

## **Depths of Theology**

*The study of theology is not merely an academic exercise but a profound journey into the heart of God's revelation.*

### **God's Redemptive Plan**

#### **Galatians 3:28-29 (HCSB)**

"There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female; since you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise."

The Apostle Paul, writing to the Galatians, emphasizes that all who are in Christ are united as one body, heirs of the promise made to Abraham. This promise is not confined to a particular ethnic group but extends to all who have faith in Christ. From Genesis to Revelation, Scripture reveals a single, unified plan of redemption centered in Christ. The promise to Abraham finds its fulfillment in the inclusion of the Gentiles, making the Church the true Israel of God.

#### **Romans 11:17-24 (HCSB)**

"Now if some of the branches were broken off, and you, though a wild olive branch, were grafted in among them and have come to share in the rich root of the cultivated olive tree, do not brag that you are better than those branches. But if you do brag—you do not sustain the root, but the root sustains you."

In this passage, Paul uses the metaphor of an olive tree to illustrate the relationship between Israel and the Gentiles. The Gentiles, represented as wild olive branches, are grafted into the cultivated olive tree, which symbolizes the people of God. This grafting process signifies the inclusion of the Gentiles into the covenantal blessings originally given to Israel. There is no separate plan for Israel and the Church; rather, there is one people of God, sustained by the same root of God's covenantal promises.

## **The Sovereignty of God in Salvation**

### **Romans 9:15-16 (HCSB)**

"For He tells Moses: I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it does not depend on human will or effort but on God who shows mercy."

The sovereignty of God is a cornerstone of theology, affirming that God is supreme in all things, including salvation. In Romans 9, Paul asserts God's absolute freedom to show mercy and compassion as He wills. This doctrine, often referred to as divine election, teaches that God chooses individuals for salvation not based on their merits or actions but according to His sovereign grace.

The implications of this doctrine are profound. It humbles the sinner, eliminating any grounds for boasting in one's salvation. It exalts the grace of God, emphasizing that salvation is entirely a gift, not a result of human effort or decision. This understanding of God's sovereignty provides assurance and comfort to believers, knowing that their salvation rests securely in God's unchanging purposes.

### **Ephesians 1:4-6 (HCSB)**

"For He chose us in Him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted through Jesus Christ for Himself, according to His favor and will, to the praise of His glorious grace that He favored us with in the Beloved."

Paul's letter to the Ephesians expands on the theme of divine election, declaring that God's choice of His people occurred before the foundation of the world. This predestination is rooted in God's love and is intended to result in holiness and adoption as His children. The ultimate purpose of election is the praise of God's glorious grace. The believer's response to this doctrine should be one of awe and gratitude, recognizing that their salvation is part of a grand, eternal plan designed to display God's glory.

How does the sovereignty of God in salvation affect our approach to evangelism and missions?

## **The Authority and Sufficiency of Scripture**

### **2 Timothy 3:16-17 (HCSB)**

"All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

The doctrine of *\*sola Scriptura\**—Scripture alone as the final authority in matters of faith and practice—is a foundational principle of theology. Paul, in his letter to Timothy, affirms that all Scripture is God-breathed and thus authoritative and sufficient for all aspects of the Christian life.

This passage highlights four key functions of Scripture: teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. Teaching provides the doctrinal foundation for the believer. Rebuking addresses erroneous beliefs and behaviors. Correcting restores the wayward to the right path. Training in righteousness equips believers for godly living. Together, these functions ensure that the man of God is complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work.

### **Psalms 19:7-11 (HCSB)**

"The instruction of the LORD is perfect, renewing one's life; the testimony of the LORD is trustworthy, making the inexperienced wise. The precepts of the LORD are right, making the heart glad; the command of the LORD is radiant, making the eyes light up. The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the LORD are reliable and altogether righteous. They are more desirable than gold—than an abundance of pure gold; and sweeter than honey, which comes from the honeycomb. In addition, Your servant is warned by them; there is great reward in keeping them."

Psalms 19 extols the perfection and sufficiency of God's word. It renews life, imparts wisdom, brings joy, and enlightens the eyes. The psalmist declares that God's ordinances are more desirable than gold and sweeter than honey, emphasizing their value and desirability. The word of God not only instructs but also warns and rewards those who keep it. This comprehensive view of Scripture underscores its all-encompassing role in the believer's life, affirming that it is the ultimate guide and authority.

In what ways does 2 Timothy 3:16-17 affirm the sufficiency of Scripture for the Christian life?

What practical steps can we take to ensure that Scripture remains the ultimate authority in our lives?

## The Doctrines of Grace

### Ephesians 2:8-9 (HCSB)

"For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—not from works, so that no one can boast."

The doctrines of grace, highlight the profound truth that salvation is entirely a work of God's grace. In Ephesians 2, Paul makes it clear that salvation is by grace through faith and not a result of human works. This grace is a gift from God, eliminating any possibility of boasting.

*These doctrines can be further elaborated as follows: (please read and discuss the corresponding scriptures.)*

#### Total Depravity:

*Humanity's entire being is affected by sin, rendering individuals incapable of coming to God apart from His grace (**Romans 3:10-12**).*

#### Unconditional Election:

*God's choice of certain individuals for salvation is based solely on His sovereign will and not on any foreseen merit or action on their part (**Romans 9:11-13**).*

#### Limited Atonement:

*Christ's atoning sacrifice was made specifically for the elect, securing their redemption (**John 10:14-15**).*

#### Irresistible Grace:

*The Holy Spirit effectively calls and regenerates the elect, enabling them to respond in faith (**John 6:37, 44**).*

## Perseverance of the Saints:

*Those whom God has elected and redeemed will persevere in faith until the end (Philippians 1:6).*

### **John 6:37-39 (HCSB)**

"Everyone the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me: that I should lose none of those He has given Me but should raise them up on the last day."

In this passage, Jesus affirms the certainty of the salvation of the elect. Those whom the Father has given to the Son will come to Him, and He will never cast them out. This assurance rests on the will of the Father, which Jesus came to fulfill. The perseverance of the saints is thus guaranteed by the promise and power of God, providing believers with unshakable confidence in their salvation.

**In what ways does irresistible grace (John 6:37, 44) bring assurance to believers?**

## **The importance of Faithful Teaching**

### **2 Timothy 2:2 (HCSB)**

"And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

The transmission of sound doctrine is essential for the preservation and propagation of the faith. Paul instructs Timothy to entrust the teachings he has received to faithful men who will, in turn, teach others. This process ensures the continuity of true doctrine across generations.

Faithful teaching involves not only conveying accurate doctrine but also modeling a godly life. The teacher must exemplify the truths they teach, providing a living testimony to the power of God's word. This holistic

approach to discipleship strengthens the church and guards against false teaching.

### **Titus 2:1-2 (HCSB)**

"But you must say the things that are consistent with sound teaching. Older men are to be level headed, worthy of respect, sensible, and sound in faith, love, and endurance."

Paul's instructions to Titus highlight the importance of teaching what is consistent with sound doctrine. The character and conduct of the teacher must align with the truths they proclaim. This consistency lends credibility to their teaching and fosters spiritual maturity. By emphasizing both sound doctrine and godly living, the church is equipped to stand firm in the faith and to pass it on to future generations.

The rich tapestry of Reformed theology, as explored through the themes of the unity of God's redemptive plan, the sovereignty of God in salvation, the authority and sufficiency of Scripture, the doctrines of grace, and the role of faithful teaching, offers profound insights into the nature of God and His dealings with humanity. Each of these themes is deeply rooted in Scripture, reflecting the consistent and coherent revelation of God's purposes.

Why is the transmission of sound doctrine important for the health of the church, as seen in 2 Timothy 2:2?

What are the dangers of false teaching, and how can the church guard against it?

How does studying theology deepen our understanding of God's character and His plans for humanity?

In what ways can we live out the truths of theology in our communities and churches?

Study these doctrines, let us be encouraged to deepen our understanding and commitment to the truths of God's word. May we be faithful stewards of the theological heritage entrusted to us, teaching and living out these truths with diligence and humility, to the glory of God.