

Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible 001

2 Thessalonians 3:14-15

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Today in Sunday School, we are embarking on a new series. This is not a book study. (We just finished Thessalonians books.) This is a topical study. The title of this is what I would call, "Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible." A lot of people are wanting to go back to the teachings of John Calvin today.

John Calvin was an interesting person. He brought some good, and he brought some bad. He lived from 1509 to 1564. We are going to be going into all of this as the study unfolds. There is a movement today that I call "Neo-Calvinism." They are very aggressive. It is my conclusion that a lot of the things they say are not directly supported by the Bible. That is what this series is about.

Don't worry, I am going to have a lot of opportunity to back up that statement. I am just giving you a taste of what is coming.

Neo-Calvinism vs. The Bible

- I. Calvinism's Mixed Blessing
- II. Why Critique Calvinism?
- III. The Source of Calvin's Theology
- IV. Calvin's Manner of Life
- V. TULIP Through the Grid of Scripture
- VI. Conclusion

Here is a six-part outline that we are going to use as we go through this teaching together. This will take several weeks. Roman numeral "I" is something that we will talk about today: Calvinism's Mixed Blessing. There are some good things that come out of Calvinism. I will try to show you those in a minute.

Roman numeral "II" is why would we get into this? Why critique Neo-Calvinism? We are going to spend some time talking about that. Under Roman numeral "III", we are going to get into the subject of the source of Calvin's theology.

A lot of people kind of look at John Calvin as somebody that just executed the Scripture. He did that in certain instances. But people who think that really do not understand where Calvin drew his ideas from. He drew them from a source called Augustine who lived over a thousand years earlier than Calvin.

Augustine's beliefs are a mixed bag. You will see once you study Augustine that he was very mixed. A lot of the things he said were off. That is why Calvin carried over a lot of things from Augustine into Reformed churches today. You will still see a lot of that fuzzy teaching in Reformed churches today.

In Roman numeral "IV", we are going to get into Calvin's manner of life. What kind of person was this that everybody's following? John Calvin: did he live some kind of completely sanctified life? Hardly, as I will show you.

Then in Roman numeral "V" we are going to spend the bulk of the series going through the Calvinistic theology known through the acronym TULIP. It is a logically arranged theology, as you will see. Some of it is Biblical. Some of it is not, as I will try to show you.

TULIP stands for Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints. We are going to spend a lot of time going through each of those letters. Here is what the Neo-Calvinists are saying—here is what the Bible says. Then we will get to Roman numeral "VI", assuming the Rapture does not happen first and I will give you the conclusion.

Now the conclusion is that Neo-Calvinism is a philosophy read into the Bible. It is not a theology derived from the Bible. It is a philosophy read back into the Bible. That is the direction that we are moving in. I hope you are interested in this. At some point in someone's life, they get hit with Calvinism by somebody.

Has anybody ever been hit with this two-by-four? Okay, a lot of people. Good. You hear so much about Calvin and Calvinism. We have all these young people that are converting to Calvinism. They are called the young, reformed and restless.

It is almost like a test of fellowship with certain people: Where do you stand on Calvinism? That is the first thing they want to know about. So, since there is all this noise made about it, we want to do some examination of it. That is the direction that we are moving in.

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Let's start off with "Calvinism's Mixed Blessing." I am really not trying to be an oratorical polemicist against Neo-Calvinism. This study is not a hit job on Calvin and Calvinism, because I recognize that there are some good things that came out of Calvinism.

So I want to cover one of the biggies with you this morning, if I could, just to show you that we are making an attempt here to be fair and balanced. It is a "We report; you decide," kind of thing, not, "We distort; you decide."

My first interaction with Calvinism was at Dallas Theological Seminary. A lot of the professors and teachers that I really liked called themselves Calvinists. So I started to call myself a Calvinist. They would call themselves "four-point Calvinists." I liked teacher X and teacher Y, so I said, "Well, if they're a four-point Calvinist, then I am a four-point Calvinist."

The point that everybody throws out is the "L": that Christ only died for some, which is hard to prove. In hindsight, I think what I was exposed to was not the type of Calvinism that is being aggressively promoted today, which I am going to call "Neo-Calvinism."

It was a form of Calvinism that was very light—very, very moderate. It did not teach things like how Jesus only died for the elect. It did not teach things like double predestination: that there are some people predestined unto hell.

So with that kind of background, I started to hear a lot of the teachings of what I would call the "Neo-Calvinists," and I would say, "Well, wait a minute, I do not really believe what they just said there. So I guess I am not a five-point Calvinist. I guess I am a four-point Calvinist."

Then I would hear a little bit more teaching from the Neo-Calvinists, and I would say, "Well, I am not really on board with that. So I guess I am like a three-point, or maybe a three-and-a-half-point Calvinist."

And then I would hear more teaching and I say, "Well, you know, I think I am more like a two-and-a-half-point...a two-point Calvinist." I just kept getting whittled down on this. I am to the point now at which I do not even call myself a Calvinist at all, because Calvinism, particularly Neo-Calvinism, brings with it a whole bunch of theological baggage that I do not really embrace.

So what I call myself today is a biblicist. A lot of people are of this mindset that, well, if you are not a Calvinist, you must be an Arminian. You hear this a lot. Let me use this example (and I do not even think I could use this today with the trans movement): if you are not a male, you must be a female. If you are not a female, you must be a male.

So that is one of the reasons I kept calling myself, a this-point Calvinist, or a that-point Calvinist, because I knew I was not an Arminian. Arminianism is the countervailing theology to Calvinism. Calvinism was developed by Calvin and his followers. Arminianism was developed by Jacob Arminius and his followers.

This battle between the two has been going on for about five hundred years. So I kept saying, "Well, I must be a Calvinist because if I am a male, I cannot be a female." When the truth of the matter is that I really am neither a Calvinist nor an Arminian. I am certainly not an Arminian because an Arminian thinks you could lose your salvation.

So I knew I was not Arminian. So if I was not Arminian, I must be a Calvinist. Yet the truth of the matter is that there is a middle road here. You do not have to be one or the other. There are some principles in Calvinism that you might respect and like and hold on to. There are some principles in Arminianism that you might like and respect and hold on to.

But at the end of the day, I think that the Bible is pretty clear that we are not to say, "I am of Apollos"; "I am of Paul"; "I am of Cephas"; "I am of Calvin"; "I am of John Piper"; "I am of this"; "I am of that." Really what we want to say at the end of the day is, "I believe the Word of God."

So at Sugar Land Bible Church, if you look at our doctrinal statement, we do not say, "We are Calvinist," or, "We are Arminian." What we say is that "Bible" is our middle name and we seek to follow the Bible. So at the end of the day, it is not, "What saith Calvin?" or, "What saith Arminius?" but, "What saith the Word of God?"

As you get into this, you are going to see that there are a lot of points at which the Neo-Calvinists are deviating from Scripture. But before we get into that, let me say some nice things about Calvinism.

Here is a quote from the late Justice Scalia. My background in law gives me a healthy respect for Calvinism. Here is something the late Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia said, (I think at a meeting of the Federalist Society). He said,

"Every tinhorn dictator in the world today, every president for life, has a Bill of Rights,'...'That's not what makes us free; if it did, you would rather live in Zimbabwe. But you wouldn't want to live in most countries in the world that have a Bill of Rights. What has made us free is our Constitution. Think of the word 'constitution'; it means structure.' That's why America's framers debated not the Bill of Rights during the Constitutional Convention of 1787 in Philadelphia, he said, but rather the structure of the federal government. 'The genius of the American constitutional system is the dispersal of power,'...'Once power is centralized in one person, or one part [of government], a Bill of Rights is just words on a paper.'...'A constitution is about setting structure; it is not about writing the preferences of special interest groups,' he said."¹

So the late Justice Antonin Scalia was saying that in the United States, you are born into a country that is basically a free country. And there is a reason why the country is free. It is not related so much to our Bill of Rights, although that is very important. It is related to the fact that our country took political power and decentralized it.

Now how does this relate to Calvinism? Let me fill in the gaps here, if I could. Lord Acton made a famous statement. He said, "All power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely." In other words, the people that run the government are tainted by the exact same sin nature that we have. Is that not self-evident?

So what keeps them from running off the rails? What keeps them from abusing their power? It is the fact that the government is set up in such a way that one person cannot get control of everything, because power is divided.

You see this in Federalist Paper #51. The Federalist Papers were written by Hamilton, Madison, and Jay to convince the farmers of New York to accept the new Constitution and ratify it, adopt it, and sign onto it. The Federalist Papers become a tremendous source of light in terms of why our government is set up the way that it is set up.

I think that James Madison in Federalist Paper #51 says this:

"But what is government but the greatest of all reflections on human nature?"²

In other words, we have the government that we have because our Founding Fathers had a certain presuppositional understanding of human nature. They understood original sin, and they understood that every single human being—it does not matter if

¹ Kevin Mooney, "Supreme Court Justice Scalia: Constitution, Not Bill of Rights, Makes Us Free," online: <http://dailysignal.com/2015/05/11/supreme-court-justice-scalia-constitution-not-bill-of-rights-makes-us-free/>, May 11 2015, accessed 20 January 2016.

² Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, trans. Clinton Rossiter (New York, NY: Penguin, 1961), 322.

they went to Harvard or not (in fact, going to Harvard might make it worse)—is touched by original sin.

Madison goes on here and says,

"If men were angels, no government would be necessary."³

We do not need a government if we all do not have a sin nature.

"If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary."⁴

So if we were all angels with no sin nature, we would not need government. And if the people running the government were angels and had no sin nature, then there is no reason to divide power up.

So Madison writes this and says,

"In framing a government which is to be administered by men [who have a sin nature] over men [who have a sin nature], the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself."⁵

What Madison is saying here is that, based on his study of the doctrine of man (which we call "anthropology," the study of man) we have a big problem here. The problem is human nature. We cannot just say, "Well, we do not want a government at all," because that would lead to chaos.

If you had no government, it would be like the world the way it was pre-government, pre-Noahic Flood, where murder was constantly taking place. So you need to have some government in place to act as a check and balance against our sinful impulses to murder, maim, rape, maul, steal etc. You need to have some penalty in place.

But Madison says that the problem is that the people who run the government have the exact same sin nature as the citizenry. And our study of world history has demonstrated that the default mode of almost every government on Planet Earth is totalitarianism.

If you give the people that run the government absolute control over the government, it will go to their heads. It will lead to pride, and they will become tyrants just like that. So Madison is saying here that we have a big problem in trying to figure out what government works and what governments do not work. And the biggest problem that we have is sin.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

And the reason Madison knew sin is a problem was that he was approaching the whole problem from the assumption that man is tainted by sin. So we have to make the government strong enough to contain the sinful impulses of people. If someone is going to speed, or if someone is going to steal, they have to know that if they do that, there is going to be a price to be paid through penalties from the government.

But at the same time, the people issuing the penalties can become totalitarian. So what are we going to do? That was the big issue at the Constitutional Convention. And consequently our Founding Fathers said, "Here is what we are going to do. We are going to have government."

So our Founding Fathers were not libertarians who say, if you listen to a lot of them talk, "Let's just get rid of the government." Our Founding Fathers were not libertarians. They said, "We are going to take the principles of government, and we are going to divide it. And we are going to create a system where one person or one group of people cannot get control of everything. And that is going to keep us from runaway tyranny."

So they devised a system that is deliberately cumbersome. They devised a system in which it is going to take a long time to get things done. No person would ever set up their business this way. If you were starting a business, you would never set up your business this way. But our Founding Fathers set up government this way because they came from an assumption that man is touched by sin.

Consequently, the government has to become strong enough to control the sinful impulses of the people, but simultaneously weak enough, or it is going to lead to runaway tyranny, because the people running the government have the same sin nature as everybody else.

So, as you know, the Founding Fathers took political power and they divided it horizontally amongst three separate branches of government. The legislature makes the laws; the executive enforces the laws; and the judicial branch of government interprets the laws. They created a system in which there are, built into our constitutional system, checks and balances.

The legislative branch can check the executive branch; the executive branch can check the judicial branch; etc. So for example, it is the President that appoints the judges. There is a check and balance right there. But it is the legislature that has to approve the President's choices. So there is another check and balance there.

The Founding Fathers created a system where people would spend all their time fighting with each other. And as long as they are fighting with each other, that is a good thing, because they are not coming after us, right?

So, you know, you listen to these people on cable and so forth, and they are always complaining, "Nothing's getting done in Washington, D.C." And every time I hear that, I

say, "Thank you, Jesus." "Nothing is getting done in Washington, D.C." You do not want to live in a country where things get done really quick.

Now, if you are interested in a country where things get done really fast, I could recommend Iran to you, a place where there is a complete and total monarchy—theocracy. Yeah, things are real efficient, but it leads to tyranny.

So where did the Founding Fathers get this idea of legislative power, executive power, and judicial power? I am convinced that they got it from the Bible. Isaiah 33:22 says,

"The Lord is our judge [that is judicial power], The Lord is our lawgiver [that is legislative power], The Lord is our king [that is executive power]" (Isaiah 33:22).

Those are the only ways power can be manifested. Political power can only be manifested in one of three ways: interpreting the law, making the law, or executing the law. You never want those three to be combined in any one person, because if those three are combined in any one person and that one person has a sin nature, which the Bible says we all do, then it is going to lead to tyranny.

The only person that you want having all combined sources of political power, is who? Jesus. Well, why can I trust Jesus with these three things in which I cannot trust regular human beings with these things? For a very simple reason. Jesus does not have a sin nature, so He is not going to take His power and abuse it.

So until Jesus shows up and sets up His Kingdom, our Founding Fathers were pretty clear that we need to take political power and we need to decentralize it. We need to take political power and we need to disperse it. And I am not sure if I brought in the quote, but there is a quote from James Madison that says that if you combine, even in the most mild sense, two of the three, then that in and of itself leads to tyranny.

You have to decentralize. You have to keep these sources of political power separate, or else it is going to lead to runaway tyranny, because the person administering the government has the same sin nature as those he is administering the government over. So that is what our Founding Fathers did.

It is a system that makes absolutely no sense. It makes no sense to the business mind, or to the business man who wants efficiency, unless you understand the truth of depravity, which is the fact that we are all touched by a sin nature. And our Founders did not just separate power horizontally. They also divided it vertically.

That is something called federalism. Basically what you have in the United States is not one layer of government, but two layers of government—two layers of government governing over the same geographical expanse. It is just when you get down to the state level that we are going to take the states and divide it amongst how many states we have, in this case fifty states.

Our Founding Fathers were so fearful of tyranny and runaway government because of their belief in biblical anthropology that they took our system of government and they divided it horizontally and vertically. It is a system that makes no sense unless you come from the right understanding of man.

So we have in our Constitution the Tenth Amendment, which says,

"The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution nor prohibited by it to the States are reserved to the States respectively or to the people."

So when you look at the American system, the part of our government which was supposed to have the most power was the state governments. The state governments actually created the federal government. Now, today, it is the exact opposite. The federal government, the national government, has become what I call Fedzilla. It has all the power.

But that was not the original design. The original design was to anchor real power at the state level, because that is the layer of government that is closest to the people. So what the Tenth Amendment says is that if something is not enumerated in the Constitution for the federal government to do—

And by the way, if you look at our Constitution, there are only twenty things the federal government can do. Did you know that? Twenty things. And yet today they have become involved in everything.

But the original design was that if it is not enumerated for the national government to do, then that is reserved for the states to accomplish. So because the powers to the federal government are very limited—those are called enumerated powers—the true source of power for unenumerated powers was to function at the state level.

This is the system that our Founding Fathers came up with, which makes absolutely no sense unless you understand what the Bible says about biblical anthropology and biblical depravity. One of the three authors of the Federalist Papers (Hamilton, Madison and Jay)—I think it was Madison—wrote Federalist Paper #45.

Federalist Paper #45 says,

"The powers delegated by the proposed Constitution"⁶—

Now, he is speaking to the farmers of New York, saying that it is okay to adopt this.

⁶ Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, trans. Clinton Rossiter (New York, NY: Penguin, 1961), 292.

"The powers delegated by the proposed Constitution to the federal government, are few and defined."⁷

See that? They can only do twenty things. What about all the other powers?

"Those which are to remain in the State governments are numerous and indefinite."⁸

Federal power: few and defined—enumerated powers. Power with the state government, which is the layer of government closest to the people—it is the layer of government most accountable to the people—

"...are numerous and indefinite."⁹

So this is a division of power vertically and horizontally. And I am here to tell you that the Founding Fathers would have never, ever, ever come up with something like this, had they not been steeped in the notion of Biblical depravity. This system makes no sense at all unless you are a believer in biblical depravity.

Thomas Jefferson puts it this way. This quote tells it all.

"...in questions of power then, let no more be heard of confidence in man, but bind him down from mischief by the chains of the constitution...."¹⁰

If you want to exert political power in the United States of America, then we are going to put a set of handcuffs on you. We are actually going to bind you down from mischief. Why is that? Because we do not have confidence in man.

Now, a modern day psychologist has confidence in man. A modern day humanist has confidence in man. If the people that put together our Constitution had confidence in man—if they thought that men were basically good at heart—they would have never come up with this contraption that we have today. But if you understand biblical depravity, and its impact on runaway tyranny, then the system makes perfect sense.

So I always get a little bit of a chuckle out of people that say, "Let's scrap the Constitution. It's outdated." Well, the truth of the matter is that the Constitution is not outdated because it is a set of handcuffs on human nature, and human nature does not change.

So when your kids come home from school and say, "Hey, our teacher said, 'It's an old constitution, let's chuck it and let's create something more conducive to the times,'" your

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Papers of Thomas Jefferson 30:529-556.

response as a parent, or as a grandparent is, "Well, I don't think that's true, because it is a shackle on human nature, which the Bible says never changes."

Now, obviously, when I say something like that, I am exempting people that have been touched by the Spirit of God and are seeking to grow in their sanctification. But generally speaking, human beings are rotten to the core. They have been rotten to the core from the beginning, ever since the Fall, and they are continuing to be rotten to the core today.

It does not matter how smart they are. It does not matter what their SAT score is. It does not matter what their LSAT score is. It does not matter what prominent Ivy League law school they graduated from. Depravity has affected all of us. So if we are going to have a government—now, if we had angels running things, we would not have to do this.

But we do not have angels. We have a government administered over men, run by men. So if you put a government over people, that is a control of the sin nature. But what about the people running the government? They need controls too. So they took political power, as I have tried to explain.

The Founding Fathers divided the power up. They separated it vertically, and they separated it horizontally. Now, why would they do that? They did that because they understood human nature. The Bible is very clear on this point of depravity.

You know, my parents did not have to sit me down and tell me how to sin. I sin naturally. In fact, my heart has committed sins that my hands have not gotten around to yet, because that is the condition I am born into under Adam's cursed lineage.

I do not need a lesson from Mom and Dad on how to be selfish, or how to be irritable, or how to throw a tantrum when I cannot get my way. I never had to have a lesson from Mom and Dad on hoarding my toys from my brother, and, you know, hitting him sometimes in the middle of the night, (poor guy) because I was upset about something, or kicking him or whatever.

It is never like a lesson: "Okay, here is how you kick your brother. Let's try it out a little bit. Here. Loosen the leg up." All these things come to us naturally because we are in Adam's cursed lineage. Now, you can demonize America's Founding Fathers. You can call them all kinds of names. You could say they have blind spots. And I think some of that might be true.

The people that put our country together were not perfect people. But let me tell you one thing about America's Founders: they understood depravity. They understood it very, very well from Bible passages like this.

This passage takes place right after the Flood. Noah and his family had come out of the Ark. The floodwaters had cleansed the outer world. The Nephilim were gone. But the floodwaters never changed man on the inside.

Inside Noah's Ark were eight people—eight sin natures. And when they got out of the boat and they repopulated the earth after the Flood, the corruption of man's nature continued on. So you have this post-Flood statement that says,

"The Lord smelled the soothing aroma; and the Lord said to Himself, 'I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done'" (Genesis 8:21).

So America's Founding Fathers understood depravity from passages like this. Now, who was teaching these things in early America? The Calvinists were. Calvinism was the dominant view of early America.

Calvinism is a logical syllogism that flows from the assumption of total depravity. If you do not believe in total depravity, then the other points that are made in Calvinism, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints, do not make any sense.

I am going to try to show you in this study that Neo-Calvinism has taken a good doctrine, total depravity, and totally overemphasized it. However, we are not at that point in the study. I am just trying to say that early America under a Calvinistic influence, emphasized total depravity.

The pulpits in early America were aflame with the notion of total depravity, because those that founded early America were Calvinistic in their thinking. And you can go to bed every night, and you can thank God that such a thing happened, because that belief in total depravity affected those who put our Constitution together, and that was their whole logic or basis for dividing political power.

And if we did not have divided political power right now, or in our Constitution, we might be under some form of tyranny as we speak, because that is what happens in virtually every country of the world. It moves into a totalitarian system. That is what Antonin Scalia is saying. What makes America unique? What makes America different? What makes America special?

Not that America is a perfect place, but what has given us this freedom is the structure of the government, which, by its built-in nature, prevents people from gaining control of everything. That is what keeps us free.

Calvinism emphasized that, and our Founding Fathers took that belief of Total Depravity and brought it into the Constitutional Convention. And that is why they created what

they created. And we can spend every day of our lives living in a free country thanking God for that.

So this is why doing a study against Calvinism, Neo-Calvinism as I call it, for me is a hard thing to do because I have enough awareness so that I can look back and not demonize everything and everybody that holds to Calvinism, because we would not even have the government that we have today were it not for Calvinism.

Loraine Boettner, in a very Calvinistic book, "The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination," towards the end of the book, quotes all these historians saying what I have been saying since this class started. Historian after historian after historian acknowledges that the freedom that we have in the United States is rooted in Calvinism.

Here is one quote from Boettner, as he is quoting a historian named Bancroft. Boettner writes,

"Bancroft, who far though he was from being Calvinistic in his own personal convictions, simply calls Calvin, 'the father of America,' and adds: 'He who will not honor the memory and respect the influence of Calvin knows but little of the origins of American liberty.'"¹¹

So what is Calvinism? It is a mixed blessing. That is what I call it. There are things in it that are very, very good and helpful. But then, on the other hand of the stick, there are things in it that are very, very confusing to people and very, very unbiblical, as being espoused by Neo-Calvinists today.

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So this takes us to Roman numeral "II": Why Critique Neo-Calvinism? Why are we getting into this? Let me give you a few reasons.

¹¹ Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1932), 389-90.

II. Why Critique Calvinism?

- A. General calling to defend the faith (Jude 3)
- B. The call to admonish fellow believers (2 Thess. 3:15)
- C. Calvinism is a serious issue
- D. The prophetic implications of Calvinism

Number one, we all have a general calling to defend the faith (Jude 1:3). You will see that in the Romans 16:17.

"Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them" (Romans 16:17).

So when people are coming in with a theology that is not on all fours biblically, every Christian has a responsibility to expose those that are teaching such things and their doctrines. You see this general calling to defend the faith in Titus 1:9-13. This deals with the selection of elders.

How do you select elders in a church? That is a great question. Well, we will pick the most successful people in business and make them elders, right? Well, that is not what the Bible says. The Bible says that one of the qualifications of an elder is the ability to refute those who contradict sound doctrine (Titus 1:9).

It is not enough for an elder just to know sound doctrine. They need to have the ability to refute or contradict those promoting false doctrine. So Paul, about the selection of elders, writes in Titus 1:9-13,

"holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict" (Titus 1:9).

So an elder has to know sound doctrine. He has to know sound doctrine well enough to refute those who are contradicting sound doctrine. Well, why do we need elders who are able to do that?

"For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced because they

are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain. One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, 'Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons'" (Titus 1:12).

And I actually went to Crete on one of our trips, and I made the mistake of quoting that verse on the bus. I do not know if the bus driver was all that happy with me when I quoted that.

But there is a general calling that we have as Christians to stand for the faith, to contend for the faith, to defend the faith. You see this in the Book of Jude. In Jude 1:3-4 Jude, the Lord's half-brother, says,

"Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints" (Jude 1:3).

In other words, Jude is saying, "You know, I originally wanted to write a positive letter about Christian doctrine, and about our common salvation. But because of the necessity of the moment, I had to write a negative book about critiquing false doctrine." Why is that, Jude?

"For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ" (Jude 1:4).

So why are we critiquing in this class something called Neo-Calvinism? Because it is bringing in doctrines that are unsettling. Because, I will show you, it is bringing in doctrines that are upsetting people. It is bringing in doctrines that are confusing people.

In fact, I get countless emails from people who follow our online ministry asking about this point or that point or this point or that point. For about seventy-five percent of them, I look at the email and I say, "Yeah, the confusion is there because of Neo-Calvinism. Yeah, you are confused on that point because of Neo-Calvinism."

So that is why I am going into this, because we have a duty as Christians to defend the faith. We also have a calling to admonish fellow believers, because some of the things that are going to be presented in these lessons are against teachings from people that you hear on the radio or that you watch on TV. Their materials are found in Christian bookstores, and yet they are very Neo-Calvinist in their slant.

So this is not a teaching in which we are critiquing Mormonism or something that is totally outside of Christianity. This is a type of series where we are critiquing people who, in some cases, are considered mainstream staples within modern day Christianity.

Are we allowed to do that as Christians? Yes, because we have a calling to admonish fellow believers.

Notice Titus 3:9-11.

"But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. Reject ["noutheteo" (νουθετέω)] a factious ["hairetikos" (αἰρετικός)] man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned" (Titus 3:9-11).

Now notice that the Christian is called here to reject a factious man. Notice that the English word translated "factious" comes from the Greek word "hairetikos" (αἰρετικός), from which we get the word "heretic."

You might ask yourself, "Well, who is a heretic?" A heretic is someone who brings in a teaching that is not exactly square with the Bible, and creates a division within Christianity. That is who a heretic is.

Notice that Titus tells us to reject a factious man after a second and third warning. Now, notice here that this verb "reject," "noutheteo" (νουθετέω), is used as one Christian critiques a fellow Christian. You see that same verb used in 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15, which says,

"If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish ["noutheteo" (νουθετέω)] him as a brother" (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15).

Now notice that "admonish" ("noutheteo" [νουθετέω]) (2 Thessalonians 3:15) is the same verb which Titus used concerning rejecting a factious ("hairetikos" [αἰρετικός]) man, a heretic (Titus 3:10). Here in 2 Thessalonians it is being used as one Christian admonishes a fellow Christian.

This becomes very significant because there are a lot of people out there that want to follow Ronald Reagan's Eleventh Commandment. You know what Ronald Reagan's Eleventh Commandment was, right? "Thou shalt not criticize a fellow Republican." That was his belief.

So you could have a Republican not acting like a Republican, receiving no critique whatsoever from fellow Republicans. So that is where we got RINOs, as they call them today: Republican In Name Only. That is why there is this insurgency of RINOs everywhere, because of Ronald Reagan's, a very influential Republican, Eleventh Commandment.

So you can criticize a Democrat for this or that, but if a Republican does the same thing, Reagan (who, by the way, was my favorite President—I voted for him twice—he was the first President I voted for) says that if it is a fellow Republican committing the same problems as a Democrat, then you just put a ziplock on it.

A lot of people are like that within Christianity. Oh, you can critique the Jehovah's Witnesses; or you can critique Mormonism; or you can critique atheism, humanism, secularism, Naziism, or Communism. But what do you do when people inside start using the same language as someone outside the church?

Do you follow the Eleventh Commandment here and say, "Oh, we gotta keep a ziplock on this, because, boy, you are criticizing my favorite Bible study hour that I watch on TV"? "You can't criticize that person because my brother-in-law goes to a church, and their whole Sunday school class is reading such and such an author"?

We have gone into this sort of self-censorship, in which we are not allowed to do internal critiques. And yet the internal heretic ("hairetikos" [αἰρετικός]), as it is being defined here by the Book of Titus (Titus 3:10), is far more dangerous than the external heretic.

You do not recognize the internal heretic. He is on the inside. He is doing more damage. If it was an atheist saying these things, we would all recognize it for what it is. So that is the spirit in which I am going to offer a lot of my comments on Neo-Calvinism.

And as I start presenting this, and maybe your golden calf is shaken, I want you to remember 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15, which takes "noutheteo" (νουθετέω), which is used of heretics elsewhere in Paul's writings and applies it to one believer critiquing another believer.

You see, the authority in Christianity is this Book. It is not in me, because I can say and do things that go against this Book. I have the same sin nature that everybody else has. So when there is a divergence, you go with the Book. When your favorite Bible teacher says X, Y, or Z, you go with the Book. Always.

Romans 15:14 uses "noutheteo" (νουθετέω) again. It says,

"And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish ["noutheteo" (νουθετέω)] one another" (Romans 15:14).

See the "one another" there—the admonishing one another. That is one Christian correcting another Christian. And notice that the English word "admonish" is again a translation from "noutheteo" (νουθετέω), which is used by Paul elsewhere of critiquing a heretic.

So why are we getting into this whole subject of Neo-Calvinism? Number one, we have a general calling to defend the faith. Number two, that calling extends to the admonishment of fellow believers. Number three, Neo-Calvinism is a serious issue.

A lot of people look at Neo-Calvinism as just sort of an intramural discussion. They call this a secondary issue. Let's do ourselves a favor today. Can you take your Bible and open it to the secondary section?

So you got my point. There is no such thing as a secondary issue in the Bible. That would be like Moses coming down from Mount Sinai, having received Ten Commandments from God and turning around to the nation of Israel and saying, "Well, you know, Commandments Six and Three are secondary. Here are the primary ones to focus on."

And yet that is the mindset that people have on this internal critique thing. They say, "Well, you cannot critique so-and-so because that is a secondary issue," when the reality of the situation is that this secondary issue thing is made up. There is nothing in the Bible that says that this over here is secondary.

If God said it, it is important. Now, I understand that not everything in this book is the knowledge to get one justified before God. What did I understand when I got saved? Did I understand Calvinism? Did not know what it was, really? You do not have to have the knowledge of some things to be justified before God.

But we do not have any right as Christians to say, "Well, as long as it is not not a salvation issue, as long as it is not a justification issue, then it is a secondary issue." So what we have done is we have created a canon within the canon. "These circles over here in the Bible, these are important. But these ones over here, that is a secondary issue."

So a lot of people will say, "Well, you are critiquing brothers in Christ over a secondary issue." What I am trying to say is that there is no secondary issue. Neo-Calvinism itself is a serious issue. And let me explain why.

C. Calvinism is a Serious Issue

- 1) Path to salvation becomes difficult (if not impossible)
- 2) The sacrifice of Christ becomes unavailable to whosoever
- 3) The character of God is questioned (double predestination)
- 4) Offers no assurance of Salvation
- 5) Calls into question basic Christian practices (such as the baptism of children)

Number one, as you will see, it makes the path to salvation difficult, if not impossible, because of a doctrine that is typically attached to Neo-Calvinism called Lordship Salvation. Unless you have, as they say, submitted your life or been willing to submit your life one hundred percent to the Lordship of Christ at the point of salvation, then you are not saved.

So you will notice that what they have done is put the spotlight on man, and what he does, and taken the spotlight off Jesus and what He did. That is how you always recognize the false gospel. Where does it put the spotlight? Is the spotlight on man or is the spotlight on Jesus?

The true gospel of grace is that Jesus did it all, and we receive what He has done as a gift. That is how a person gets saved. But this doctrine of Lordship Salvation says, "No, that is not true. There has to be conviction, obedience, perseverance, submission, etc." All these principles that you learn at the growth phase are put at the initial phase.

What they just did was taking the gospel of grace and turning it into a gospel of works. So if you are in your Christian life, and you are not manifesting enough fruit (they never tell you how much has to be manifested) then what they will say is, "Well, your conversion was spurious. And the reason it was spurious is that maybe you were not one of the elect. Because if you were really one of the elect, you would be straightened out by now."

So do you guys think that is a secondary issue? To me, that is a very serious issue. You just took the gospel and turned it into a gospel of works, and you made the path to salvation difficult, if not impossible.

A second reason that this is a serious issue is that what they say is that the sacrifice of Christ is not available to whosoever. Jesus did not die for the sins of the world. He died for the sins of the elect. In fact, Jay Adams, whom I love on the issue of counseling, wrote a book called "Competent to Counsel."

I will be showing you his quote. He says that when he is counseling people and he thinks they are unsaved, he does not tell that person that Jesus died for them. He says this is in print.

Well, excuse me, Jay Adams, why would you not tell someone that you are counseling that Jesus died for them? "Well, I don't do that because I am a Calvinist, and I am not sure if Jesus really died for that person, because I do not know if they are one of the elect or not."

So you just changed the gospel. If you are steeped in Calvinistic doctrine, suddenly it affects what you say in evangelism. I have no problem going up to any person and saying, "Jesus died for you," because I do not believe in the Calvinistic doctrine of Limited Atonement.

Now, if I did believe in Limited Atonement, my gospel presentation would be different. Now, is that a serious issue? That is a serious issue in my mind.

Number three, Neo-Calvinism critiques the character of God. It constantly questions the God that I know from my reading of the Bible, because Calvinists have a belief called omni-causality. Not just omnipotence—God is all-powerful—but omni-causality, meaning that God causes everything.

So Calvinists will say that when Adam fell, God caused it. And if your child is hit by a drunk driver, God caused that. Now some of them have even gone so far as to say that God causes rape. I am sorry. The Bible does not teach that God causes everything. It teaches that man through free will brought in a lot of consequences to sin that God never caused.

Now, does God use everything for His glory? Will God use horrific situations in a person's life for His greater purpose of transforming us and conforming us into the likeness of Jesus? Yes, He will, but that is very different from saying that God causes everything.

Omni-causality is an attack on the goodness of God. God is love: 1 John 4:8. In fact, why do we call these hurricanes and tornadoes acts of God? Can't we give the devil a little credit for something?

Calvinists also have a belief of double predestination. Calvin (I will show you the quote) said, "doomed from the womb." He claimed that there are certain people who are born into this world whose sole purpose is to reject Christ and go to hell. And as the flames are rising up throughout all eternity, God is glorified in that.

I am sorry. That is not what the Bible says. What the Bible says is that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). So when

you start playing these double predestination type games, you are no longer dealing with a secondary issue. This is a serious issue.

Neo-Calvinism—let me just finish this list here—offers no assurance of salvation. The people under it have no idea whether they are saved or not because of the “P”: the Perseverance of the Saints. Perseverance of the Saints means that if you are really one of the elect, then you should be overcoming in good works and good doctrine.

Well, what if you are backslidden? Maybe you are not one of the elect. Do you see what is happening? There are a couple of psychologists, actually, Minirth and Meier. I am not crazy about everything they say. But they have an article online entitled "The Psychological Effects of Lordship Salvation."

If you keep telling people over and over again that if there is any lapse in their lives—rejecting the doctrine of the carnal Christian, which doctrine the Neo-Calvinists hate—that maybe you are not saved and maybe you are not one of the elect. Yet Jesus says that it is your birthright—it is your birthright to know that your salvation is sure.

When you start preaching this Perseverance of the Saints over and over again, you are taking away from people the assurance of salvation, which is an emotional counseling issue, Minirth and Meier say.

The last reason that Neo-Calvinism is a serious issue is that it calls into question basic Christian practices, such as baptizing children. Now, I am not talking about infant baptism. I am talking about a lot of these very young people that we baptized last week.

The Neo-Calvinists crowd says, "You do not baptize people like that." Why would they say that? Because to figure out whether they are one of the elect, we need to watch them grow up. We need to watch them go off to college. We need to watch them into their careers. And if they are not persevering in the faith, then they are not one of the elect. Because they may not be one of the elect, we are not, we are not going to baptize them.

Justin Peters wrote a whole book about this issue entitled "Do Not Hinder Them—A Biblical Examination of Childhood Evangelism." Justin Peters is an aggressive Calvinist who believes in the Perseverance of the Saints. He wrote a whole book on why you should not baptize children.

I found it interesting that the only person he could get to write an endorsement for it was John MacArthur, who writes,

"Jesus said, 'Permit the children to come to Me and do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these' (Mark 10:14). Is this a

verse in support of baptizing children who make a profession of faith in Christ as most evangelicals have supposed?"¹²

In our church, we baptize children if we think they have trusted in Christ and can explain that to us. We take them at their word. We baptize them. If you are in a Neo-Calvinist church, they say to never baptize a child. Once again, I am not dealing with infant baptism here.

"If it is, why is it that so many of the children we baptize grow up to show little if any fruit of having being genuinely converted?"¹³

There is the "P"—it just came right to the surface: Perseverance of the Saints. If you are in Christ, there has to be fruit bearing, or else we are going to second guess whether you are saved. And you are going to spend the rest of your life second guessing whether you are saved, because they never tell you how much fruit there has to be.

"Why do so many walk away from Christianity once they gain independence from the home? In 'Do Not Hinder Them,' the author and evangelist Justin Peters presents a compelling biblical case that both the nature of children and the nature of salvation warrant extreme caution before we baptize children who have made intellectual assent to the basics of the Gospel. 'Do Not Hinder Them' encourages parents to teach their children the Gospel but also provides strong biblical and theological reasons to wait until they are older before following through with baptism."¹⁴

Calvinists are calling into question a basic Christian practice of baptizing children. Isn't that what Paul said to the Philippian jailer? "You will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:31, paraphrase). In fact, when you go back to the Didache, which is a very early writing in Christianity, like a manual for Christian and church practices, there are instructions in the Didache regarding baptizing children.

But Calvinists are coming along and saying, "You are never supposed to baptize children." So they are calling into question something Christianity has practiced for 2,000 years, because of their allegiance to the P, or the Perseverance of the Saints.

So I hope I am getting my point across that this subject of Neo-Calvinism needs to be critiqued, amen?

¹² Justin Peters, *Do Not Hinder Them*, FOREWORD by Dr. John MacArthur.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.