A large, light-colored stone relief sculpture depicting four men in historical attire, likely the Reformers, standing in a row. The man in the center holds a book. The background is a textured, light-colored wall. The text is overlaid on a white rectangular area with a dark green bar at the bottom.

A SURVEY OF THE REFORMATION

ITS HISTORY & DOCTRINE



HISTORY

1. Intro & Overview of Church History
2. Forerunners of the Reformation
3. The Protestant Reformation
4. Puritanism & the Legacy of the Reformers

DOCTRINE

1. Reformation Doctrine: The Big Picture
2. Total Depravity & Irresistible Grace
3. Particular Redemption & Unconditional Election
4. Unconditional Election (cont.) & Perseverance of the Saints
5. **Perseverance of the Saints (cont.), Answering Objections & Why the Reformation Matters Today**

THE FIVE POINTS OF CALVINISM

- Today, the five counter-points that Dort raised against the Arminians, are remembered as the “five points of Calvinism” [TULIP].

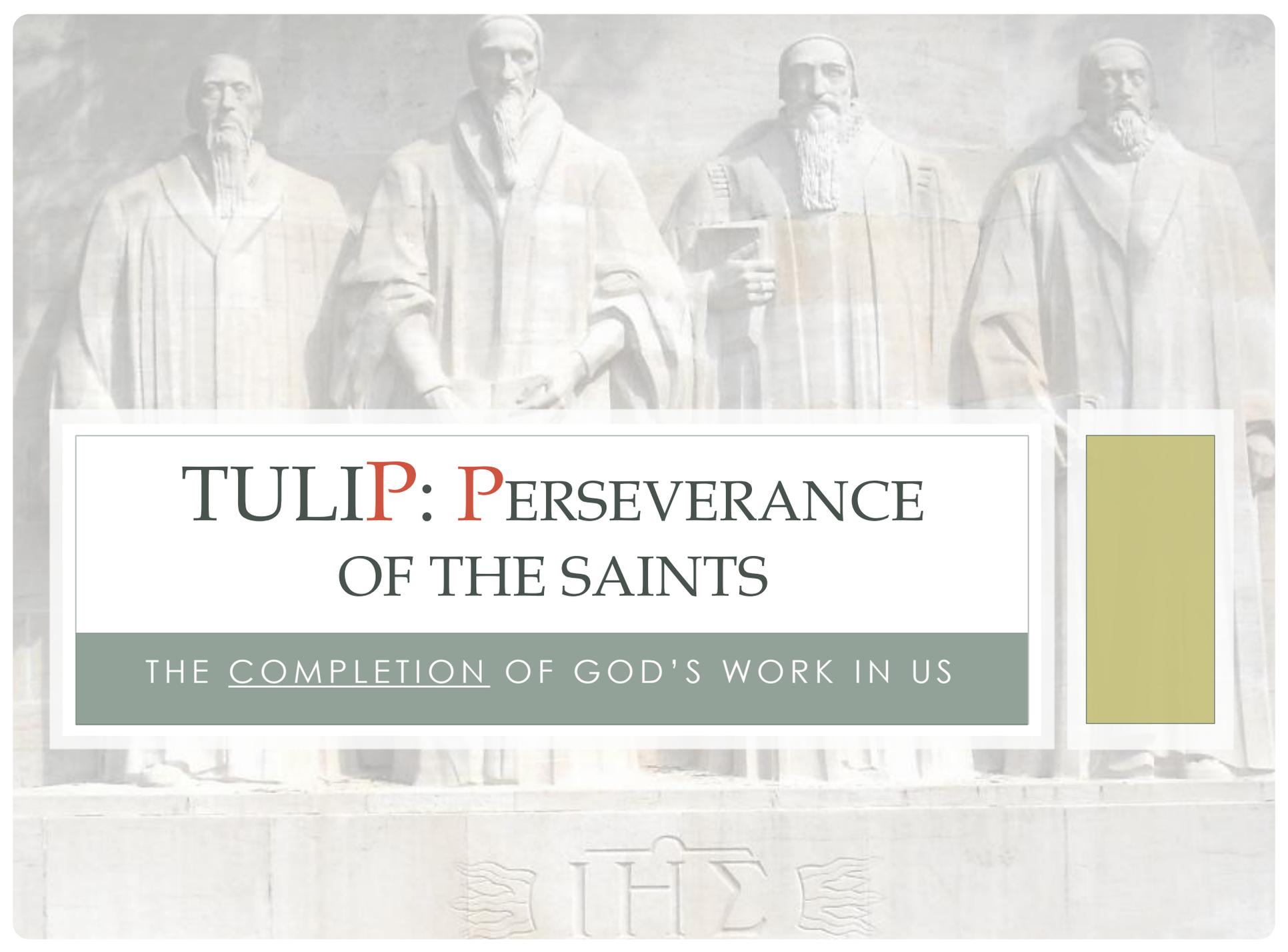
Total Depravity – Fallen Man’s Inability to Come

Unconditional Election – God’s Sovereign Choice

Limited Atonement – Our Particular Redemption

Irresistible Grace – God’s Gracious, Enabling Call

Perseverance of the Saints – The Completion of God’s Work in Us



TULIP: P PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

THE COMPLETION OF GOD'S WORK IN US



PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

God preserves all the elect so that not one of them is finally lost, but He also so works in them that they persevere in their faith. When they fall, they aren't utterly destroyed, they get back up. They bear fruit and have good works which testify to the genuineness of their professed faith. For those who fail to persevere, we are not the ultimate judge, God is. But we should exhort one another daily to "fight the good fight of faith". When understood properly, this point allows believers to take seriously the many warning passages and "if" statements in Scripture. It also gives us confidence to trust that "He who began a good work in [us], will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."

- Some prefer to use the phrase "**Security of the Believer**" or "**Eternal Security.**"
- Emphasizes that God completes His work in the lives of the elect so that none of them finally fall away from grace.

WHY “PERSEVERANCE”?

- Perseverance of the saints is often mis-stated as “preservation of the saints.”
- Preservation or “eternal security” is true. But perseverance speaks of the **obligation on the part of believers to persevere**, to “endure to the end.”
- Common Errors today:
 1. One can lose salvation (Pentecostal, true Arminian)
 2. One needs the Church rites to preserve salvation (R.C.)
 3. Once Saved Always Saved (most Baptists) – problem is a presumption that if you say the prayer, you are secure
 4. Free Grace theology (some Evangelicals who are opposed to “Lordship salvation”) – error lies in saying repentance is something optional, the merest faith saves

PROBLEM WITH ONCE SAVED, ALWAYS SAVED

“Today’s popular evangelical maxim “once saved, always saved” while based in the Biblical truth of justification by faith alone has morphed into a virtual get-out-of-jail-free card for far too many. The church’s duty to make disciples of all nations has been downgraded to an optional extra. The gospel call to repent and believe has become a plea for sinners to assent to the facts of the gospel, pray a prayer, and join the cool Christian club called churchianity. Gone are the stern warnings to “watch and pray” and “endure to the end”. Gone are the bold exhortations to “make your calling and election sure” and “be diligent to be found in [Christ] without spot or blemish”. In their place are the warm assurances “since you confessed you are saved” and “since eternal life is a free gift, God cannot take it back”, and the friendly reminders “everybody makes mistakes” and “don’t sweat: remember, we’re under grace!” The old doctrine that saints must diligently make a personal effort to persevere in faith has been overshadowed by the new doctrine that saints can live just like anyone else in the world and as long as they once assented to gospel truths they are most certainly bound for heaven.”

SECURITY TEXTS (GOD KEEPS)

- **John 10:26-30** “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand”
- **John 5:24** “has passed from death unto life”
- **Rom. 8:33-39** “[nothing] shall separate us from the love of God in Christ”
- **Heb. 10:14** “perfected for all time those who are being sanctified”
- **1 Pet. 1:5** “by God’s power... being guarded through faith for... salvation”
- **Phil. 1:6** “he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion”
- **1 Thess. 5:23-24** “Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, he will surely do it.”

IF TEXTS (MAN MUST ENDURE)

- **1 Cor. 15:1-2** “the gospel... by which you are being saved, **IF you hold fast... unless you believed in vain**”
- **Col. 1:21-23** “you... he has now reconciled... **IF indeed you continue in the faith**, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel”
- **Mark 13:13** “the one who **endures to the end** will be saved”
- **Heb. 3:12-14** “we have come to share in Christ, **IF indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end**” (see also 3:6)
- **John 8:31** “**IF you abide in my word**, you are truly my disciples”
- **Rom. 8:13** “**IF by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body**, you will live”
- **Heb. 12:14** “**holiness** without which no one will see the Lord”
- **Luke 8:13** “**believe for a while... [but] fall away**”

GOD WORKS IN HIS ELECT TO ENDURE

- **Phil. 2:12b-13** “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”
- **Hebrews 13:20-21** “working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight”
- **Jude 22, 24** “Keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life... Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy.”
- **Phil. 1:6** “he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ”
- **1 Cor. 1:8-9a** “[Jesus Christ] will sustain you to the end guiltless... God is faithful”

WHAT ABOUT BACKSLIDERS?

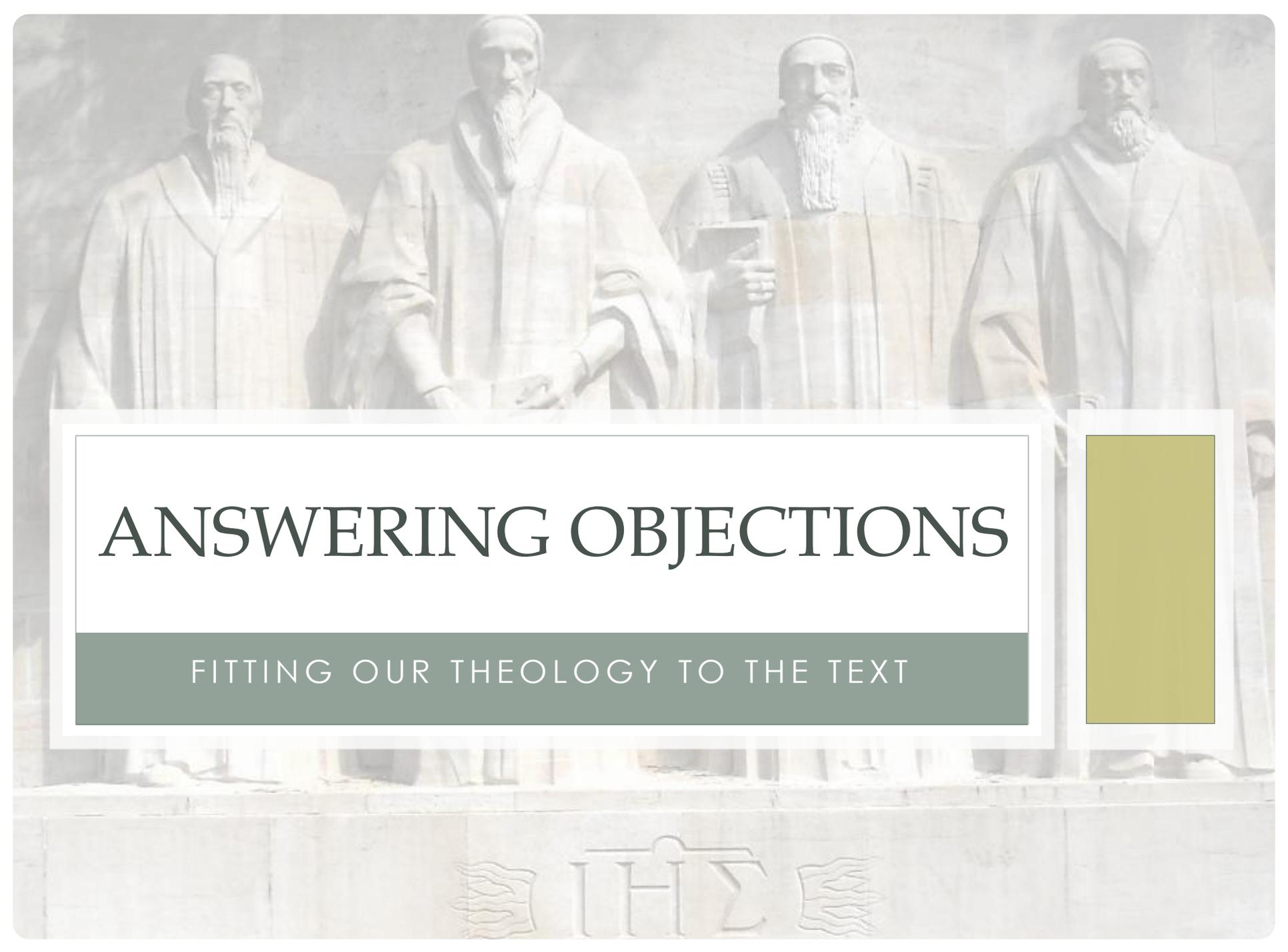
- The truly saved, will return to the Lord – Prov. 24:16
- Difference between Lot and Esau, Peter and Judas.
 - (2 Pet. 2:7 & Heb. 12:16-17; Jn. 13:27 & Luke 22:31-32 cf. Jn. 17:11-12, 24)
- Those who apostasize, **never were truly regenerate.**
 - 1 John 2:19 “went out from us, that it might be manifest they were not all of us”
 - 2 Cor. 13:5 “Jesus Christ is in you, unless indeed you fail to meet the test”
 - Matt. 7:23 “I never knew you; depart from me”

ASSURANCE

- Assurance is in **God's objective work** for us, but is bolstered by evidences of grace in our lives.
- We don't point necessarily to "a time and place" or an "action we did" we point to Christ's death for us.
 - Heb. 12:1-2ff.
- **Present FAITH:** Are we believing in Christ NOW? – Jn. 3:16
- **Pattern of FRUIT:** A godly life (i.e. endurance) is evidence of the reality of our faith.
 - Gal. 5:22-23 "fruit of the Spirit"
 - Col. 1:6 "bearing fruit and growing"
 - Phil. 1:11 "fruit of righteousness"
 - **1 John 5:3** "we keep his commandments"
 - **John 15:16** "your fruit should abide"
 - 2 Pet. 1:5-10 – long-term growth

CAUTION

- Jesus does teach we will recognize false teachers “**by their fruits,**” but we should not be self-appointed “fruit-inspectors” (Matt. 7:16)
- The “thief on the cross” and Lot are examples of true believers that would have failed the fruit test.
- **God is the judge, not us.** (Matt. 7:1, Rom. 14:3-4)
- We are to welcome all, and be considerate of others weaker than us. **We should encourage faith not chase it away.** (Gal. 6:1-2, 1 Thess. 5:14, Rom. 15:1-7)
- Don't despair, “doubts” are not the problem of unbelievers. *The very struggle against sin is evidence of God's work begun in our hearts.* (Heb. 12:1-11)



ANSWERING OBJECTIONS

FITTING OUR THEOLOGY TO THE TEXT

CONSIDERATIONS

- We must be careful to **subject our theology to the text**, not twist texts to fit our theology
- We must admit that there are **difficult texts** for all sides of this issue.
- We may not be able to explain everything to our satisfaction. Some things are shrouded in **mystery**.
- However, we can't shrink back from believing what the text does clearly say.

THE ALL TEXTS

- **John 3:16** “that whoever believes in him”
- **John 5:24** “whoever hears my word and believes”
- **1 Tim. 2:4-6** “who **desires all people to be saved** and to come to the knowledge of the truth... who gave himself as a **ransom for all**”
- **2 Pet. 3:9** “**not wishing that any should perish**, but that all should reach repentance”
- **Ezek. 33:11** “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked”

RESPONSE

- There are contextual arguments in 1 Tim. And 2 Pet. that all kinds of people, or none “of you [the elect]” are in view.
- But the best answer is that **God has 2 wills**.
 - God wills that all be saved.
 - God also ordains [= his will in another sense] that some suffer in Hell for all eternity, to satisfy his righteous wrath against sin.
- These two wills are termed:
 - God’s **prescriptive will** or **revealed will**. [this OUGHT to be]
 - God’s **decretive will** or **secret will**. [God PLANNED this to happen]
- Examples: Jesus’ death (Acts 4), Joseph’s suffering (Gen. 50)

WHY?

- God wants all to be saved, but He must want something MORE than that, since all do not get saved.
- Two principle options:
 - **To preserve free will:** God desires intimate fellowship from free beings so much that he wouldn't impinge upon their free will to actually force them to become saved. He wants true love not a coerced love.
 - **To display God's glory:** God desires to display the full attributes of His glory – his anger toward sin, his perfect holiness, & his mercy toward the undeserving. He wants to magnify Himself in salvation so no one can boast.
- The first option depends on a libertarian understanding of human “free will.” This is never explicitly taught in Scripture.
- The second option is taught clearly in Rom. 9:22-24, 1 Cor. 1:29 & Prov. 16:4. [Also, God didn't create out of a sense of need.]
- John Piper's book *The Pleasures of God* traces Scripture's central theme that God acts for His own glory in salvation – not primarily from a desire to save sinners. He is Jealous.

WHY EVIL?

- Behind the problem of why God doesn't save all people, lies the question of why God permitted sin in the first place. **Jonathan Edwards** has a convincing answer:
- *"God's awful majesty, his authority and dreadful greatness, justice, and holiness... would not shine forth as the [other parts of divine glory] do, and also the glory of his goodness, love, and holiness would be faint without them; nay, they could scarcely shine forth at all... There would be no manifestation of God's grace or true goodness, if there was no sin to be pardoned, no misery to be saved from. No matter how much happiness he might bestow, his goodness would not be nearly as highly prized and admired.... and the sense of his goodness heightened. **So evil is necessary if the glory of God is to be perfectly and completely displayed.**"*
- Remember, it is not Calvinists who raise these questions. Calvinists try to answer them, others are often content to not even think about such questions....

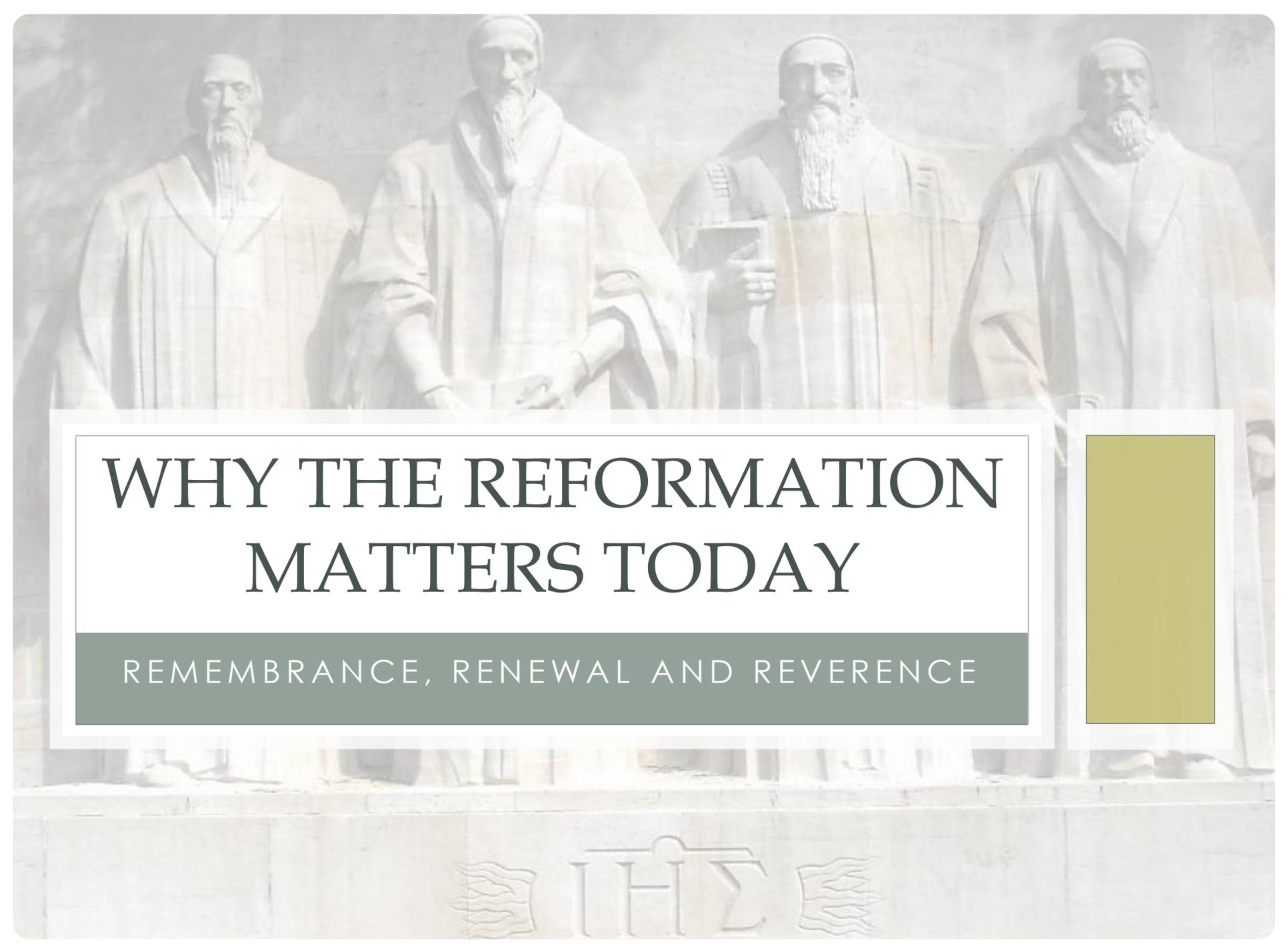
~ quoted from *Chosen for Life* by Sam Storms (Crossway, 2007), pg. 186-187

WHAT ABOUT EVANGELISM?



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Calvinism defends a **God-centered view** and majors on God's bigness.
- Other positions **defend man's role and freedom.**
- Conditional election ultimately rests on an idea of libertarian freedom which is not clearly taught in Scripture – only inferred.
- The impetus behind Calvinism is a desire to believe **what the text actually says** about this difficult matters (Rom. 9, Eph. 1, etc.).
- *My example is typical, I came to believe that Scripture clearly teaches this, so I changed my belief system to line up with this understanding of Scripture.*



WHY THE REFORMATION MATTERS TODAY

REMEMBRANCE, RENEWAL AND REVERENCE

REMEMBRANCE

- We should remember what God has done in Church History and where He has brought us.
- To many today are forgetting why the Protestant church separated itself from Rome.
- A de-emphasis on doctrine and history has led to:
 - Some of the same errors that were found in Rome, popping up in mainline denomination churches and some conservative culture-focused churches
 - More and more evangelicals are returning to Rome, enamored by historic teachings and profound rituals that cast church in a more serious and sober light than today's evangelicalism.
 - There is a movement to blur distinctions & to yoke up with Catholics to do the real ministry of standing for Christ in a fallen world. This leads to an acceptance & tolerance of soul-damning errors.
 - Justification by faith, and a penal-substitutionary atonement are now doctrines that are up for grabs in evangelicalism, rather than the bedrock of the Protestant faith.

RENEWAL

- Restoring a **sense of rooted-ness to Church History**, a continuity with the Church of past ages, will safeguard us from error and keep us humble.
- Recovering **Reformation doctrine**, emphasizing the truths of the 5 solas, and appreciating the role of God in our salvation will keep us from moving off into a man-centered pragmatism that shifts with the sands of culture and obscures the Gospel – the only true hope for our world.
- A **clearer understanding of salvation, election and “the doctrines of Grace”** can lead to transformed lives, humility, worship and a careful persevering trust in the grace of God.

REVERENCE

- How does understanding Calvinism (TULIP) help us?
 - **HUMILITY** – shouldn't promote pride, but a newfound awe of God's incredible grace and mercy in saving us.
 - **Deut. 10:14-15**
 - **ENCOURAGEMENT** – knowing that God chose us, and promises to complete His work he started in us, assures us of our standing with Him. Nothing separates us from His love.
 - **CONFIDENCE** – in evangelism, we are confident that God is at work, and He will save His people. We can serve faithfully trusting God to “give the increase”
 - **JOY & PRAISE** – since election glorifies God, it should make us happy too. Our assurance that God has loved us before the foundation of the world should spill forth in joy and praise. As we understand the truth of this teaching, our hearts will come to rejoice in it as we should.

~ adapted from *Living for God's Glory* by
Joel R. Beeke (RHB, 2008), pg. 69-71

TESTIMONIES

Jonathan Edwards: “There has been a wonderful alteration in my mind, in respect to the doctrine of God’s sovereignty... [it] has very often appeared exceeding pleasant, bright, and sweet. Absolute sovereignty is what I love to ascribe to God... [it is] a great part of his glory.”

George Whitfield: “The doctrines of our election, and free justification... fill my soul with a holy fire and afford me great confidence in God my Saviour.... I am persuaded, til a man comes to believe and feel these important truths, he cannot come out of himself, but when convinced of these and assured of their application to his own heart, he then walks by faith indeed!”

TESTIMONIES, cont.

George Mueller: “To my great astonishment I found that the passages which speak decidedly for election and persevering grace, were about four times as many as those which speak apparently against these truths.... As to the effect which my belief in these doctrines had on me, I am constrained to state for God’s glory... I have walked more closely with Him since that period.”

Charles Spurgeon: “I have my own private opinion that there is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified, unless we preach what is nowadays called Calvinism. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else.”

CONCLUDING POINTS

John Piper: “[Election] is not mainly a doctrine to be argued about, but a doctrine to be enjoyed. It’s not designed for disputes; it’s designed for missions. It’s not meant to divide people (though it will); it’s meant to make them compassionate, kind, humble, meek, and forgiving.”

Piper again: “I recall the time I first saw... the threefold statement of the goal of all God’s work, namely, **“to the praise of the glory of His grace”** (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14). It has led me to see that we cannot enrich God and that therefore his glory shines most brightly not when we try to meet his needs but when we are satisfied in him as the essence of our deeds.... Worship becomes an end in itself.”

~ quote 1, from Piper’s sermon “Pastoral Thoughts on the Doctrine of Election”, quote 2, from Piper’s article “Ten Effects of Believing in the Five Points of Calvinism”, both at desiringgod.org