

Reformed Theology

Ephesians 1:3-14

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April 21, 2024

** This sermon draws from RC Sproul's book entitled *What is Reformed Theology* and from an outline that Chris Patton had put together for our Care Group Leaders a number of years ago.*

“Sound doctrine is essential in the unity of the church because the only true unity is unity in the truth. Think about it. Without sound doctrine the church will be a jumbled mess of everyone’s personal beliefs. If the church without sound doctrine is united, it will either be united around whimsical sentiment or an explicit untruth.” -- Nine Marks Ministries

Scripture presents the all-glorious, triune God as the source and end of all things (Romans 11:36), sovereignly working all things according to His will (Ephesians 1:11). At the center of God’s purposes in the world is the exaltation of His glory through the redemption of sinners (John 17:1–26). To this end, we believe that God sovereignly chooses men and women to be saved in order to display His immeasurable grace and glory (Ephesians 1:3–6; Romans 9:11). God’s sovereign grace in salvation humbles us, fills us with gratitude, and compels us to worship Him and share the message of His grace to all people. Seven Shared Values

An overview of Reformed Theology:

1. Reformed theology affirms the authority of scripture

“All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” -- 2 Timothy 3:16

2. Reformed theology affirms God’s sovereignty over all

“In Him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will” -- Ephesians 1:11

“God is sovereign in creation, providence, redemption and judgment. This is a central assertion of Christian belief and especially in reformed theology. God is King and Lord of all. To put this another way: nothing happens without God’s willing it to happen, willing it to happen before it happens, and willing it to happen in the way that it happens...To say that God is sovereign is to express His almightiness in every area.” Derek Thomas

3. Reformed theology affirms justification by faith alone

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” -- Ephesians 2:8-9

4. Reformed theology affirms that God is sovereign in salvation

“He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption to Himself 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.” -- Eph. 1:4-6

“And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.” -- Romans 8:30

“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.” -- John 6:44

“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ.” -- Colossians 2:13

“Scripture is clear in teaching that we are not all journeying toward God—some having found Him, others still seeking. Instead, Scripture presents us as needing to have our hearts replaced, our minds transformed, our spirits given life. We can do none of this for ourselves. The change each human needs, regardless of how we may outwardly appear, is so radical, so near our roots, that only God can bring it about. We need God to convert us.” -- Mark Dever

“I believe in the doctrine of election, because I am quite certain that, if God had not chosen me, I should never have chosen Him; and I am sure He chose me before I was born, or else He never would have chosen me afterwards; and He must have elected me for reasons unknown to me, for I never could find any reason in myself why He should have looked upon me with special love.” -- Charles Spurgeon

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures” – 1 Cor. 15:3

God’s providence is His almighty and ever present power, whereby, as with His hand, He still upholds heaven and earth and all creatures, and so governs them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, food and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, indeed all things come to us not by chance but by His Fatherly hand. -- Heidelberg Catechism

Q.28 – What does it benefit us to know that God has created all things and still upholds them by His providence?

A. – We can be patient in adversity, thankful in prosperity, and with a view to the future, we can have a firm confidence in our faithful God and Father, that no creature shall separate us from His love, for all creatures are so completely in His hand that without His will they cannot so much as move. -- Heidelberg Catechism

Questions for Discussion/Application:

- Consider taking time to read Ephesians 1:3-14 out loud. What initial insights or observations of the text do you have?
- Please read the quote at the top of the outline from Nine Marks Ministries. What is sound doctrine so essential in the life of the church? What is the danger articulated in that quote of a local church not being united around sound doctrine?
- What is the doctrine of justification by faith alone (see point #4). Why does it matter so much? What blessings come to us when we regularly hold before our eyes the doctrine of justification by faith alone?
- Reformed Theology affirms God is sovereign in salvation. How can this truth stir thankful worship in our hearts?
- Consider reading the quotes from the Heidelberg Catechism at the end of the outline. How does the rich biblical truth contained in those quotes encourage you or help you?
- Consider taking time to pray, asking God to help us to grow in our trust in the God who is sovereign over all.