in his adult life, after living a very immoral life as a Greek philosopher.

And he became a very influential Christian writer and a monk. And he's the one who introduced these ideas that are called Calvinism now. No teacher before Augustine had taught them.

That means three centuries of Christians did not believe in Calvinism. The first three centuries. But Augustine did.

He invented those. He merged Greek philosophy with Christianity and he became influential. He's the father of Roman Catholicism.

For many centuries, Roman Catholicism was the only Christianity in Europe. So, all Christians were Augustinians in some measure, through the Dark Ages. When the Reformers came along, Martin Luther and Calvin, of course, were born Catholics.

They defected from Catholicism to become Reformers. But Luther was an Augustinian monk. So, his views are Augustinian.

The same is true of Calvin, though he was not a monk. And therefore, the doctrines that we call Calvinism are simply a restatement of Augustine's doctrines. And Calvin himself said so.

He mentioned that he really didn't teach anything that Augustine had not previously

taught. But what about before Augustine? On the third page of your notes, there's a page that's entitled The Doctrine of Human Free Will, a Historical Survey. And I don't know that we'll take the time to read all of these, but these are quotes from different church fathers from earlier than Augustine.

And they pretty much give you the idea of what the early church taught. Now, later than Augustine, later than Calvin, Calvin's successor in the movement, when Calvin died, his successor was Theodore Beza. And he led the Calvinist movement in Geneva after Calvin died.

And in speaking about Romans 11.2, where Paul says, God has not cast away his people whom he foreknew. Beza said, nor are we on any account to listen to the fathers, meaning the church fathers, who refer this to faith foreseen. Now, if you're not familiar with Calvinism, you may not know the significance of that statement.

Arminians believe that God has foreknowledge, that God knows all things future. And he knew before the foundation of the world who would become a believer. If you're a believer now, God knew you would.

Before he made the world, he knew you'd become a believer. And because he knew you'd become a believer, he set his seal upon you. Because he knew you'd become a believer, you were written in his book.

So that your election is conditioned upon your faith. And that God foresaw your faith. Now, Calvinism is very strong against this.

They believe God knows the future, but only because he makes everything happen. He knows what he's going to do. Man has no real free will.

And God didn't save you because he knew you would do something, like believe. Because that would make it conditional. That means that you made some contribution to your salvation.

And God simply chose you because he knew you were going to make that contribution. Calvinism is very strong in this. You make no contribution to your salvation.

Believing is not your doing. Repentance is not your doing. God gives you that.

God puts that in you. Sovereignly. So to say that God chose people because he foresaw their faith is an anti-Calvinist statement.

And Beza is saying that the church fathers actually taught this. Taught the non-Calvinist view. That God foresaw the faith of those who would believe.

And Beza, in commenting on this, wanted to make it clear that we are not supposed to agree with the fathers on this. He said we should by no account, on any account, listen

to the fathers who refer to this as faith foreseen. Essentially what he's saying is we shouldn't pay attention to the church fathers who weren't Calvinists.

This is what he's saying. Now, he's right. They weren't.

When I debated one Calvinist for three days up in Moscow, Idaho, about 600 people attended. Most of them were his church. He's the pastor.

And before the debate began, I was talking to one of his deacons or elders or someone. And they said, doesn't it bother you at all to know that there is no major commentator out there right now who holds your views? Almost all major commentators seem to be Calvinists. I said, well, does it bother you at all that there was never one Calvinist before the year 400 AD? Now, Calvinists know this is true.

Most of them do. Some don't know this. But certainly all the scholarly Calvinists know that there were no Calvinists before Augustine.

And they say, well, how do you explain that? They say, well, the church was embroiled in Christological controversies for the first 400 years. They had to decide if Jesus was God or not God. That's what the Nicene Council was about and so forth.

All the controversies in the church were about the nature of Christ. They didn't have time to work out these doctrines of grace and of salvation until Augustine's time. That might sound sensible to some, but 300 years? I've only lived 60 years at this point.

In my lifetime, from my side of scripture, I've been able to work out my theology of end times, my theology of the doctrines of grace and election, my doctrines on the Christology about Christ's deity, and many other doctrines. And in some cases, some of those things, I worked them out, though I was taught the opposite, especially on eschatology, for example. And despite that fact, in one lifetime, a person studying the Bible can work through those doctrines and explain the multi-sides of it and arrive at a conclusion about them.

Now, why couldn't the church fathers do that in 300, 400 years? Just because they're talking about the deity of Christ? Is that the only thing they had time to talk about in three centuries? I believe they had plenty of time, and I think they had given it lots of thought, and I think they had decided that the views we now call Calvinism were not right. In fact, they called those views Manichaeism. Mani was a heretic of the Gnostic sort, and he's the founder of what became called a heresy of Manichaeism.

Now, it was called a heresy long before there were even church councils called that. All the church fathers referred to Manichaeism as a heresy. It taught a thesis of the sovereignty of God similar to Augustine's, and Augustine was a Manichaean before he was a Christian.

So the plot thickens. But the early Christians knew very well the doctrines that Augustine later championed, but they considered them the doctrines of the heretics, the Manichaeans. They did not consider them Christian.

Just let me give you some quotes before we run out of time here. Justin Martyr, who lived from 100 to 165 A.D., is very typical of the attitude of the pre-Augustinian church fathers. He said, Now, this is an Arminian statement.

Though Arminius had not been born yet, and wouldn't be born for another 15 centuries, this is nonetheless not Calvinism. It's opposite of Calvinism. Same author, Justin Martyr, said this in another place, Otherwise, if all things happen by fate, then nothing is in our own power.

For if it be predestined that one man be good and another man evil, then the first is not deserving of praise or the other to be blamed. Unless humans have the power of avoiding evil and choosing good by free choice, they are not accountable for their actions, whatever they may be." To me, that's sensible. And you'll find it's the universal view of the early church, that God did not predestine some to be good and some to be bad.

They gave free choice, and he rewards or punishes them according to the choices they make about this. Irenaeus, another important church father, who lived from 130 to 200 A.D., said this expression, How often would I have gathered thy children together, and thou wouldst not. This is what Jesus said to Jerusalem, of course, in Matthew 23-37.

That expression, he says, set forth the ancient law of human liberty, because God made man a free agent from the beginning, possessing his own soul to obey the behests of God voluntarily, and not by compulsion of God. And in man as well as in angels, he has placed the power of choice. If then it were not in our own power to do or not to do these things, what reason had the apostle, and much more the Lord himself, to give us counsel to do some things and to abstain from others? Another church father, Athenagoras, living from 150 to 190 A.D., said, Men have freedom of choice as to both virtue and vice, for you would not either honor the good or punish the bad, unless vice and virtue were in their own power.

And some are diligent in the matters entrusted to them, and others faithless. Sounds like a broken record. Clement of Alexandria, lived from 150 to 200 A.D., and he said, Neither praise nor condemnation, neither rewards nor punishments, are right, if the soul does not have the power of choice and avoidance, if evil is involuntary.

In other words, if total depravity is true, and men can't do good because it's not in their power to make the right choice, then you can't condemn them. That's what the early fathers all agreed about. Barsadian of Syria, living from 154 to 22 A.D., he said, How is it that God did not so make us, that we should not sin and incur condemnation? If man had

been made so, he would not have belonged to himself, but would have been the instrument of him who moved him.

Which is exactly what Calvinists say we are, but Barsadian thought that would be unthinkable. How, in that case, would man differ from a harp, on which another plays? Or from a ship, which another guides? Where the praise and the blame reside in the hand of the performer or the steersman, they being only instruments made for the use of him in whom is the skill. But God, in his benignity, chose not to make man, but by freedom he exalted him above many of his creatures.

I think I may have left some words out of that quote, I don't know, but obviously you can tell what he is saying. He chose not to make man good or bad, but to let him have choice, unlike a ship or a harp, which depends on someone else to decide what it produces or where it goes. Tertullian is a famous church father who wrote a great deal and is the founder of many of the modern doctrines of Christianity.

In 155 to 225 he lived. He said, I find then that man was by God constituted free, master of his own will and power, indicating the presence of God's image and likeness in him by nothing so well as by this constitution of his nature. Now, by the way, I'm not suggesting that the church fathers were right in their doctrines.

I'm just trying to point out that they were unanimous in them. They could have been unanimously wrong, as Calvinists believe they were, but they could have been unanimously right. What we can say is that no one taught Calvinism in the church until Augustine, and all the church fathers before it, when they were familiar with those doctrines, held them to be heresy and specifically spoke out against them.

Now, it'll only be by looking at the scriptures that we decide whether the Calvinists are right or the early fathers were right. The fathers could be wrong and the Calvinists could be right, but the point I'm making here is not that we hereby prove Calvinism to be wrong by quoting the church fathers. All we prove is that it was a novelty in the early 5th century.

Calvinism was a novelty of theology, whereas for many today it's orthodoxy itself. All right? Origen, another church father, said, This also is clearly defined in the teaching of the church that every rational soul is possessed of free will and volition. Origen also said, There are indeed innumerable passages in the scriptures which establish with exceeding clearness the existence of freedom of will.

From 250 to 300 AD, Archelaus lived and he wrote, There can be no doubt that every individual, in using his own proper power of will, may shape his course in whatever direction he chooses. Methodius, from 260 to 315 AD, he said, Those pagans who decide that man does not have free will, but say that he is governed by the unavoidable necessities of fate, are guilty of impiety toward God himself, making him out to be the

cause and author of human evils. Now you'll find that both Calvin and the Westminster Confession of Faith, which is an official statement of Calvinistic doctrine, they both unflinchingly say that God is the one who ordained evil.

God is the one who ordained sin. This is the only way they can be consistent with their theology. And the early fathers knew that that was a consistent position to take, but the wrong one.

It is consistent to say that if God makes everything happen, then he's responsible for evil. But they believe that was not a correct way to think. Calvinists think it is.

And we'll talk more about that as we go through and quote the Calvinists themselves, including Calvin on these matters. Cyril of Jerusalem, from 312 to 386, wrote, The soul is self-governed, and though the devil can suggest, he has not the power to compel against the will. He pictures to thee the thought of fornication.

If thou wilt, thou rejectest. For if thou wert a fornicator by necessity, then for what cause did God prepare hell? If thou wert a doer of righteousness by nature and not by will, wherefore did God prepare crowns of ineffable glory? The sheep is gentle, but never was it crowned for its gentleness, since its gentle quality belongs to it, not from choice, but by nature. So, we're starting to see the same thing all the way through.

John Chrysostom, from 347 to 407, his life overlapped that of Augustine. Chrysostom said, All is in God's power, but so that our free will is not lost. It depends, therefore, on us and on him.

We must first choose the good, and then he adds what belongs to him. He does not precede our willing, this is contrary to Calvin, that our free will may not suffer. But when we have chosen, then he affords us much help.

It is ours to choose beforehand to will, but God's to perfect and bring to an end. I'd say all of these statements are pretty characteristic of non-Calvinist theology, or Arminian theology. Now, Augustine, on the other hand, who lived from 354 to 430, wrote the following.

Well, this is not a quote from him. We do have a quote from him, I think. No, we just have a summary of his statements.

Anyway, the point here is, of course, we've talked about it. He was made bishop of Hippo in North Africa in 396. He began writing against Manichaeism once he was converted to Christianity, but gradually replaced his Neoplatonism with a more biblically radical diagnosis of man in history, so the Calvinists say.

But he lived and advocated a monastic life. His theology ripened in controversy. In conflicts against Manichaeism, he taught that man had free will, but seemed to deny

this later in conflicts with Pelagius, who overrated the power of the human nature to live perfectly apart from grace.

Augustine was the true originator of the ideas later associated with Calvinism. There is nothing in Calvin's view of predestination that was not earlier propounded by Luther and Augustine before him, R.C. Sproul says in *Chosen by God*. This is a summary of Augustine rather than a quotation of him.

We've already mentioned that he came up with all these ideas. Martin Luther, before Calvin, was an Augustinian monk, and then, of course, the first reformer in Germany. And he made statements like this.

When he's talking about how God predestined people to go to hell, he said, this is the highest degree of faith to believe that he is merciful, the very one who saves so few and damns so many, to believe that he is just, the one who, according to his own will, makes us necessarily damnable. He also said, and this is in his book, *The Bondage of the Will*, Luther said, but why should these things be difficult for we Christians to understand, so that it should be considered irreligious, curious, and vain to discuss and know them, when heathen poets and the common people themselves have them in their mouths in the most frequent use? How often does Virgil alone make mention of fate? All things stand fixed by unchangeable law, he quotes Virgil. Again, fixed is the day of every man.

Again, if the fates summon you. And again, if you will break the binding chain of fate. Notice he's quoting Virgil, the pagan poet, to prove that fate is true.

In other words, what Luther is saying is, why should we have any trouble with this idea, when the pagans have taught it for a long time? Christians haven't, but pagans did, and therefore we should accept it, is essentially what Luther is saying. In that last paragraph he says, for if this is not known, there can be neither faith nor worship of God. In other words, you can't really be a Christian if you don't hold an Augustinian view.

Actually, to not know this is to be ignorant of God, and with this ignorance, salvation, it is well known, cannot exist. For if you doubt or disdain to know that God foreknows and wills all things, not contingently, but necessarily and unchangeably, how can you confidently believe, trust in, and depend upon his promises? You will regard him as neither true nor faithful, which is unbelief, the greatest of wickedness, and a denial of the Most High God. So, if you don't hold this view of meticulous providence, essentially, as your view of the sovereignty of God, Luther believed you're denying God himself.

You can't have faith, you can't be saved. So, there's more history here in these notes. We've pretty much run to the end of our session, and if you want to, you can just read, there's probably a total of about half a page of notes left, and it talks about Calvin's contribution.

The Council of Trent was a Catholic council at which these doctrines were discussed. The Dominicans felt one way about it, and the Franciscans felt another way about it, and Catarinus took a medium view. This is in the Catholic circle, but Jacob Arminius, he's mentioned here, and his contribution in Arminianism, especially the Remonstrance of 1610.

That's where the followers of Arminius, after his death, put together five points of Arminianism, and then it was the Council of Dort in 1618, where the Calvinists got together to basically contradict the five points of Arminianism, and formulated the five points of Calvinism. So, this is our introduction to the subject. We can see that the claims of Calvinism, on many important points, are just the direct opposite of the claims of those who are not Calvinistic, and among those that are not Calvinistic include all the Church Fathers for the first 400 years, and that means that Calvinism, if it is true, was hidden from the eyes of all Christians for four centuries.

It may be that it is true, and that for four centuries, the Christians were just blind to this, but we have to remember that these were not stupid people. These Christians we're talking about in the first four centuries, many of them died as martyrs. Many of them read Koine Greek, which is New Testament Greek, as their first language.

By the way, Augustine didn't read Greek well. He even said so. He spoke Latin.

He read some Greek, but he actually admitted he didn't know Greek very well. Well, that might explain a lot of things, because the New Testament was written in Greek, and the Church Fathers who spoke Greek as their native language all saw it a certain way. The first person to see it differently was Augustine, who admittedly didn't know Greek very well, and he was reading from the Latin Vulgate, and some things were different in the Vulgate than in the Greek.

But we're going to look at the passages in Scripture that are relevant in our next session. At this point, time constraints require that we...