

The Doctrines of Grace Student's guide

by

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Based on:

The Bible (ESV)

The Westminster Confession

[Unlocking Grace](#) by Roger Smalling

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This student's guide is arranged to make an introduction to the doctrines of grace as simple as possible. It is the same as the teacher's guide but with answers removed. It works best in a Sunday School or home group setting where discussion of the various points is permitted. The facilitator of a group study should have the teacher's guide in hand.

This guide is a translation from a Spanish text that follows an acrostic, *Si, Jesús*. It could be arranged according to the famous *tulip* acrostic in English but that would require extensive rewriting. This arrangement allows for chapters on a couple of key points, namely *sovereignty of God* and *justification* that fit poorly into the *tulip* acrostic.

It also follows the textbook, **UNLOCKING GRACE**, available in electronic from [Smalling's web site](#). Homework reading follows each lesson.

Lesson One: Sovereignty of God

Purpose

Define the sovereignty of God, prove it biblically and show why it is the foundation for a strong Christian faith.

What does *sovereign* mean?

This word means *total control*. As regards God, the Scriptures teach that all of reality is a product of divine decrees made before the creation of the world.

Why do we say that the sovereignty of God is the foundation for Christian faith?

- Only a sovereign God can guarantee his promises.
- The sovereignty of God is the only grounds for giving him glory.
- It is the only grounds for prayer. Why pray to a God who is not sovereign?

Is it possible that *sovereignty* may have a limit? Yes _____ No _____

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The apostle's prayer: Acts 4:23-32

First evidence

What is the name the apostles called God in this prayer? _____

According to Jude 4, what is a good way to detect false teachers who profess to be Christians? What is it they deny? _____

Therefore, the first evidence for the sovereignty of God is that the term *sovereign* is part of _____.

Second evidence

In Acts 4:24, the apostles implied that God is sovereign. What was the reason?

What does God own according to Job 41:11? _____

- Of what is God the owner according to Psalm 24:1? _____
- What does God own according to Ezekiel 18:4? _____

Therefore the second evidence for the sovereignty of God is that

Third evidence

In Acts 4:27-28, what made it possible that the enemies of Jesus do what they did? For the answer, compare this text with Psalm 33:11 and Proverbs 19:21. _____

According to Hebrews 6:17, God wanted to show the heirs of his promise the _____.

Immutable means “unchangeable.” Scripture expresses God’s unchangeable nature in other ways than the word *immutable*. Examples are: James 1:17; Malachi 3:6; Numbers 23:19;

My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose, Is 46:10

How does the concept of immutable decrees prove the sovereignty of God?

Therefore, the third evidence for the sovereignty of God is that God’s decrees are

Fourth evidence

What did the apostles ask God to do? _____

Therefore, the fourth evidence for the sovereignty of God is that he has the power to

Fifth evidence: Incommunicable attributes

What is the attribute of God described in Revelation 1:8? _____

What attribute of God is described in 1John 3:20? _____

What attribute of God is described in Psalm 139:8? _____

Discussion

- If anything could happen outside God’s control, what would this indicate about his attributes?
- Are these attributes implied in the apostle’s prayer? If so, in what ways?

Therefore, the fifth evidence for the sovereignty of God is

The problem of evil: Acts 4:27-28

If God is sovereign, why does he permit evil? This text shows the righteousness of God in permitting evil and offers to Christians an answer that can be used to defend their faith relative to this specific issue.

According to Acts 4:27-28, what determined that Pontius Pilate, the gentiles and the people of Israel were going to do? _____

Did God force those people to do anything they did not want to do? Yes _____ No _____

Did God force these people to do anything they did not want to do? Yes _____ No _____

Did the enemies of Jesus act according to their own desires? Yes _____ No _____

Did the actions of those wicked people result in any good? If the answer is yes, what was that result? _____

Was the good that resulted greater than the evil done? Yes _____ No _____

Based on the previous questions, what can we conclude about the way God uses evil?

The meaning of *your hand and your plan* in verse 28: Optional

The term *plan* in Greek is ***boulé*** and means “purpose” or “intention.” It is used as “purpose” in Ephesians 1:11. With what doctrine is it associated in that text?

Therefore, the term, *your hand and your plan* means _____

The objection that God is not good if he permits evil can be refuted in this way: The objection assumes that good cannot come out of evil. The cross refutes that. Even events in ordinary life refutes it. We have all experienced circumstance in which some good results from a bad event.

Suggested readings: [Sovereignty and Suffering](#) and [How Could a Good God Permit Evil?](#)

What is providence?

Providence refers to the outworking of God’s government and control over all creation. Although the term *sovereign* covers the *fact* of total control, the word *providence* emphasizes the *means* by which he controls.

God normally expresses his sovereign control *indirectly*. He works through circumstances and people to accomplish his decrees. This is sometimes called *the doctrine of means*, that is, he uses means to the end rather than acting directly.

When he acts directly, without means, we call these *creative miracles*. These are rare, such as the resurrection of Jesus, certain miracles of healing or Jesus turning water into wine.

Examples of God using means to the end:

- God opened the Red Sea by a strong east wind that blew all night.
- God used Esther to save the Jew from extinction.
- He used Joshua to conquer the promised land.

From this lesson we learn...

- *Sovereign* is an absolute term meaning *total control*.
- God is sovereign because the term *sovereign* is part of certain of his names.
- God is sovereign because he is creator, owner and sustainer of all creation.
- God is sovereign because his decrees are unchangeable.
- God is sovereign because he is able to do miracles.
- God is sovereign because his three incommunicable attributes allow for nothing less.
- God allows evil in order to produce a greater good. He uses even wicked people to accomplish benevolent purposes.
- The apostles understood this principle and expressed it in their prayers.
- *Providence* refers to God's government over all things. God is active in everything and passive in nothing.

Homework reading

Chapters One and Two in **UNLOCKING GRACE**; Chapters Three and Five of **WCF**; Romans 3 in the New Testament. (Note: The reading assignment is a bit heavy for this first lesson only because the student needs to be prepared for the next lesson as well as review Lesson One.)

Lesson Two: Total inability

Purpose

Define *grace* more clearly by showing that man is incapable of contributing anything to his salvation, whether by word, will or works.

Importance

Our view of saving grace will affect our self-concept, prayer life, ability to trust God's promises of God, the way we evangelize and everything else involved in our theology and walk with God.

In Christianity two concepts about grace are in conflict. Everyone grants that the word *grace* means *unmerited favor*. The conflict revolves around the idea of how that favor is obtained.

One viewpoint claims that saving grace is the result of a cooperative work between God and man. The other asserts that saving grace is a sovereign work of God, independent of any foreseen quality or merit that a person may have.

Only one of these viewpoints can be correct. The answer has to do with the question of whether a sinner is able to cooperate with God on his own initiative, without grace.

First evidence: The moral condition of fallen man: Romans 3:9-20

Answer the following questions about those who are not justified by faith in Christ.

- How many righteous exist? _____
- How many understand? _____
- How many seek after God? _____
- How many do good? _____
- How many fear God? _____

Discussion: We have all met unbelievers who do good works. Some unbelievers say they have been seeking after God. How do we reconcile this with Romans 3?

Therefore, the first evidence for the inability of man is his moral condition as described in _____.

Second evidence: Original sin, Romans 5

In Romans 5:12-20, we find four things humanity inherits from the fall of Adam. What are these and in which verses are they found?

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The representative principle

Read Romans 5:17. Does this appear just?

In Romans 5:15, what is meant by the phrase, *the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.*

Adam was innocent before the fall. What do believers in Christ inherit, according to verse 19? How does this relate to 2Corinthians 5:21? *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Therefore, the second evidence for the inability of man is the fall of Adam (original sin) and the corruption we inherit.

Third evidence: How a person is drawn to Christ, John 6:44, 65

What does Jesus say about the innate ability of man to come to him?

What is the result when a person is drawn to Christ?

In verse 65, what is the origin of saving faith? _____

Therefore, the third evidence for the inability of man is that sinners cannot put their faith in Christ without _____.

Fourth evidence: The condition of the unregenerate mind

- Rom 8:7 _____
- 1Cor 2:14 _____
- 2Cor 4:4 _____
- Eph 4:18 _____
- 2Tim 2:25 _____

Therefore, the fourth evidence for the inability of man is that the mind of sinners is blinded by _____ is hostile to God and unable to repent without special divine assistance.

From this lesson we learn...

- Because of the fall of Adam, we inherit a sinful nature incapable of commending itself to God.
- Romans Chapter Three is a good description of the more inability of man.
- Jesus taught that a person cannot come to Christ without a special drawing of the Father.
- Numerous Bible texts show that the mind of sinners is enslaved by Satan and sin to the point that he cannot free himself without God's intervention.

True and false quiz

Put T for True or F for False.

1. _____ Saving grace is granted when a sinner does enough good works to show his sincerity.
2. _____ The word *grace* means "unmerited favor."
3. _____ Saving grace is the result of a cooperative effort between God and man.
4. _____ Jesus taught that God the Father waits patiently until the elect decide to come to Christ by their own wills.
5. _____ Repentance is a gift of the grace of God.

Homework reading

Chapter Three in **UNLOCKING GRACE**; Chapters Eleven and Fourteen in the **WFC**;
Romans 5 in the New Testament

Lesson Three: Justification by faith

Purpose

Show that justification by faith alone in Christ alone is the gospel and nothing else is.

Definition

Justification: The legal declaration from God that a person is righteous relative to the divine law. The basis of that declaration is the perfect righteousness of Christ imputed to the person by faith alone.

- It is a _____ declaration from God.
- It is according to God's _____.
- Its basis is the perfect _____ of Christ.
- This righteousness is _____ to the believer as his own.
- The means is by _____ alone.

Does the term *justification* mean “made righteous” or “declared righteous?” See Luke 7:29; 16:15; 1Timothy 3:16.

Justification means _____.

Justification does not mean _____.

The importance of defining correctly the gospel: Galatians 1:6-9

Verse 6 — *so quickly deserting*

Verse 7 — *Only one gospel*

Verses 8,9 — *accursed*

The problem to resolve

Read Romans 1:16-20, 2:5,8; 4:15

According to these verses, from what is the gospel designed to save us?

The problem to resolve in the gospel is how to get the _____ necessary to escape the _____.

Continued validity of the moral law

Defining moral terms

What is the frame of reference as to the meaning of the word *righteousness*? Deut 4:8; Rom 2:13

What is the frame of reference as to the meaning of the word *sin*? 1John 3:4

What is the frame of reference as to the meaning of the word *judgment*? Romans 2:12

According to Romans 8:4, does God require that the righteousness of the law be fulfilled in Christians? Yes _____ No _____

Does the moral law apply to the entire world or only to believers? Romans 3:19

Revelatory function

What does the law reveal about God in Romans 3:1-4 _____

What does the law reveal about man in Romans 3:19,20 _____

What is revealed to us by the law, according to Romans 3:20 and 7:7? _____

The source of righteousness

According to Romans 3:22, what is the source of righteousness? _____

By means of what does righteousness come? _____

To whom does it come? _____

According to Philippians 3:9, how is this same concept expressed as in Romans 3:22?

Romans 4- The concept of righteousness *counted* to the believer

(The theological term for this is *imputation*. It means “attribute to the account of a person that which belongs to another.” See **UNLOCKING GRACE**, chapter three for a fuller explanation.)

Group exercise

Look throughout Romans 4 and find uses of the word *counted*.

...just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: Rom 4:6

blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.” Rom 4:8

Reconciliation by mutual imputation: 2Corinthians 5:21

(This doctrine is called *commutation*. It means the exchange of one thing for another between two parties. The result of commutation is called *reconciliation*. A further discussion of reconciliation by Paul is found in Romans Chapter 5 and Colossians Chapter 2.)

What was attributed to Christ according to 2Corinthians 5:21? _____

What was attributed to our account? _____

The two parts of justification

- Forgiveness of sins
- Imputation of the righteousness of Christ

Important questions

According to Romans 8:30...

For whom is reserved the gift of justification? _____

What is the final result? _____

What precedes justification? _____

According to Romans 8:33,34...

What is God's attitude toward those who are justified? _____

Who does God justify according to these verses? _____

What does Christ continue doing on behalf of those justified? _____

What other doctrines are associated with these verse on justification?

Saving faith versus faith that does not save

What is the definition of faith according to Romans 4:21?

Faith and works

Titus 2:11-15

According to verse 11, what is it that brings salvation? _____

According to verse 12, what does grace produce in us after we are saved?

According to verse 14, for what do those who are saved have zeal? _____

The problem of false faith: James 2:18-25

According to verse 18, how does genuine saving faith manifest itself?

Do demons have a kind of faith? _____

How is faith made perfect according verse 22? _____

The fundamental difference between Catholicism and the Bible as to salvation and its relationship to works:

Catholic: Faith + works= salvation

Biblical: Faith= salvation + works

Matthew 7:21-23

What is the central problem in the lives of these supposed believers?

Do these verses say that Jesus takes away their salvation?

What about *born again*?

If justification is the gospel, how does regeneration fit in? Is it included in justification?

Regeneration is a theological term used in the Titus text and expressed elsewhere in the New Testament as *born again*¹ or *born of the spirit*.²

Titus 3:4-8

On which doctrine does Paul base our possession of eternal life?

Which comes first: Regeneration or justification? _____

Important: Justification is always associate with faith in the New Testament. Regeneration is never associated with faith.

From the above considerations, reformed theologians hold that regeneration is a sovereign and preparatory work of the Holy Spirit to make justification by faith possible.

¹ John 3:1-8. Note that Jesus attributes regeneration to a sovereign work of the Spirit.

² Galatians 4:29

Therefore, contrary to the belief of many, the message “you must be born again,” is **not** the gospel. Justification by faith is the gospel. Likewise, it is an error to say, “if you have faith, you will be born again.” Faith will get you justified but at that point, regeneration will have already taken place.

Regeneration is therefore not included in justification but simply precedes it. The correct order of events is *regeneration*→*faith*→*justification*.

From this lesson we learn...

- The problem to resolve in the gospel is how to obtain the righteousness necessary to escape divine justice.
- The moral law is the only frame of reference for defining what is the righteousness we need.
- God requires that the perfect righteousness of the law be fulfilled in us.
- God counts the righteousness of Christ to believers as their own.
- God has reconciled us to himself by counting the guilt of our sins to Christ and the righteousness of Christ to us.
- Faith is the conviction that God is able to fulfill his promises. It is not a mystical or emotional experience.
- Nay all that is called faith is saving faith.
- Obedience, manifested by good works, is the inevitable result of biblical faith.
- Regeneration, born again, is a sovereign preparatory work of the Spirit preceding justification by faith.

True and false quiz

1. _____ God accepts as legally righteous those who trust in Christ.
2. _____ God sometimes accepts accusations against justified people.
3. _____ In Paul’s mind, justification and salvation are synonyms.
4. _____ The apostle Paul was tolerant toward those who had another perspective of the gospel message that his.
5. _____ Human conscience is an appropriate frame of reference for defining moral terms.
6. _____ Jesus intercedes for all, the elect and the non elect equally.

7. _____ Justification by faith alone in Christ alone is the gospel.
8. _____ Crediting the righteousness of Christ to the believer is the basis of our security of salvation.
9. _____ The biblical evidence that a person has saving faith is the ability to manifest spiritual gifts.
10. _____ Biblical faith results in salvation plus good works.

Homework reading

Chapter Four in **UNLOCKING GRACE**; Chapter Three in the **WCF**; Romans 9 in the New Testament

Lesson Four: Election and predestination

Purpose

Show that God is sovereign in salvation as in everything else. This grants a solid sense of security to those know they have been saved by grace.

Definitions

These two words, *election* and *predestination* are similar and overlap in parts of the New Testament.

Election refers to God's eternal decree to save certain people by grace, without regard to any foreseen virtues in them.

Predestination refers to the God's providence over circumstances to guarantee the fulfillment of his eternal decrees regarding his elect.

...who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, 2Tim. 1:9

Three chapters in particular in the New Testament mention election and predestination with great clarity: Romans 9; Ephesians 1; John 17.

Romans 9

First illustration: Jacob and Esau, verses 6-13

In choosing between Jacob and Esau, did God take into consideration their respective good or bad works? Yes _____ No _____

According to verse 13, does God's love extend equally to the elect and the non elect? Yes _____ No _____

Does Paul recognize any unfairness in God's sovereign election? Yes _____ No _____

What explanation does God offer in verse 15 as to why he has mercy on some and not
o t h e r s ?

According to verse 16, what does God NOT take into account in choosing his elect?

Second illustration: Pharaoh, verses 17,18

According to verse 17, why did God arrange for Pharaoh to come to power?

What is the conclusion Paul draws from the two previous illustrations, according to verse 18? _____

People frequently complain about the doctrine of election by saying, "That does not seem fair!" In verses 19 and 20, does Paul anticipate that objection? Yes _____ No _____

How does the above objection actually confirm what Paul is teaching?

Third illustration: The potter, verses 19-22

What are the two reasons for which God created humanity?

Ephesians 1

According to verse 4, when did God choose us and what was the purpose behind his choice? _____

In the light of verse 4, which of the two statements is correct? Mark the correct one:

_____ God chose some because he foresaw they would be holy and without blame

_____ God chose some to make them holy and without blame.

According to verse 5, what is the immediate benefit for believers of predestination?

According to verse 6, what benefit does God himself receive from predestinating us?

According to verse 7, what are the results of God's decree of predestination?

According to verse 11, does God predestine people arbitrarily? Yes _____ No _____

John 17

In this chapter, John does not use the words *predestination* or *election*. Instead, he uses the phrase *those you have given me*.

According to verse 6, to whom does Jesus manifest the name of the Father?

In verse 9, for whom does Jesus pray and for what does he not pray?

In verses 11, 12 and 15, what does Jesus pray to the Father to do with those who the Father has given to him? _____

Based on verse 26, describe the kind of love the Father has toward those he has given to Jesus. _____

Connections between faith and election

Is faith the cause of election or is election the cause of faith? See Acts 13:48; Titus 1:1

What was the cause of the faith of believers in Achaia, Acts 18:27? _____

According to John 6:44, 64 what or who is the cause of saving faith? _____

Effectual call: How God applies the decree of election

Irresistible grace or *effectual call* are terms theologians use for the work of the Holy Spirit in drawing the elect to Christ through the gospel.

Two kinds of call: General and special

General is the gospel preached to everyone, without regard to who may be elect.

Special is the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in the elect to produce regeneration, faith and justification, in that order.

We see the differences between general and special call in verses like Mathew 22:13; Acts 2:39; 1Corinthians 1:22-24.

The chain of salvation: Romans 8:30

How many of the predestined are called? _____

How many of the called are justified? _____

How many of the justified are glorified? _____

According to 2Timothy 1:9

What does not count relative to our election? _____

What two things does this verse mention as the basis of our election?

1Thessalonians 5:23,24; Jude 1; 1Corinthians 1:2

According to these verses, what does God promise to those who are called?

From this lesson we learn...

- *Election* is the eternal decree of God to save certain people. *Predestination* is the God's sovereign control over everything to guarantee that his decree of election is accomplished.
- God gives faith to elect that they might be saved.
- With the three illustrations in Romans 9, Paul demonstrates that the decree of election has nothing to do with foreseen good works or good will in the elect.
- God promises final sanctification to the elect.

John 17

- According to John 17, God the Father sent Jesus to save out of the world those he had given him. Jesus intercedes for those only, not for the world. The Father loves them with the love with which he loves Jesus.
- Although the gospel should be preached to all, only the elect receive a special call from God.
- In theology, this special call is called *effectual call* or *irresistible grace*.

True and false quiz

1. _____ God grants saving faith to the elect.
2. _____ God chooses those who he knows beforehand have good will.
3. _____ The word *election* refers to the God's sovereign decree to save by grace certain chosen people.
4. _____ God chose us because he foresaw that we would be holy and blameless.
5. _____ The term *general call* refers to the work of the Holy Spirit in calling the elect.
6. _____ The term *special call* refers to the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing the elect to faith in Christ through the gospel.
7. _____ The immediate result of the work of the Holy Spirit in effectual call is justification.

Homework reading

Chapter Five in **UNLOCKING GRACE**; Chapter Eight in the **WCF**; Romans 8:32-34 in the New Testament

Lesson Five: Sacrifice of Christ

Purpose

To show that the benefits of the sacrifice of Christ apply to the elect and those only, thus guaranteeing an infallible salvation.

In theology, this doctrine is called *particular redemption* because the cross was intended to save certain individuals in particular — the elect — not humanity in general.

Sometimes it is called *limited atonement* because the sacrifice of Christ is limited to the elect. Some theologians dislike this term because all doctrines of atonement are limited in some way. The term *limited* fails to express the reformed intent in defining Christ's sacrifice in its power and intent.

The great guarantee of Romans 8:32-34

First evidence

According to these verses, is it possible for anyone for whom Christ died to perish? Yes _____ No _____

In verse 32, what did God do to ensure the elect would receive all the benefits of salvation? _____

In verse 33, who does God justify? _____

In verse 33, what does God **not** do against his elect?

In verse 34, why are the elect not condemned? _____

Therefore, the first evidence for particular redemption is that those for whom Christ died cannot be _____.

Who did Jesus come to save?

Second evidence

According to the Gospel of John, Jesus came to save only those whom the Father had given him. This explains for whom he died.

According to John 6:39, who did Jesus come to save? _____

According to John 18:9, did Jesus accomplish that purpose? Yes _____ No _____

For whom did Jesus give his life, according to John 10:15? _____

For whom did Jesus pray, according to John 17:9 and for whom did he not pray?

Therefore, the second evidence for particular redemption is that Christ came to save

_____.

The priesthood of Jesus: Hebrews 9:11-15

Third evidence

The priesthood in the Old Testament had two functions: Sacrifice and intercession. The priest intercede only for those for whom the he offered sacrifice and no others. This fore type is fulfilled in the ministry of Christ who is both the sacrifice and the priest who offers it.

According to verse 13, for whom were the Old Testament sacrifices offered? For Jews alone or for others _____

According to verse 15, who receives the promise of an eternal inheritance and why?

Therefore, the third evidence for particular redemption is that Christ is the

Fourth evidence

For whom did he come?

According to Matthew 1:21, Jesus come _____.

According to John 10:15 , Jesus laid down is life for _____.

According to Ephesians 5:25, Jesus give himself for _____.

According to Hebrews 9:15, Christ's death redeems _____.

Therefore, the fourth evidence for particular redemption is that Christ came to save certain specific people, not all.

What about the love of God?

Does God love everyone equally or does he have a special love for the elect? Compare the following texts:

In John 17:26, what is the relationship between the love of the Father for Jesus and his love for the elect? _____

In Titus 3:4, the phrase *lovingkindness* is a single word in Greek, ***filantropía***, and means “benevolence.” Note that the word is not ***ágape***, reserved for only for believers.

What are the two words in Colossians 3:12 associated with the elect?

Does there exist in Ephesians 1:5,6 any connection between the divine love and predestination? Yes _____ No _____

From this lesson we learn...

- The cross guarantees the salvation of the elect and of them only.
- God accepts no accusations against the elect because Christ died for them.
- Christ did two things to ensure the salvation of his elect: He died for them and lives to intercede for them.
- Jesus is the high priest of the elect and intercedes for them that the Father may preserve them.
- The Father loves the elect with the same love with which he loves Jesus.
- Jesus died to save his people, his sheep and his church.

True and false quiz

1. _____ The sacrifice of Christ guarantees the salvation of the elect and those only.
2. _____ God accepts accusations against his elect because sometimes they behave badly.
3. _____ The death of Christ makes the justification of the elect inevitable.
4. _____ Christ interceded for the whole world.
5. _____ God loves the elect with the same love with which he loves Jesus.

Homework reading

Chapter Six in **UNLOCKING GRACE**; Chapter Twenty-Five in the **WCF**

Lesson Six: Unity and universality of the church

Purpose

This lesson contains ecclesiological elements that relate directly to the doctrines of grace. For a more complete study of biblical ecclesiology, see Smalling's teacher's guide, [Biblical Church Government](#).

The reformers realized that Rome taught membership in the Catholic Church is a condition of salvation. According to catholic theology, the church administers salvation through its sacraments to its members.

This caused a challenge to the reformers since the Bible teaches salvation is by grace alone and takes place before becoming a member of a church. Moreover, the Bible indicates that some church members may not be saved. This produced a series of questions: What is the church and what is the work entrusted to it?

What is the church according to Hebrews 2:47?

Is the church a visible institution?

Is the concept of a visible local church found in 1Corinthians 1:2? The church is in the city of Corinth and visible to the human eye.

In which part of 1Corinthians 1:2 do we see the universality of church?

Therefore, the local expression of the church is called _____.

The universal existence of the church is called _____.

Who is the head of the church according to Ephesians 1:22,23 and 5:23? _____

The difference between represent and replace

According to the church of Rome, the pope *replaces* Christ and thus has the authority to dispense grace. In biblical theology, the church *represents* Christ but does not replace him.

According to John 14:16 and 26, what replaces Christ in the earth? _____

Is the invisible church limited only to those currently alive on earth? Hebrews 11:39,40

What are the characteristics of the true church?

Faithful proclamation of the biblical gospel

According to Galatians 1:6-9, what is God's attitude toward those who preach a different gospel than that which Paul proclaimed? _____

Faithful administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper

According to Matthew 26:26-28 and Paul's instructions to the Corinthians in 1Corinthians 11:17-34, is the Lord's Supper optional or mandatory in the church?

According to Matthew 28:19,20 is baptism optional or mandatory in the church?

Church discipline

According to 1Corinthians Chapter 5, what are the limits of tolerance that Paul imposes inside the church with regard to the conduct of its members? How should they treat unrepentant members? _____

From this lesson we learn...

- The church is a society of those who have been saved by grace.
- Christ alone is head of the church and the pope is not the head in any sense of the word.
- The visible church is a society of people who meet in a specific locality for worship. The invisible church is made up of those who have been saved in every place and epoch of history.
- The church represents Christ but does not replace him. The Holy Spirit is the replacement of Christ on earth.
- According to the reformers, the characteristics of a true church are: The faithful proclamation of the gospel, the administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper and church discipline.

True and false quiz

1. _____ Membership in a local church that preaches the gospel guarantees salvation.
2. _____ The church replaces Christ on earth.
3. _____ The term *body of Christ* refers to all those who are members of a local church.

4. _____ The local church may be considered Christian even if it preaches a distorted gospel.

Homework reading

Chapter Seven in **UNLOCKING GRACE**; Chapter Eighteen in the **WCF**; Romans 8, John 17 and Hebrews 7

Lesson Seven: Security of the elect

Purpose

Show that God preserves his elect from falling away into final apostasy and explain the means by which he does this.

The question as to whether Christians can or cannot lose their salvation has caused controversy. The reformed answer should be abundantly clear from the previous lessons. God is sovereign in salvation and therefore justifies and preserves his elect.

Those who question the security of the believer show a lack of understanding of the gospel in its depths, although they themselves may be saved.

This teaching is commonly called *preservation of the elect*. The term *security* is used here because it fits better with the original Spanish acrostic in the manual from which this is translated.

Several questions are involved with this issue:

- Who does the preserving and how?
- Can this teaching be construed in any way to involved a license to sin?
- Does God remove our free will after we are saved?

Who preserves?

According to 1Peter 1:5, what keeps us? _____

In Jude 1, where does God put the believer to ensure preservation? _____

In Jude 24 and 25, from what does God preserve us? _____

In 2Timothy 4:18, Paul is confident that the Lord will rescue him from one thing and will preserve him for something else. What are those things?

In Psalm 97:10, what is it the Lord preserves? _____

According to Hebrews 7:22,25, what is the guarantee that the believers will be heirs of the covenant of grace and why?

Does there exist a license to sin?

According to 1John 3:3, what is it that genuine Christians desire?

According to 1John 3:9, what is impossible for those in whom Christ dwells?

In 1John 5:17, what characterizes those born of God and why?

According to Galatians 5:13, what is Paul's warning to those who understand their freedom in grace? _____

What about those who fall away?

What does John conclude about those who leave the Christian faith and the church, according to 1John 2:19? _____

According to 2Corinthians 13:5, did Paul believe that every member of the church was saved? _____

Does God remove the free will of believers?

What does God do to ensure that the wills of the believers will be in line with his own will, according to Philippians 2:12,13? _____

According to the above verses, does God force Christians against their will? Yes _____
No _____

What does God do exactly to preserve his elect?

Positive

What is the principle means God uses for the growth of his children according to 1Peter 2:2? _____

What should Christians do to receive a greater measure of grace, according to Hebrews 4:16? _____

What is one of the means God gives Christians to bless them according to 1Corinthians 10:16,17? _____

What is another means of blessing according to 1John 1:7?

Negative

What happens to believers who become negligent in their spiritual growth, according to Hebrews 12:7-11? _____

According to 2Timothy 4:2, what is the role of God's ministers in the life of other Christians? _____

The covenant of grace

It is important to note that the covenant of grace made with Abraham is part of God's immutable decrees. This, by itself, is a strong reason for believing in the preservation of the elect.

According to Galatians 3:16-17, what is the basis of the covenant? _____

What is excluded as a basis for God's faithfulness to the covenant? _____

Teachings connected to the theme of preservation

- Sovereignty of God: If God is sovereign over all, then he is sovereign in the question of preserving his people.
- Total inability: If man is incapable of saving himself, then likewise he is unable to preserve himself as well.
- Justification by grace alone: If the righteousness of Christ was imputed to us regardless of our merits, then it cannot be removed because of our faults.
- Election by grace: If God's decree to save us was made in eternity before the time began, then nothing in the current time continuum can change that now.
- Sacrifice of Christ: If the sacrifice of Christ is sufficient to cover all the sins of all the elect, then none of the sins of the elect can be the cause of their loss of salvation. No mortal sins exist for a Christian.
- Effectual call: The special call of God the Father to bring people to Christ invariably results in their eternal salvation.

From this lesson we learn...

- It is God's power that preserves the elect by uniting us to Jesus Christ.
- Genuine Christians do not desire a license to sin.
- Jesus Christ himself will undertake to see that his people do not fall into a life of sin.
- God works through the wills of believers to do his own will.
- The inevitable proof of salvation is obedience to God.

- God uses a variety of means to preserve his people: The Scriptures, prayer and the church with its admonitions and discipline.

True and false quiz

1. _____ It is the power of God that preserves us from falling.
2. _____ The proof of genuine salvation is obedience to the Lord.
3. _____ The doctrine of the security of the elect means that they are free to sin because they cannot lose their salvation.
4. _____ The doctrine of preservation stimulates genuine Christians to purify themselves.
5. _____ Christ preserves those who are truly born again from returning to a life of sin.
6. _____ The evidence of genuine salvation is when a person does miracles and prophecies.
7. _____ Although we are incapable of saving ourselves, we are indeed capable of preserving ourselves.
8. _____ The proof that a professing Christian is not, in fact, regenerate is when he leaves the church and returns to a life of sin.
9. _____ God is sovereign in salvation as he is in everything else.
10. _____ The covenant with Abraham is part of the divine immutable decrees and therefore constitutes a strong comfort for Christians.

Homework reading

Chapter Eight in **UNLOCKING GRACE**; Chapter Seven in the **WCF**; Genesis 17 and Galatians 3

Lesson Eight: Covenant, the golden chain

Purpose

Show that the doctrines of grace are a result of a covenant God made with Abraham and fulfilled in Christ.

Why is this important?

Why are these doctrines of grace arranged as they are and not in some other way? Do they have something in common?

These doctrines are joined like keys on a chain. The chain that holds them in common is called a *covenant*, which in turn is consequence of the character of God. Once we understand this, we how they are intimately interconnected.

What is a covenant?

A covenant is an agreement between two parties. A business contract is a kind of covenant. Normally contracts are agreements between equals with a view to mutual benefits.

Not so with the covenant of grace. God and man are not equals and man is in a morally helpless state incapable of contributing anything. This kind of covenant is more like the adoption of child in which the benefactor provides for the beneficiary who in turn has nothing to give in return. This is the Christian covenant.

Christians use the term *covenant* instead of *contract*, to make the distinction that God and man are not equal partners.

What are the elements of a covenant?

- Identification of the participants
- The benefits
- The conditions to fulfill
- The time limit
- How the agreement is validated.

The Christian covenant: Genesis 17 and Galatians 3

In theology, this is called *the covenant with Abraham* or *the Abrahamic Covenant*. This was inaugurated in Genesis 17 and fulfilled in Christ in Galatians 3.

Group exercise

Genesis 17

- Who are the participants? V.1 _____
- What are the conditions? V.1 _____
- What are the benefits? V.7 _____
- The time limit V.7 _____
- Validation V.10,11 _____

Galatians 3

Find in this chapter the same Abrahamic covenant elements as in Genesis 17 above.

- Who are the participants? V.1,7 _____
- What are the conditions? V.9 _____
- What are the benefits? V.8,14 _____
- The time limit V.15 _____
- Validation V.23,24 _____
- What did Paul call the covenant with Abraham in verse 8? _____

Based on this comparison between Genesis 17 and Galatians 3, can we say that the covenant with Abraham is the Christian covenant of grace? Yes _____ No _____

End of group exercise

The doctrines of grace in the covenant of grace

Let's examine each of the doctrines studied so far to see how they relate to the covenant.

Sovereignty of God

According to Hebrews 6:13,14,17, how does the covenant reflect the sovereignty of God?

Total inability

According to Galatians 3:13,13; 4:7, what is the moral state of man and how does the covenant meet that need?

Justification by faith

According to Genesis 15:6 and Galatians 3, what is the connection between the covenant and justification? _____

Election by grace

Does there exist any connection between election and grace in Romans 11:5?

Yes _____ No _____

Sacrifice of Christ

What took place in Hebrews 9:13-15 to make the covenant an effective means for obtaining eternal life?

Security of the elect

According to Hebrews 6:13-20, why do we have security of salvation in the covenant?

From this lesson we learn...

1. The doctrines of grace are the consequence of the divine a divine covenant established with Abraham and fulfilled in Christ.
2. This covenant requires perfection as a condition for receiving the benefits.
3. Christ fulfilled the condition of perfection in his life and by his sacrifice. For this reason he is guarantor for those who trust him and they remain participants in the covenant forever.

True and false quiz

1. _____ The covenant of grace is an agreement between God and man as equals
2. _____ The covenant of Abraham is the Christian covenant
3. _____ God is faithful to his covenant with us because he know that we will be good.
4. _____ God is faithful to his covenant with us because he is faithful to his own immutable oath.

5. _____ We are in the covenant partly by faith in Christ and partly by our obedience to the divine law.
6. _____ Another term for the covenant of grace is *the gospel*.

Conclusion

From these studies we learn...

- God is sovereign in salvation just as he is in everything else.
- Fallen man is unable to will or do anything to contribute to his own salvation or to prepare himself to be saved.
- God chose from fallen humanity individuals from all ethnic groups to be recipients of his saving grace. He did this without regard to foreseen supposed good will or good works in them.
- The sacrifice of Christ on the cross guarantees the salvation of all the elect and of those only.
- The church universal consists in all the elect from everywhere and all ages of history.
- God preserves the elect from falling away from the Christian faith. He does this by various means, including paternal discipline, exhortations, the word of God, prayer and the teachings and admonitions of the church.

[Appendix: The doctrines of grace in church history](#)

The following is an outline of the influence and existence of the doctrines of grace throughout church history. This serves to counter the falsehood that these doctrines are merely inventions of sixteenth century reformers.

Early church fathers: 100-400 A.D.

The fathers of the first four centuries taught these doctrines. In his book **THE CAUSE OF GOD AND TRUTH**, John Gill proves this. In this classic of reformed theology, Gill quotes extensively from those early writers, proving they would be classified as *reformed* if they were alive today.

Augustine and Pelagius: C. 400 A.D.

Pelagius, a British monk, invented new doctrines emphasizing the will of man as the cause of salvation. Augustine took him to task in a series of treatises on grace. These include **GRACE AND FREE WILL** and **PREDESTINATION OF THE SAINTS**.

Council of Orange: 529 A.D.

This council in Orange, France, met to decide on the validity of Augustine's teachings. The **CANONS OF ORANGE** clearly support Augustine's theology of grace and rejects Pelagianism, although the Catholic Church in practice still follows the line of thinking proposed by Pelagius.

From Augustine to Calvin: 400-1550 A.D.

Theologians during the middle ages who held to what we call today reformed theology were often labeled as *Augustinians* or sometimes *Johannine* scholars because John was one of the Bible writers who taught these doctrines.

Thomas Aquinas: 1225 A.D.

In his monumental work **SUMMA TEOLÓGICA** (Summary of Theology), Aquinas describes and defends predestination and associated doctrines.

John Calvin: 1509-1564

Converted through reading Augustine, Calvin wrote the first protestant systematic theology text, **THE INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION**, the most thorough exposition of the reformed faith ever written.

Martin Luther: 1484-1546

Considered the father of the reformation. Luther eventually evolved to a Calvinist position theologically. This is clear from what he himself designated as his *opus magnum*, **THE BONDAGE OF THE WILL**.

The Arminian Controversy: From the sixteenth century to the present

Jacobus Arminius was a Dutch theologian, died 1609, who invented a system of theology similar to Pelagius, challenging the teachings of the reformation. His followers expressed his views in five points called the Remonstrances (theological errors.) These five points are:

1. Freedom of the will: Man's will is sovereign in salvation
2. Conditional election: Election is based on foreseen faith and good works
3. Universal atonement: Christ died with the intention of saving everybody.
4. Resistible grace: Man has the power to successfully resist God's saving grace.
5. Loss of salvation: Christians can lose their salvation through mortal sin.

Synod de Dort: 1618

This synod was convened in Holland to consider whether Arminianism is a legitimate alternative to reformed theology. After fifteen months of debate, the Synod declared Arminianism to be unscriptural.

The Canons of Dort were written by the reformed delegates later and are known today as the five points of Calvinism. Calvin himself is not the author of the *tulip* acrostic below. This acrostic was invented later by a British theology student.

- 1.Total depravity: Man's will and nature is bound in sin and unable prepare himself for salvation.
- 2.Unconditional election: Election is based on God's sovereign choice.
- 3.Irresistible grace: God works in the elect so that they come to Christ willingly despite previous resistance.
- 4.Limited atonement: Christ died to save the elect and those only.
- 5.Perseverance of the elect: God sees to it that the elect will persevere.

The Westminster Assembly: 1643-1648

An assembly of 151 theologians of the British isles convened to formulate the doctrinal standards of the reformation. This resulted in the Standards of Westminster, used today by Presbyterians and by the principle Baptist denominations, with some revisions. This

includes the **WESTMINSTER CONFSSION** and the **LARGER** and **SHORTER CATECHISMS**.

Baptist confessions

British Baptists adopted the **WESTMINSTER CONFSSION** in 1689 but changed the chapters on baptism and church government, calling it **THE LONDON CONFSSION**. American Baptists accepted it in 1742 and labeled it the **PHILADELPHIA CONFSSION**.

Resurgence of Arminianism: John Wesley, 1703-1791

The dynamic British evangelist John Wesley, founder of Methodism, boasted that he had never read a theology textbook. This is obvious from his ignorance of theology as expressed in his resurrection of Arminianism. He committed the typical logic errors of Arminianism previously refuted at Dort in 1618.

From Wesley's movement were born others such as the Nazarene denomination and from them, Pentecostals and Charismatics.

Arminians who take the time to study these issues objectively often become Calvinists. It is rare to hear of a Calvinist becoming Arminian. Arminians rarely debate Calvinists today because they come up short.

Chronology of the doctrines of grace in church history

100-400 A.D. Comments by early church fathers in their writings express these doctrines. Irenaeus, Polycarp, Chrysostom, etc. Puritan writer John Gill writes **CAUSE OF GOD AND TRUTH**, 1735, documenting this.

C.400 A.D.- Pelagius-Augustinian controversy. Augustine writes dissertations on grace **AGAINST PELAGIUS** and **ENCHIRIDION** manual of doctrine.

529 A.D.- Council of Orange. Augustinian theology vindicated. Strong statements favoring sovereign grace.

Dark Ages- 500-1500 A.D. Scholars holding to doctrines of grace sometimes called Augustinians, or Johannines.

Thomas Aquinas, C.1300, **SUMMA THEOLOGICA** contains elements of sovereign grace doctrines.

1517- Luther begins reformation. Erasmus-Luther dispute over free will. His *Opus Magnum* **THE BONDAGE OF THE WILL** refutes Erasmus.

1559-Calvin publishes **INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION**

1560-1609 James Arminius and the Arminian controversy

1618- Synod of Dort/ Arminianism refuted/ Five Points of Calvinism established. **CANONS OF DORT**.

1643-1648- Westminster Assembly writes **WESTMINSTER STANDARDS**. End of Reformation period.

1689- Baptists adopt Westminster Confession, with changes, **LONDON BAPTIST CONFESSION**

1703-1791- John Wesley and the resurgence of Arminianism. Leads to Methodism, Nazarene, Pentecostalism and others.

1823- Southern Baptist Convention adopts the **WESTMINSTER CONFESSION** at Philadelphia, with changes, the **PHILADELPHIA CONFESSION**.