

## A Just and Loving God: How TULIP Magnifies His Justice and Mercy

### Introduction:

I once sat across from a young man who looked at me with a mix of anger and pain in his eyes. “I just can’t believe in a God who predestines some people to hell,” he said. “That kind of God sounds like a moral monster.” Maybe you’ve heard words like that, or even felt that fear in your own heart. Is the God of the Bible unfair, unloving—a *tyrant*? It’s a heavy question, and it often arises when we talk about doctrines like predestination or God’s sovereignty in salvation. At first glance, teachings such as God choosing some and not others, or Christ dying only for the elect, can sound troubling. We wonder: **Is God truly just and loving?** Or are we worshiping a capricious being who plays favorites?

I invite you to walk with me through those very doctrines that raise these questions. In the Reformed tradition, we often summarize these teachings with the acronym **TULIP**:

- **T**otal Depravity,
- **U**nconditional Election,
- **L**imited Atonement,
- **I**rresistible Grace, and
- **P**erseverance of the Saints.

Each of these five points reveals something profound about God’s character. Far from painting God as a cruel despot, these truths *magnify* both **God’s justice and His mercy**. They show us a God who is **absolutely just and overflowing with love**. In fact, I believe you’ll see that God is not a “moral monster” at all, but a God whose holiness and grace are far greater than we imagined. As C.S. Lewis illustrated with the lion Aslan in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, God is not a tame, predictable housecat that we can fully grasp or control. He might even seem fearsome in His greatness—“not safe,” as Lewis wrote—but He *is good*. And when we understand these doctrines rightly, we’ll see His goodness shine in full force.

So let’s journey through the petals of *TULIP*, the “flower” of grace. With each step, I pray we’ll be drawn into worship of our just and loving God.

### Total Depravity – Our Great Need Highlights God’s Justice and Mercy

We begin with **Total Depravity**, the first petal of this TULIP. *Total depravity* doesn’t mean people are as bad as they could possibly be, as if everyone is a monster all the time. Rather, it means that the Fall has affected **every part** of our human nature. In our natural state, we are spiritually dead and **unable to save ourselves**. As the Apostle Paul writes, “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God” (Romans 3:10-11). And in Ephesians 2:1 he says we were “dead in our trespasses and sins.” Think about that word *dead*. A corpse can’t revive itself. A dead heart can’t suddenly start beating on its own. This is a stark diagnosis of the human condition.

To make it more relatable, consider a simple illustration: Imagine a man drowning far out at sea. The waves are pounding, and he has no strength to swim to shore. In fact, by the time the Coast Guard helicopter arrives, he's already unconscious and sinking. He doesn't need a cheerleader on the shore yelling "You can do it!"—he needs a **rescue**. Total depravity says that **we** are that drowning person in spiritual terms. We're not politely treading water, waiting for a life raft; we're **spiritually lifeless** at the bottom of the ocean, in desperate need of a Savior to dive in and pull us up. It's a humbling truth: left to ourselves, we would never choose God. Our hearts are bent away from Him. We *need* new hearts, new life breathed into us.

Now, how does this magnify God's justice and mercy? First, **God's justice** is highlighted because our depravity means that if God were only *just* and nothing else, He would be completely right to **condemn us all**. We have all sinned and fallen short of His glory (Romans 3:23). Every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart is evil from youth (Genesis 8:21). If a human judge had a room full of convicted criminals, we wouldn't call him unjust for handing down sentences; we'd say justice is being served. In the same way, a holy God is just in punishing sin. Total depravity reminds us that *no one* deserves salvation. Hard pill to swallow? Yes. But it puts us all on equal footing before the Judge of the universe. Not one of us can say to God, "Give me what I earned." What we earned by our sin is judgment. God would be no monster to leave us in that state; He'd be righteous and fair.

But praise God, He is not only just—He is also **rich in mercy**. This is where the beauty starts to shine. Total depravity sets the stage for **extravagant mercy**. The darker the night sky, the more brilliantly the stars shine. Likewise, the more we grasp how lost we are, the more we marvel at God's mercy to save *any* of us. When we were dead in sin, God made us alive with Christ (Ephesians 2:4-5). That's mercy! Think of Jesus standing before the tomb of Lazarus. Lazarus had been dead four days—no pulse, no breath, wrapped in graveclothes. Jesus didn't say, "Lazarus, try your best to come out." A dead man can't try. Jesus **called** him to life: "Lazarus, come forth!" And the power of God's word **raised the dead**. In the same way, God, in His mercy, calls spiritually dead people like us to new life. Total depravity magnifies mercy by making it clear that salvation *from start to finish* must be a work of God's grace. If anyone is rescued from drowning, it will only be because God dove in to save them.

Far from being a dismal doctrine, Total Depravity humbles us and prepares us to see just how **amazing grace** really is. It levels us—all of us—so that no one can say, "I'm better than my neighbor; I'm saved because I'm smarter or more righteous." No, we were **all** hopeless, and God would have been just to leave us so. But *hallelujah*, He didn't. Understanding our great need makes us run to the great Savior. It makes us **grateful**. It makes us marvel, "Why me, Lord? Why would You have mercy on *me*?"

That question leads naturally to the next doctrine, one that often raises the hardest questions of fairness in our minds: **Unconditional Election**.

## Unconditional Election – Grace Before Time Displays God's Love and Righteousness

If we are all equally lost in sin, then how is it that anyone is saved at all? This brings us to **Unconditional Election**, the second petal of the TULIP. *Unconditional election* means that from eternity past, **God chose to save some people** out of the mass of fallen humanity—**not** based on any foreseen goodness or merit in them, but solely out of His sovereign grace and love. As Ephesians 1:4-5 says, “He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will.” Notice those key words: *in love* He predestined us, and it was *His will*, not ours, that ultimately determined this.

Now, to our human ears, this doctrine can sound troubling. “God chooses *some* and not others? How is that fair?” we ask. We live in a society that highly values personal choice and equality of opportunity. So, it might seem that if God doesn’t give everyone an equal chance, He’s being unfair. I want to gently challenge that notion by looking at election through the lens of **justice and mercy**.

First, let’s remember what we just established: **no one deserves salvation**. If God were only just and nothing else, **none** of us would be saved. Election does not mean God is *obligated* to save the elect and pass over others. It means God, *who is not obligated to save anyone*, mercifully decided to save **many**. He is like a king in a prison full of rebels—He could rightly leave every traitor in chains, but instead He walks in and sets a multitude free. Is that unfair? Not at all. The ones left get justice (their deserved punishment), and the ones freed get mercy (undeserved grace). **No one** gets injustice.

Think of two criminals guilty of the same crime. The judge has the right to pardon one and not the other. The one who is not pardoned can’t complain, “Hey, that’s not fair!” because he is receiving the due penalty for his crime. The one who *is* pardoned can’t boast or claim he earned it—he can only be thankful. The difference between them is not in their own worthiness, but solely in the sovereign grace of the judge. In a similar way, God’s election is **unconditional**—not based on anything He saw in us. Romans 9:15 puts it plainly: God says, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” And a few verses later Paul anticipates our concern about fairness and responds, “What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God’s part? **By no means!**” (Romans 9:14). In other words, God’s ways may transcend our full understanding, but they are never unrighteous.

Unconditional election **magnifies God’s mercy** because it shows that **salvation is 100% a gift of grace**. If God had not lovingly chosen to save, none would be saved. Jesus told His disciples, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you” (John 15:16). This truth should not make us feel arrogant (“We’re chosen, we must be special!”). On the contrary, it should **humble us to the dust**. God didn’t choose me because I was wiser or better—He chose me despite my unworthiness. It’s like an orphan with no

redeeming qualities being adopted by a loving father *simply because* that father decided to set his love on the child. The child had nothing to offer; it was sheer grace. **That** is our story if we are Christians. We are the orphan. God is the loving Father who says, “I want **that one**. I know they have nothing to offer, but I will set my love on them and make them My own.” This isn’t a cold, arbitrary selection; Scripture says it’s fueled by **love**. “In love He predestined us,” remember.

Now, how does election highlight **God’s justice**? It does so by ensuring that grace does not bypass justice but rather **upholds** it through what comes next. God’s choice to save sinners doesn’t ignore the fact that sin’s penalty must be paid. A holy God cannot simply shrug off sin; His justice must be satisfied. So the question becomes: *How can the Judge of all the earth choose to show mercy to sinners without compromising His justice?* How can He adopt traitors into His family and still be a righteous Judge?

That brings us to the third point of TULIP, one that answers this dilemma: **Limited Atonement**, or as many prefer to call it, **Particular Redemption**. This is where we see God’s justice and mercy meet in a powerful, concrete act of love.

### **Limited Atonement – The Cross Secures Salvation for God’s People**

“Limited Atonement” is a phrase that often needs a bit of reframing because at first blush it sounds like we’re limiting Jesus’ work or His love. A better term some use is **“Particular Redemption.”** The idea is this: **Christ’s death on the cross was not an undefined blanket payment for sins with no specific beneficiaries.** Rather, it was a deliberate, effective, *specific* atonement intended to save **the particular people whom the Father had given to the Son.** In John 10:14-15, Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd. I know My own and My own know Me... and I lay down My life for **the sheep.**” Jesus does not say He lays down His life for the goats or for those who ultimately reject Him; He lays it down for His sheep—those the Father has chosen. Similarly, Ephesians 5:25 declares, “Christ loved **the church** and gave Himself up for her.” There’s a focused intent in the atonement: Jesus died to actually secure the salvation of His bride, His flock, His people. Every sin of every person who would ever believe in Him was punished fully at the cross, and *only* those sins.

Now, let’s unpack how this magnifies justice and mercy. At the cross, **God’s justice** is displayed more brilliantly than anywhere else in history. Here’s why: if you are in Christ, *every ounce* of the wrath, the judgment, the hell that your sins deserved was poured out on Jesus in your place. God did not simply forgive us by waving a wand and setting aside His righteous law. No—He satisfied justice **to the full**. The debt we owed to God’s law was **paid, in full, by Jesus’ blood.** Do you see how this protects God from any accusation of being a “moral monster”? God did not compromise His justice even as He showed us mercy. *Someone* paid – and that someone was God Himself in the person of His Son. Romans 3:26 says that at the cross God proved to be **“just and the justifier”** of those who have faith in Jesus. He remained just (because sin was

punished), and He became the justifier (the one who declares us righteous) because Jesus took our place. Mercy and justice kissed at Calvary.

Now, *Limited* atonement means that this atoning work was effective and particular. Jesus actually accomplished redemption for those He died for. When He said “It is finished,” He meant it. He didn’t make salvation merely *possible*; He obtained eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:12). Think of it this way: if Jesus died for the sins of every single person in the same way, then why isn’t every person saved? We know not all are saved—Jesus spoke of hell as a real outcome for many. The difference is **faith**—only those who trust in Christ are saved. But what makes them come to faith? (We’ll get to that in the next point.) The point here is, Jesus’ death perfectly secured the salvation of God’s elect. There will not be one soul in heaven for whom Jesus didn’t atone, and not one soul in hell whose sins were paid for by Jesus. God is not unjust; He will not punish sin twice. Either Christ paid for your sin on the cross (and you will be saved), or you will pay for it yourself in judgment.

This doctrine actually **highlights God’s love** in a beautiful way. Far from saying “Jesus doesn’t love everyone,” it shows that **Jesus loves His own with a special, redeeming love**. Think of a husband’s love for his wife. In one sense, a kind man might care about the well-being of all people generally, but his **sacrificial, covenant love** is set on his bride in a unique way. He will do *anything* for *her* specifically, even lay down his life. In the same way, Christ loved *His bride, the Church*, to the point of dying for *her*. This is personal. *Your* name, Christian, was written on His heart as He hung on that cross. He wasn’t dying for a faceless mass; He was dying for you, and for all whom the Father had given Him. **That** is immensely comforting and assuring. Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). And He did exactly that, calling us His friends.

One story to illustrate the power of a particular, effective rescue: There was a famous incident of a miner trapped deep in a collapsed mine. A rescuer was lowered down on a cable through a narrow shaft, risking his life to reach that one man. After grueling hours, he carried the miner out to safety. It was a rescue mission for a specific person, and it *succeeded*. Christ’s atonement is like that: a mission targeted to save particular individuals, and it does not fail. If Jesus has gone after you, if He intended to save *you*, He will not come back empty-handed. This gives us **confidence** in the power of the cross. When we share the gospel, we’re not offering a **maybe** or a **hope-so** salvation; we’re announcing a powerful, *completed* work. Jesus **will** have His sheep.

Still, someone might think: *Okay, if Jesus secured salvation for His people, how do those people actually receive it?* After all, we start out dead in sin (Total Depravity, remember?). How do spiritually dead, lost, unwilling people ever come to believe and embrace this salvation? To answer that, we look at the fourth petal of our TULIP, **Irresistible Grace**—the glorious way God draws His chosen ones to Christ.

**Irresistible Grace – God’s Effective Call Awakens the Heart**

The term “**Irresistible Grace**” can be a bit misleading if misunderstood. It doesn’t mean God drags people into the kingdom kicking and screaming against their will, as if we’re robots. Rather, it means that **God’s gracious call is so powerful and loving that it overcomes our resistance** and makes us willing. When God moves to save a person, His grace **cannot ultimately be thwarted**. As Psalm 115:3 says, “Our God is in the heavens; He does all that He pleases,” and thank God, what He pleases is to bring lost sinners home! Jesus said, “All that the Father gives Me **will come** to Me” (John 6:37). That’s the certainty of Irresistible Grace—if the Father has given you to the Son (that’s election), then at some point in your life, **you will come** to Jesus. And you will come freely, joyfully, because God will have transformed your heart.

Maybe the phrase “irresistible” makes more sense if we think in terms of **a new birth**. In John 3, Jesus said we must be “born again” to see the kingdom of God. How many of you caused your own physical birth? (Spoiler: none of us did!) Birth is something that happens to you. Likewise, the new birth is a sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. He “blows where He wishes,” Jesus said (John 3:8). God’s grace comes to us, and where there was a heart of stone, He creates a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26). Where there was resistance and hatred of God, suddenly the beauty of Christ is unveiled and we *want* Him. It’s as dramatic as God saying, “Let there be light” at creation. 2 Corinthians 4:6 compares conversion to exactly that: “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God’s glory in the face of Jesus Christ.” When God shines that light in the heart, the darkness cannot resist—it flees. The result? We see Jesus as glorious and we run to Him in faith.

I think of the story of **C.S. Lewis**, the author I mentioned earlier. Lewis was for years a determined atheist. He described himself as “the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England” on the night he finally surrendered to God. He said he felt “the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet.” In the end, Lewis “gave in” and admitted God was God. He later reflected on his conversion with awe, noting how God’s mercy had overcome him. “*His compulsion is our liberation*,” Lewis wrote. In other words, when God’s grace finally conquered Lewis’s rebellion, it didn’t feel like violence or violation—it felt like **freedom**. The grace that Lewis once resisted became irresistible in the sense that it overcame his defenses and set him free to truly **want** God. The hardness of God, he said, was kinder than the softness of men. God’s tough pursuit was actually love in action.

Isn’t that true of all of us who have come to Christ? Perhaps you remember a time you resisted God—maybe you grew up hearing the gospel but wanted to live life on your own terms. Or you loved your sin too much to let go. But God kept coming after you. Maybe it was a restless feeling in your soul, a circumstance that humbled you, a Scripture that pierced your heart, a friend’s persistent prayers. And one day, something changed. The message of Jesus that once seemed boring or foolish suddenly became *personal and urgent*. You saw your need, and you saw His open arms. **That** was Irresistible Grace at work: the Holy Spirit opening your eyes, drawing you to the Savior. Jesus likens it to a shepherd who goes out to find a lost sheep. The sheep isn’t looking

for the shepherd; the shepherd is doing the rescuing. But when he finds that sheep, he lifts it onto his shoulders rejoicing (Luke 15:5). The sheep, once found, doesn't fight the shepherd's arms—it relaxes, finally safe. Likewise, God's grace wins us over so that we gladly rest on His shoulders.

This doctrine magnifies **God's mercy** so wonderfully. It tells us that **no one is beyond the reach of God's grace**. The most hardened sinner, the most wayward prodigal can be drawn in by the Father at the proper time. This gives us hope in our evangelism and in our prayers for loved ones. We don't have to try to manipulate people into the kingdom; we testify to the truth and pray, knowing that God can **open the heart** (as He did for Lydia in Acts 16:14). Salvation ultimately doesn't depend on the weak persuasion of man but on the mighty calling of God. And when that call comes, it is effectual. It accomplishes what God intends.

Irresistible Grace also upholds God's **justice** in a subtle but important way. God is not forcing people to do something they hate; He's transforming their will so that they freely choose what is good. In our depravity, we *freely* chose sin every time. When grace comes, God sets us free from that bondage so we can freely choose **Him**. There is nothing unjust about God giving someone a new heart; it's *sheer gift*. And in giving that gift, He isn't violating our will—He's healing it. We often hear, "God is a gentleman, He won't violate your free will." But our will wasn't truly free under sin; it was a slave to sin. God in His grace **liberates** our will. The result is we come to Christ gladly. As the old hymn says, "Thine eye diffused a quickening ray; I woke, the dungeon flamed with light, my chains fell off, my heart was free; I rose, went forth, and followed Thee." *That* is irresistible grace in poetry.

Now, we might wonder: once God has done all this—He's chosen us, Christ has died for us, His Spirit has drawn us—*can we still mess it up?* Could we still fall away and be lost? In other words, will this salvation **last**? For the answer, we turn to the final petal of the TULIP, **Perseverance of the Saints**.

### **Perseverance of the Saints – God Finishes What He Starts**

The doctrine of **Perseverance of the Saints** declares that those who are truly saved by God's grace will be **kept by God's power** and will endure in faith to the end. In short, **God finishes what He starts**. If you have been born again, if you are truly one of Christ's sheep, *you will never be lost*. Jesus Himself gives us this comfort: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and **they will never perish**, and no one will snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:27-28). Note the promise – *never perish*. Romans 8:30 famously says, "Those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, and those whom He justified He also glorified." It's like an unbreakable chain from eternity past to eternity future. If God has justified you (declared you righteous in Christ), your glorification (future perfection in heaven) is so certain that Paul speaks of it in past tense – "glorified" – as if it's already done!

Now, perseverance doesn't mean Christians won't face struggles, doubts, or even seasons of wandering. We certainly do. We still battle sin and temptation. But it means God will **preserve us** through those struggles. Another term often used is "**Preservation of the Saints**," emphasizing that it's ultimately God who keeps us. 1 Peter 1:5 says we are people "who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." God's power guards us! Jude 24 praises God because He "is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of His glory with great joy." Our security rests not in our grip on God, but in **His grip on us**.

I find great comfort in an illustration: imagine a father and his little child walking along a dangerous path, perhaps by a cliff's edge or across a busy street. The safety of the child doesn't depend on the child's ability to hold on tight, but on the **father's strong grasp**. The dad holds the child's hand firmly. Yes, the child should hold on too, but even if he momentarily lets go or stumbles, the father's hand doesn't let go. In the same way, when you became a Christian, God took hold of you. There are times we may feel our faith weakening, our fingers slipping. But underneath are the everlasting arms. Jesus intercedes for us continually (Hebrews 7:25), just as He prayed for Peter that his faith would not fail (Luke 22:32). Because of that, if you truly belong to Christ, you **will persevere**. You might fall into sin for a time, but like the prodigal son you'll eventually come to your senses and return, because the Holy Spirit will not let you remain comfortable in rebellion. God may discipline you, even severely, but that is a sign of His fatherly love, not His abandonment (Hebrews 12:6). He disciplines the ones He loves to bring them back to holiness.

This perseverance shows **God's mercy** in that He doesn't just save us and then leave us to fend for ourselves. He **shepherds** us all the way home. Think of Jesus' parable of the lost sheep again: He puts the sheep on His shoulders *and carries it home*. Or consider Philippians 1:6, which says, "He who began a good work in you **will carry it on to completion** at the day of Jesus Christ." Our faithful God finishes what He starts. How loving is that? It's like a parent who not only teaches a child to walk but stays right by their side until they reach their destination. God's commitment to us is total. He didn't choose you, redeem you, and call you only to later say, "Well, good luck keeping yourself saved." No, Jesus is "**the author and finisher of our faith**" (Hebrews 12:2). From first to last, salvation is of the Lord.

At the same time, the Perseverance of the Saints also upholds **God's justice** and holiness, because true perseverance includes our growth in righteousness. Some people hear "once saved, always saved" and think it means a person can pray a prayer, then live like the devil and still claim heaven. But that's a distortion. The saints *persevere*—they continue in the faith, however imperfectly. If someone completely abandons Christ and never returns, it shows they were never truly born again (1 John 2:19). God's grace, when it saves a person, also changes that person. Over time, true believers bear the fruit of righteousness. Not perfectly, but genuinely. In fact, one of the means God uses to keep us persevering is the **warnings** in Scripture. When we read a



warning like “Take care, brothers, lest there be in you an evil, unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12), a true believer responds with sober-mindedness, humbling themselves, asking God for strength to remain faithful. The warnings stir us to watchfulness, and by heeding them we actually *do* persevere. It’s like a sign on the cliff path that says “Stay back from the edge!” The sign itself is one of the tools that ensures the hikers don’t fall. God’s promises and God’s warnings together keep us walking the path home, and His Spirit works in us to will and to act according to His good purpose (Philippians 2:13).

So, in perseverance we see a God who is **faithful, patient, and powerful**—not only able to save us from sin’s penalty, but to break sin’s power progressively and ultimately to remove sin’s presence entirely in glory. We see a God who *will not lose one* of all whom He has saved. His justice will see to it that the sacrifice of Christ is not in vain for any of His elect. His mercy will see to it that even our stumbling and failures won’t derail His saving plan. *“Nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 8:39). **Nothing.** Not even our own weaknesses. What a merciful promise!

### **Conclusion – Worshiping the God of Justice and Mercy:**

We’ve walked through the five points of TULIP: **Total Depravity** (our desperate need), **Unconditional Election** (the Father’s sovereign, loving choice), **Limited Atonement** (the Son’s effective, redeeming work), **Irresistible Grace** (the Spirit’s powerful call), and **Perseverance of the Saints** (God’s unfailing keeping of His people). Taken together, what do they show us about God? They show us a God who is **utterly just** and **utterly merciful** —a God who, in the gospel, proved that *“steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other”* (Psalm 85:10).

God’s justice is not compromised one bit by these doctrines. In fact, His justice is **illuminated**. He does not wink at sin; He deals with it—either at the cross for His elect or in righteous judgment for the unrepentant. There will be **no sin** in all of history that isn’t paid for, either by the sinner or by the Savior. God **will** get justice. He *will* see to it that every wrong is righted, every evil punished. That should sober us and eliminate any notion that God is morally lax or unjust. The *only* reason you or I stand a chance is because in God’s unbelievable mercy, He chose to pour out the punishment for our sins on Jesus. Justice was served on Him so that mercy could be served on us. As Jonathan Edwards noted, God’s mercy is seen as *truly glorious* only when we realize it is **just mercy**—mercy that satisfied justice. The cross is where we see this most clearly.

And oh, how these truths magnify **God’s mercy and love**! Do you see now that God is no “moral monster”? He is *so loving* that He set His affection on unworthy people like us. He is *so merciful* that He sent His only Son to die a gruesome death to save us. He is *so compassionate* that He sent His Spirit to find us in our wandering and bring us home. He is *so faithful* that He promises never to let us go. This is a God who **deserves our worship** and trust. When you really grasp that you were as good as dead, and God came in and gave you life, you can’t help but say, “Amazing grace, how

sweet the sound, that saved a **wretch** like me!” We don’t shy away from that word *wretch*—it’s what makes the grace amazing, and it makes the God of grace all the more beautiful.

Understanding TULIP should not make anyone arrogant or complacent. If anything, it levels us into the dust and then lifts us to the sky in joyful praise. **Humility** is the only proper response: *Why me, Lord?* There is no room for boasting, only gratitude. And understanding these doctrines should also ignite a fire for **evangelism** and **mission**, not dampen it. Some people wrongly think, “If God has chosen who will be saved, why evangelize?” But friends, the opposite is true! Because God has His elect people out there, we have confidence that our evangelism is **not in vain**. He has promised that a great multitude from every nation will be saved (Revelation 7:9). And guess what means God uses to call them? The preaching of the gospel through people like you and me. When Paul was in Corinth facing opposition, the Lord told him, “Do not be afraid... for I have many in this city who are My people” (Acts 18:9-10). God knew there were many elect in Corinth who had not yet come to faith, and that promise encouraged Paul to keep preaching **so that they would hear and believe**. The doctrine of election guarantees that the mission will be successful. It’s the assurance that **someone** will respond when we share Christ, because God is at work. We get to be the messengers of a grace that cannot fail to save those God is calling.

Moreover, when we evangelize, we don’t come with arrogance (“Hey, I’m chosen, you might not be”). Not at all! We come as one beggar telling another where to find bread. We can plead with anyone and everyone to repent and believe in Jesus, knowing that *anyone* who does so **will be saved**. The gospel invitation is absolutely sincere: “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:13). The wonder of it is that the ones who call do so because God was already drawing them. As Charles Spurgeon (a staunch believer in these doctrines) once urged with evangelistic zeal: **“If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to Hell over our bodies. And if they perish, let them perish with our arms wrapped about their knees, imploring them to stay... Let not one go unwarned or unprayed for.”** In other words, knowing the terror of judgment and the greatness of mercy, we should be all the more passionate to reach out to the lost. God’s sovereignty in salvation doesn’t stop evangelism; it **empowers** it. It emboldens us to pray and to preach, because we know God can save anyone – He saved *us*, after all!

Brothers and sisters, the truths of TULIP form a picture of a God who is worthy of all our praise. Here is a King whose sovereign will is matched by His sovereign goodness. Here is a Judge whose gavel of justice fell on His own Son so that we, the guilty, could go free. Here is a Father who chooses the unwanted and says, “You are mine,” a Savior who lays down His life for His friends, a Spirit who hunts down the lost sheep until He finds them and carries them home. This is not a monster or a tyrant. This is **amazing love**, beyond degree.

So how should we respond? **With worship** – deep, soul-surrendering worship. Let your heart be warmed by the love of God that planned your salvation from beginning to end. **With humility** – knowing that we contribute nothing but our need, and God gives everything by grace. And **with urgency** – to share this good news far and wide, to live holy lives that reflect our gratitude, and to invite others into the joy of knowing this just and loving God.

Perhaps this morning you feel a stirring in your heart – maybe you’ve held God at arm’s length, thinking Him harsh or unfair. See now His hands and feet, pierced for sinners. See His holiness that will by no means clear the guilty, and His mercy that provided a Substitute for the guilty. He is calling you even now: “Come to Me.” If you sense that pull, do not harden your heart. That is His irresistible grace knocking on the door. Humble yourself and trust in Christ. He promises that whoever comes to Him, He will *never* cast out.

And for those who have already believed: rejoice! Rejoice that your salvation is secure in hands far stronger than yours. Rejoice that God’s justice and mercy have met in your life. Let these truths move you to deeper awe. Like the elders in Revelation who cast their crowns before His throne, we say: “**Worthy are You, our Lord and God...**” Worthy in Your justice, worthy in Your mercy, worthy in Your sovereign grace.

Let us then bow our hearts before this God of grace. **Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Your name give glory** (Psalm 115:1) – for from Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.