



What Is Reformed Theology?

Introduction

Some basics

The essence of this class: the foundation for our need for salvation and how God has provided for that salvation.

Calvinism / Reformed Theology teachers / Theologians
/ Authors

Historically - John Calvin, Martin Luther,
Augustine, Charles Spurgeon, James Whitefield,
Adonirum Judson, Jonathan Edwards, and
William Carey

Teachers you may know- Alistair Begg, David Platt, John Piper, John MacArthur, Matt Chandler, Tim Keller, Joni Eareckson Tada, and [Francis Schaeffer](#)

Reasons for this class

For clarity and for gospel encouragement

“To enjoy him we must know him. Seeing is savoring. If he remains a blurry, vague fog, we may be intrigued for a season. But we will not be stunned with joy, as when the fog clears and you find yourself on the brink of some vast precipice.” (John Piper)

Worthwhile Wrestling: “My experience is that clear knowledge of God from the Bible is the kindling that sustains the fires of affection for God. And probably the most crucial kind of knowledge is the knowledge of what God is like in salvation. That is what the five points of [Calvinism](#) are about. Not the power and sovereignty of God in general, but his power and sovereignty in the way he saves people. That is why these points are sometimes called *the doctrines of grace*. To experience God fully, we need to know not just how he acts in general, but specifically how he saves *us* — how did he save me?” (John Piper)

“But all the wrestling to understand what the Bible teaches about God is worth it. God is a rock of strength in a world of quicksand. To know him in his sovereignty is to become like an oak tree in the wind of adversity and confusion. And along with strength is sweetness and tenderness beyond imagination. The sovereign Lion of Judah is the sweet Lamb of God.” (John Piper)

“The gospel—not the 5 points of Calvinism—is the center of our faith. If you believe in the loftiness of God’s glory, that salvation belongs only to God, and that God is sovereign over the world, and that he that has begun a good work in you will see it through, then you and I can stand in alignment, even if we parse some of the particulars differently.” (J D Greear)

Being Reformed in theology is not a core issue but it is also not a peripheral issue.

“The Elder Affirmation of Faith”

Reformed Theology is what you will hear taught at Journey.

What is Reformed Theology?

Reformed Theology provides a high view of the total sufficiency of God: my need and what God has done.

First, a Calvinist believes that God always does whatever he pleases. Second, a Calvinist believes that God initiates, sustains, and completes the salvation of everyone who gets saved. (Orrick)

“What is Calvinism?” (John Piper)

(<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-is-calvinism>)

Reformed theology, as I mean it, is a view of God and his way of working in the world that grows, like a tree with lots of branches, out of a deep conviction that God’s glory is the goal of all things and that his freedom and his sovereignty are essential to his deity. And, because he is free and sovereign and glorious, he doesn’t need to be served by anyone to meet his needs. Therefore, he is gloriously free to be gracious to us.

God's glory is central.

The glory of God is the supreme theme of Reformed theology. Isaiah 48:9-11 says, "For my name's sake I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise" — God says — "I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off. Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction. For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another."

God is free and sovereign.

He is totally free and sovereign. That is, he is not decisively constrained or controlled by any force from outside himself. He can overcome every obstacle to his purposes and do everything he pleases.

Free

Psalm 115:3 Our God is in the heavens;
he does all that he pleases.

Romans 9:15 For he says to Moses, “I
will have mercy on whom I have mercy,
and I will have compassion on whom I
have compassion.”

Sovereign

Isaiah 46:9-10 [9] remember the former things of
old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am
God, and there is none like me, [10] declaring
the end from the beginning and from ancient
times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel
shall stand, and I will accomplish all my
purpose,’

So, he has no needs and therefore, he overflows
in free grace to whom he pleases.

Acts 17:25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

Which means that, when it comes to saving sinners — and here is where we get down to the nitty-gritty, just briefly — when it comes to saving sinners, God is free and sovereign in the way he does it.

TULIP

Total Depravity

Unconditional Election

Limited Atonement

Irresistible Grace

Perseverance of the Saints

You have to do something with certain...

Words → foreknew, called, predestined, elect, chosen, etc.

Texts

Ephesians 1:3–6 [3] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, [4] even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love [5] he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, [6] to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

2 Timothy 1:9 who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,

Revelation 13:8 and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.

Lay aside

Your past

Your thoughts / arguments

Let God speak through His word and form your thinking.

Assumptions (John Piper)

This is not primarily about Calvinism. This is primarily about being faithful to Scripture.

Right thinking about God really matters.

Bad theology dishonors God and hurts people.

Good theology honors God and helps people.

The Holy Spirit's help is needed.

I Corinthians 2:14–16 [14] The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. [15] The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. [16] “For who has understood the mind of the

Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

Thinking is essential for grasping biblical truth.

I Corinthians 14:20 Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature.

God has not revealed everything. There are times / places where we must rest in mystery.

Deuteronomy 29:29 “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

We must pursue an understanding of what God has revealed.

II Timothy 2:15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.