

Sovereign Grace Series

Lesson # 12 What's Wrong with Arminianism? ²⁰¹²

Amplifying Attachments for this Lesson #12:

- File # 1435; What's the Purpose of the Local Church? For Section III. below.
- File # 1196; The Five Solas of the Reformation. Section
- File # 1436; God's Name is Jealous. Section V. below

In this series, we've presented you the logic and many Scripture passages that point to God's sovereign purpose in the individual, particular atonement unto salvation by the work of Christ. Each of our students need to decide what the Bible teaches about this subject and not rely alone on their own common sense which was corrupted in Adam's fall from God's grace.

The purpose of this final lesson is to analyze and discuss the reasons why it matters if a Christian believes in man's human autonomy in deciding to be saved or whether he believes in God's sovereignty in selecting by Himself who will be saved unto Christ as His own bride to be presented at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb in heaven during the tribulation period.

I. A Godly Sorrow is Required for the New Birth in Christ!

A. Consider Nebuchadnezzar's Conversion to Saint-hood: Did God beg, argue, cajole, or offer salvation to this wicked pagan king as choice for him to make??? Did He make a logical argument?

NO! He did NOT! Read Daniel 4:28-37. **Discuss**

B. Consider Paul's New Birth on the Road to Damascus: Did God beg, argue, cajole, or offer salvation to this wicked Pharasee, persecutor of the early church??? Did He make a logical argument?

NO! He did NOT! Read Acts 9:1-19. **Discuss**

C. Consider the Disciples Conversion after Christ's Ascension: Did God beg, argue, cajole, or offer salvation to these, Jesus' own inner circle of His disciples??? Did He make a logical argument?

NO! He did NOT! Read Acts 1:6-14 & 2:1-13. **Discuss**

D. Conversion Comes When God Acts 1st and Then Repentance Occurs:

2 Cor 7:8-11 *For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it — for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while — ⁹I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. ¹⁰For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death. ¹¹For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter. NASU*

2 Cor 13:4-6 *For indeed He was crucified because of weakness, yet He lives because of the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, yet we will live with Him because of the power of God directed toward you. ⁵Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you — unless indeed you fail the test? ⁶But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test. NASU*

II. A Review of the History of Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism:

[Microsoft Word - History of Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism \(understanding-ministries.com\)](http://www.understanding-ministries.com/microsoft-word-history-of-pelagianism-and-semi-pelagianism)

Rom 5:17-19 *For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. ¹⁸So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. ¹⁹For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. NASU*

A. Pelagianism as Heresy: What is Pelagianism?

“Pelagianism was a 5th century system of works righteousness that was developed by the [British monk,] Pelagius.

This theology **denied**:

- The total depravity of man.
- The imputation of Adam's sin to all of men.

- Election of men to salvation and to reprobation.
- The need for redemption because man was fully capable to live righteously before God.

These 4 denials are the very foundations of Liberal Theology and the root of so called Liberal Churches.

Augustine the Bishop of Hippo in North Africa was the major opponent to this teaching and Augustine's teaching became the source of early Roman Catholic understanding of correct theology, referred to as Augustinianism.

“The controversy yielded several church verdicts including the judgment of the church in a synod in the year 418 AD, where the **Council of Carthage** condemned the teachings of Pelagius. The heretic was exiled to Constantinople in 429. And once again, **Pelagianism was condemned by the church at the Council of Ephesus** in 431 AD.”
From article - **The Pelagian Controversy** by R. C. Sproul;

B. Semi-Pelagianism as Heresy: What is Semi-Pelagianism?

After Pelagianism was declared a heresy at the Council of Carthage and at the Council of Ephesus (431 AD) a new form of movement arose called Semi-Pelagianism which was an attempt to reconcile Pelagianism with Augustinianism.

This new theology had elements of Pelagianism in it, softened, but still in significant error from the Church's official position of Augustinianism. This new theology taught that:

- The beginning of doing good is man's doing, but grace enters the process after man begins to do good works.
- The natural man is not spiritually dead, but is merely spiritually sick and must seek to be made spiritually well.
- God does not choose the elect in eternity past, but merely foresees man's future faith and then elects that person for salvation.
- Man's will co-operates with the Holy Spirit in one's own regeneration, having initiated such regeneration by his own free will, making man's decision to obey God and to apply godly faith to his life, effectively denying God's sovereign election of man unto salvation. This is considered a **weak form of “synergism”**, thus **denying Augustine's understanding of “monergism”** in salvation.
- Men who are elect by God's foreknowledge can still resist His Holy Spirit thus reversing God's electing decision thus changing God's sovereign decree, making God no longer ultimately sovereign.

At the instigation of Pope Felix IV (526–530 AD), Caesarius condemned Semi-Pelagianism at the **Second Council of Orange (529 AD)**. This condemnation was approved by Pope Boniface II, Felix's successor. From that point on, semi-Pelagianism was recognized as a heresy in the Roman Catholic Church.

C. Informal/Practical Adoption of Semi-Pelagianism by the Roman Church:

Although the Roman Church has throughout its life recognize Augustine as their lead theologian in these matters, but practically they have become Semi-Pelagian.

Salvation to the Roman Church is a gradual process bringing about a works based righteousness in the Roman adherent. Rome also declares that actual righteousness can occur due to Church baptism and continue through the other 6 sacraments of the Church. The Council of Trent (1545-1563 AD) formalized confusion regarding justification with sanctification and clearly moved entirely away from their original Augustinianism.

D. Faithful Remnants of Augustinianism Throughout Roman Church History:

Chief advocates of strict Augustinianism throughout Roman Church History include: Isidore of Seville (c. 560-636 AD), Bede (c. 673-735 AD), Alcuin (d. 804 AD), Gottschalk (c. 804-869 AD), and much later the proto-Reformers such as Gregory of Rimini (d. 1358 AD), John de Wycliffe (c. 1329-1384 AD), Jan Hus (c. 1373-1415 AD), and Martin Luther (b. 1483-1546 AD).

“It is noteworthy that what spurred Luther on to Reformation was denying the later schoolmen (Scholastics) and holding on to his order's strict Augustinianism which he graciously received from his mentor Johann Staupitz.”

From **Paul Fahy**; Understanding Ministries; *A Simplified History of Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism*; p. 9 of 34 pages. See Link at the end of this Lesson.

III. The Nature of the Local Church: (See file # 1435)

Many members of local churches do not have a substantial understanding of the purpose of the Local Church. Because of this lack of understanding, which has existed throughout much of Church history, many churches are weak and or dying and saints are not effectively bringing glory to God. I want to propose that fundamentally the local church has 3 requirements by which we bring glory to the God-head. These are outlined in detail in the attachment to this lesson, namely **file # 1435, What's the Purpose of the Local Church?** These three purposes are:

- 1st To glorify God through worship God in truth. Meaning to worship God correctly!

2nd To glorify God by edifying the saints of God. Meaning to build them up in the knowledge of the holy.

3rd To glorify God by evangelizing the world to His glory in His own mercy and Grace.

In this part I want to address the 2nd purpose listed in the attached file #1435. ***The Local Church Exists to Glorify God by Edifying His People.*** All 3 of the purposes are critical to a healthy, God fearing, God serving, God glorifying Church.

I believe that the 2nd of these 3 purposes is currently the weakest amongst American Evangelical Churches. I see a lack of hunger for the Word of God. Many churches fail to and even refuse to teach doctrine. How can we saints be protected from Satan's lies if we don't know the Word of God and its principles, its precepts, its doctrine? It takes a lifetime of preaching, teaching, and study to gain a solid knowledge of Christian doctrine and to hone that knowledge into "discernment" regarding Satan's lies. Many evangelical churches are terribly vulnerable to Satanic lies because they have become, like the Roman Church, Semi-Pelagians. They believe and teach that:

- The beginning of doing good is man's doing, but grace enters the process after man begins to do good works.
- The natural man is not spiritually dead, but is merely spiritually sick and must seek to be made spiritually well.
- God does not choose the elect in eternity past, but merely foresees man's future faith and then elects that person for salvation.
- Man's will co-operates with the Holy Spirit in one's own regeneration, having initiated such regeneration by his own free will, making man's decision to obey God and to apply godly faith to his life, effectively denying God's sovereign election of man unto salvation. This is considered a **weak form of "synergism"**, thus **denying Augustine's understanding of "monergism"** in salvation.
- Men who are elect by God's foreknowledge can still resist His Holy Spirit thus reversing God's electing decision thus changing God's sovereign decree, making God no longer ultimately sovereign.

IV. The Five Solas of the Reformation: (see File # 1196)

This modern "Semi-Pelagianism" denies the five Solas of the Reformation which are all authenticated by Holy Scripture. The modern Evangelical Church has now largely left these truths just as the Roman Church left these same truths shortly after condemning Semi-Pelagianism in the 6th century AD. There were men faithful to the Scriptures throughout the history of the Roman Church, but many were persecuted, imprisoned, martyred, and/or exiled to remote locations because the Roman Church could not withstand the truth of Scripture being preached.

Shame on much of the modern Evangelical Church that has willingly given up the serious preaching/teaching of the Word of God, ignoring and/or denying the essentials of the faith clearly taught in Scripture in order to appeal to the wickedness of the world.

The 5th diagnostic of true saving faith in **1 John 2:15-17** states "**Do not love the world nor the things in the world.** *If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever."*

V. God is a Jealous God: (See File # 1436)

Clearly God is a Jealous God. He even identifies His jealousy by being a name of His.

See Exodus 35:14 *for the Lord, **whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God*** This is one of God's very attributes, perfect and complete and compatible with all of His other attributes. It is part of His identity, not just an add-on.

What is He jealous about? He is Jealous for His own glory. In Scripture, what work of God is depicted as bringing God the greatest glory. It is His defeat of evil and the redemption of a people for His own glory. Why would He share that glory with lost men and women to keep their autonomy intact. His greatest glory is that He is accomplishing His own mighty work to which we who are saved from death and wickedness will praise Him for all eternity! To claim that wicked men are the initiator's of His greatest glory doesn't make any sense!

VI. The Historical Road to Theological Liberalism:

- B. There is a particular sequence of the destruction of orthodox Christian Churches into heresy as described by the description of the church of Laodicea in Revelation 3:14-22. This sequence is well observed throughout many movements within historical Christianity. This movement away from Biblical Christianity continues with us even today.

The Church today still struggles with man's natural depravity as reflected in the continuing corruption of the Church's theology turning away from the Word of God and turning to man's humanistic forms of Liberal

theology that naturally attracts men throughout all ages. The attraction is towards man's autonomy independent of God's design and purpose. Lost man's hatred of the things of God still persists

The Historical Sequence of Apostasy: Generally continuously present throughout Church history!!!

Apostolic Christianity to the early Roman Church's Augustinianism (Pre 5th century Church)

Luther's attempt to return the Roman Church to Augustinianism (16th century Reformation Church)

Much later **Reformation to Orthodox Sovereign Grace soteriology:** God's work of redemption is entirely His sovereign work in redeeming His elect.



Semi-Pelagianism – The theological dark ages of Church Error. (6th century to the present in the Roman Church.)

Arminianism: The theological dark ages of the Modern Church. (1610 to the present in Protestantism)

Salvation becomes a work of God and man. (synergism) God can do no salvation apart from man's autonomy. **A serious error!**



Arianism: Jesus Christ is not eternal as the Father, but was created by the Father, not equal to or of the same nature as. **A heresy!**

Liberal Protestant Theology 19th and 20th century



Socinianism: Jesus is not eternal, reject doctrine of original sin, man's free will trumps God's omniscience, atonement is not

Unitarianism: substitutionary in nature, Jesus became the Christ figure upon his birth to Mary and Joseph. **A heresy!!**

Process theology of the 20th & 21st century



Deism: Jesus is not God or a god, but rather an enlightened, rational man. God is transcendent, but not immanent. **A heresy!!!**

Unitarianism: Jesus was not divine, but was rather a great teacher.

Liberal Evangelicalism - Open theology of the 21st century

21st Century Extreme Liberal Theology:

The Problem Statement Regarding Modern Arminianism:

During the second Great Awakening in America, Charles G. Finney, a heretic evangelist, (considered great by most Arminians) deeply misled the "evangelical" churches. "Finney's new measures were tremendously influential. Even down to our own day, whole denominations are enmeshed in the established traditionalism of revivalist preaching methods. Its present fruits were indicated by a survey of the 350,000 baptized in Southern Baptist churches in 1993: the Home Missions Board reports that more than half cannot be found now by the churches that reported the baptisms. Only nine percent of the adults responding to the survey said they joined the church for spiritual reasons."

R. K. McGregor Wright; *No Place for Sovereignty;* p. 34 – published 1996

"In Isaiah 40-66 there is a more general and all-encompassing concept of an idol that is implied in the prophet's extended diatribe against idolatry. In its most general form, an idol is anything erected by the sinner to stand alongside the God of the Bible to keep him at bay, to limit him in some way within his own creation, to keep him in his place. This place is always a place of convenience designed by his compromised worshipers from which God can be recalled into acting at their philosophical or political whim, without threatening their basic presumption of [human] **autonomy**. It functions as a humanly chosen reference point, a competing origin of meaning and integration, so that human freedom to oscillate between preferred "relative absolutes" is preserved. In this way claims can continue to be made on a history that is forgotten, and a theological tradition can be appealed to while its content is being progressively abandoned. In this way Christian terminology can be used just as it was in the old days, with the words now given new meanings in conformity with the latest syncretism. The search for a workable syncretism between Christianity and heathenism would itself make a fine idol for an enterprising thinker. Historically, it often has."

R. K. McGregor Wright; *No Place for Sovereignty;* p. 216