

STUDY GUIDE

The Doctrines of Grace

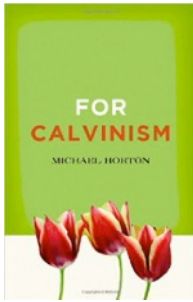
The depths of the Gospel

IIII

Brett Baggett

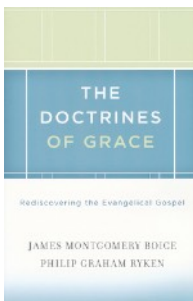
RECOMMENDED HELP FOR STUDYING THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE

From technical to very accessible



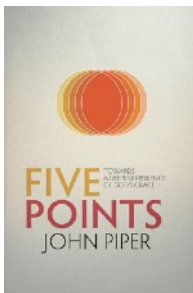
Technical but Accessible

For Calvinism by Michael Horton



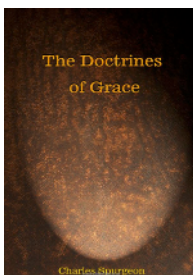
Accessible

The Doctrines of Grace by James Montgomery Boice and Philip Ryken



Accessible

Five Points by John Piper



Very Accessible

Doctrines of Grace Sermons by Charles Spurgeon

CONTENT

This study guide was edited, and the study questions were written, by Brett Baggett. The excerpts contained are sermons, books, and articles by many pastors, authors, and theologians, both current and from church history.

HOW TO USE IT

This Study Guide is designed to help you work through The Doctrines of Grace in 6 weeks (one week of introduction and 5 weeks of Bible study). I pray this will be a great tool for personal study, small groups, and leadership training of various kinds.

PURPOSE

My hope for this study guide is to equip the people of Jesus Christ to understand, love, and obey the written Word of God. I believe when that happens, they will more joyfully understand, love, and obey the Incarnate Word of God—Jesus Christ the Righteous.

For God's glory and the joy of all people,



THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE

The Depths of the Gospel

STUDY GUIDE

Study 0

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW - 7

Study 1

HOW BAD OFF ARE WE? TOTAL DEPRAVITY:

Romans 3:9-18 - **12**

Study 2

DID GOD CHOOSE US OR DO WE CHOOSE HIM?

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION: Romans 9:6-26 - **20**

Study 3

WHAT DID JESUS ACCOMPLISH ON THE CROSS? LIMITED

ATONEMENT: Isaiah 53:7-12 - **29**

Study 4

HOW DOES ANYONE COME TO FAITH IN JESUS?

IRRESISTIBLE GRACE: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 - **35**

Study 5

CAN I LOSE MY SALVATION? PERSEVERANCE OF THE

SAINTS: Romans 8:28-30 - **43**

Study 0

INTRODUCTION

The word gospel means good news that brings joy. But how good is it? How much of it is based on God and His action and how much depends on us and our response? These are important questions, and they have to do with the depths of the gospel.

The Doctrines of Grace are like looking as far down into the beautiful ocean of the gospel as possible, at least this side of heaven. What we see in these doctrinal deeps should make us wonder and praise God for the grace given to us.

These Doctrines are succinct answers to questions like *how bad off are we? did God choose us or do we choose him? how does anyone come to faith in Jesus? what did Jesus accomplish on the cross? and can I lose my salvation?* These are serious questions every Christian will ask or be asked. Why not survey the Scriptures and see if God has answered them clearly? That's exactly what the Doctrines of Grace seek to do.

If we humble ourselves as we look to the Scriptures, these doctrines will lower us to our knees yet lift our souls into the joy of heaven itself.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND BY JOHN PIPER

John Calvin

John Calvin, the famous theologian and pastor of Geneva, died in 1564. Along with Martin Luther in Germany, he was the most influential force of the Protestant Reformation. His Commentaries and Institutes of the Christian Religion are still exerting tremendous influence on the Christian Church worldwide.

The churches which have inherited the teachings of Calvin are usually called Reformed as opposed to the Lutheran or Episcopalian branches of the Reformation. While not all Baptist churches hold to a reformed theology, there is a significant Baptist tradition which grew out of and still cherishes the central doctrines inherited from the reformed branch of the Reformation.

Calvin and Arminius

The controversy between Arminianism and Calvinism arose in Holland in the early 1600's. The founder of the Arminian party was Jacob Arminius (1560-1609). He studied under the strict Calvinist Theodore Beza at Geneva and became a professor of theology at the University of Leyden in 1603.

Gradually Arminius came to reject certain Calvinist teachings. The controversy spread all over Holland, where the Reformed Church was the overwhelming majority. The Arminians drew up their creed in Five Articles (written by Uytenbogaert), and laid them before the state authorities of Holland in 1610

under the name Remonstrance, signed by forty-six ministers. (These Five Articles can be read in Philip Schaff, *Creeks of Christendom*, vol. 3, pp. 545-547.)

The Calvinists responded with a Counter-Remonstrance. But the official Calvinistic response came from the Synod of Dort which was held to consider the Five Articles from November 13, 1618 to May 9, 1619. There were eighty-four members and eighteen secular commissioners. The Synod wrote what has come to be known as the Canons of Dort. These are still part of the church confession of the Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church. They state the Five Points of Calvinism in response to the Five Articles of the Arminian Remonstrants. (See Schaff, vol. 3, pp. 581-596).

So the so-called *Five Points* (known as *The Doctrines of Grace*) were not chosen by the Calvinists as a summary of their teaching. They emerged as a response to the Arminians who chose these five points to oppose.

The Doctrines of Grace (Five Points)

It is more important to give a positive Biblical position on the Doctrines of Grace (*Five Points*) than to know the exact form of the original controversy. These five points are still at the heart of Biblical theology. They are not unimportant. Where we stand on these things deeply affects our view of God, man, salvation, the atonement, regeneration, assurance, worship, and missions. Somewhere along the way the five points came to be summarized under the acronym *TULIP*.

- T - Total depravity
- U - Unconditional election
- L - Limited atonement
- I - Irresistible grace
- P - Perseverance of the saints

— *John Piper, The Doctrines of Grace Historical Information (DesiringGod.org)*

CONCERNING THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE

BY CHARLES SPURGEON

There is no soul living who holds more firmly to the doctrines of grace than I do, and if any man asks me whether I am ashamed to be called a Calvinist, I answer—I wish to be called nothing but a Christian; but if you ask me, do I hold the doctrinal views which were held by John Calvin, I reply, I do in the main hold them, and rejoice to avow it. But far be it from me even to imagine that Zion contains none but Calvinistic Christians within her walls, or that there are none saved who do not hold our views. Most atrocious things have been spoken about the character and spiritual condition of John Wesley, the modern prince of Arminians. I can only say concerning him that, while I detest many of the doctrines which he preached, yet for the man himself I have a reverence second to no Wesleyan; and if there were wanted two apostles to be added to

the number of the twelve, I do not believe that there could be found two men more fit to be so added than George Whitefield and John Wesley. The character of John Wesley stands beyond all imputation for self-sacrifice, zeal, holiness, and communion with God; he lived far above the ordinary level of common Christians, and was one "of whom the world was not worthy." I believe there are multitudes of men who cannot see these truths, or, at least, cannot see them in the way in which we put them, who nevertheless have received Christ as their Saviour, and are as dear to the heart of the God of grace as the soundest Calvinist in or out of Heaven.

I do not think I differ from any of my Hyper-Calvinistic brethren in what I do believe, but I differ from them in what they do not believe. I do not hold any less than they do, but I hold a little more, and, I think, a little more of the truth revealed in the Scriptures. Not only are there a few cardinal doctrines, by which we can steer our ship North, South, East, or West, but as we study the Word, we shall begin to learn something about the North-west and North-east, and all else that lies between the four cardinal points. The system of truth revealed in the Scriptures is not simply one straight line, but two; and no man will ever get a right view of the gospel until he knows how to look at the two lines at once. For instance, I read in one Book of the Bible, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Yet I am taught, in another part of the same inspired Word, that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." I see, in one place, God in providence presiding over all, and yet I see, and I cannot help seeing, that man acts as he pleases, and that God has left his actions, in a great measure, to his own free-will. Now, if I were to declare that man was so free to act that there was no control of God over his actions, I should be driven very near to atheism; and if, on the other hand, I should declare that God so over-rules all things that man is not free enough to be responsible, I should be driven at once into Antinomianism or fatalism. That God predestines, and yet that man is responsible, are two facts that few can see clearly. They are believed to be inconsistent and contradictory to each other. If, then, I find taught in one part of the Bible that everything is fore-ordained, that is true; and if I find, in another Scripture, that man is responsible for all his actions, that is true; and it is only my folly that leads me to imagine that these two truths can ever contradict each other. I do not believe they can ever be welded into one upon any earthly anvil, but they certainly shall be one in eternity. They are two lines that are so nearly parallel, that the human mind which pursues them farthest will never discover that they converge, but they do converge, and they will meet somewhere in eternity, close to the throne of God, whence all truth doth spring. – *Charles Spurgeon, A Brief Defense of Calvinism*

- For more, read James Montgomery Boice, *The Doctrines of Grace*, chapters 1-2

Study 1

HOW BAD OFF ARE WE? TOTAL DEPRAVITY

Romans 3:9-18

RADICAL DEPRAVITY

BY JAMES MONTGOMERY BOICE

I once was rebellious, corrupted by sin,
Pursuing the Devil's dark path,
Oblivious, dead to the state I was in,
An object of God's dreadful wrath.

— James Montgomery Boice

WHEN ADAM FELL HE BROKE HIS NECK

BY CHARLES SPURGEON

We need to read our Bibles more—we must read our Bibles more! If we do, what shall we read there?

Well, we shall read of a great fall that took place in the Garden of Eden.

You know, they tell us, now, that when Adam fell, he broke his little finger—and it was fixed up—and he recovered. But that is not what the Bible says. He broke his neck and a great deal more than his neck! Oh, what a fall was there, my brothers and sisters! You and I and all of us fell down.

It was a fall which dislocated man altogether. Well, now, for a great fall, you must have a great salvation. Therefore do not be astonished when you read of a great salvation! It is involved in the meaning of the great disaster of the fall.

Then, the fall brought on great depravity. Although they make it out, now, that man, through the fall, has only suffered very slightly, just a little toothache, or something of that sort, yet the Scripture does not tell us so.

His whole head is sick and his whole heart faint, and from the sole of his feet to the crown of his head he is nothing but wounds, bruises and putrefying sores! "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

Now you must have a great salvation to meet this great depravity! There must be a great work of grace to turn this ship right-about, to lay a mighty hand upon the helm and reverse its course!

Next, beloved, if you read the Bible carefully, you will find that there is such a thing as great sin. Ah, you do not need to read your Bible for that! Reading your own heart, by the light of the Bible, and remembering that every evil thought as well as every evil word, yes, and every evil imagination is sin before God, you will see what a mass of sin one single human being is defiled with! You need a great salvation because of great sin!

Further, if you read your Bibles, you will find that there is a great hell. Everything in the Bible is according to scale. When men talk of a little hell, it is because they think they have only a little sin and believe in a little Savior—it is all little together! But when you get a great sense of sin, you need a great Savior, and feel that if you do not have Him, you will fall into a great destruction and suffer a great punishment at the hands of the great God! As you would escape a great hell, believe in a great salvation and never be staggered because it is great.

And then there is a great heaven. Oh, what a heaven! Have any of us any idea of what it will be like? We sit and meditate upon it. We sing about it and we sometimes half think that we are there—but we are not by a very long way. When we once get inside the gates, we shall say, with the Queen of Sheba, “The half was not told me.”—

*“Then shall I see, and hear, and know
All I desired or wished below!
And every power find sweet employ
In that eternal world of joy.”*

— Charles Spurgeon, in a sermon titled *Joy Hindering Faith* (#2279)

5. Now, having looked at the scope, look at the description of human depravity and write down each. What different levels or areas does Paul cover?

6. Concerning **verse 10**, what does Paul mean “None is righteous, no not one”? How do **Ecclesiastes 7:20** and **Romans 14:23** help clarify?

7. Concerning **verse 11**, what does Paul mean by “No one seeks for God”? How does the *ESV Study Bible* note help clarify? How does **Romans 8:6-8** help clarify?

8. What else stands out to you in this passage and why? How should this lead you to praise God all the more, Christian, for plucking you out of the depths of your own terrible situation? To ask it another way, where would you be today if Jesus had not redeemed you?

We have to now deal with the fact that a lot of people say, “This is just over the top.” I did as a young Christian. I looked at this and I see Paul saying no one seeks for God. It sure seems to me there’s an awful lot of people spiritually searching and seeking to please God. Then it says no one does good. “Wow, wait a minute. What do you mean, nobody does good?”

But if you look more carefully, you will see what Paul is giving us here is a definition of sin that goes deep. He’s showing us that sin is relational before it ever becomes, if it ever becomes, a behavioral thing like breaking the law. Why? Look at the word turn away. “All have turned away ...” Even look at the word seek. “... there is ... no one who seeks God.”

These are directional words. What it’s talking about is trajectory. It’s talking about direction. Your aim. Therefore, sin is not so much a matter of whether you’re doing bad things or good things. Sin is mainly a matter of what you’re doing your doing for. We’re being told sin makes you want to get away from God. Not go toward him; get away.

Sin makes you want to get out from under his gaze, get out from under his hands, get out from under his control. You want to be your own savior. You want to be your own lord. You want to keep God at arm’s length. You want to stay in control of your own life. That’s what sin makes you want to do. As we have often said, but we have to say it now again, there are two ways to be your own savior and lord.

There are two ways to keep God at arm’s length. One is to be a law to yourself. Live any way you want. The other is to be very, very, very good, and go to church and obey the Bible and do everything you possibly can and try to be like Jesus, so that God has to bless you, so God has to save you, in which case you’re trying to get control over God. In that case you’re not seeking God. You’re seeking things from God.

The text doesn’t say, “No one seeks blessing from God.” Of course they do. “No one seeks answers to prayer from God.” Of course they do. “No one seeks forgiveness from God.” Of course they do. “No one seeks spiritual ...” Of course they do. But no. Paul’s saying no one seeks God. All your so-called serving, and all your so-called doing good, is really for yourself. It’s away from God. It’s away from others. It’s toward self-centeredness. That’s the trajectory.

– Dr. Timothy Keller, in a sermon titled *No One Seeks God*

Study 2

DID GOD CHOOSE US OR DO WE CHOOSE HIM? UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

Romans 9:6-26

THREE GENERATIONS OF ELECTION

BY JAMES MONTGOMERY BOICE

In the verses that follow [the apostle Paul] demonstrates that the three fathers of [the nation of Israel]—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—became what they were by election, and that others were not given this privilege.

1. *Abraham.* Election is obvious in the case of Abraham, which is one reason why Paul does not discuss his case in detail, though he does mention him. Abraham had a pagan ancestry, having been born in the ancient city of Ur in Mesopotamia. He had no knowledge of the true God, because no one in Ur had knowledge of the true God. In fact, Abraham's family worshiped idols. Joshua said this explicitly in the sermon recorded in the twenty-fourth chapter of the book that bears his name: "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Long ago your forefathers, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the River and worshiped other gods'" (Josh. 24:2). Years later, even after God had called Abraham out of this pagan environment and had instructed his son and grandson about himself as the true God, idols were still possessed and cherished in this family, for Rachel, the wife of Jacob, hid them from her father (see Genesis 31). Since God's call of Abraham is recorded clearly in Genesis 12, every knowledgeable Jew would have to confess that Jewish history began with that election.

2. *Isaac.* "But that is beside the point," some might have answered. "God had to start somewhere." They would have argued that the important matter is not whether God had elected the nation of Israel to some specific destiny apart from other nations. That was conceded. Paul had already written of "the adoption as sons, . . . the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law" and other privileges that were granted only to Israel (Rom. 9:4-5). No one disputed the election of the nation. The real issue was whether all the descendants of Abraham (that is, all Jews) were saved by reason of their having come from him, or whether the principle of choice and rejection also applies after the initial choice of Abraham. In other words, does God continue to choose some but not all for salvation, both Jews and Gentiles, but not all from either category? Since this is the issue, Paul begins his actual argument in verse 7 with the case of Abraham's son Isaac. The point is that Abraham had another son, Ishmael, begotten of Hagar thirteen years before Isaac was born. Ishmael was Abraham's son, but Ishmael was not chosen. Ishmael was Abraham's physical descendant, but he was not a child of promise as Isaac was. There is something else in this example: the contrast between natural in the phrase "natural children" and promise in the phrase "children of the promise" (v. 8). The contrast shows that the difference between Isaac and Ishmael was not merely that God elected Isaac and passed over Ishmael,

though that was an obvious truth, but also that God's choice of Isaac involved a supernatural intervention in the case of his conception. Ishmael was born of Abraham's natural sexual powers. But Isaac was conceived when Abraham was past the normal age for engendering children and when Sarah was past the age of conceiving and giving birth. It is the same with our spiritual conception and new birth. Our spiritual conception, which is the outworking of God's electing choice, is likewise supernatural. We cannot engender spiritual life in ourselves, since according to Ephesians 2:1 we are spiritually dead in sins. We studied that in the last chapter. A dead person cannot do anything. In order for us to become spiritually alive God must do a miracle, which is exactly what he does. It is called the new birth, or regeneration.

3. *Jacob*. Yet there is still another objection. Paul's opponents could have argued that Ishmael was not a pure-blooded Jew. "It is true," they might have said, "that Ishmael was the son of Abraham. Yet he was not the son of Sarah. He was the son of Hagar, and Hagar was only an Egyptian and Sarah's servant. That is why Ishmael was not chosen." In order to answer this point, Paul proceeds to the third generation of election, to the case of Rebekah's twin children, the sons Jacob and Esau. The words "not only that" show that he is continuing the argument: "Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls—she was told, 'The older will serve the younger'" (vv. 10-12). This is a remarkably effective example, since it proves everything that Paul needed to make his point. First, Jacob and Esau were born of the same Jewish parents. That is, each was "a Hebrew of Hebrews," the phrase Paul used to describe his own pure-blooded Jewish ancestry in Philippians 3:5. So this was not a case of one having been chosen on the basis of a better ancestry and the other having been rejected because of a lesser one. The possible explanation of Paul's opponents for the choice of Isaac over Ishmael was invalidated by this case. Second, the choice of Jacob rather than Esau went against the normal standards of primogeniture, according to which the elder should have received the greater blessing. True, the boys were twins, but Esau actually emerged from Rebekah's womb first. In spite of that, however, Jacob was chosen. There is nothing to explain this except God's right to dispose of the destinies of human beings as he pleases. Third, the choice of Jacob was made before either child had opportunity to do either good or evil. The choice was made while the children were still in the womb. This means—we cannot miss it—that election cannot be on the basis of anything done by us. Moreover, Paul argues, the choice of Jacob rather than Esau was made specifically to teach election. This is what verses 11 and 12 say: "Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand . . ." (emphasis added). This means that God made his choice before the birth of Rebekah's sons to show that his election is apart from anything a human being might or might not do. It is a proof of what Paul says later, namely: "God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy" (v. 18).

– Boice, James Montgomery. *The Doctrines of Grace: Rediscovering the Evangelical Gospel* (pp. 95-98).

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

BY JAMES MONTGOMERY BOICE

Foreknown before the world began,
According to his gracious plan,
God destined I must be
Conformed to Jesus Christ, the man,
Who lived and loved as no man can:
A glorious decree.

– James Montgomery Boice

NOTES:

1. Read **verses 6-9**. What is Paul’s point in **verse 6** and how does he argue it? How does he argue it in **verse 7**? Concerning **verse 8-9**, what does it mean to be “the children of the promise”?

2. How does **Galatians 3:7-9** help clarify what Paul means in **Romans 9:6**?

3. Read **verses 10-13**. What is Paul's point here and how does he argue it? Why did God choose Jacob? How does **verse 11** especially help clarify what he's really getting at?

4. Read **verse 14**. Note the brilliance of Paul's argument in even assuming the very questions that are most typically asked after reading **verse 13**. *God the Holy Spirit is the ultimate author of this book!* What is Paul's point in **verses 14-15** and how does he argue it?

5. In **verses 16-18**, what do we learn about how anyone is saved from sin, death, and the wrath of God?

6. Read **verse 19**. Note, again how Paul asks the question that is most frequently asked after reading **verses 16-18**. What is his answer to the question in **verses 20-21**?

7. How does **Isaiah 55:8-9** help put us in our proper place? Are you smarter than the one who breathed you into existence? Are you wiser than the one who intricately fine-tuned this universe to inhabit life? Are you able to sit in judgement over God in why he does what he does? If you don't understand why exactly God would do something, does that mean there must not be a good reason?

8. Read **verses 22-23**. What is Paul saying God's ultimate purpose is in election?

9. According to **verses 24-26**, what are the blessing God gives His elect through the gospel? How should this give us great hope in evangelism, missions, and for our lives as Christians in the world?

FIVE REASONS TO EMBRACE UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION BY JOHN PIPER

I use the word *embrace* because unconditional election is not just true, but precious. Of course, it can't be precious if it's not true. So that's the biggest reason we embrace it. But let's start with a definition:

Unconditional election is God's free choice before creation, not based on foreseen faith, to which traitors he will grant faith and repentance, pardoning them and adopting them into his everlasting family of joy.

1. We embrace unconditional election because it is true.

All my objections to unconditional election collapsed when I could no longer explain away Romans 9. The chapter begins with Paul's readiness to be cursed and cut off from Christ for his unbelieving Jewish kinsmen (Romans 9:3). This implies that some Jews are perishing. And that raises the question of God's promise to the Jews. Had it failed? Paul answers, "It is not as though the word of God has failed" (Romans 9:6). Why not?

Because "not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel" (Romans 9:6). In other words, God's purpose was not to acquit every individual person in Israel. It was instead a purpose of election.

So to illustrate the point of God's unconditional election, Paul uses the analogy of Jacob and Esau: "Though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad — in order that God's *purpose of election* might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls — [Rebekah] was told, "The older will serve the younger" (Romans 9:11–12).

In other words, God's original purpose in choosing individuals for himself out of Israel — and all the nations! (Revelation 5:9) — was not based on any conditions that they would meet. It was an unconditional election. And thus he says, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion" (Romans 9:15; see Romans 9:16–18; 11:5–7).

Jesus confirms this teaching: “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out” (John 6:37). Coming to Jesus is not a condition we meet to qualify for election. It is the result of election. The Father has chosen his sheep. They are his. And he gives them to the Son. That is why they come. “No one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father” (John 6:65). “You did not choose me, but I chose you” (John 15:16; see John 17:2, 6, 9; Galatians 1:15).

In the book of Acts, why did some believe and not others? Luke’s answer is election: “As many as were appointed to eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48). This “appointment” — this election — was not *based on* foreseen faith; it was the *cause* of faith.

The Father has chosen his sheep. They are his. And he gives them to the Son. That is why they come.

In Ephesians 1, Paul says, “[God] chose us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world. . . . In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will” (Ephesians 1:4, 11). It is the “counsel of God’s will” that is eternally decisive in this affair.

What will *you* say to God at the judgment if he asks, “Why did you believe on my Son while others didn’t?” You will not say, “Because I was smarter.” No. Surely you will say, “Because of your grace. Had you not chosen me, I would have been left spiritually dead, unresponsive, guilty.”

2. We embrace unconditional election because God designed it to make us fearless in our proclamation of his grace in a hostile world.

“If God is for us, who can be against us? . . . Who shall bring any charge against *God’s elect*?” (Romans 8:31, 33).

3. We embrace unconditional election because God designed it to make us humble.

“God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise . . . so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. . . . ‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord’” (1 Corinthians 1:27, 29, 31).

4. We embrace unconditional election because God made it a powerful moral impetus for compassion, kindness, and forgiveness.

“Put on then, as God’s *chosen ones*, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness . . . forgiving each other” (Colossians 3:12–13). No one has seen or savored his election truly who is not moved by it to become kind and patient and forgiving.

5. We embrace unconditional election because it is a powerful incentive in our evangelism to help unbelievers, who are great sinners, not despair.

“What will you say to God at the judgment if he asks, ‘Why did you believe in my Son while others didn’t?’”

When you offer Christ freely to all unbelievers, suppose one says, “I have sinned too terribly. God could never choose to save me.” The most ultimate despair-destroying thing you can say is this: Do you realize that God chose before the foundation of the world whom he will save? And he did it based on absolutely nothing in you. Before you were born or had done anything good or bad, God chose whether to save you or not.

Therefore, you dare not get in God’s face and tell him what qualifications you lack in order to be chosen. There were no qualifications for being chosen. “What then should I do?” he asks. “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). That’s how you begin to “confirm your calling and election” (2 Peter 1:10). If you will embrace the Savior, you will confirm that you are elect, and you will be saved.

- John Piper, www.DesiringGod.org

Study 3

WHAT DID JESUS ACCOMPLISH ON THE CROSS? LIMITED ATONEMENT

Isaiah 53:7-12

PARTICULAR REDEMPTION BY JAMES MONTGOMERY BOICE

He bore my sin on Calvary's tree
And righteousness bestowed on me
That I might see his face.
God justified me, set me free,
And glorified I soon will be:
How marvelous this grace.

– James Montgomery Boice

THE NATURE OF JESUS' ATONEMENT BY JOHN MURRAY

The very nature of Christ's mission and accomplishment is involved in this question. Did Christ come to make the salvation of all men possible, to remove obstacles that stood in the way of salvation, and merely to make provision for salvation? Or did he come to save his people? Did he come to put all men in a salvable state? Or did he come to secure the salvation of all those who are ordained to eternal life? Did he come to make men redeemable? Or did he come effectually and infallibly to redeem? The doctrine of the atonement must be radically revised if, as atonement, it applies to those who finally perish as well as to those who are the heirs of eternal life. In that event we should have to dilute the grand categories in terms of which the Scripture defines the atonement and deprive them of their most precious import and glory. This we cannot do. The saving efficacy of expiation, propitiation, reconciliation, and redemption is too deeply embedded in these concepts, and we dare not eliminate this efficacy.

We do well to ponder the words of our Lord himself: "I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that of everything which he hath given to me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up in the last day" (John 6:38-39).

Security inheres in Christ's redemptive accomplishment. And this means that, in respect of the persons contemplated, design and accomplishment and final realization have all the same extent.

– John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1955), 63-64.

1. According to **verses 7-9**, which are prophesying what Jesus experience on the cross, what words are used to describe what he underwent to redeem transgressors? How does **1 Peter 2:23-24** help clarify?

2. Who exactly does Isaiah say Jesus experienced this *for* at the end of **verse 8**? What do you think he means?

3. According to **verse 10**, whose will was it to crush Jesus? What is Jesus' death said to effectually do? How does **Romans 3:21-26** help clarify?

4. According to **verse 11**, what does Isaiah seem to be saying will happen to the Christ after "his soul makes an offering for guilt"? How is **Acts 2:24** helpful commentary on this passage?

5. Concerning the end of **verse 11** and the whole of **verse 12**, what will Jesus' death and resurrection accomplish? How does **Hebrews 10:11-18** help clarify?

6. What is the connection between those Jesus died for and their standing before the LORD, especially concerning the end of **verse 11**? How does **John 10:14-18** help clarify?

JESUS ACTUALLY ATONED FOR SINNERS

BY JAMES MONTGOMERY BOICE

When we put these terms (redemption, propitiation, reconciliation, and atonement) together, looking at their precise meanings, we see that Jesus did not come merely to make salvation possible, but actually to save his people. He did not come to make redemption possible; he died to redeem his people. He did come to make propitiation possible; he turned aside God's wrath for each of his elect people forever. He did not come to make reconciliation between God and man possible; he actually reconciled to God those whom the Father had given him. He did not come merely to make atonement for sins possible, but actually to atone for sinners. . .

Christ's work on the Cross was not a hypothetical salvation for hypothetical believers, but a real and definite salvation for God's own chosen people. A redemption that does not redeem, a propitiation that does not propitiate, a reconciliation that does not reconcile, and an atonement that does not atone cannot help anybody. But a redemption that redeems, a propitiation that propitiates, a reconciliation that reconciles, and an atonement that atones reveal a most amazing grace on God's part and draw us to rest in him and in his completed work, rather than our own. – Boice, James Montgomery. *The Doctrines of Grace: Rediscovering the Evangelical Gospel* (p. 123). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

TWO DIFFERENT VIEWS OF THE CROSS BY J.I. PACKER

Christ's work of redemption was defined by the Arminians as the removing of an obstacle (the unsatisfied claims of justice) which stood in the way of God's offering pardon to sinners, as he desired to do, on condition that they believe. Redemption, according to Arminianism, secured for God a right to make this offer, but did not of itself ensure that anyone would ever accept it; for faith, being a work of man's own, is not a gift that comes to him from Calvary. Christ's death created an opportunity for the exercise of saving faith, but that is all it did. Calvinists, however, define redemption as Christ's substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners, through which God was reconciled to them, their liability to punishment was forever destroyed, and a title to eternal life was secured for them. In consequence of this, they now have in God's sight a right to the gift of faith, as the means of entry into the enjoyment of their inheritance. Calvary, in other words, not merely made possible the salvation of those for whom Christ died; it ensured that they would be brought to faith and their salvation made actual. The cross *saves*. Where the Arminian will only say; 'I could not have gained my salvation without Calvary', the Calvinist will say, 'Christ gained my salvation for me at Calvary.' The former makes the cross the *sine qua non* of salvation, the latter sees it as the actual procuring cause of salvation, and traces the source of every spiritual blessing, faith included, back to the great transaction between God and his Son carried through on Calvary's hill. Clearly, these two concepts of redemption are quite at variance.

– J.I. Packer, *Introductory Essay to John Owen's The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*

Study 4

HOW DOES ANYONE COME TO FAITH IN JESUS? IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

EFFICACIOUS GRACE BY JAMES MONTGOMERY BOICE

But God who is rich in compassion and love,
Not leaving my soul to the grave,
Has given me life; born again from above,
By God's sov' reign grace I've been saved.

— James Montgomery Boice

EFFECTUAL CALLING BY R.C. SPROUL

In historic Reformation thought, the notion is this: regeneration precedes faith. We also believe that regeneration is monergistic. Now that's a three-dollar word. It means essentially that the divine operation called rebirth or regeneration is the work of God alone. An erg is a unit of labor, a unit of work. The word energy comes from that idea. The prefix mono- means "one." So monergism means "one working." It means that the work of regeneration in the human heart is something that God does by His power alone—not by 50 percent His power and 50 percent man's power, or even 99 percent His power and 1 percent man's power. It is 100 percent the work of God. He, and He alone, has the power to change the disposition of the soul and the human heart to bring us to faith.

In addition, when He exercises this grace in the soul, He brings about the effect that He intends to bring about. When God created you, He brought you into existence. You didn't help Him. It was His sovereign work that brought you to life biologically. Likewise, it is His work, and His alone, that brings you into the state of rebirth and of renewed creation. Hence, we call this irresistible grace. It's grace that works. It's grace that brings about what God wants it to bring about. If, indeed, we are dead in sins and trespasses, if, indeed, our wills are held captive by the lusts of our flesh and we need to be liberated from our flesh in order to be saved, then in the final analysis, salvation must be something that God does in us and for us, not something that we in any way do for ourselves.

However, the idea of irresistibility conjures up the idea that one cannot possibly offer any resistance to the grace of God. However, the history of the human race is the history of relentless resistance to the sweetness of the grace of God. Irresistible grace does not mean that God's grace is incapable of being resisted. Indeed, we are capable of resisting God's grace, and we do resist it. The idea is that God's grace is so powerful that it has the capacity to overcome our natural resistance to it. It is not that the Holy Spirit drags people kicking and screaming

to Christ against their wills. The Holy Spirit changes the inclination and disposition of our wills, so that whereas we were previously unwilling to embrace Christ, now we are willing, and more than willing. Indeed, we aren't dragged to Christ, we run to Christ, and we embrace Him joyfully because the Spirit has changed our hearts. They are no longer hearts of stone that are impervious to the commands of God and to the invitations of the gospel. God melts the hardness of our hearts when He makes us new creatures. The Holy Spirit resurrects us from spiritual death, so that we come to Christ because we want to come to Christ. The reason we want to come to Christ is because God has already done a work of grace in our souls. Without that work, we would never have any desire to come to Christ. That's why we say that regeneration precedes faith.

I have a little bit of a problem using the term irresistible grace, not because I don't believe this classical doctrine, but because it is misleading to many people. Therefore, I prefer the term effectual grace, because the irresistible grace of God effects what God intends it to effect.

– R.C. Sproul, *TULIP and Reformed Theology: Irresistible Grace*. ligonier.org

NOTES:

1. What is Paul saying in **verse 18**? How does **verse 17** help clarify? Given **verse 18**, what seems to be the main theme of **verses 18-31**?

2. What passage does Paul quote to argue his point in **verse 19**? What is Paul getting at in **verses 20-21**?

3. Read **verses 22-23**. How do the ESV Study Bible notes for **1 Corinthians 1:22-25** help clarify what Paul is writing about?

4. According to **verses 24-25**, what is the reason people to whom the cross is a “stumbling block” and “folly” end up embracing Jesus as “the power of God and the wisdom of God”? How does **John 6:37** help clarify?

5. How do **verses 26-27** help clarify the meaning of “but to those who are called” that we read in **verse 24**? What is the verb that is ascribed to God that reveals why these Christians were “called”? How does **John 10:25-30** help clarify?

6. Why does it seem God “chose” these particular Corinthians to be “called” to salvation, according to **verses 28-29**?

7. According to **verse 30**, who is the ultimate one behind the “because” of why someone is “in Christ”?

8. What is the ultimate aim of God calling us effectually to Jesus, according to **verse 31**? How does **Ephesians 2:8-9** help clarify?

CHARLES SPURGEON'S TESTIMONY

I can recall the very day and hour when I first received those truths (of election and effectual calling) in my own soul—when they were, as John Bunyan says, burnt into my heart as with a hot iron, and I can recollect how I felt that I had grown on a sudden from a babe into a man—that I had made progress in Scriptural knowledge, through having found, once for all, the clue to the truth of God.

One week-night when I was sitting in the house of God, I was not thinking much about the preacher's sermon, for I did not believe it. The thought struck me, "How did you come to be a Christian?" I sought the Lord. "But how did you come to seek the Lord?" The truth flashed across my mind in a moment—I should not have sought him unless there had been some previous influence in my mind to *make me* seek him. I prayed, thought I, but then I asked myself, How came I to pray? I was induced to pray by reading the Scriptures. How came I to read the Scriptures? I did read them, but what led me to do so? Then, in a moment, I saw that God was at the bottom of it all, and that he was the Author of my faith, and so the whole doctrine of grace opened up to me, and from that doctrine I have not departed to this day, and I desire to make this my constant confession, "I ascribe my change wholly to God."

—Dallimore, Arnold A, in his *Charles Haddon Spurgeon Biography* titled simply *Spurgeon* (1984)

Study 5

CAN I LOSE MY SALVATION? PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

Romans 8:28-30

PERSEVERING GRACE BY JAMES MONTGOMERY BOICE

What can separate my soul
From the God who made me whole,
Wrote my name in heaven's scroll?
Nothing. Hallelujah!
Trouble, hardship, danger, sword
Brought by those who hate my Lord?
Slander here? Or no reward?
Nothing. Hallelujah!

- Boice, James Montgomery. *The Doctrines of Grace: Rediscovering the Evangelical Gospel* (p. 155). Crossway.

RUSTLING WITH THE RUMOR BY C. S. LEWIS

If we take the imagery of Scripture seriously, if we believe that God will one day give us the Morning Star and cause us to put on the splendor of the sun, then we may surmise that both the ancient myths and the modern poetry, so false as history, may be very near the truth as prophecy. At present we are on the outside of the world, the wrong side of the door. We discern the freshness and purity of the morning, but they do not make us fresh and pure. We cannot mingle with the splendors we see. But all the leaves of the New Testament are rustling with the rumor that it will not always be so. Some day, God willing, we shall get in. When human souls have become as perfect in voluntary obedience as the inanimate creation is in its lifeless obedience, then they will put on its glory, or rather that greater glory of which Nature is only the first sketch.

- C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (1949; repr. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1969), 13.

NOTES:

1. In **verse 28**, is Paul writing about all people in general when he says “all things will work together for good”? Explain your answer.

2. What does Paul mean by “called according to his purpose” at the end of **verse 28**?

3. Why do you think Paul says “And we know” before the rest of **verse 28**, almost as if he assumes this should be an evident truth to all Christians? How can **John 16:33** help clarify? How can **Genesis 50:20** help clarify?

4. In **verse 28**, Does Paul mean all things *are* good, even the seemingly bad that happens to us? What does Paul specifically say concerning “all things” in **verse 28** and what does he mean?

5. What is the first word in **verse 29** and what does that indicate?

6. What is Paul emphasizing here when he writes “Foreknew”? (look at the note in the ESV Study Bible) Read **Acts 26:5, Romans 11:12, 1 Peter 1:20, 2 Peter 3:17** to see how this Greek word *proginosko* is used elsewhere in the New Testament.

7. What is Paul emphasizing here when he writes “Predestined” (look at the note in the ESV Study Bible)? Read **Acts 4:28**, **1 Corinthians 2:7**, **Ephesians 1:5**, **Ephesians 1:11** to see how this Greek word *proorizo* is used elsewhere in the New Testament.

8. What does Paul write that God predestines his foreknown people *to* at the end of **verse 29**? How does **1 John 3:2** help clarify?

9. What does Paul mean by the word “called” in **verse 30**—who is the “he” that is doing the calling? According to this verse, why does God *call* someone? Read **Acts 2:39, Romans 4:17, Romans 9:11, 24, 1 Corinthians 1:9, Galatians 1:6, 15** to see how this Greek word *Kaleo* is used elsewhere in the New Testament.
**search the amount of times the word kaleo is used in the NT Epistles on blueletterBible.org to see more*

10. What does Paul mean by the word “justified” in **verse 30**? According to this verse, why does God *justify* someone? Read **Acts 2:39, Romans 4:17, Romans 9:11, 24, 1 Corinthians 1:9, Galatians 1:6, 15** to see how this Greek word *proorizo* is used elsewhere in the New Testament.
**search the amount of times the word kaleo is used in the NT Epistles on blueletterBible.org if you'd like to see more*

11. What does Paul mean by the word “glorified” in **verse 30**? According to this verse, why does God *glorify* someone? Read **Luke 7:29, Acts 13:39, Romans 3:20-26, Romans 4:5, 1 Corinthians 6:10, Galatians 2:16-17, Titus 3:7** to see how this Greek word *dikaioō* is used elsewhere in the New Testament.

12. How does Paul link all these together? Is there someone God predestined that may not be justified? Or someone that will be glorified that God did not previously call, etc? Why do you think Paul writes about Christians’ glorification in the past tense, even though it’s something that hadn’t happened to these Romans (as of yet) and hasn’t yet happened to anyone reading it today?

GOD KEEPS HIS PEOPLE SAFE BY J.I. PACKER

Let it first be said that in declaring the eternal security of God's people it is clearer to speak of their preservation than, as is commonly done, of their perseverance. Perseverance means persistence under discouragement and contrary pressure. The assertion that believers persevere in faith and obedience despite everything is true, but the reason is that Jesus Christ through the Spirit persists in preserving them.

Scripture emphasizes this. John tells us that Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, is under promise to his Father (John 6:37-40) and to his sheep directly (John 10:28-29) to keep them so that they never perish. In his high-priestly prayer before his passion Jesus asked that those whom the Father had given him (John 17:2, 6, 9, 24) would be preserved to glory, and it is inconceivable that his prayer, which still continues (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25), will go unanswered.

Paul sees the sovereign plan of God for the salvation of his elect as a unitary whole, of which the glorifying of the justified is part (Rom. 8:29-30). On this basis he builds the triumphant peroration of Romans 8:31-39, in which he celebrates the present and future security of the saints in the almighty love of God. Elsewhere he rejoices in the certainty that God will complete the "good work" that he began in the lives of those Paul addresses (Phil. 1:6; cf. 1 Cor. 1:8-9; 1 Thess. 5:23-24; 2 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 1:12; 4:18).

Reformed theology echoes this emphasis. The Westminster Confession declares, They, whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved. (XVII.1)

The doctrine declares that the regenerate are saved through persevering in faith and Christian living to the end (Heb. 3:6; 6:11; 10:35-39), and that it is God who keeps them persevering. That does not mean that all who ever professed conversion will be saved. False professions are made; short-term enthusiasts fall away (Matt. 13:20-22); many who say to Jesus, "Lord, Lord," will not be acknowledged (Matt. 7:21-23). Only those who show themselves to be regenerate by pursuing heart-holiness and true neighbor-love as they pass through this world are entitled to believe themselves secure in Christ.

Persevering in faith and penitence, not just in Christian formalism, is the path to glory. To suppose that believing in perseverance leads to careless living and arrogant presumption is a total misconception.

Sometimes the regenerate backslide and fall into gross sin. But in this they act out of character, do violence to their own new nature, and make themselves deeply miserable, so that eventually they seek and find restoration to righteousness. In retrospect, their lapse seems to them to have been madness.

When regenerate believers act in character, they manifest a humble, grateful desire to please the God who saved them; and the knowledge that he is pledged to keep them safe forever simply increases this desire.

—J.I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide To Historic Christian Belief*

CONVICTING:

ENCOURAGING:

STUDY GUIDE

The Doctrines of Grace

The depths of the Gospel



The word gospel means good news that brings joy. But how good is it? How much of it is based on God and His action and how much depends on us and our response? These are important questions, and they have to do with the depths of the gospel. I think The Doctrines of Grace are like looking as far down into the beautiful ocean of the gospel as possible, at least this side of heaven. What we see in these doctrinal deeps should make us wonder and praise God for the grace given to us.

These doctrines are succinct answers to questions like how bad off are we? did God choose us or do we choose him? how does anyone come to faith in Jesus? what did Jesus accomplish on the cross? and can I lose my salvation? These are serious questions every Christian will most likely ask or be asked. Why not survey the Scriptures and see if God has answered them clearly? That's exactly what the Doctrines of Grace seek to do.

I think if we humble ourselves as we look to the Scriptures, these doctrines will lower us to our knees yet lift our souls into the joy of heaven itself.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B.A. Barnett'.