

CANONS OF DORT – Abiding Grace Church

Sunday School

Hours 1 & 2

Sundays, April 15 & 22, 2015

- Introduction to the Conundrum: God's Sovereignty & Human Responsibility
 - The Bible unashamedly affirms both God's absolute sovereignty in all things and man's responsibility for his actions (e.g., Acts 2:23)
 - Pastor Mike emphasized the first of these things in the sermon last week – and hopefully generated some questions...
 - For example, "why should we evangelize people when God tells us that His Elect will be saved no matter what?"
 - Our goal in this Sunday School series will be to use an important historical document (Canons of Dort) to navigate through some of these difficult issues/questions
 - Emphasize again: The Bible has no issue with these things; e.g., Romans 9 (unconditional election/raising up of Pharaoh) is followed by Romans 10 (Let's go and preach!)
 - Also, although our reason may generate questions, I note here that, practically speaking, we live our lives in such a way that there is no conundrum...
 1. Do you affirm God's sovereignty? (Yes)
 2. Do you repent of your sin? (Yes)
 3. Q.E.D., i.e., you don't blame God, do you, for your sinning?
- Why Are We Doing This? Is "All This Theology" Really That Important?
 - We are doing this because yes, theology and doctrine really are that important!
 - William Ames (Puritan, 1576-1633) said: "Theology is the life giving substance—it's marrow" → Called his Systematic Theology text, The Marrow of Theology
 - Theology informs how you live, how you pray, how you love your wife and kids, how you worship,... and how you witness to others (← direct context)
 - We are going to use the Canons of Dort to guide us through these most important questions, but especially to inform our evangelism
- Dispelling Common Objections:
 - 2 Peter 3:9 ("not wishing any to perish, but all to come to repentance")
 - 1 Timothy 2:1-4 ("desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth")
 - John 3:16; 1 John 2:2 ("the world")
 - Romans 2:11 ("God shows no partiality")
 - Romans 10:12-13 (quoting Joel 2:32) ("whosoever will may come")
 - Does "Calvinism" = "once saved, always saved" (only)?
 - Was I ever *really* free? Was any Man ever *really* free?
 1. Slavery to sin; dead in trespasses and sins
 2. Adam
 3. Jesus
- Brief History Leading Up to the Canons of Dort
 - Pre-Reformation: Men like John Wycliffe (late 14th Century) and John Hus (early 15th Century) bucked against the powerful Roman Catholic system
 - Pop Sixtus IV (1471–1484) established the practice of selling indulgences to be applied to the dead, thereby establishing a new stream of revenue with agents across Europe

- Increasing papal corruption as the 15th Century closed became disconcerting to the "faithful" culminating in Luther's 95 Theses (October 31, 1517)
- John Calvin (and others) systematize Christian theology in (what is now known as) the "Reformed" tradition as 16th Century progresses
- At turn of 17th Century, theology professor at University of Leiden (Netherlands) – Jacob Arminius – writes against the Reformed soteriological view; Arminius dies in 1609
- Remonstrants: the Dutch Protestants who, after the death of Jacob Arminius, maintained the views associated with his name.
- In 1610 they presented to the States of Holland and Friesland a remonstrance (formal complaint, grievance) in five articles formulating their points of disagreement with the Reformed view (i.e., "Calvinism")
- 5 Remonstrant Articles were:
 1. That the divine decree of predestination is conditional, not absolute
 2. That the Atonement is, in intention, universal
 3. That man cannot of himself exercise a saving faith
 4. That though the grace of God is a necessary condition of human effort, it does not act irresistibly in man
 5. That believers are able to resist sin but are not beyond the possibility of falling from grace
- The Canons of Dort
 - In 1618–19 the Synod (formal meeting of church leaders) of Dort, after expelling the thirteen Arminian pastors headed by Simon Episcopius, established the victory of the Calvinist school
 - The Synod drew up 93 canonical rules, and confirmed the authority of the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism
 - 5 Main Points of Dort:
 1. The First Main Point of Doctrine: Divine Election and Reprobation
 2. The Second Main Point of Doctrine: Christ's Death and Human Redemption Through It
 3. (and 4.) The Third and Fourth Main Points of Doctrine: Human Corruption, Conversion to God, and the Way It Occurs
 4. The Fifth Main Point of Doctrine: The Perseverance of the Saints