



What's So Great about the Doctrines of Grace?

Richard D. Phillips

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In *What's So Great about the Doctrines of Grace?*, the Rev. Richard D. "Rick" Phillips shows that "the doctrines of grace," those theological tenets more popularly known as "the five points of Calvinism, are comforting, faith-strengthening, and humbling teachings. In six short chapters, Rev. Phillips demonstrates conclusively from Scripture that this view of salvation exalts God and makes plain His great love for man, which drove Him to do all that was necessary to redeem a people for Himself.

What's So Great about the Doctrines of Grace? Details

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Author : Richard D. Phillips

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From Reader Review What's So Great about the Doctrines of Grace? for online ebook

E says

This is a pretty simple but quite good book on the six points of Calvinism. Wait, six points? Yes! Add sovereignty of God to TULIP (and as I like to advocate, change limited atonement to definite atonement and get STUPID!; somehow I don't think that will catch on). This book is at a level that you could give to your mother-in-law or next-door neighbor to convince them that you're not crazy but, in fact, Biblical. He lays out the doctrine very well, addressing necessary objections but spending far more time on teaching what we believe, not why Arminians are wrong or their objections to Calvinism are wrong. He also riffs on the title and ends each chapter discussing the wonder, glory, and applicability of each doctrine (leading to the wonderful line, "What's so great about total depravity?" A lot, actually!).

I like to read "refreshers" like this every now and then. A nice bit of fresh air. I've already grown to like and respect Rick Phillips. This book will only increase my doing so.

Michael Spotts says

I have read perhaps two dozen books on the Doctrines of Grace. Phillips' is among the best two or three recent popular treatments of the subject. It's not intended for scholarly study, so don't expect to be swept up in nuanced exegesis. Instead, it's a starting-point for the average person looking to know not just the facts, but the value of so-called Calvinism. The book is informative and devotional, making worthwhile reading for those who believe the Doctrines of Grace as well as for those who are considering the other side.

Travis Lee says

Short yet concise book on the doctrines of grace. The informal style of writing makes this accessible to people new to Calvinism or theology in general.

Adam Shields says

Short review: Good overview of TULIP. If you want to know what are the basics of Calvinism, this short book does a good job. But it also mischaracterizes a lot of what those that do not agree with Calvinism actually believe. If the author could either just say what he believes without comment about others or do a better job honestly and humbly understanding disagreements it would be a better book. Many of the complaints he has with Arminianist (about how they read scripture or do theology) he does, just at different points.

Full review at <http://www.mrshields.com/what-is-so-g...>

Jennifer says

A decent overview for someone who already believes these doctrines. Though I don't think he handled the chapter on perseverance of the saints particularly well. At several points throughout the book, I also felt he was attacking Arminian straw men. If the point of this book is to remind Calvinists why they're Calvinist and why they should be happy about that, then the book succeeds. If there is any intent for the book to be convincing to a non-Calvinist, then I think it fails largely.

Josh Pannell says

This book would better be titled "What are the Doctrines of Grace and Why Do They Matter?". Except for a few short paragraphs at the end of each chapter, this book was not about what is so great about the doctrines of grace. This book gives a good, basic overview of TULIP and would be good for any person who is at the beginning stages of understanding the Calvinistic system; but this book is not about why the doctrines of grace are so great.

Also, he commits pretty severe anachronism when he calls biblical characters like Jonah and Paul Calvinists. He does the same with men from church history, like Augustine. This is unforgivable.

His defense and explanation of I is one of the worse I have ever read. He does not explain well the connection between faith and regeneration in the Calvinistic system.

Overall, good read. I would recommend this book highly.

Bob Kublawi says

This book is a high-level overview of the five doctrines of grace as espoused by Reformed theologians. These five doctrines are represented by the acronym TULIP (Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace and Perseverance of the Saints). If you are of the Reformed tradition then this book will give you an essential guide to the foundations of your faith and its theology. If you are not of the Reformed tradition then these five doctrines might appear puzzling and even frightening.

In the end the book left me unfulfilled, as the author relied far too much on using the sovereignty of God as a handy explanation for his viewpoints. It became tiresome to read "because it was taught in the Bible", and the author's explanations didn't fully address legitimate doubts and concerns that outsiders or those not of the Reformed tradition might have regarding the five doctrines, particularly the fact that Reformed theologians reject the concept of "free will" when it comes to salvation, believing that it is too "humanistic". Salvation, and those who receive it, are under the sole purview of God and whether or not one is saved has nothing to do with the action, or inaction of the believer or unbeliever.

A quick read, but one which made me want to read a different volume with more depth, although I'm not sure I can be convinced of the Reformed theological viewpoint.

Ross Lucas says

Written in an elementary manner, this little book takes us through the five points of Calvinism with much emphasis on biblical support and the practical applications of these doctrines.

Brad Graham says

Great Intro to Reformed Theology

This was a very enjoyable and enlightening introduction to the Doctrines of Grace, also known as the five points of Calvinism. The structure of the book is an introduction, followed by a chapter for each of the five doctrines. Phillips begins each chapter by selecting a Biblical text that supports the doctrine being discussed, and then explains it and highlights corroborating Scripture. He concludes each chapter by giving a practical application for the doctrine, hence the name of the book: What's so great about these doctrines?

Though short, it was refreshing to see each point explained in plain language. The structure of the book made sense and I also appreciated Phillips expositing some less conventional passages of scripture to provide support for each doctrine. He also gave a few helpful analogies, which can be useful when trying to explain complicated Theological concepts (if used properly, of course). I wish the book were longer but would recommend it to anyone interested in this topic, regardless of Theological background.

Mike says

This is a short book that gives an introduction to the doctrines of grace. That's right, TULIP. Just mentioning TULIP or Calvinism carries connotations and evokes a variety of reactions. Phrases like Unconditional Election or Limited Atonement aren't exactly enticing on first glance. I used to wince at the terms too. I actually took no interest in them. A book like this would have been extremely helpful. It's written with humility, uses scripture and logic rather than emotion to support its arguments and simply directs us to how a triune God works to save His people. The thing I enjoyed most was at each point Phillips highlighted what makes the doctrines significant beyond the academic level.

Obviously a 100 page book is only an introduction and must limit its scope, but I would have appreciated more time on responding to some of the common objections (although he does address several objections). Overall a really encouraging book.

Josue Manriquez says

This is a helpful little introduction to the Doctrines of Grace. If you're looking for an in depth defense of the doctrines of grace, this is not the book for you. In each chapter, Phillips provides a brief explanation of the doctrines of grace (aka. the five points of Calvinism), followed by a short conclusion explaining why these doctrines are so great.

Truly, the Doctrines of Grace are great!!

Tim Genry says

Are you Armenian? Are you a Calvinist? No. I'm a Christian. I believe that part of the good news is that Jesus didn't talk about this stuff. Too much semantics and worrying about the right wording. To hear someone say irresistible grace does not mean "irresistible" makes me say, dude let's just talk about grace and what awesome news it is. Let's quit arguing amongst ourselves and let's get to know God and His amazing love. In Acts 2 I'm glad Peter didn't reply to "What must we do to be saved?" By saying, "Declare first whether you understand the same way on all future doctrines." Nope. Instead after realizing we caused his crucifixion ... and now that I believe Jesus is God's Son, turn 180 degrees around, and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins and I'll receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Saved by grace through faith. We make things too difficult! I know, so did Paul ... but not Jesus. It was so simple to Him. Believe in Jesus. Love God. Love others. Love His bride (the church).

Ryan says

What's So Amazing About the Doctrines of Grace? is a helpful book on the five points of Calvinism, which are total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints—also known as TULIP. It is not an in-depth book by any means, weighing in at only 111 pages, but it is beneficial and a delight.

One of the points that made this such a helpful book was that the author didn't just write a book to explain the doctrines of grace, but to show what is so important about them. Namely, he wanted to inform us about them through teaching and Scripture, but he also wanted to cause to worship Christ and apply them to our daily lives. His two-fold reason for writing was "explain the doctrines of grace, also known as the 'Five Points of Calvinism,' through the exposition of Scripture," and to "help believers feel the power of these precious truths in their lives" (xi). And he does just that.

After explaining the doctrines of grace in a concise way (he didn't write an exhaustive book on each of the doctrines), he then applies them to a believer's daily life. How does the doctrine of limited atonement affect the way I live my life each day? What does perseverance of the saints mean to me today? How can I glory in total depravity, and what does it mean for my life? Richard Phillips does a wonderful job thinking through what each doctrine means to us in the real world, and pointing us to Christ and the glory he will receive as a result of it. And that is one of the strengths of the book.

He ends with this: "Summing up all the doctrines of grace, this is what's so great: those who know and rely on God's all-sufficient grace—the grace of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the grace of the Holy Spirit—are inspired to live for His all-consuming glory. There's nothing greater than that" (97).

Sure, there are much more exhaustive studies that will go much more in-depth into each of the doctrines, but this one is helpful because it is so short and easy to understand. And the best part of it is, the folks over at Ligonier are giving away the ebook for free for this month. Head on over there and grab it—you won't be disappointed. It is well worth the few hours it takes to read it—in fact, more than worth it. You won't be disappointed (unless you're an Arminian).

Tommy Cummings says

I think this title is a little misleading. It should be renamed something like "An intro. To the doctrine of reformed theology". Frankly I am still waiting to find what was so amazing about the doctrine of grace.

This book is a well written overview of TULIP. My main problem with the book, and frankly maybe reformed theology in general, is that relies all too conveniently on God's sovereignty. But back to the book, the author does generalize those who don't necessarily share his views on theology and offers convenient answers when the theology gets tough. That coupled with claiming that many of the early church fathers were teaching calvanism from the get go we're a turn off for me.

If you want an entry level book on reformed theology this is a solid good, but not great.

Tim Chaney says

This was a good but not great book. I think it will be an encouragement to anyone who is newly convinced of a Reformed view of soteriology. For this reader this is a good devotional reflection on some of the strengths of this perspective and how it uplifts God's grace. My fear is that if someone is looking for a good treatment of the debate as a whole this book in its shortness does not provide the best interaction with the opposing view. In other words, if you are an Arminian that is interested in a good defense of Calvinism this book alone would may not convince you. However, this book along with another more technical book could be a helpful combination. But you should understand that this book is short and to the point and for that reason does not have as full of a presentation as some would like.
