

# So That You May Know

## An Expository Study of the Epistle of **1 John 4:19**

### Chapter 24 We Love Him Because He First Loved Us

#### 215 We Love Him Because He First Loved Us- Part 2

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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. So let's spend some time with what John wrote here so we can get all the richness of this powerful statement by John.

Now as I said last time- I rejected many of the tenets of **The Doctrines of Grace** for years because they either were not presented to me correctly or else I was just not that Biblical in my own walk with God. But either way- God was good to continue to draw me toward the Truth about what John is teaching here- that the only reason why any of us loves Jesus Christ- is because He loved us- *first*.

And thanks be to God that now I don't have to struggle against what John taught here anymore. I can rest now in the powerful and comforting Truth that *before* I loved God- God loved me; that *before* I was saved- God had sovereignly chosen me for Salvation- based on nothing good that was in me- but based solely on His Own sovereign Will.

So I am not saved today because I possess some internal goodness about myself that allowed me to believe when so many other people who are so much smarter than I am do not believe. No, I believe; I love Jesus for no other reason than He first loved me- which is *exactly* what John teaches here.

So now I no longer “kick against the pricks” I no longer base the very foundation of my theology on pagan and humanistic concepts like “God will never violate my will”. I now trust that what God said about Himself in Scripture is true and so I believe in the Sovereignty of God.

You see, I’m convinced that anyone would be hard pressed to deny God’s Absolute Sovereignty on just a very simple walk through the Bible. And so the fact that Sovereignty in one form or another is so hard fought today and rejected by so many in the modern Church only proves to me that the Bible is very little read and very little understood- and that, my friends, is a shame.

The very idea that we would, on the one hand, defend God’s Sovereignty in Creation against the various attacks of the godless Evolutionists and then turn right around and deny God’s Sovereignty in Salvation is a baffling contradiction of the highest order. Because the Bible declares plainly and repeatedly that the very same God Who made everything out of nothing Sovereignly- also saved unworthy sinners in the very same way- all by Himself.

And it just seems dumb and completely inconsistent to me to believe that God is “kinda sorta” Sovereign sometimes and on occasions and then turn around and believe without hesitation that the devil is sovereign or that we are in charge. God is either Sovereign or He isn’t. And so, we really don’t need to fight much at all about this- because all we need to do is open the Bible anywhere you want to and start reading and it won’t be ten minutes until you find one of God’s Characteristics that screams out from the page that God is Sovereign.

And that doesn’t mean that to believe in what Scripture clearly reveals about God’s Sovereignty settles our minds about every issue- because it doesn’t. We are human and things deeply and profoundly disturb us precisely because we are not Sovereign. But I suggest to you that whatever hiccups Sovereignty brings to you in the discussions of things like tragedy and evil in the world are not nearly so profound as the struggle we would all have if God was not Sovereign at all.

The bottom line here is that Scripture teaches that God is completely Sovereign not only in Salvation (effectually calling and granting faith to those whom He chooses); but also in every detail of the outworking of Providence- including Salvation. And the fact that this goes against what we have all been taught over the last 150 years or so-

doesn't in any way tarnish Sovereignty. It simply proves to us how wrong and how unscriptural our teaching and learning has been.

Now there are, these days, quite a few people who claim to understand and accept The Doctrines of Grace who disagree strongly with my assessment of Arminianism and insist that Arminianism entails an absolute denial of certain fundamental Gospel Truths and is a damnable heresy. And those wishing to make that argument will invariably quote a famous statement by Charles Spurgeon, taken from the chapter in his autobiography titled "*A Defense of Calvinism*" in which Spurgeon said this:

"I have my own private opinion that there is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified, unless we preach what nowadays is called Calvinism. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else. I do not believe we can preach the gospel, if we do not preach justification by faith, without works; nor unless we preach the sovereignty of God in His dispensation of grace; nor unless we exalt the electing, unchangeable, eternal, immutable, conquering love of Jehovah; nor do I think we can preach the gospel, unless we base it upon the special and particular redemption of His elect and chosen people which Christ wrought out upon the cross; nor can I comprehend a gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called, and suffers the children of God to be burned in the fires of damnation after having once believed in Jesus. Such a gospel I abhor."

And you need to know that I absolutely agree with what Spurgeon says here- but only in the sense that he *meant* it. And the context of the statement that I just quoted from Charles Spurgeon explains clearly what he meant. Spurgeon was pointing out that the principle at the heart of all Gospel Truth is the same principle that drives all of The Doctrines of Grace- that "*Salvation is of the Lord.*" Salvation is *God's* Work; it's not something we do for ourselves- it is a Sovereign Work of God alone. That's the Truth that Spurgeon was defending.

Spurgeon was not saying that we ought to use the five points of The Doctrines of Grace the way that Campus Crusade people use the "Four Spiritual Laws." He wasn't saying that unless all you ever talk about is the Doctrines of Election and Reprobation then you are not faithfully preaching the Gospel and the whole counsel of God.

But sadly, I think that's what a lot of careless people who say they adhere to The Doctrines of Grace *think* Spurgeon meant when he said "The Doctrines of Grace is the Gospel."

But if you read Spurgeon's entire article- he makes very clear what he meant. In fact, at the beginning of that very same paragraph—as his preface to remarking that "The Doctrines of Grace is the gospel"—he wrote this:

"Salvation is of the Lord." [Jonah 2:9.] *That is just an epitome of Calvinism; it is the sum and substance of it.* If anyone should ask me what I mean by a Calvinist, I should reply, "He is one who says, Salvation is of the Lord." I cannot find in Scripture any other doctrine than this. It is the essence of the Bible. "He only is my rock and my salvation." Tell me anything contrary to this truth, and it will be a heresy; tell me a heresy, and I shall find its essence here, that it has departed from this great, this fundamental, this rock truth, "God is my rock and my salvation."

So did Spurgeon believe Arminianism was an error? *Absolutely.* So do I. But did he believe it was *damnable* error? *Absolutely not,* and he made that clear, too.

At the peak of the "Downgrade Controversy" of the late 1800's, some of Spurgeon's critics accused him of being driven by a doctrinaire agenda. *It's not really Modernism that Spurgeon hates,* they said. *It's anything that departs from his old fashioned adherence to The Doctrines of Grace. This whole controversy is a furtive campaign against Arminianism. That's what really has Spurgeon bugged. He thinks modern Christians don't believe in The Doctrines of Grace enough.*

But Spurgeon replied in one of his issues of his magazine- *The Sword and the Trowel* with a paragraph that said this:

"Certain antagonists have tried to represent the Down Grade controversy as a revival of the old feud between Calvinists and Arminians. It is nothing of the kind. Many evangelical Arminians are as earnestly on our side as men can be. We do not conceal our own Calvinism in the least; but this conflict is for truths which are common to all believers."

In another place, he was even more explicit:

“We care far more for the central evangelical truths than we do for Calvinism as a system; but we believe that Calvinism has in it a conservative force which helps to hold men to the vital truth, and therefore we are sorry to see any quitting it who have once accepted it.”

So he had a bone to pick with people who once affirmed The Doctrines of Grace and had now abandoned them in favor of new ideas that smacked of Socinianism. But he regarded evangelical Arminians as his true brethren and fellow soldiers—as long as they affirmed The Doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone, the principle of *sola fide*, the absolute Authority of Scripture, the penal aspect of Christ’s Atonement, and other *essential* Gospel Truths.

Speaking of Arminians in particular, he said:

“Those who hold the eternal verities of salvation, and yet do not see all that we believe and embrace, are by no means the objects of our opposition: our warfare is with men who are giving up the atoning sacrifice, denying the inspiration of Holy Scripture, and casting slurs upon justification by faith. The present struggle is not a debate upon the question of Calvinism or Arminianism, but of the truth of God versus the inventions of men. All who believe the gospel should unite against that “modern thought” which is its deadly enemy.”

So Spurgeon did not regard Arminians as hell bound heretics. He regarded them as brethren. Did he think they were in error? Yes? Were they guilty of gross inconsistency in their own theology? He would have answered emphatically, “Yes”. Was their main error significant? Spurgeon did not shrink from referring to it as “heresy”—meaning unorthodox doctrine, heterodoxy, serious error.

But Spurgeon was very careful to make clear that he did not regard Arminianism *per se as damnable* heresy or utter apostasy from essential Christianity. Virtually all mainstream Calvinists from the time of the Synod of Dort until now would agree with him on every count.

For example, Gordon Clark, one of the highest of high Calvinists, said this with regard to whether Arminians are authentic Christians or not:

“An Arminian may be a truly regenerate Christian; in fact, if he is truly an

Arminian and not a Pelagian who happens to belong to an Arminian church, he must be a saved man. But he is not usually, and cannot consistently be *assured* of his salvation. The places in which his creed differs from our Confession confuse the mind, dilute the Gospel, and impair its proclamation.”

Which is to say that Arminianism is inherently inconsistent.

Arminians technically affirm the fundamental, essential Truths of the Gospel. Then they try to build a theology on top of that which is totally inconsistent with the solid foundation they have affirmed.

I agree with Clark’s assessment of Arminianism. It’s an attempt to reconcile the Sovereignty of God with human responsibility—and the Arminian method of reconciling those two truths involve a view of human free will that is inherently inconsistent with certain Gospel Truths every Arminian actually affirms and it more resembles pure Pelagianism than it does with what John taught here:

**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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