

## Neo-Calvinism vs The Bible 009

Matthew 7:16-18

November 24, 2024

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Let us take our Bibles this morning and open them to Matthew 7:16-18.

Jesus said this:

*"You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? So every tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit" (Matthew 7:16-18).*

Jesus laid out this principle that you determine a fruit by its root. The root determines the fruit. You do not get, for example, a lemon tree from an orange seed. If an orange seed goes into the ground, what kind of tree are you going to get? You are going to get an orange tree. If a lemon seed goes into the ground, what kind of tree are you going to get? You are going to get a lemon tree.

In the same way, you determine the fruit of something by the seed that was planted in the ground. One of the things that we are looking at here in our study on Neo-Calvinism versus the Bible is really the source of Calvin's theology. From where did Calvin receive his theology? He actually tells us in a particular quote here:

"Augustine is so wholly with me, that if I wish to write a confession of my faith, I could do it with the fullness and satisfaction of myself in his writings."<sup>1</sup>

We are looking at this section, The source of Calvin's Theology, in our study of Neo-Calvinism versus the Bible.

I think this is important because a lot of people have this idea that John Calvin was just the world's greatest exegete of the Scripture. He was magically dropped out of heaven and gave us these wonderful interpretations of the Bible. I really do not think that is true. There are some contributions that Calvin makes, but here—and we went into a lot of detail on this last week—he is admitting that he got a ton of his material from a man named Augustine.

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<sup>1</sup> John Calvin, "A Treatise on the Eternal Predestination of God," in *John Calvin, Calvin's Calvinism*, trans. Henry Cole (Grandville, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1987), 38.

## Neo-Calvinism vs. The Bible

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I gave you those quotes last time where in his writings he keeps calling Augustine "holy father." In his writings he quotes Augustine 4,119 times. You can hardly read five pages into Calvin's "Institutes" without hearing or reading, "Augustine says," or "Augustine said," or "We agree with Augustine in such and such."

To understand this Neo-Calvinist movement that is now springing up through groups like the Gospel Coalition and Together for the Gospel, and they are so in love with Calvin, that I am going to try to figure out where Calvin derived his ideas? That is an important inquiry, because Jesus Himself said in Matthew 7, in the Sermon on the Mount, the root determines the fruit.

If Calvin is literarily dependent on Augustine, which he himself acknowledges—I would listen to last week's study to get more information on that if you are on the fence on that—but if he was literarily dependent on Augustine, then who was this guy Augustine?

We covered last time that Augustine was a man who lived at the end of the third century and the beginning of the fourth century. He preceded Calvin by over a millennia. Augustine, as we saw last time, is the father of Determinism, which is this idea that some people are elected to salvation, other people have no hope of salvation but they are elected unto damnation.

It is almost as if they are a stone or a rock. Preaching the gospel to them really is of no value or consequence because they cannot understand it anyway. The only ones that can understand it are the ones that are regenerated before they believe, because they are one of the elect. That is Determinism. That kind of idea did not exist for the first two centuries of Christianity, but it became popular in the church through this man named Augustine.

Also last week we covered that Augustine is the father of the doctrine of Amillennialism. "Millennium" means "a thousand years," the "a" prefix meaning "no millennium." He did not believe in a future kingdom of God on planet earth, where Jesus, Yeshua, would rule and reign and govern the world from the city of Jerusalem over planet Earth. The early church for two centuries believed that, but things changed with Augustine, so he is the father of Amillennialism.

He is also the father of the Inquisition, that you can coerce people into Christianity through governmental force. I showed you that in his writings and showed you how that actually bled through in a lot of the things that Calvin did.

When you are dealing with Calvinism, you have to understand that Calvinism is not something you just analyze in a vacuum. It is something that has its roots in a soil. To figure out if the fruit is good or if the fruit is bad, you have to figure out if the soil from which it springs is good or bad. That is why we are taking this deep dive here into this man Augustine.

I believe that Augustine was probably the most influential theologian in church history in terms. When I use the expression influence, I do not believe that the influence was primarily good. I think the influence was negative. The church has been under Augustine's spell, or was under Augustine's spell, for over a millennia, over a thousand years.

The Protestant Reformers, John Calvin included, started barely getting the church to crawl out of that shadow, but when you have been in a tar pit for over a thousand years, and you start to climb out of the tar pit, and let us say you get your way out of the tar pit, you have still got a lot of muck on you. That is essentially what you have with John Calvin and Martin Luther and all of these Protestant Reformers.

They did some good, but they carried a lot of excess baggage with them into their newfound Protestant movement. A lot of the ideas that you hear today in Calvinism and Neo-Calvinism, you can actually link back to this man, Augustine.

Now with brand new material we are picking up where we left off last time. Something else to know about Augustine is that he had a very limited facility with Scripture's original languages. As you probably know, the Bible was not written in English. We have English translations of the Bible. Praise the Lord for that, but the original Bible, the Old Testament was written in Hebrew with a touch of Aramaic, and the New Testament was written in Koine Greek.

The best we know about this man Augustine, the most influential theologian in church history, is that he knew some Greek, but as far as Hebrew, it is open. What did he know about Hebrew? In fact, he may have known almost nothing about Hebrew.

That is problematic because Israel's promises for the future are given primarily in the Old Testament—given in the New Testament some, but primarily you see them developed in the Old Testament. If you are dealing with a theologian that does not really know Hebrew, he is not going to be very favorable to Israel's future promises.

That is why he probably moved in the direction, among other reasons, of Amillennialism, the idea that Israel's promises have been transferred to the church through a non-literal method of interpretation. Some would call this supersessionism, that the church has

superseded Israel's place. This is why, in the writings of John Calvin you see, as he is depending on Augustine, a very sloppy, non-literal interpretation of Israel's promises.

Some of these quotes I have given to you already, but this comes from Calvin's commentary on Isaiah 35:1, which says:

*"The wilderness and the solitary places shall be glad" (Isaiah 35:1, KJV).*

That is properly understood as a millennial passage of the topography of the earth changing once Jesus establishes His kingdom subsequent to the Second Advent of Christ. Notice how Calvin treats this passage, and as he is treating it, you have to see who he is depending on. He is depending on this guy, Augustine, who lived over a thousand years earlier. Calvin says:

"This passage is explained in various ways. I pass by the dreams of the Jews, who apply all passages of this kind to the temporal reign of the Messiah, which they have contrived by their own imagination..."<sup>2</sup>

"This has nothing to do with Israel," Calvin says. "In fact, if you believe this has something to do with Israel in the future in the Kingdom, then you have just pulled it out of your imagination box."

"I willingly view this passage as referring to Judea, and afterwards other parts of the world..."<sup>3</sup>

That is not what the passage says. It talks about Judea and Samaria, and those places in the land of Israel being glad.

"Let us now see when this prophecy was fulfilled, or shall be fulfilled. The Lord began some kind of restoration when he brought his people out of Babylon: but that was only a foretaste, and therefore I have no hesitation in saying that this passage, as well as others of a similar kind, must refer to the kingdom of Christ."<sup>4</sup>

What kingdom is he talking about? The kingdom that is here in spiritual form.

"And in no other light could it be viewed, if we compare it with other prophecies."<sup>5</sup>

This one I have given you before, too. It is Amos 9:13, which says,

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<sup>2</sup> John Calvin, Commentary on Isaiah 35:1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

*"Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed: and the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt" (Amos 9:13, KJV).*

This is talking about in context the Millennial reign of Jesus and the topographical and geographical prosperity that that reign is going to bring in, beginning in the land of Israel. How does Calvin treat this? In his commentary on Amos he says:

"Here the Prophet describes the felicity which shall be under the reign of Christ: and we know that whenever the Prophets set forth promises of a happy and prosperous state to God's people, they adopt metaphorical expressions, and say, that the abundance of all good things shall flow, that there shall be the most fruitful produce, that provisions shall be bountifully supplied; for they accommodated their mode of speaking to the notions of the ancient people; it is therefore no wonder if they sometimes speak to them as to children. At the same time, the Spirit under these figurative expressions declares, that the kingdom of Christ shall in every way be happy and blessed, or that the Church of God, which means the same thing, shall be blessed, when Christ shall begin to reign."<sup>6</sup>

"This has nothing to do with a restored Israel in the future. This has to do with the spiritual form of the kingdom that Jesus established, supposedly, when He came the first time. If you think it is literal it is because God, when He said this, according to Calvin, accommodated—that is a very important word—accommodated His expression."

In other words, Calvin says, "How could the people in the Old Testament understand this glorious kingdom that we are now in? They could not understand it. They did not have the wherewithal to understand it, so God spoke to them like they were in kindergarten. He spoke to them as if they were children. The only thing they understood was something literal on the earth. We all know that that is not what God really meant, because Augustine gave me a framework to repackage this literal prophecy as being fulfilled in the church through a non-literal method of interpretation."

This is the thing that John Calvin does all the time, and it is not a big shock because that is what Augustine did. The man that he says he is wholly dependent on. Here is Zechariah 14:4, which says:

*"And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives...and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the west..." (Zechariah 14:4, KJV).*

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<sup>6</sup> John Calvin, Commentary on Amos 9:13.

That is speaking of not the Rapture, but of the second advent of Jesus at the end of the 70th week of Daniel, where His feet are actually going to touch the Mount of Olives and the Mount of Olives is going to split. There is actually a fault line, I am told by many, going through the Mount of Olives just waiting for Jesus' feet to touch it.

This is just as literal as was the first coming of Christ. Just as Jesus was literally on the Mount of Olives 2,000 years ago, this prophecy says the same thing is going to happen in His second advent. That is a standard, normal, literal reading of the passage, but watch how Calvin waves a magic wand like his mentor Augustine, and waves it away and makes it into something that it is not. He says in his commentary on Zechariah:

"For as we are dull and entangled in earthly thoughts, our minds can hardly rise up to heaven, though the Lord with a clear voice invites us to himself. The Prophet then, in order to aid our weakness—"7

That is the language of accommodation. "You are just a kindergartner. You could not understand higher spiritual truth if you wanted to, so I am going to teach you at the kindergarten level. I am going to make you think it is literal, but in hindsight, everybody will see it is not literal." That is what he means by accommodation.

"The Prophet then, in order to aid our weakness, adds vivid representation, as though God stood before their eyes. Stand, he says, shall his feet on the mount of Olives. He does not here promise a miracle, such as even the ignorant might conceive to be literal—"8

Excuse me, John Calvin. I take that literally. "You are still an ignoramus. You have not arisen to this higher gnostic teaching that Augustine gave us."

"—nor does he do this in what follows, when he says, The mount shall be rent...half...to the east and half to the west."9

This is not saying that the Mount of Olives is going to split in two. That is what it says. He would come back and say, "That is what God told that audience would happen, because that audience did not have the ability to understand anything more." I do not know how that strikes you, this language of accommodation. To me, it makes God into a liar, and we know that God cannot lie.

"—nor does He do this in what follows, when he says, The mount shall be rent...half...to the east and half to the west. This has never happened, that mount has never been rent; but as the Prophet could not, under those grievous trials, which might have overwhelmed the minds of the godly a hundred times, have extolled the power of God...without employing a

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<sup>7</sup> John Calvin, Commentary on Zechariah 14:4.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

highly figurative language, he therefore accommodates himself, as I have said, to the capacity of our flesh."<sup>10</sup>

What you are getting from Calvin in this doctrine of the Millennium is not an exegesis of biblical truth. What you are getting is a philosophy read back into the Bible to rewrite the Bible. If he is claiming that he is completely dependent upon Augustine, I guess it should not surprise us that Calvin would do this, because Augustine did this constantly in his book, "The City of God," where he argued or became the father of Amillennialism. Why would we expect anything different from Augustine when he admits he did not know anything about Hebrew?

This is the concern that I have. As this Neo-Calvinist movement is rising, you are seeing the same kind of attitude towards the prophecies of Israel. A lot of those guys will write off Israel and say Israel has no future nationally. Is that a big surprise to hear them say that when they are following Calvin, who was following Augustine?

As Jesus very clearly said in the Sermon on the Mount: the root determines the fruit. These guys are not acting like exegetes in this area. They are acting like theologians, people that have bought into a preexisting theology or they are acting like philosophers. This is why I do not believe that John Calvin is cracked up to be all that people make him into. This is a whole package that is now coming into Christianity through the young, the reformed, and the restless.

What else do we know about Augustine? We know that Augustine, who Calvin drew a lot of information from, is called the Catholic's catholic. Augustine was the quintessential Catholic; he was the ultimate Catholic. That is why in a lot of circles, Augustine is revered. My criticism of him here would be looked at almost like heresy in a lot of spiritual communities.

He was quite a Catholic, this guy Augustine. Let me give you some examples. He believed in infant baptism. Here is a quote from Augustine. He says:

"Let there be no eternal salvation promised to infants out of our own opinion, without Christ's baptism...So that infants, unless they pass into the number of believers through the sacrament [baptism] which was divinely instituted for this purpose, will undoubtedly remain in this darkness...unless this benefit [baptism] has been bestowed upon them [infants], they are manifestly in danger of damnation."<sup>11</sup>

Another quote from Augustine. He says:

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Augustine, Edited by Philip Schaff, *A Treatise on the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, and on the Baptism of Infants* (Aeterna Press, 2014 edition), p. 29, 30, 112.

"[U]nbaptized infants not only cannot enter into the kingdom of God, but cannot have everlasting life."<sup>12</sup>

As the saying goes, "The road to hell is paved through the skulls of unbaptized infants." The problem is that there is not a shred of biblical evidence to substantiate that. There is no example.

We are studying the Book of Acts on Wednesday evenings. Every time there is a baptism in the Book of Acts, I point out that this is someone that is not an infant, this is someone who understands the gospel. They could be very young, but how can an infant who does not have the ability to talk give a profession of faith? As I like to say, "We will baptize any infant in Sugar Land Bible Church that can walk forward and stand behind this microphone and tell us how they received Christ as their Savior." They cannot do that.

The idea of baptizing an infant violates the idea of what baptism is. Baptism is an outward confession of an inward reality. A person has received Christ, they are saved. If they get baptized or if they do not get baptized they are saved, period. Why do we baptize them? We baptize them because the Lord told us to. It is an outward symbol of an inward reality, something that an infant cannot provide or give.

You have no way of documenting whether an infant is saved or not. All they can do is scream and yell and cry. They can be as problematic as your cats at home. It is like when we brought our daughter home from the hospital after she was born. She was so little and I could not believe what a massive set of lungs she had. She could just yell as if there was no tomorrow. Of course, we were the same way when we were infants. An infant cannot communicate. You have no idea whether an infant has trusted in Christ or not, so we do not baptize infants.

The only way to get the baptism of infants to work is to say that Israel circumcised infants on the eighth day (Genesis 17). These folks do not have an Israel church distinction. We say, "No, that is something for Israel. We are not Israel. We are the parenthesis called the Church Age." There is absolutely nothing in Church Age material or the Book of Acts which talks about any baptism of an infant. Every single person that is baptized by full immersion in the Book of Acts is someone that you can document if they have trusted in Christ through their own confession or if they have not.

That is what the Bible says. Augustine did not believe that. He baptized infants. Is there any small wonder that a lot of the Reformers coming out of Catholicism baptize infants? Martin Luther, for the good that he did, baptized infants. Here is a scholar, McGrath, looking at Luther. He says:

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<sup>12</sup> Augustine, Edited by Philip Schaff, *A Treatise on the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, and on the Baptism of Infants* (Kindle edition, published by Amazon Digital Services), Chapter 8, Kindle location 3350.



"He believed that 'such sacraments could generate faith; and hence baptism could generate faith of an infant.'" <sup>13</sup>

That is what Luther believed. So here is Luther crawling out of this tar pit of Augustinian theology, which existed for over a thousand years, and he is now given the right foot of fellowship by the Roman Catholic Church because he really never wanted to start a Protestant movement. Luther, when he posted the 95 theses in Wittenberg, Germany, was trying to start a Facebook discussion. There were some things that bothered him, and he wanted to get the conversation rolling. The Catholics did not like that, and they gave him the right foot of fellowship, and they booted him out.

Here is this guy, climbing out of a tar pit that the church has been in for a thousand years, and he still has all of this junk all over him. When he starts his church he brings in infant baptism because that is all he knew.

This is what the Protestant Reformers were. They had all this tar pit junk still on them. As you see this whole movement wanting to go back to these guys as if they are the sole arbiters of truth, you are going back to people that did a lot of good, but they were still hybrid Catholics. Calvin was clearly hybrid Catholic because he followed Augustine, the Catholic's Catholic.

As you see this resurgence of Neo-Calvinism, what is happening is that a lot of these folks are bringing back these teachings. None other than R.C. Sproul believed in infant baptism. R.C. Sproul is one of the big voices in Neo-Calvinism. He is deceased now, but when he was alive, he advocated very strongly for infant baptism. Where is he getting that from? He is not getting it from the Bible. He is not getting it from a dispensational understanding of the Bible. He is getting it by taking Calvin as if he is some kind of sage of the past and putting him on a pedestal, when Calvin, in a lot of ways, was doing nothing more than following Augustine.

R.C. Sproul said:

"The Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, and Reformed churches all practice infant baptism. Today we want to look at four lines of evidence that show the validity of this practice." <sup>14</sup>

"R.C, why do you need four lines of evidence?" He needs four lines of evidence because the Bible itself does not go in the direction that he wants. If we followed what the Reformers said in certain areas, Sola Scriptura, there would not be much to debate. There is no biblical case for infant baptism. But he does not want to do that. He does not want to follow Sola Scriptura before he wants to follow tradition.

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<sup>13</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 179.

<sup>14</sup> R.C. Sproul, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/the-infant-baptism-question/>.

"First, just as baptism is the sign of entrance into the community of the new covenant, so circumcision was the sign of entrance into the core community of the old covenant (the people of Israel—"15

What he just did there is he took Israel and the church and he mixed them up. He does not have an Israel-Church distinction the way we do in dispensational theology.

"—God-fearing Gentiles did have to be circumcised)...The absence of the controversy anywhere in the early church—"16

What is he doing now? He is building his doctrine from church tradition. He is not following Sola Scriptura anymore—Scripture alone.

"The absence of controversy anywhere in the early church indicates that the church was comfortable with infant baptism and was carrying on the apostolic tradition of the New Testament."17

Excuse me, I thought these guys left Roman Catholicism because you did not like tradition. Apparently here he likes tradition. This is so common in the Protestant Reformers. It is hybrid Roman Catholicism is what it is. Calvin admits as much because he is channeling, if I can use that word, Augustine.

As Neo-Calvinism thrives and grows, you are getting a lot of people like R.C. Sproul, a leading voice, bringing back some of these ancient practices that are not biblically founded. This is why I have a problem with this whole Neo-Calvinist mindset.

What else do we know about Augustine, the Catholic's Catholic? He also believed in Mary's sinlessness. Here is a scholar writing and then quoting Augustine:

"Augustine also said things to suggest he believed Mary was sinless as can be seen in his book *On Nature and Grace* in chapter 42 titled 'The Blessed Virgin Mary May Have Lived Without Sin.'"18

Augustine believed in the sinlessness of Mary, and that opens the door to Mariolatry. Do not get me wrong. Mary deserves honor, and she deserves respect. She is a wonderful woman of God in the New Testament that the Holy Spirit sovereignly made a decision to use her womb to bring forth Jesus Christ through the virgin conception, the God-Man into the world. We should respect Mary, revere Mary, never try to say derogatory things about Mary, but the other end of the stick is turning Mary into something that she was not.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Augustine, *On Nature and Grace* (Pickerington, OH: Beloved Publishing, 2014), pp. 35-36.

One of the beliefs is that Mary remained a virgin her whole life, and that is just purely unbiblical. I can show you places in the Bible where Mary and Joseph, post virgin birth of Christ, in their marriage had children, and they are called the brothers of Christ. We call them the half-brothers of Christ. They shared the same mom, but not the same dad, because Jesus was conceived of a virgin.

Two of His half-brothers, by the way, wrote books of the Bible. You know what those two books are: the Book of James and the Book of Jude, written by the half brothers of Christ. If Jesus had half-brothers, how in the world could Mary be a perpetual virgin?

Another way they venerate Mary is they turn Mary into something like she is an intermediary between God and man. A lot of people pray to Mary. I had a Roman Catholic student, believe it or not, when I was teaching at the nearby Bible College, and he wrote a thank you letter to all his professors after he had graduated. It was an email he sent out to everybody, and it said something to the effect of: I thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for giving me the ability to complete my education. I prayed to Him daily throughout the process." I was thinking, "Great letter. Thumbs up!" But then he kept writing: "I also want to thank Thomas Aquinas, who I prayed to regularly." Whoops. "I also want to thank Mary, who interceded for me and prayed for me regularly." Whoops.

You just took someone that deserves respect and you turned her into a deity, some kind of patron saint, when neither Mary nor Thomas Aquinas was the God-Man. The only one that can bridge the gap between God and man is the God-Man. There is only one of those, and He is Jesus Christ, because at the point of the Virgin conception, humanity was added to eternally existent deity.

Part of this belief, in addition to her being a perpetual virgin and to her being some kind of patron saint that you pray to, is that Mary did not have any sin. That is a problem because Paul the apostle said: "For all have sinned." Would that not include Mary?

*"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).*

If Mary did not have any sin, then Mary did not need a Savior. We have a big problem with that doctrine because Mary herself called Jesus "My Savior." What is somebody without sin doing calling Jesus her Savior? These are Mary's own words in Luke 1:46-47:

*"And Mary said:  
'My soul exalts the Lord,  
And my Spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior'" (Luke 1:46-47).*

Why does she say "My Savior"? She obviously did not see herself as sinless. Sinless people do not need a savior. But you see, Augustine, the Catholic's Catholic, brought into Christendom this distorted, exaggerated view of Mary. The last time I checked, God's word is pretty clear that we are not to worship idols—anything in the place of

God. That is what you have in Roman Catholicism with Mary. Augustine really got a lot of the ball rolling on this. This is who Calvin keeps calling "holy father."

What else do we know about, Augustine? He was a big believer in purgatory. What is purgatory? You cannot find it in the Bible. You have to find it in the apocryphal books that the Roman Catholic Church added to their canon of Scripture 1,500 years after the apostles left the earth. That is what is called the Council of Trent, the counter-reformation. They did not like this idea that Luther kept saying *Sola Scriptura*—unless I am convinced by Scripture and sound reasoning, I will not believe. They said, "Fine, Luther, we will add our own Scripture."

They grabbed all of these intertestamental apocryphal books and jammed them into the Roman Catholic canon. Do you know how something got accepted into the canon? It had to be written by an apostle or someone who knew an apostle. Peter knew Mark, so Mark's writings came in. Here they are jamming these books into their Bible.

That is why when you talk to your Roman Catholic friends, "I have a bigger Bible." In fact, at one of our events, we had a Roman Catholic gal show up, and one of our people said to her that salvation is by faith alone. She says, "Why do you say that?" They said, "It is in the Bible." She said, "It is not in my Bible," and she is referring to the bigger Bible. What are they talking about? They are talking about books that were added 1,500 years after the fact, after the apostles left the Earth—the Council of Trent—to shut Luther up, who kept talking about the Bible alone.

That is where this whole doctrine of purgatory comes from. It comes from those apocryphal books. It does not come from the New Testament written by the apostles, or someone who knew an apostle, or what we call Hebrew Bible, Old Testament. That did not stop Augustine. He propagated purgatory.

Purgatory is the idea that you go to some place, if you are really bad, for example, to get your sin debt taken care of through burning. Then after a season there, you are qualified to go to heaven. Where does that come from? It comes from the apocryphal books. You can thank Augustine for bringing all that stuff into Christendom.

"Augustine wrote, 'From these words it more evidently appears that some shall in the Last judgment suffer some kind of purgatorial punishments...'"<sup>19</sup>

He did not believe that absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). He did not believe what Jesus said to the thief on the cross—the penitent thief who exercised faith in the Messiah, a deathbed conversion. Jesus said to him, "You have to go into purgatory for a little while and get your sin debt taken care of." No, He did not say that. He said, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). There was no talk of purgatory whatsoever.

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<sup>19</sup> Augustine, *The City of God*, trans., Marcus Dods (NY: Random House, 1950), Book XX, chap. 25.

Yet Augustine promoted purgatory. By the way, this is how the Roman Catholic Church got so rich, by teaching largely ignorant peasants who could not even read that the way to get their relatives out of purgatory was to pay money. It is called the sale of indulgences.

Here is one of your famous ones, Johann Tetzel, whose famous saying was: "When the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs." This is what really upset Luther and really pushed him over the edge, because he saw the people being manipulated by the ecclesiastical authorities. They did this to people for a thousand years. That is how all of that wealth got accumulated in Vatican City.

I will show you some pictures of that in just a minute. If you were alive during the time of Johann Tetzel pre-Reformation, and you happened to go to a church on a Sunday morning, here is the kind of stuff that you would hear:

"Don't you hear the voices of your wailing dead parents and others who say, 'Have mercy upon me, have mercy upon me, because we are in severe punishment and pain. From this you could redeem us with small arms and yet you do not want to do so.' Open your ears as the father says to the son and the mother to the daughter..., 'We created you, fed you, cared for you, and left you our temporal goods. Why then, are you so cruel and harsh that you do not want to save us, though it only takes so little? You let us lie in flame so that we only slowly come to the promised glory.' You may have letters which let you have, once in life and in the hour of death...full remission of the punishments which belongs to sin..."<sup>20</sup>

This is what Tetzel would say, "You have to get your parents out of purgatory. What kind of child are you?" Did we mention there is a little price for that? "When a coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs." If you do this for a thousand years to people, you are going to get rich.

This is how the Roman Catholic Church got filthy rich, through lies, deception, manipulation. What was wrong with those people for over a thousand years? Why don't they just pull out their Bible and say I do not find purgatory in the Bible? It is hard to do that with the Bible chained onto the pulpit. All over Europe it was chained.

You walked into a Roman Catholic parish and people did not have Bibles. It was chained to the pulpit because they were told, "You cannot understand the Bible." Why can you not understand it? "You do not know Augustine's allegorical method of interpretation like we do. We are the clergy. We have been trained. You do not understand that. So trust the priesthood."

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<sup>20</sup> Johann Tetzel, *A Sample Sermon*, Hillerbrand 1964: 41-3.

It is hard to refute Roman Catholic false doctrine when you do not even have the ability to read and you are illiterate. The only thing you could do is depend upon the words of Johann Tetzel, which you would assume he is the authority. He must be telling the truth, right? People in authority always tell the truth, don't they? Trust the science. I have the white lab coat on. I know the truth.

They could not refute this if they wanted to. They did not have the ability to do it. This is why Luther was so strong on Bible translations into the common language of the people. This is why I think it took him 11 years in the Old Testament, I think around 11 months in the New Testament to translate the Bible, not from the Latin Vulgate. The Latin Vulgate is the fourth-century translation of the Bible from Greek and Hebrew into Latin—"vulgate" meaning common; common, as in "vulgar" common speech, earthy speech.

When I went through all of these places, these guides were very knowledgeable. We were at the actual desk that Luther was at when he did this translation. It took him a fast time with the New Testament, and a longer time with the Old Testament because his life was under pressure and he had to move and all kinds of things, but he got it done. He translated the Bible into the language of the common person.

I specifically asked the guide, "When Luther did the translation, did he translate it from the Latin Vulgate or the original Greek in Hebrew?" The guides were very clear: he did not translate it from the Latin Vulgate because he did not trust it. He saw that as the Roman Catholic Bible. He went back to the Greek and Hebrew and translated it into the language of the common man.

That is why the reformers were all about literacy. "We have to teach people to read so they will not be manipulated like this." He believed that if they had their own Bible, they would not be manipulated by the Johann Tetzel's of the world. Yet they got away with this for over a thousand years, pre Luther, with the Bibles chained to the pulpits.

Today in the United States, we have every kind of Bible we can imagine. We take it for granted, but if you were living in the Middle Ages, we would not have a Bible. If you did not have a Bible, you could not test the authorities. How could you be a Berean?

*"Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word of God with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).*

How do you do that when you cannot read? If you do not have a Bible, you cannot be like the Bereans who put Paul to the test. If you are coming to this church without a Bible and you are only listening to what I say as if it is gospel truth, you are falling short of your calling, your calling as a priest.

Did you know that you are a priest? We will talk about that in the second hour. I was watching my favorite cable station this morning. They were sitting on the curvy couch,

and they got into religion, and they said, "Isn't it wonderful that there have been saints in the past? Isn't it wonderful that there are people living today that are saints? Isn't it wonderful that we too can work hard and maybe be saints?" I look over at my wife and I say, "Talk about a bunch of smart people that completely and totally miss the point."

If you are a Christian, you are a saint. Jesus made you a saint at the point of faith alone, in Christ alone. You live a godly life not because you are trying to become a saint; you live a godly life because you are a saint. It is a totally different motivation.

As a saint, you are a priest and you have your own Bible, and you are supposed to analyze everything through the lens of Scripture, including the words of yours truly.

*"But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21).*

Concerning prophecy:

*"...and let others pass judgment..." (1 Corinthians 14:29).*

To the church at Ephesus, Jesus says:

*"I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false" (Revelation 2:2).*

Jesus never criticizes the church at Ephesus for doing that. He says, "Thumbs up." It is easy in the 21st century to look back at the Middle Ages and say, "Why didn't the people test the doctrines that were taught by Roman Catholicism and reveal that purgatory is wrong?" You cannot do that unless you have a Bible and can read it in your own language and understand it, which is what we all have today.

We have Bibles in every size, shape, color, pictures, illustrations, table of contents. People say, "What translation do you use?" I basically use the wide letter issue because it is easier for me to read. I prefer reading out of the New American Standard Bible. The New King James is very good. We have all of these things. We have paraphrases of the Bible, we have all kinds of things. We take it for granted what Christendom, for a thousand years or more, did not have.

This is why today we know purgatory is a false doctrine. How do I know it is a false doctrine? Because in Luke 16:24-26 Jesus talked about it. It says:

*"And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise*

*Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us" (Luke 16:24-26).*

Two men died, one in faith and one in unbelief. They went to heaven or hell. The unbeliever said, "If you are not going to get me out of here, at least come over and cool my tongue or go back and warn my brothers. I have five who are on the same course of unbelief that I am on." You notice the way that this is told is that their condition is irreversible. You cannot get out of here. You cannot go back and warn your brothers. You are in hell forever just like the other is in a place of blessedness forever.

There is no talk about purgatory here. No talk about how you are going to be here for six months and you can get out. It is heaven or hell at the point of death, which is an irreversible condition. By the way, this is not a parable. People want to, because it is uncomfortable, turn it into a parable. Jesus never used personal names in parables. Here He uses three: Lazarus, Abraham, and Moses. If this is a parable, it is totally uncharacteristic of any other parable Jesus told.

That is a clear passage you can use to refute purgatory. You can use Hebrews 9:27, which says:

*"And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).*

Purgatory is something that came into the church largely through the negative influence of Augustine.

One more thing about Augustine, and we will wrap it up here. He believed that the Roman Catholic Church is the only true church.

"Augustine said, 'I should not believe the gospel unless I were moved to do so by the authority of the [Catholic] Church.'"<sup>21</sup>

"Augustine said, 'The Catholic Church alone is the body of Christ...Outside this body, the Holy Spirit giveth life to no one.'"<sup>22</sup>

A lot of Roman Catholics today believe that, and you can thank Augustine for that. John Calvin is saying, "This is the guy I got my theology from."

If you want to bring John Calvin back to life in modern-day evangelicalism under Neo-Calvinism, or if you are upset when people want to put the brakes on and say, "Wait a

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<sup>21</sup> Augustine, *Against the Epistle of Manichaeus Called Fundamental*, by CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, June 7, 2015, p. 13.

<sup>22</sup> Augustine and Chrysostom, Edited by Philip Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Volume 1-14* (Ephesians Four Group, 2015 edition, Kindle edition), Kindle location, 106761.



minute, what are you talking about, exactly?" That is what I mean by the root determines the fruit.