

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

214 We Love Him Because He First Loved Us- Part 1

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 look at what John taught about "A defense of the Doctrines of Grace". So, let's read **1John 4:19** together:

We love, because He first loved us.

Now 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 awhile here to savor the richness of this powerful statement by John.

Now even though I was not taught about the Sovereignty of God for the first thirty years of my Salvation- over the last several years- I have become convinced of **The Doctrines of Grace**. Some of you may know what I mean by that term- but for those who do not- **The Doctrines of Grace** are those Biblical Truths- all the many, many verses- that- put together form a Biblical understanding of how and why God saves lost, unworthy sinners.

You see, we live in a day when much of what is taught in the modern Church is *not* in the Bible. And human wisdom; human logic and human ingenuity has replaced Biblical Truth and Scriptural preciseness. And one of the greatest casualties of this departure from the Bible in our teaching is that the majesty of the Sovereignty of God has been lost to most people who sit on the pews of our Churches today.

If you were to ask the average person walking down the street- "*Do you believe that God is Absolutely Sovereign?*" he would no doubt say, "*Sure*" because he would be thinking about Creation.

But if you were to press him and ask, "*Is God Absolutely Sovereign over everything?*" that same man who said, "*Sure*" just a second ago would begin to waffle a bit. And then if you asked him an even deeper

question, “*Is God Absolutely Sovereign over everything- all the time?*” That same man who said “*Sure, God is Absolutely Sovereign*” concerning Creation would probably say, “*No, God is not Absolutely Sovereign over everything all the time*”.

And the reason his answer would be different from the first question to the last is that he would be thinking about all the evil that is in the world and he would reason to himself, “*Certainly God is Good and yet all things in the earth are not good. So therefore God could not be Sovereign over what is bad.*”

And that is an example what I mean when I say that human logic and human reasoning have taken the place of the Bible in the minds and hearts of many of the people who go to Church today. Because without hesitation or apology- the Bible declares over and over and over and over again that God is Absolutely Sovereign over everything all the time. That God sits in Majesty- completely in control of all things; unafraid; and confident that what He has counseled with Himself to do- will be done *exactly* as He has determined it.

Therefore- God is not lonely- as so many teach today. God is not scared; and God is not afraid. God doesn't wonder; He doesn't hope; and He doesn't wish or try to do *anything*- God doesn't even pray- He just does.

God is the Creator and the Owner of the entire Universe- it belongs to Him. God is Incomprehensible; Triune; Omnipotent; Omniscient; Omni- Present; Self Evident; Holy and Good. All of these Characteristics make up what the Bible reveals about God. But one of the most overlooked and forgotten Attributes of God as revealed in Scripture is that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is “Effectual”.

And Effectual means that what God wants- God gets. So God never ever loses; He is never defeated; He is never frustrated; He is never at a loss; and He never ever fails. And it is this “effectualness” of God that is so powerfully illustrated here in **1John4:19**:

We love, because He first loved us.

Now I rejected many of the tenets of **The Doctrines of Grace** for many years because they either were not presented to me correctly or else I was just not that Biblical. But God was good to me to continue to draw me toward the Truth about what John is teaching here- that the

only reason I love Jesus Christ- the only reason why *anyone* loves Jesus- is because He first loved us.

And thanks be to God that now I don't have to struggle against what John taught here anymore. I rest in the 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 Choice.

And so now I no longer "kick against the pricks" and I believe in the Sovereignty of God. I'm convinced 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. Now the original Greek of **Romans 8:30** says:

and [all of] these whom He predestined, He also called; and [all of] these whom He called, He also justified; and [all of] these whom He justified, He also glorified.

So the word, "**whom**" in this verse actually means "all of those" in the original Greek. So what the Apostle Paul was saying here is that 100% of those whom God predestinated before the foundation of the world- He called. And 100% of all those whom God called- He saved or justified. And 100% of all those who God saved or justified- He kept all the way into Heaven so they could be glorified.

And this is tied in with one of the most loved verses in all the Bible- **Romans 8:28**- which says:

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.

You see, without God being Absolutely Sovereign over everything all the time- the many different things that come into our lives- some good; some bad- would all be just random and without any purpose at all and God could not "work" them all together for "good".

But God can and God does work all things together- both what we call, "good" along with what we call, "bad" precisely because God is Absolutely Sovereign over everything all the time. Which is why **Ephesians 1:11** says that God:

... works all things after the counsel of His will,

So this is what I mean when I say, “The Doctrines of Grace”. When I accept that term- I am not pledging any allegiance to any man or any man- made doctrine- no, no, no, I am humbly bowing my knees to what the Scriptures actually say and no longer rebelling against them.

Now the Truth of God’s Sovereignty is clear and ultimately inescapable in Scripture. But I acknowledge it is a *difficult* Truth to come to grips with. So I am very merciful with those who struggle with it. And I believe in Sovereignty enough to know that God has ordained (at least for the time being) that some of my brethren should hold wrong ideas about this.

And that’s one reason I am on the radio. I want everyone to come to terms with the deep and profound teachings of God’s Word- even though some of them are very deep and very difficult to grasp. Look, God didn’t give us the Bible so we would not understand what it says. And He also didn’t give us His Word so we could ignore what it says. We are supposed to struggle with deep and profound Truths. That is what deep and profound Truths do to us- they stagger us; they affect us powerfully; and they were designed on purpose by God to change us.

Some of what God said in the Bible is very clear. Many Truths of God’s Word are easy to read; easy to learn and easy to teach. But some things that God said seem to be very hard and difficult. And that is not because there is anything wrong with them. It is simply because we are flesh. But we are told to love the hard parts in the same way as we love the easy parts. Because they are both true. Both the easy and hard parts of God’s Word came from the same God. And so we are to teach and learn the hard parts with the same degree of energy and passion as we do the easy parts.

So imply because some areas of God’s Word are difficult does not mean we are supposed to avoid them. We are to preach and learn and love the whole Counsel of God. And the same God Who said “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but will have eternal life” also said “Jacob I love and Esau I hate”. The same God Who said, “God is love: also said, “You did not choose me but I chose you”.

And so, both are true. We do not have to pick between the lovely and the difficult; the simple from the profound. We need to know both;

we need to love both; we need to teach both; and we need to believe both.

But I also understand that many people are honestly struggling with those parts of the Bible that are deep and so I'm probably a whole lot less militant than you might expect when it comes to attacking the errors of Arminianism. Besides, I have gotten much further answering Arminian objections with patient teaching and dispassionate, reasonable, Biblical instruction—instead of angry arguments and instant anathemas.

Listen, I don't believe that I am right and everybody who disagrees with me is wrong. I have never said that and I don't believe it and I pray I don't come across like that. But I do believe that God is right. And I do believe that what God inspired to be in the sacred Scriptures is true and so it is incumbent upon all of us to drop any belief and throw away any teaching that is contrary to what the Bible actually says.

So why don't I take a more passive, lenient, brotherly, approach to *all* theological disagreements? Because I firmly believe that there are *some* theological errors that *do* deserve a firm and decisive condemnation. And that's Paul's point in **Galatians 1:8&9**; and it's the same point the Apostle John makes in **2John 7-11**. When someone is teaching an error that fatally corrupts the Truth of the Gospel, **“let him be anathema.”**

But let me be plain here: *Simple Arminianism doesn't fall into that category. It's not fair to pin the label of rank heresy on Arminianism, the way some of my more zealous Doctrines of Grace brethren seem prone to do.* I'm talking about historic, evangelical Arminianism, of the classic and Wesleyan varieties — *Arminianism*, not Pelagianism, or open theism, or whatever heresy Clark Pinnock has invented this week — but true evangelical Arminianism.

Now listen- Arminianism is certainly wrong; and I would argue that it's inconsistent with itself. But in my judgment, standard, garden variety Arminianism is not so fatally wrong that we need to consign our Arminian brethren to the eternal flames or even automatically refuse them fellowship in our pastors' meetings.

Now if you think I'm beginning to sound like an apologist for Arminianism here- I'm definitely not that. I *do* think Arminianism is a profound error. Its tendencies *can* be truly sinister, and when it is

allowed to go to seed, it *does* lead people into rank heresy. But what I'm saying here is that mere Arminianism *itself* is not a damnable heresy. It's just grossly inconsistent with the core Gospel Doctrines that Arminians themselves believe and affirm.

But as long as I'm *sounding* like a defender of Arminianism, let also me say this: There are plenty of ignorant and inconsistent people who say they believe in The Doctrines of Grace out there, too. With the rise of the Internet it's easier than ever for self- taught lay people to engage in theological dialogue and debate through internet forums. I think that's mostly good, and I encourage it. But the Internet makes it easy for like- minded but ignorant people to clump together and endlessly reinforce one another's ignorance. And I fear that happens a lot.

But if you read the Reformers you'll have trouble finding even one who regarded Arminianism per se as a damnable heresy. And there's a reason for that: It's because while Arminianism is bafflingly inconsistent- it is not necessarily damnably erroneous. Most Arminians themselves- and I'm still speaking here of the classic and Wesleyan varieties and not Pelagianism masquerading as Arminianism- most of those Arminians emphatically affirm Gospel Truth that is actually rooted in this one verse-

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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