

Hebrews 12

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Preacher: Jonathan Hoffman

[0 : 00] Morning, Christ family. I invite you to turn to the book of Hebrews, chapter 12, Hebrews chapter 12, Hebrews chapter 12 with me. And I see a lot of new faces today, and for those of you who may not know me, my name is Jonathan Hoffman. I do go by John, either or works for me.

I am a member of this church body, and I am also a recent graduate of the apprenticeship program that Nathan leads, which is a program.

It's about a year apprenticeship for those who are interested and have a sense of calling to do ministry vocationally.

And Nathan asked me to preach this morning as he takes the week to do some planning and vision and goal setting.

And he told me I could preach on whatever topic I wanted to, which I told him hopefully he will not regret afterwards. And so through prayer and conviction, I have decided to preach on a topic of much theological controversy.

[1 : 17] And it has been controversial through the history of the church. For most of you, this won't be anything new, and you have studied God's Word on the topic.

You are well informed and have come to a conclusion of what you believe to be the truth in accordance to Scripture. For others of you, you have heard the terms, you know the controversies, you know what your parents or your friends have told you of the topic.

But that may be the extent of your knowledge, because you have not searched the Scriptures yourself. And so you may not be well informed, but you might even be very one-sided on the topic. And you may even be a little hostile in your thinking towards the opposite view. And for others of you, you may have never heard of these theological views or terms, and it may be completely new to you.

But ultimately, regardless of where you stand in the spectrum of these three, it is your duty, Christian.

[2 : 34] And it should be, hopefully, your joy, believer, to search out the Scriptures for truth concerning the very character of your God.

And so, especially for those of you who may be hostile to or uncomfortable with terms such as Calvinism, predestination, election, doctrines of grace, total depravity, and the like.

I ask you, and I beg you to please put that aside and just listen to what I have to say this morning.

And weigh out what I have to say against the Scriptures. And not against what others have told you concerning the matter at hand.

And after the fact, if you have questions or concerns, please ask. There are many here who are well-educated on the topic.

[3 : 48] And who have strong convictions firmly planted from Scriptural foundations. And if you see me around, please ask. I love to discuss theology.

I love it. So please, ask somebody if you have questions. Search out the Scriptures yourself for truth.

And I pray that in the end, regardless of what your beliefs are, that we can love one another and serve our Lord side by side.

Because ultimately, this is not about us. It is not about us. And so there are two reasons why I want to share with you as to why I decided to preach on this topic this morning.

And first of all, it's because I firmly, firmly believe that the current status of the church in America, the reason for a watered-down Christianity and the growing number of false converts, people who call themselves Christian, who believe themselves to be Christian, but are not Christian, comes from a lack of knowledge.

[5 : 00] And yes, specifically from a lack of knowledge of these glorious doctrines. And secondly, I chose this topic because in my own walk with Christ, nothing has spearheaded me further into true piety.

Nothing has so inclined my heart towards the pursuit of God. And nothing has brought me down lower on my knees in dependence, worship, and adoration than these truths found in these old doctrines.

And this, to me, seems to be a pattern with other Calvinist brothers that I know. That is the same experience that they have had.

And for me, it began with a little book that a man from my Sunday school class gave me called Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God by J.I. Packer. I was a new convert probably not even a year into my conversion.

I was pretty zealous at the time for street evangelism. And knowing that, this guy gave me this book. I was very excited to read the book, and that's why I first encountered the term Calvinism and these doctrines of election.

[6 : 11] And I actually remember stopping, putting the book down, and thinking to myself, this cannot be right. This is not true. Now, before I became a believer, I was an atheist.

Most of my life, up until I was converted at the age of 21. And in the process of being drawn to Christ, I set out to look for truth. I knew that logically speaking, there could only be one source of ultimate truth.

And I wanted to be honest and unbiased in the pursuit of it. And ever since, that has been my mentality when it comes to the things of God, such as theology.

I want nothing but logical, unbiased, scripturally drenched truth. And so I searched the scriptures on the matter of Calvinism and was convinced of their truths.

And I stand before you now to proclaim them. And so my prayer this morning is that you would give all this in unbiased consideration and determine whether or not it's biblical.

[7 : 18] But my ultimate goal this morning is that all of you would walk out of this place with a higher view of Christ. His person, His work, His love, and His mercy.

As we read of Him and exposit on just the first half of verse 2 in Hebrews chapter 12. Where we read, Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith.

Let's pray together. Father, I just thank You for this time, Lord. And I just pray that You would be at work in us, Father. I pray that You would work it in us to desire to search for nothing but truth.

Lord, I just pray that You would work through me. And Lord, that love would just overflow from this place after the fact.

Lord, that we would be zealous to work for You regardless of where we stand on theological differences. Lord, we love You because You first loved us.

[8 : 35] And we thank You for all that You have done for us. In Jesus' name. Amen. It was Charles Haddon Spurgeon, a British pastor of the 1800s, who's also known as the Prince of Preachers, who once stated, and I quote, 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 with which Christ wrought out upon the cross.

Nor can I comprehend the gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called and suffers the children of God to be turned in the fires of damnation after having once believed in Jesus.

Close quote. It was Spurgeon's understanding of Calvinistic theology, also termed the doctrines of grace, that so magnified and lifted up the gospel in his mind and so constrained his heart in an unquenchable zeal in the service of his God.

And in the history of the church, there has been a long line of godly men who have held these truths. Calvinism did not originate from John Calvin. Calvin was but a preacher of these doctrinal truths.

[10 : 30] Truths which giant contenders of the faith preached hundreds of years even before Calvin. In his book, Pillars of Grace, A Long Line of Godly Men, Dr. Stephen Lawson, who is

professor of biblical and theological studies at Ligonier Ministries, or Ligonier Academy, and also professor of theology, or correction, professor of preaching at the Master's Seminary and founder of One Passion Ministries, sets out to show how some of the most esteemed men of the faith in the history of the church have upheld the doctrines of grace.

And through the careful study of the writings of the following list of men, from the early church fathers to the reformers, Lawson shows that these men would today be called Calvinists.

They being Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Anio, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyons, Tertullian of Catheridge, Cyprian of Catheridge, Athanasius of Alexandria, Basil of Cassaria, Gregory of Nazianzus, Ambrose of Milan, Augustine of Hippo, Isidore, Gottschak, Aslam of Canterbury, Bernard of Claravaux, Thomas Bradwaren, John Wycliffe, John Huss, Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, William Tyndale, Heinrich Bullinger, and John Calvin.

That was his list up to the reformers, but we could add such names to that list, such as Charles Spurgeon, John Knox, William Bradford, George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, Robert Murray McShane.

The list goes on and on and on. But there has been no greater preacher, no greater proclaimer of the doctrines of grace, than the very author of them, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[12 : 33] And this is what we will see this morning as we look at Jesus as the founder and perfecter of our faith. And so I have divided this text into two main headings with two subheadings each, in which we will draw out the five points of Calvinism.

Those being total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints.

These are also known by its acronym form, TULIP, although we will not be going through them in that particular order. So our first heading this morning is simply, Founder of Our Faith, under which we have two subheadings, the first one being, He created a way for lost sinners.

So Jesus Christ is the founder of our faith in that He created a way for lost sinners. The message of the Bible is that of redemption.

It is the message of a loving, powerful, just, holy Creator, who out of love, from the foundation of the world, from before the foundation of the world, creates a plan to redeem lost sinners to Himself.

[13 : 51] He created Adam and Eve, the first humans, in His image, in righteousness and holiness of the truth. They were in perfect contentment and communion with God until they willfully disobeyed God and broke His commandment.

Therefore, sin entered the world, condemning the whole human race and enslaving the freedom of the will to the depravity of a sinful nature.

Romans 5, verses 18 and 19 reveal this truth to us as it says, St. Augustine writes, and I quote, From the bad use of free will, there originated the whole train of evil, which, with its continuation of misery, convoys the human race from its depraved origin as from a corrupt root.

Close quote. Herein lies the doctrine of total depravity. And let's get a wider picture of this from Scripture because I believe this doctrine to be vital in order for the rest to stand.

So turn with me to Genesis chapter 6, Genesis chapter 6, and look at verses 5 through 7. Genesis chapter 6, verses 5 through 7.

[15 : 41] We read, The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

And the Lord regretted that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the Lord said, I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals, and creeping things, and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.

Now listen to verse 5 again. The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Did you get that? Every intention? Every single intention. Man could not even think without the very inner foundations of the intent being fundamentally evil.

But look even closer. It says that they were only evil. There was no trace whatsoever of goodness or righteousness.

[16 : 54] And look even closer yet again. The word continually, meaning there was never any turning from this norm. There was no repentance.

And this describes the entire human race to this day. And so what did God do about it? He wiped out the entire human race at that point.

But by grace, only eight people were the exception. Noah and his family along with a number of animals. But were these eight also then the exception to that description of depravity? No. Every one of those who were saved by the ark was stained by the same sin nature described in verse 5. And through them it continued to be passed down to this day. Now you might be thinking, but that description in verse 5 is before the flood, not after. Well then, let's go to chapter 8. So turn a few pages with me to chapter 8 and see what it says after the flood. [18:02] Chapter 8 and verse 20. The flood has subsided. And then we read in chapter 8 verse 20. Do you see that?

It doesn't say that the intentions of man's heart was evil from his youth. It says the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. That's in the present tense. And that's after the flood. This is God declaring after the flood the same pronouncement of depravity in man as it was before the flood. This is why David says in Psalm 51 5, Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me. This is why Psalm 58 3 says, The wicked are estranged from the womb. They go astray from birth. And who are the wicked? [19:16] The human race. That is what Jesus says in Mark 10 18 when he says, No one is good except God alone.

That's why Romans 3 verses 9 through 12 says, Both Jews and Greeks are under sin. As it is written, None is righteous. No, not one. No one understands. No one seeks after God. All have turned aside. Together they have become worthless. No one does good. Not even one. This is what Ephesians 2 means when it says in verses 1 through 3, You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work and the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature, by nature, children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. This is why Romans 8 7 and 8 says, For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law. [20:39] Indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. That's what Romans says. Do you see that? And so based on that alone, let me ask you this.

Is not repenting and placing your trust in Christ something that is pleasing to God? Just that act alone. Is that not something that is pleasing to God? Yet how can anyone who is dead in trespasses and sins, and therefore with a mind that is hostile to God, and unable to please God, repent and trust in Christ of their own will, and thereby pleasing God? Do you see that? It is against the very nature of the natural man to freely and willfully come to Christ, as it is against the very nature of a loving, pregnant woman to plunge a steak knife into her own abdomen.

Now this may sound harsh, but I believe it to be true based on what we have just looked at. This is the true state of the unregenerate man. That's what the Bible teaches. [21:58] This is the true condition of the heart. Like sheep, we have all gone astray in this condition, and in this condition even our greatest works are but filthy rags. In this state, we are all slaves to the ruler of this world, the devil, completely in bondage to sin, totally depraved, hostile towards God, utterly unable to freely choose to do anything pleasing to God.

Is that not a scary thought? Yet, is this not what these scriptures teach? And this is why God had to be the one to act to make a way for sinners. And this is why Jesus is the founder of our faith in this sense. In John 8, verse 34, Jesus says, Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. And in verse 36, He says, So, if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. If who sets you free? The Son. And who initiates the freeing? The Son. In John 6, 44, Jesus says, No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. [23:26] God had to be the one to make a way because what would we have here if He were to have left it at this? We would have all of mankind going to hell and yes, originally condemned by the sin of Adam, but by no means just by it.

Every single person is responsible for His own sin. And so here we have a picture of a God-hating, self-loving, depraved humanity who would rather go to hell than repent and turn from their wicked ways.

In John 3, 20, Jesus says, Everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works be exposed. And so if God would have stopped there and not saved anyone and not have acted at all, would He be at fault for allowing all of humanity to end up in hell for all eternity?

No. And He would be completely just and completely righteous in that act because His justice and His holiness would be put on display.

But praise be to God, brothers and sisters, that He did not stop there and that out of love and kindness and pure grace, He became the founder, the author of our faith by creating a way for lost sinners.

[25 : 03] Depraved, God-hating sinners. And so here we affirm the next doctrine of grace called unconditional election. Turn with me to 2 Thessalonians chapter 2.

2 Thessalonians chapter 2. Verses 13 and 14.

It reads, But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

To this He called you through our gospel so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ. Now, we won't spend much time on this one because it's hard to deny that Scripture teaches election and predestination.

That being, that before the foundation of the world, out of a mass of depraved humanity to be, without merit or condition or any future doing on the part of the sinner, out of His grace and love and for His glory and for His Son, He chose a multitude of them to snatch them out of the fire of their own making to demonstrate His mercy and His glory and His grace in them.

[26 : 36] That's what Jesus means when He tells His disciples in John 15, 16, You did not choose Me but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide.

And it's what He refers to when He says in Matthew 11, 27, No one knows the Son except the Father. And no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.

This is what Paul refers to in Romans 11, 5 when he says that there is a remnant chosen by grace. And in Ephesians 1, 4 when he says He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.

And in verse 5, He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of His will to the praise of His glorious grace with which He has blessed us in the Beloved. That's why Peter calls us a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a people for His own possession. That is why Acts 13, 48, as the gospel is being preached, it says, And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord.

[28 : 05] and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. They believed because they were appointed to eternal life.

They were unconditionally elected by a gracious and merciful God. And I want to, once again, just reiterate that in electing, God is merely, by grace, to give you an illustration, snatching people out of a burning building who actually want to stay in that burning building.

And when He does so and snatches the select few out, He opens their eyes and shows them their foolishness. And the ones that stay in the burning building and were not pulled out by God do so because they would rather stay in that building than to come to God.

Election is unconditional. Do you recall the story in Exodus of the crossing of the Red Sea? God sends a strong wind parts the Red Sea.

The people of Israel begin to cross on dry land. Pharaoh and his Egyptian army follow after, pursue after Israel. And if you could just imagine imagine a bird's eye view of this scene, you have both the Egyptians and Israel on this dry land and they are perfectly paralleled by massive walls of ocean being held back only by the power of God.

[29 : 54] And let me ask you this, out of all those people on that stretch of land, could any one of them stand before a holy God and be considered spotless and righteous out of their own doing?

Of course not. None of them. Not one. And so, in this case, God would have been just in even wiping all of them out.

But instead, out of His grace, He chose to save the Israelites not because anything that He saw in them, not because of any goodness in them or any future acts on their behalf.

life. But as we see in Exodus 6, it is God who unconditionally elects. It is God who initiated a covenant with Israel of His own choosing.

And that's the beauty of election. And that's the beauty and grace of our Savior. That though we do not deserve it, and we cannot in our own ability make the massive crushing waves of our sin part so that we may make our way to the other side, Jesus, the founder of our faith, went before us and made a way so that not one drop of that ocean would ever touch our heads.

[31 : 29] Praise God for His electing grace. Spurgeon put it quite well when he says, it's a good thing God chose me before I was born because He surely would not have chosen me afterwards.

Close quote. What a mighty Savior, a leader, pioneer, author, founder of our faith, and that He made a way for sinners.

And this leads us to our second subheading for how Christ is the founder of our faith, that being that Christ is the founder of our faith and that He is the giver of the new birth.

He is the giver of the new birth. It is the emphatic affirmation of our Lord Jesus Christ in John 3, 3, that unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

And it is the unequivocal teaching of Scripture that it is God that through His sovereign, unconditional election, births within those elect repentance and faith unto everlasting life.

[32 : 42] It is here that we see the doctrine of grace entitled Irresistible Grace. Irresistible Grace. In John 3, verses 3-8, Jesus tells Nicodemus, a teacher of the law, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus said to him, how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time in his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again. the wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes.

So it is with everyone who is born of the spirit. This shows the utter inability of man to do anything in order to enter the kingdom of God on his own.

Obviously, you cannot be born when you are old, and you cannot enter your mother's womb again and be reborn. There is nothing in your power or ability that you can do to be born again.

[34 : 09] There is a reason why Jesus uses these specific words and these specific illustrations in talking about regeneration.

You had nothing to do with your first birth, and you cannot have anything to do with your second birth from above. On this effectual calling, which must be initiated by God, Philip Ryken, the current president of Wheaton College, writes, What makes this illustration especially effective is the fact that in the Greek language, wind and breath and spirit are all the same word, pneuma.

The spirit is the breath of God, whose influence is like the wind. No one can control the wind or even see it, yet its effects are obvious wherever it blows. So it is with the Holy Spirit.

No one can control his gracious influences. No one can see when he first slips into a sinner's heart. The regenerating, life-giving work of the spirit is up to the sovereignty of God.

Close quote. God This effectual calling, this irresistible grace, is what Acts 16, 14 alludes to when it tells of Lydia's conversion.

[35 : 30] For it says God opened her heart as the gospel was being preached by Paul. Lydia didn't open her own heart. It clearly says God opened her heart.

She couldn't have opened her own heart. She was dead in her trespasses and sins. God effectually through the gospel called her, opened her heart, and gave her new birth.

And it is this that John 1, 13 refers to when speaking of the children of God where it says they were born not of blood nor of the will of man or the flesh but of God.

Christ is the founder of our faith because He alone is the giver of the new birth. Now we have reached our second main heading for this morning and that is perfecter of our faith.

And for the sake of time I will give you the two subheadings and try to move quickly. So Christ is the perfecter of our faith in that He has perfectly accomplished His work.

[36 : 40] He has perfectly accomplished His work and the second subheading that He will complete the work He began in us. He will complete the work that He began in us.

Jesus came to this world with a purpose. He did so to accomplish a work. He came to give His life a ransom for many.

And it is here that we encounter the doctrine of grace called limited atonement or particular redemption. It is the belief of some that Christ died to pay for the sins of every single person who has ever and will ever live.

That He has bore the wrath for the sins of Judas who is now spending eternity in hell as He has bore the wrath for the sins of Peter who is now in glory in the presence of the Lord.

And though I don't have time to get into detail about it, I will just say this quickly because some of you may be thinking, well, what about those texts that say that He took away the sins of the world, of the whole world?

[38 : 02] Well, those are to be understood under their particular and respective contexts, which we don't have time to examine this morning. So let me just give you quickly some texts that I believe help repudiate those notions.

Mark 10 45 says, For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

You see that? For many. Not for all, for many. Matthew 22 14. For many are called, but few are chosen. Hebrews 9 27 to 28.

And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that the judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time.

Once again, many, not all. And one last one. Revelation 5 9 says, Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

[39 : 25] This is talking particularly about the redemptive work. And it speaks and it says that he ransomed people from every tribe and language and people and nation.

It does not say that he ransomed every tribe and people and language and nation. We see that the extent of the atonement here is explicitly limited.

Right here in the pages of Scripture. Now those who do not hold to the Calvinistic view would have to say and believe that Christ paid the full price for the sense of humanity without actually securing anyone's salvation definitively.

Only a possibility of salvation. salvation. So you see friends, while Calvinism limits the extent of the atonement by saying that Christ died for a specific people only, those being the elect, and paid an actual price for an actual people, the non-Calvinist view limits the effect of the atonement.

Because they cannot say that Christ died to perfectly secure the salvation of anybody. But to the Calvinist, in regards to the effect of the atonement, the accomplished work of Christ on the cross, we believe this, as John Flavel, a 1600s Puritan, puts it, and I quote, he finished it completely and fully.

[41 : 15] All that was to be done by way of meritorious redemption is fully done. No hand can come after this. His angels can add nothing to it.

That is perfectly to which nothing is wanting and to which nothing can be added. Such is the work which our Lord Jesus Christ finished.

finished. Whatever the law demanded is perfectly paid. Whatever a sinner needs is perfectly obtained and purchased.

Nothing can be added to what he had done. He put the last hand to it when he said, it is finished.

Close quote. Which arrives us at the final and glorious doctrine of grace called the perseverance of the saints. The perseverance of the saints.

[42 : 14] Otherwise known as preserving grace. The Calvinist affirms that once saved, always saved. Because he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

As we are told in Philippians 1, chapter 1, verse 6. And the Lord tells us in John 6, 39, And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.

We cannot be plucked out of his hands, for God is a good father, and our Lord is a good shepherd, who will not let one of his sheep go astray.

And because Christ is almighty, who lives to intercede for us, and as Hebrews 7, 25 so powerfully puts it, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

And my dear friends, Christ will not and cannot fail at his intercessory prayer. And as J.I.

[43 : 38] Packer puts it, your faith will not fail while God sustains it. You are not strong enough to fall away while God is resolved to hold you.

Close quote. And as to the importance of this doctrine of preserving grace, Spurgeon so determinedly writes, and this should be on the front of your bulletin, quote, if one dear saint of God had perished, so might all.

If one of the covenant ones be lost, so may all be. And then there is no gospel promise true, but the Bible is a lie, and there is nothing in it worth my acceptance.

I will be an infidel at once when I can believe that a saint of God can ever finally fall. Close quote.

Jesus Christ is preeminent.

He is all and in all. He is founder and perfecter of our faith. Therefore, let us lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith.

[45 : 04] Salvation and glory and power belong to our God. And if you have not yet trusted in him, repent and believe the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ today.

Let's pray. Amen.