

So That You May Know

An Expositional Study of the Epistle of **1 John 4:19**

Chapter 24 We Love Him Because He First Loved Us

216 We Love Him Because He First Loved Us- Part 3

Welcome again, my beloved in Jesus Christ. We're continuing our verse by verse "journey" through the Epistle of **1John**, and today we are going to continue to look at what John taught about "A Defense of the Doctrines of Grace". So, let's read **1John 4:19** again together:

We love, because He first loved us.

Now as I told you last time- even though this is one of the shortest verses in the entire Bible- this one single verse is so packed with Eternal Truth about Salvation- that I do not want to just pass by it. In this small little verse- John teaches powerful aspects of God's Sovereignty that most people just pass by without even blinking.

And on the last broadcast- I was detailing for you what has traditionally been the argument between the Arminians – those who uphold the concept of human free will and who espouse a Salvation that is a *cooperative* effort between God and Man and those who adhere to The Absolute Sovereignty of God- that Salvation is wholly a Work of God alone- which the Apostle John taught.

Now historically that second group are called Calvinists and the Truths that they found in Scripture are historically called Calvinism. But I find that term both strange and troubling. First of all- we are not studying what John Calvin wrote on these broadcasts- we are studying what the Apostle John wrote. Now having said that- let me say to you that I believe- from everything that I have ever read- that John Calvin was one of the most godly men who ever lived. Calvin had a command of Scripture like very few before him or since. He was in fact brilliant. His ability to take a verse of Scripture apart and put it back together again so that people could understand it was breathtaking and he was able to put the pieces together of very difficult passages better than anyone I know.

But there is nothing that Calvin wrote about Predestination and God's Sovereignty that Martin Luther had not written before him. In fact- Luther wrote much more about what we call the Doctrines of Grace than Calvin ever did.

And it is also true that Luther didn't write anything about these wonderful Biblical Truths that Augustine had not written 1200 years earlier- and Augustine didn't write anything that he did not find written from Paul and Peter and John and Moses and Jesus.

So to call these Scriptural Truths "Calvinism" to me is a stretch and so I don't use that term. I do not call the Biblical Truths about Salvation- "Calvinism"- I call them, "The Doctrines of Grace". Also I want you to understand that I am not following John Calvin- I am following Jesus Christ - so I refer to myself as a Christian- and not a Calvinist.

But the term Arminian, however is a very useful and accurate term because until Joseph Ariminus began to teach in the early 1600's that Salvation was *not* a Sovereign Work of God alone and Salvation was *not* permanent- nobody believed or taught that.

People who have heard these broadcasts call or write and they ask me, *"Why do you spend time teaching these hard and troubling issues like Predestination and Sovereignty? So many preachers today never even mention them and they are difficult to teach and difficult to learn- so why do you spend time with them?"*

And my answer is always the same. I don't teach these Biblical Truths because they are easy to teach or because it will make me popular or because they are easy to learn. I teach them, because I cannot avoid them. If anybody one earth goes verse by verse through any Book of the Bible- sooner or later- you are going to run into terms like "Election" "Sovereignty" and "Predestination".

So what do you do with these terms when you read them? Just pass them over? Ignore them? I didn't write the Bible, dear friends, and while I will acknowledge that teaching about these issues is a whole lot harder than telling people that God wants to make them rich- we are derelict and irresponsible in our duty as leaders in the Christian Church if we do not stop and look at what these terms mean.

God the Holy Spirit thought them important enough to put them in the Bible to begin with and I just see no purpose in skipping over what God has said- especially when I call it a Bible Study.

Now I will grant you that if you are trying to discover your 40 days of purpose or if you are trying to live your best life now- or if you are more interested in the bumper stickers and the ball caps and tee shirts and slogans- that this stuff will seem irrelevant.

But if you desire to know God so that you may rightly worship God- then we need to know what the Bible actually says and preach that- not just what is popular.

And I realize that most people who go to Church today couldn't care less about Sound Biblical Doctrine- in fact Doctrine has gotten such a bad reputation lately than many believe that to have a Biblical view of something as opposed to a worldly view is actually wrong.

People say today, "*We don't need Doctrine- we need Jesus*" as though it doesn't matter to Jesus what we believe. Nobody on earth taught Truth any more precisely or any harder than Jesus did, dear friends, and Jesus spent the majority of His time here on earth rebuking and denouncing people for not knowing the Scriptures correctly.

No, what is really going on is that we are living in a time of The Great Falling Away- A time of great apostasy and backsliding when people love pleasure more than God; a time when people love themselves more than Jesus; and a time when people want to do what is right in their own eyes. Paul wrote about it like this in **2Timothy 4:3&4**:

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,

4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

Now everybody wants Jesus to come back and so do I- but we must understand, dear friends, that according to the Word of God- before Jesus comes back- this is going to be the condition of many in the Church. Sound Biblical Teaching will be the last thing on people's mind. So, this stuff matters- a lot.

So the Apostle John writes this short little verse and yet in this verse contains almost everything I have been talking about now over the last several broadcasts.

We love, because He first loved us.

Now before we go further in this series, let me recommend a handful of books. The first book I want to recommend is a new book by Roger Olson, who is himself an Arminian, and he has written a defense of Arminianism titled *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities*. And you might be surprised to hear me recommend this book

But I have to say that Olson's book is the best book in defense of Arminianism that I've ever read. It's a good defense of Arminianism, and although I disagree with virtually all his conclusions, he pretty much knows what he is talking about, and he explains the differences between Arminianism, Pelagianism, and Semi-Pelagianism pretty well.

Now if you do read that book, you'll need to read at least three or four good books on The Doctrines of Grace to get the taste out of your mouth. So, I'll recommend three. Two are standard works that I routinely recommend every year. The first is a massive syllabus, written by Curt Daniel, called *The History and Theology of Calvinism*. These are notes Dr. Daniel wrote when he taught this material, and the tapes of his teaching are downloadable for free from the Internet. Dr. Daniel is currently working on developing that material in book form, to be published by P&R. My guess is you'll have to wait 2-3 years for that, so buy the syllabus; download the sound files for free download.

The other standard work you must have is the book by David Steele, Curtis Thomas, and Lance Quinn, titled *The Five Points of Calvinism* (also by P&R). It is an encyclopedic collection of key Scripture references and some wonderful essays explaining and defending Calvinism from the Bible.

And then one of my favorite books — hard to find for a long time but recently published in a quality edition by Audubon Press, *The Great Invitation*, by Erroll Hulse, subtitled "Examining the use of the altar call in evangelism." The book deals with the question of altar calls, as the subtitle suggests, but it's greatest value, I think, is that this is a classic example of the kind of warm-hearted, evangelistic, classic Calvinism that I appreciate, and it's a great antidote to the ugly Calvinism I spoke about that you find on a lot of the Internet forums.

Erroll Hulse is a greatly respected British Reformed Baptist leader, and this is one of my all-time favorite books.

Now here's a recommendation for your iPod: If you are someone who is resistant to The Doctrines of Grace, or you don't feel you fully understand enough about it, and you want a single, simple overview of

the substance and the history of The Doctrines of Grace- there is an excellent message by Phil Johnson titled, “The Story of Calvinism,” where he does a great job of covering all that ground in one shot. It’s on the internet with the rest of his sermons, and you can download it for free. The web address is www.swordandtrowel.org and look for the title “The Story of Calvinism.”

In that message, Johnson explains that he has not always been a Calvinist. He grew up in a family that had been Wesleyan Methodists for generations — and even after he was born again- it was several years before he finally came to the point where he could affirm the Biblical Doctrine of Election without trying to explain it away.

Johnson says that one of the things that first got him thinking seriously about the Sovereignty of God was an incident in a college Sunday School class, in a Southern Baptist Church, in Durant, OK, where he had a Sunday school teacher who hated Calvinism with a passion and wasted no opportunity to make an argument against the Sovereignty of God. And his continual emphasis on the subject got Johnson thinking about it a lot.

Then one Sunday, while this guy was taking prayer requests, a girl in the class raised her hand and asked, *“Should we really be praying for our lost relatives? It seems like it’s a wasted effort to pray to God for their Salvation if He can’t do any more than He has already done to save them.”*

Johnson says he vividly remembers the look on the face of this Sunday School teacher. This was clearly a question that had never occurred to him. So he thought about it for a moment, and you could see the wheels in his head turning while he tried to think of a good reason to pray for the Salvation of the lost. And finally, he said, *“Well, yeah, I guess you’re right.”* And from that Sunday on, Johnson says, the teacher never accepted any more prayer requests for people’s lost loved-ones!

Now when I heard that- it just didn’t seem quite right to me. So I looked and began to search the Scriptures myself and found this in **Romans 10:1**, where Paul says,

Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for *their* salvation.

Not only that, but I began to wonder why we should pray about

anything in the realm of human relationships if it is true that God never intrudes on the sanctity of human free will- as I had been taught. I mean why in the world should I pray for God to move my English teacher to look favorably on my work when she grades my papers if she is ultimately sovereign over her own heart? Those were questions I couldn't answer, and I really struggled with questions like that.

But the more I studied the Bible- the more it seemed to challenge my ideas about human free will and the Sovereignty of God. I had heard the phrases, *"God will never violate human free will"* and *"The Holy Spirit is a gentleman- and He will never force you to do something that you don't want to do"* so often that I became quite frustrated when I couldn't find either one of them anywhere in the Bible.

Every time one of my arguments against The Doctrines of Grace would collapse under the weight of clear Biblical Truth- it was like I was resolving a nagging conflict in my mind and things began to make sense that had puzzled me for years. And the more I studied the Bible- I found that The Doctrines of Grace were Truths that I had always affirmed:

- ✓ That God is Sovereign
- ✓ That Christ died for me while I was yet sinful
- ✓ God sought me and drew me and initiated my reconciliation while I was still His enemy.

And this one verse of Scripture that John writes here began to shine through it all-

We love, because He first loved us.

Well, I have to stop right here, but please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our journey through the Epistle of **1John**. May God help us all.

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