

Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible 014

Ephesians 2:1-5

January 5, 2025

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Open up to Ephesians 2:1. We are continuing this teaching that we started last year. I said to my wife today, "Man, I have not acted up all year." She said, "Well, it is only January fifth." I have kept my behavior good all year long.

We are continuing this teaching on "Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible."

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

A portrait of John Calvin, a French theologian, pastor, and reformer. He is depicted with a long, dark beard and a black cap, wearing a brown robe. The name "IOHANNES CALVINUS" is inscribed above his head.

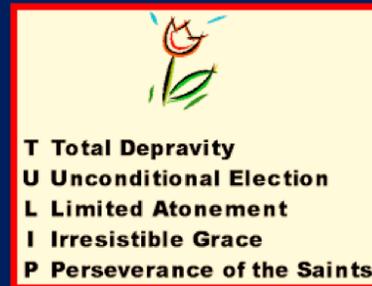
We talked about Roman numeral I, Calvinism's mixed blessing, some good things that flow out of Calvinism. And there have to be some good things, or the church would not have bought into this for five hundred years.

Then we got into the subject of why we are critiquing Calvinism. And then from there we dealt with where Calvin got his theology from.

And then from there we got into Calvin's manner of life. The fruit is determined by the root. We looked at Calvin's life, and now this is where the bulk of our study will be, in the TULIP section.

V. Running TULIP Through the Grid of Scripture

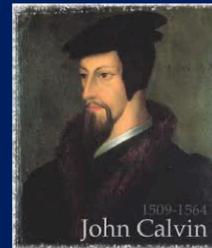
- A. Total Depravity
- B. Unconditional Election
- C. Limited Atonement
- D. Irresistible Grace
- E. Perseverance of the Saints



TULIP is the theological acronym for Calvinism. In this section, Roman numeral V, we are running TULIP through the grid of Scripture. The "T" in the TULIP acronym stands for Total Depravity.

A. Total Depravity

1. The starting point
2. Total Depravity properly defined
3. Calvinism: Total Depravity = inability
4. Calvinism's overstatement of Total Depravity



We start there at "T" (Total Depravity). Calvinism really starts there, because that is the starting point of Calvinistic theology: Total Depravity.

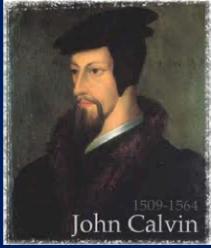
By the way, total depravity is a doctrine that I believe in. I just do not define it the way Calvinists do. But if you buy into the Calvinistic definition of Total Depravity, all the other points in the Calvinistic system make perfect sense. They flow very logically.

But what I am trying to show you here is that I think the Calvinists are off on their definition of Total Depravity. So to show you that, last time we took a look at what the Bible actually means by total depravity.

You cannot critique something as wrong until you understand what the proper definition is. I told you just a moment ago that I believe in total depravity, but I define it differently from how Neo-Calvinism does.

Total Depravity

- What total depravity *is not*:
 - Man is as evil as he can possibly be & indulges every possible sin
 - Man is incapable of doing good things
 - Gen. 3:22
 - Matt. 7:11
 - Acts 10:1-2
 - Rom. 2:14-15



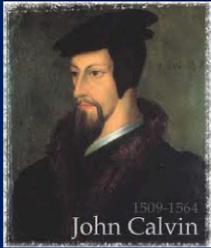
1509-1564
John Calvin

So what is total depravity? Well, first of all, what is total depravity not? Total depravity does not mean that man is as evil as he can possibly be, and indulges every sin.

Total depravity does not mean that man is incapable of doing good works in the sight of his fellow man. I gave you many verses that demonstrate that.

Total Depravity

- What total depravity *is*:
 - Every area of man's being is touched by sin
 - Intellect (Prov. 3:5-6; 14:12; 2 Cor. 4:4; Rom. 3:11a)
 - Conscience (1 Tim 4:2)
 - Will (Rom 1:28; 3:11b)
 - Deeds (Rom. 3:12)
 - Speech (Rom. 3:13-14)
 - Feet (Rom. 3:15)



1509-1564
John Calvin

Well, if that is what total depravity is not, what is it? Basically, total depravity means that every area of our being has been touched by original sin, whether it is intellect, conscience, will, deeds, or speech.

Right down to my feet, my heart, and my body, my total being has been touched by original sin. Am I as bad as I could possibly be? No. Have I indulged every single sin that can be indulged in? No.

But the consequence of original sin and its repercussions to us is that all of our being, in some way, shape, or form, has been touched negatively by original sin.

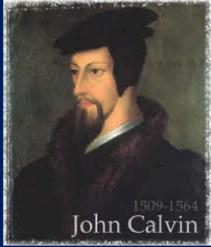
In that state, we are capable of doing good deeds in the eyes of our fellow man, but we are completely and totally incapable of meriting favor from God, other than to accept by way of faith the good deed that Jesus did for us on the cross 2,000 years ago.

We are not saved by good deeds. We are saved by Christ's good deed, and we have simply received that as a free gift by way of faith. That is the only way, in my depraved state, that I can gain or merit God's favor.

So with that being explained, let me show you what Calvinism, or Neo-Calvinism, is teaching by their definition of Total Depravity, a concept upon which their whole system hangs.

A. Total Depravity

1. The starting point
2. Total Depravity properly defined
3. **Calvinism: Total Depravity = inability**
4. Calvinism's overstatement of Total Depravity



1509-1564
John Calvin

When Calvinists use the term "Total Depravity," what they mean by it is inability. Bob Kirkland summarizes their view as follows:

"'T' stands for 'Total Depravity.' Man is completely and wholly depraved and has no ability whatsoever to respond (repent or believe) to God until he is first 'regenerated' by God."¹

So the Calvinists' understanding of Total Depravity is that you are like a rock. You are in an inanimate and insensate state. You have no capacity at all to respond to God.

So why is it that we have people in our world that have responded to God? Well, God had to come in the front end and give them the gift of faith, because a rock cannot believe.

¹ Bob Kirkland, *Calvinism: None Dare Call It Heresy; Spotlight on the Life and Teachings of John Calvin* (Eureka, MT: Lighthouse Trails, 2018), 34.

So in order to get a rock to believe, God has to do a miracle on the front end, and He imparts to them the gift of faith. The faith people who are saved have in Christ today is not their faith, but it is God's faith given to them.

And those people could not even embrace that faith unless they were born again. So God causes them to be born again first. Regeneration precedes faith. And then, once they are born again, they could see straight to believe.

But the belief that they have really is not theirs anyway. It is imparted or infused by God. That is the only way you can get an inanimate object to a state of spiritual aliveness.

Then you say, "Well, who is it who gets this gift of faith and is regenerated so they can believe?" Calvinists say, "That is the elect, the very small fraction of humanity that God chose to give this gift to."

"What about everyone else who is not so chosen?" "Well, they are doomed from the womb by God's design." So they will go into hell, having never had an opportunity to believe, any more than a rock would have an ability to believe.

So, this whole Calvinistic system is built from their understanding of Total Depravity. And when you talk to them, it will not be long till they take you to Ephesians 2, which is why I had you open to that verse.

It says in Ephesians 2:1,

"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins," (Ephesians 2:1).

And Calvinists say, "Do you know what 'dead' means? 'Dead' means not alive—a rock. You are in an insensate state—an inanimate object, just like a corpse."

So what does God have to do?

Ephesians 2:5 says,

"even when we were dead in our transgressions, [He] made us..." (Ephesians 2:5).

He forced you, in a sense.

"...alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)" (Ephesians 2:5).

"Made us," in the Calvinists' definition, means that God took a dead person who is inanimate, and He made that person alive by giving him the gift of faith, because a dead person cannot believe.

Regeneration precedes faith. God did that for the elect. So if you have experienced that, then congratulations: you are one of the elect—maybe you are one of the elect.

You have to persevere in good works to the end of your life (that is the "P" in TULIP: Perseverance of the Saints) to prove that you are one of the elect.

And if you are not part of that small fraction of humanity who is one of the elect—you are one of everyone else whom God created for destruction.

This concept is called the doctrine of double predestination. God predestined certain people to heaven and certain people to hell.

And if you say back, "Well, that is not fair," Calvinists would say, "Well, who are you, as a rock, to answer to God? Your sense of fairness does not matter. This is how God arranged things."

So this is basically their understanding. Calvinists are defining "dead," not as separation, which as I will be showing you is the correct definition, but dead in the sense of being inanimate. So God made us alive, Ephesians 2:5, by imparting to us, as the elect, the gift of faith.

Now, we are living in this age, in which, when you critique other beliefs, particularly within the body of Christ, people always accuse you of misrepresenting people.

That is why I have to bore you with a bunch of quotes to show you that, yes, this is really what they teach in this Neo-Calvinist movement.

The Calvinists are getting ready, by the way, to have a big conference, "Together for the Gospel, I think, in April (now called "TGC25"²). Neo-Calvinism is a movement that is spreading like wildfire in evangelicalism.

So let me give you some quotes from Calvinists showing you that they actually teach this and that it is not me mishearing them over the course of a sermon, or something like that. Calvinists say these things over and over again in their communications and writings.

Here is a quote from John Piper. I have all the references to these quotes on the screen, references to where you could look these things up.

A lot of times Calvinists will scrub the websites. When they say something like this, they get embarrassed and take it down. So sometimes the reference is not up anymore.

But this is a real reference. This is a quote from John Piper, one of the big leaders in the Neo-Calvinist movement.

John Piper defines spiritual death as the state of being "incapable of any life with God [before salvation]. Our hearts were like a stone toward God (Ephesians 4:18; Ezekiel 36:26)."³

² <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/tgc25-conference-announcement/>

³ John Piper and Pastoral Staff, TULIP: What We Believe About the Five Points of Calvinism: Position Paper of the Pastoral Staff" (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God Ministries, 1997), Desiring God website, March 1, 1998.

See the language "stone"⁴? That is a rock that is incapable of ever responding to God.

Piper refers to a few verses: Ephesians 4:18 (which does not say that, but he quotes it anyway), and Ezekiel 36:26 (about Israel in the last days, and God giving to Israel new life).

Calvinists read into that the gift of faith, totally leaving out Matthew 23:37-39, in which Jesus specifically said, "I am not coming back for this nation until this nation makes a choice to receive Me" (paraphrase).

So when Calvinists are quoting Ezekiel 36, keep in mind that they are leaving out Matthew 23:37-39. Notice this language of "stone": "stone toward God."⁵

Adam and Eve, when they sinned, were not stones towards God, because they were running from God. In other words, they were suppressing the truth of God.

How do you run from God when you are like a rock? That in and of itself does not make a lot of sense, does it?

Here is what Calvinists say in the Westminster Confession, one of their key documents, giving us their doctrines. It says,

"All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, He is pleased in His appointed and accepted time effectually to call, by His Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and, by His almighty power determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ: yet so, as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace."⁶

So how does the stone come to Christ? Well, it has to be equipped for it, right? It has to be equipped for it by a miracle God does on the front end, imparting the gift of faith—regeneration precedes faith—if the stone is one of the elect.

That is what we mean: when Calvinists use the word "depravity," they do not define it exactly the way we did. They throw in the word "inability."

Here is a quote from John Gerstner. He is talking about John 3:16, and putting down the interpretation of John 3:16, where it says,

"For God so loved the world" (John 3:16).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ *Westminster Confession* 10:1.

Gerstner does not like that word "world," so he shrinks it to the elect. That is just the world of the elect. But he is down on the proper interpretation of John 3:16, which says that Jesus died for the whole world.

Gerstner says that here is the logical outcome of defining John 3:16 the way everyone else other than we Calvinists define it. Gerstner argues that if John 3:16,

"is supposed to teach that God so loved everyone in the world that He gave His only Son to provide them an opportunity to be saved..."⁷

What a terrible thing to tell people that. "John 3:16 says that God loves you and wants you saved." "Oh, no, no, don't say that. We are misreading it." If that verse,

"is supposed to teach that God so loved everyone in the world that He gave His only Son to provide them an opportunity to be saved by faith...such love on God's part..would be a refinement of cruelty.... Offering a gift of life to a spiritual corpse, a brilliant sunset to a blind man, and a reward to a legless cripple if only he will come and get it, are horrible mockeries."⁸

So obviously, John 3:16 does not mean what we think it means. That is what Gerstner is saying. That is like offering life to a spiritual corpse, somebody who has an inability to respond to God.

It is like offering "a reward to a legless cripple." It is like offering "a brilliant sunset to a blind man." So where is Gerstner getting all this from?

He is getting it from his foundational presupposition that Total Depravity means inability. Once you believe that, you can go in and rewrite all these Bible verses.

So that is why we are starting, and why the Calvinists start, with Total Depravity: because Total Depravity, and the Calvinists' understanding of it, are the concepts that their whole system revolves around.

Here is a quote from Loraine Boettner saying essentially the same thing. (All these people I am quoting are very aggressive Calvinists.)

Lorraine Boettner writes,

"In the Epistle to the Ephesians Paul declares that Prior to the quickening of the Spirit of God each individual soul lies dead in trespasses and sins."⁹

No problem so far—if you define "dead" correctly.

⁷ John H. Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth: A Critique of Dispensationalism* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth and Hyatt, Publishers, Inc., 1991), 124.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1932), 65-66; quoting Warburton, *Calvinism*, p. 48.

"Now it will surely be admitted that to be dead, and to be dead in sin, is clear and positive evidence that there is neither aptitude nor power remaining for the performance of any spiritual action."¹⁰

Now Boettner is defining what "dead" is, in his mind. According to him, it means inability. Death in the Bible never means that, as I will be showing you. It never means inability. It means separation.

But Boettner is coming in with a twentieth-century definition of death and reading it backwards into the Bible.

"If a man were dead, in a natural and physical sense, it would at once be readily granted that there is no further possibility of that man being able to perform any physical actions. A corpse..."¹¹

See, that is how Boettner sees unsaved people: a corpse—lifeless—like a rock.

"A corpse cannot act in any way whatsoever, and that man would be reckoned to have taken leave of his senses who asserted that it could."¹²

So apparently, because I am teaching the view that I am teaching here, I am a man who would be reckoned to have taken leave of his senses. (Now, my wife probably would agree with that in my case.)

In other words, we just do not have any common sense, the way our theology works, because we do not understand what Calvinists mean by Total Depravity.

"If a man is dead spiritually, therefore, it is surely equally as evident that he is unable to perform any spiritual actions, and thus the doctrine of man's moral inability [Boettner's words, not mine] rests upon strong Scriptural evidence."¹³

So when Boettner talks about Total Depravity, as a five-point Calvinist, he defines it as meaning that you are a corpse, and as inability.

You may have never heard of some of these guys—Gerstner—Lorraine Boettner—they are people who are less visible who have been formulating these ideas for many, many years.

One of the huge popularizers of this theology in our time period is John MacArthur. Here is what John MacArthur says in his book, "Faith Works."

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

"Because we were dead to God, we were dead to truth, righteousness, peace, happiness, and every other good thing, no more capable to respond to God than a cadaver..."¹⁴

Now, I had to look up "cadaver" in the dictionary, admittedly. "Cadaver" means a corpse, which is kept in the morgue, or in the cemetery. You do not go into a morgue and have conversations with the dead, right? They have no ability to respond.

Well, that is how Calvinism describes the spiritually lost today. Without Christ, they have no ability to respond at all. They are, MacArthur continues,

"...spiritual zombies, death-walkers, unable even to understand the gravity of their situation. They are lifeless."¹⁵

See that expression: "lifeless"?

Samuel H. Turner, a Calvinist, says that being spiritually dead is

"a state of insensibility to the impressions of true religion, so that the party denoted thereby is uninfluenced by its sanctions and representations....It expresses also the inability [Turner's words] to raise oneself from the condition denoted by the word."¹⁶

So if you preach the gospel today, you really cannot expect it to have any effect any more than you, going into a morgue, would have some kind of ability to communicate with a corpse.

See that? So, what are the consequences of this belief? Ideas have consequences. Let me give you some of the consequences as spelled out by Calvinists themselves.

James White, a Calvinist, writes,

"Unregenerate men who are enemies of God most assuredly respond to God: in a universally negative fashion."¹⁷

So if there is any response from an unsaved person to the things of God, the Scripture, and the name "Jesus," it is always going to be negative, because they are in a dead state.

The only way they could get saved would be by God doing something on the front end, if they are one of the elect.

Here is a quote from Arthur Custance, a Calvinist. He says this,

¹⁴ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles* (Dallas: Word, 1993), 64-65.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Samuel H. Turner, *The Epistle to the Ephesians in Greek and English: With an Analysis and Exegetical Commentary* [New York: Dana, 1856], 43-44.

¹⁷ James R. White, *The Potter's Freedom* (Amityville, NY: Calvary Press Publishing, 2000), 98.

"A corpse does not cry out for help."¹⁸

Here is a quote from Gordon H. Clark, a Calvinist, saying that the unsaved person cannot exercise faith.

"A [spiritually] dead man...cannot exercise faith in Jesus Christ."¹⁹

Here is a quote from Arthur Pink, in his book, "The Sovereignty of God." And boy, the Calvinists push this book. They want everybody to read this.

Pink just lays out the points for Calvinism in this book. He says that a lost person cannot exercise faith in the Messiah on their own.

"Faith is a spiritual grace, the fruit of the spiritual nature, and because the unregenerate are spiritually dead—'dead in trespasses and sins' [Ephesians 2:1]—then it follows that faith from them is impossible, for a dead man cannot believe anything."²⁰

Here is a quote from Herman Hoeksema, describing people as not only unwilling to receive the gospel, but also unable.

Hoeksema says,

"[T]he sinner is of himself neither capable nor willing to receive that salvation."²¹

Notice that language: they are not willing, and even if they willed it, they do not have the ability. They do not have the equipment to receive salvation. That is what Hoeksema is saying.

Here is a quote from Steele and Thomas, laying out Calvinism. This is a really important quote to understand the mindset of Calvinists. They say,

"Because of the fall [of man], man is unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel."²²

See, they are not just saying that a lost person cannot do anything to justify himself before God, which is what we are saying.

¹⁸ Arthur Custance, *The Sovereignty of Grace* (P & R Press; First Edition, 1979), p. 18.

¹⁹ Gordon H. Clark, *Predestination* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1987), p. 102.

²⁰ A.W. Pink, *Sovereignty of God*, p. 57.

²¹ Herman Hoeksema, *Whosoever Will* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, First Edition 1945, reprinted 1973), p. 14.

²² David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, and S. Lance Quinn, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1963), 5-6.

Good works do not get you to heaven. The only thing that gets you to heaven is trusting in the good work that Jesus did. Calvinists are taking this whole doctrine of total depravity and going a step further.

Calvinists are saying that the lost person does not even have the ability to believe the gospel. What we are saying is that the lost person cannot do anything to make himself right before God other than to believe.

What Calvinists are saying is that a lost person cannot even believe. That is what they mean by inability.

"Because of the fall [of man], man is unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel. The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God; his heart is deceitful and desperately corrupt. His will is not free, it is in bondage to his evil nature, therefore, he will not—indeed he cannot—choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. Consequently, it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ—..."²³

Now, all the time, when we preach the gospel in this church, we say that the Spirit is convicting men and women all over the world of their need to receive Christ. We get that from John 16:7-11, which I will quote in a minute.

Now, the Calvinist comes back and says, "Yeah, you know, God does that. But it is of no effect because it takes much more than that for a person to get saved."

Mere conviction of the Holy Spirit to respond to the gospel is inadequate is what the Calvinists are saying. God has to make you alive by imparting the gift of faith to you on the front end—if you happen to be one of the elect.

So all this work that the Holy Spirit is doing right now, convicting men and women of their need to respond to the gospel, is of no avail.

I would just ask the question, "If that is true, then why does God do it?" That would be like God convicting rocks and trees to come to Christ. To me it seems that it would be a waste of God's time.

You have to be very careful here, because we do believe that we come to Christ through spiritual enablement. There is no problem there. I did not wake up one day and say, "You know, I think I am going to become a Christian today."

In hindsight, I know that God was working. He was convicting. He was setting up circumstances. He was setting up conversations, evangelistic opportunities, and so forth.

I have no doubt in my mind that God was doing that. God was softening my heart through conviction. And if God did not do those things, I could not be saved, because of my depraved state.

²³ Ibid.

What the Calvinists are saying is that even if God did those things, it does not matter, because that is like convicting a rock.

So God has to make you alive by giving you the gift of faith on the front end, if you happen to be fortunate enough to be one of the chosen.

"Because of the fall [of man], man is unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel. The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God; his heart is deceitful and desperately corrupt. His will is not free, it is in bondage to his evil nature, therefore, he will not—indeed he cannot [inability]—choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. Consequently, it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ—it takes regeneration by which He makes the sinner alive and gives him a new nature. Faith is not something man contributes to salvation,..."²⁴

It is not your faith that saves you. Obviously, our faith does not save us. It is Jesus who saves us. But He asks us to exercise our faith in Him.

You become aware of your need to exercise your faith in Christ as the Holy Spirit convicts you of your need to do so.

Calvinism comes along and says, "No. First of all, it is not your faith. It is God's faith. God gave you the gift of faith. And secondly, to have your eyes opened as a rock which is incapable of ascertaining spiritual truth, you have to be regenerated first—if you are one of the elect."

So you see the differences between what Calvinists believe about total depravity and what we believe about total depravity. I believe in total depravity. I believe in spiritual assistance for the lost sinner to be saved.

But Calvinists are coming in with a completely different ball of wax. They are saying that conviction is not enough because you are a rock.

And then much more has to happen to get you saved than conviction. God has to give you the gift of faith, because a rock cannot believe.

"Faith is not something man contributes to salvation, but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation—..."²⁵

Oh, faith is a gift.

"...—it is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God."²⁶

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

Why does God require of us faith to be saved? Because when you study Romans 4:4-5, you will see that in the mind of God, faith is the one thing that we have that is not a work. It is non-meritorious.

So that is why the Bible says in Hebrews 11:6,

"And without faith it is impossible to please Him,..." (Hebrews 11:6).

Calvinists come along and say, "Well, since you are a rock, you are in a state of inability, and you do not have the faith. God has to give it to you."

That is really weird, because Jesus, when He was ministering on the earth, would say things like this of certain people, usually Gentiles: "I have not seen such great faith in all of Israel" (paraphrase, Matthew 8:10; Luke 7:9).

Well, why would Jesus commend someone for their faith being great? If God gives the gift of faith, would not all our faith be great? Why does Jesus say things like, "Oh ye of little faith!" (paraphrase, Matthew 6:30, 8:26, 14:31, 16:8; Luke 12:28)?

Why does Jesus make a distinction between great faith and little faith? If faith is a gift from God, there would be no such distinction, right?

"Faith is not something man contributes to salvation, but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation—it is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God."²⁷

When you believe in Christ, you are not giving God a gift. You are acquiescing to His terms. That faith is the one thing that we have as totally depraved (properly defined) people that can be pleasing to God.

Now we know from John 16:7-11 that the Spirit of God is at work in the world, convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. If the Holy Spirit were not doing this in the world, none of us could get saved.

So clearly we are not arguing that we get saved with no enablement from God. There is enablement from God. But it is not to the point that God believes for you.

God will bring you to the point of decision at which you must exercise your own faith. And the Calvinist would say, "That is heresy, because a rock cannot believe."

Jesus said this in the Upper Room when the disciples were hitting the panic button because He was leaving, according to His announcements to them. He said,

"But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper [the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, the one who comes alongside to assist] will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.

²⁷ Ibid.

And He, [the Holy Spirit], when He comes, will convict the [elect... Whoops. It doesn't say that, does it?] world..." (John 16:7-8).

Now, the Calvinist will take the word "world" and shrink it to just the world of the elect. But that is not what John 16:7-11 says. This conviction is something that the Holy Spirit is doing worldwide as I speak. Without it no one could be saved.

"And He, when He comes, will convict the world..." (John 16:8).

There are three things that the Holy Spirit is convicting, meaning persuading, unsaved people as I speak (John 16:8). Number one, sin. Number two, righteousness. Number three, judgment.

Fortunately, the passage goes on, and defines what each of these three things are.

"And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin [singular noun, "hamartia" (ἁμαρτία)] and righteousness and judgment;..." (John 16:8).

"Well, Jesus, I have a question. What do those three things mean?" And Jesus says, "I am glad you asked."

"...concerning sin [singular noun, "hamartia" (ἁμαρτία)] because they do not believe in Me;..." (John 16:9).

That is what the Holy Spirit is doing right now in the minds of unsaved people, whether they recognize it or not. He is convicting them over and over and over again of the singular sin that they are committing against God.

If they die in that state, they will go to hell. And that sin is not believing in Me, the Son. You will not get to heaven without the Son.

You will not get to heaven with a belief that says, "I believe in the Father, but not the Son." You come to the Father through the Son (John 14:6). The Holy Spirit is convicting people over and over again of their need to do this.

You will notice that the Holy Spirit, in the lives of unsaved people, is not convicting them of pornography, profanity, materialism, spousal abuse, foul language, or drunkenness.

The Holy Spirit is not trying to morally clean up unsaved people. He is dealing with the foundational issue that separates them from God.

Now, once they trust in the Savior and are regenerated, then God moves them into the second tense of their salvation called progressive sanctification, in which He will start to deal with them with profanity, pornography, anger problems, anxiety issues, etc.

But prior to their conversion, the Holy Spirit is not focused on those issues. He is not focused on gambling, or whatever the issue is.

The Holy Spirit is focused on the one sin that they are committing against God, because of which, should they die in that state, they are headed to an eternal separation from God.

So when you evangelize people, the lost, you have to keep in step with what the Holy Spirit is already convicting them of. If the conversation moves into profanity, or pornography, or marital unfaithfulness, or having too much screen time, you are talking about something that the Holy Spirit is not working on.

Do you see that? So that is why our evangelistic messages have to be crafted in a way that harmonizes with what God is already doing in a person's life.

That is why the gospel tracts that we have out there are vetted, because most gospel tracts tell you that you are saved by grace through faith and not by works. Then they give you five or six works you have to do to get saved.

Well, if you put something like that out, you have a gospel tract that is working with a different message from what the Holy Spirit is doing in people.

As you talk to people, and they want to talk about dinosaurs, and the age of the earth, and important issues, you just start gently redirecting the conversation to what the Holy Spirit is already agitating them about.

"You need to believe in Jesus." Then you define that for them as trust. That is why it is sin. The Holy Spirit is convicting them of sin, not sins. In John 16:9, "hamartia" (ἁμαρτία), the Greek word for "sin," is singular.

"...concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me;..." (John 16:9).

Now, there are three things that the Holy Spirit is convicting the world of: sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). Well, what does "righteousness" mean?

"...and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me;" (John 16:10).

"I am leaving the earth. And what you need to stand before a holy God is My righteousness, from heaven, transferred to you."

I am not planning on standing before God one day in my own fig leaves—my own works of righteousness. I am planning on standing before God one day in the righteousness of Jesus, which has been transferred to me (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The Protestant Reformers called it "alien righteousness." It has been transferred to me at the point of faith.

So when you are talking to an unsaved person and you start bringing up, "Well, you are going to stand before a holy God one day. Do you know what that means? You are going to need more holiness than what you can muster up. You are going to need His holiness."—

Lewis Sperry Chafer called this true evangelism, because now your evangelism is taking on effectiveness—because you are not blathering on and on about some subject that the Holy Spirit is not dealing with that person about.

You want to talk about the things that unbelievers are already under conviction for.

"...concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged"
(John 16:9-11).

This is the devil's world. The devil has been judged at the cross. So Satan is going down. It just has not happened yet. What was that movie that I quote sometimes?

"Frequency." Is that the movie? The guy comes backward in time and finds a criminal there at the lunch table, and says something to the effect of, "You went down twenty years ago, pal." because he has a knowledge of the future. "You just don't know it yet."

That is your message to the world. "It is already going down. The ship is sinking. You just don't know it yet. And if you stay in your state, you are going to go right down with the sinking ship, because Satan is a defeated foe."

So when you evangelize the lost, those are the three things you focus on, as the conversation unfolds.

"You don't believe in Jesus? You need the transferred righteousness of Jesus because you are about to meet a holy God. And if you do absolutely nothing, you just made a decision. You are on a losing team. You are on a sinking ship."

So by total depravity, I obviously mean by it that the Spirit enables, which He clearly does. What these Neo-Calvinists are saying is that even though the Holy Spirit does that, which we just explained, it is not enough. Their words, not mine.

"Consequently, it takes much more..."²⁸

More than what? More than John 16:7-11, because you are dealing with a rock who has no ability.

"Consequently, it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ—..."²⁹

"Well, what does it take?" "Oh, I am glad you asked." And they start to front load and unload their Calvinistic theology.

"You have to be given the gift of faith. Regeneration precedes faith." "Well, how do you get that?" "Well, not everybody gets it. The elect get it."

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

"...—it takes regeneration by which He makes the sinner alive and gives him a new nature."³⁰

So John 16:7-11 is not enough in the Calvinists' minds. I have heard them say it in writing. I have read it in writing. I have heard them say it verbally, over and over again.

I would just say: if this is of no effect at all, then God is wasting His time. There is absolutely no need for God to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:7-11) if people cannot get saved unless they are given the gift of faith.

So if you are dealing with someone in your family, or someone at work, and you keep sharing the gospel, and keep witnessing to them, and it is to no avail, what do you do?

You start praying that Jesus takes John 16:7-11 and starts going steroid on it in their life. And then when opportunities to evangelize come up, you bring up the things that John 16:7-11 brings up.

You start doing stuff like that rather than your typical method of evangelism today. You will start seeing a lot more fruit in your evangelistic efforts. True evangelism is evangelism that cooperates with God's agenda.

But if you are not in a line-by-line, verse-by-verse church, how could you possibly know what God's agenda is? That is why we are covering the Scripture verse by verse: so you will understand these things and you will understand how to evangelize.

Gordon Clark writes that faith is a gift.

"A dead man cannot...exercise faith in Jesus Christ. Faith is an activity of spiritual life, and without the life, there can be no activity. Furthermore, faith...does not come by any independent decision."³¹

Calvinists are very down on what they call "decisional Christianity." Billy Graham used to have his magazine, or program, called "The Day of Decision."

Calvinists say that decisions are a waste of time, since a rock cannot make a decision. Well, I am here to tell you that decisions are not a waste of time. God calls us to decisions constantly.

In this matter of salvation, God says, "Are you going to trust in the work of My Son or not?" That is a decision.

"The Scripture is explicit, plain, and unmistakable:..."³²

Do you see the total arrogance in that statement there?

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Gordon H. Clark, *Predestination* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1987), 102.

³² Ibid.

"The Scripture [which we also read] is explicit, plain, and unmistakable..."³³

In other words, if you do not interpret the Scripture the way Calvinists do, you are irrelevant. They will say that, if you do not hold to Calvinistic theology: "You are irrelevant." I have actually heard John MacArthur say that.

"The Scripture is explicit, plain, and unmistakable: 'for by grace are you saved through faith, and that is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God' (Ephesians 2:8). Look at the words again, 'it is the gift of God.' If God does not give a man faith no amount of willpower and decision can manufacture it for him."³⁴

"Excuse me, Mr. Calvinist, I disagree." "Oh, will you disagree with the Ephesians 2:8?" "No, I do not disagree with Ephesians 2:8. I disagree with how you are defining Ephesians 2:8."

And when we get to faith being a gift, allegedly, I will show you that Ephesians 2:8 is not saying what Calvinists say it is saying. The gift in Ephesians 2:8 is not faith. The gift is salvation. I will make that very, very clear.

Clark is arguing that faith is a gift. Here is a quote from James White again. White argues that because the Bible says Christ saves sinners, we can't change it to say that he "saves synergistically with the assistance of the sinner himself."³⁵

One of their big terms is monergism, meaning that God does everything. Calvinists reject synergism, the idea that we have any type of role in salvation.

We do have a role in salvation. I have the same role in salvation that I have when I receive any gift. We just got finished with Christmas time, right? We received a lot of gifts. I can either receive the gift or leave it under the tree or in the stockings.

So I do have a role to play. We do not teach monergism here. We teach synergism. I cannot do anything in and of myself to merit God's favor, but I can make a decision, particularly when the Holy Spirit convicts my heart of my need to do so.

I can decide either to receive the gift, or not to receive the gift. Calvinists reject that entirely, and say, "No, God does everything on the front end. Your faith is really not your faith."

James White writes,

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ James R. White, *The Potter's Freedom* (Amityville, NY: Calvary Press Publishing, 2000), 247.

"The Reformed assertion is that man cannot understand and embrace the gospel nor respond in faith and repentance toward Christ without God first freeing him from sin and giving him spiritual life (regeneration)."³⁶

Unless God regenerates you first so that you can believe—and really, when you believe, it is not you believing, it is God giving you the gift of faith—you cannot be saved.

What you are going to see in the Bible is that the Bible always puts the order inverted of what James White just did here. The Bible teaches conviction upon hearing the gospel.

The Bible teaches that when a person is under conviction, they need to trust in the finished work of the Savior. And once they trust in the finished work of the Savior, then they are born again, given the impartation of divine life.

The Calvinist comes along and says, "No, that is decisional Christianity. That cannot happen any more than a rock can believe. So here is the way it works: regeneration and faith."

What you will discover in the Bible is that it is always the opposite. It is conviction, followed by faith in the Messiah, and then you are born again.

That is what we would call "ordo salutis": order of salvation, which Calvinism completely puts backwards. Why are Calvinists always putting it backwards?

Because of their ironclad belief in Total Depravity, by which they mean inability. If you believe that, then conviction is unnecessary, even though God does it—I don't know why; it is of no effect.

Here is a quote from Loraine Boettner.

"The elect of God are chosen by Him to be His children, in order that they might be made to believe, not because He foresaw that they would believe."³⁷

So if you are one of the elect, you are going to become a believer whether you want to or not, because God is going to do a work on the front end, giving you the gift of faith.

If you are not one of the elect, then you are just a rock and you are stuck. Enjoy your time in hell. And by the way, as the flames go up throughout all eternity, in the very twisted mind of Neo-Calvinists, God is somehow glorified in that.

Somehow God is glorified by a bunch of people being in hell who never had a chance to believe. Because after all, as Calvin said, they are doomed from the womb by double predestination.

³⁶ James R. White, *The Potter's Freedom* (Amityville, NY: Calvary Press Publishing, 2000), 101.

³⁷ Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1932, 14th printing), page 101, citing Augustine.

Some are predestined to life. The vast majority of the world is predestined unto damnation. So if you are one of the elect, you will be made to believe. It will not be your choice.

Here is a quote from Tom Wells. This is a nice one to read just after Christmas. Wells compares spiritual deadness to,

"an old dry [Christmas] tree with—no fruit or ornaments of his own [his faith]." ³⁸

What does no fruit or ornaments on a dead Christmas tree mean? Well, it means that you are in that dead state like a rock. You have absolutely nothing going for you in terms of spiritual things.

You do not even have an ability to believe the gospel, even when the Holy Spirit is convicting you of your need to believe the gospel. So that is your state.

"Then God comes along and hangs the bright jewel of faith on him.... There is no real connection between what he is and this gift of faith from God." ³⁹

So where did this "bright jewel of faith" ⁴⁰ come from? It did not come from the person, because they are dead. They are a rock.

God had to put that "jewel of faith," ⁴¹ that ornament of faith, on this dead Christmas tree, because the Christmas tree in and of itself cannot put its own ornaments on. So God has to do that.

Well, wait a minute. Some Christmas trees have an ornament of faith on them. Some do not. Shouldn't you put an ornament of faith on every Christmas tree?

No. God made a sovereign decision. He only did that for the elect Christmas trees.

Here are another two quotes from A.W. Pink from "The Sovereignty of God." I quote Pink a lot in my "Coming Kingdom" book because when he talks about the kingdom, he is right on.

But he had, as I understand it, a midlife crisis, so that he wrote some wonderful things when he was young. And then as he got older, he got very Calvinistic, and disavowed everything that he wrote earlier.

So when you quote Pink, you have to figure out, is it former Pink or latter Pink? Or code Pink? So here I am quoting Pink in his older years, as he drifted into this Calvinistic belief system.

³⁸ Tom Wells, *Faith: The Gift of God* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1983), 56–57

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

From what I have been told, he died a very grumpy old man, to put it that way, just alienated almost from the church, lashing out at everybody.

Even John MacArthur said that about A.W. Pink, even though John MacArthur embraces the theology of A.W. Pink. Pink says,

"Faith is not the cause of the new birth, but the consequence of it."⁴²

Did you see that? You just switched the order on me. It is not conviction, faith, then regeneration.

"Faith is not the cause of the new birth, but the consequence of it."⁴³

You are regenerated so that you can believe.

"This ought not to need arguing."⁴⁴

Oh, well, why would you even have a discussion about it? Arthur Pink said it is true.

"Faith (in God) is an exotic, something that is not native to the human heart."⁴⁵

Now, I agree, faith is not native to the human heart, absent enablement. But the Spirit enables constantly (John 16:7-11).

Here is another quote from Pink. He says,

"Personally, we have no more to do with our spiritual birth than we had with our natural birth..."⁴⁶

Now that is as I will be showing you, that is an invalid comparison—comparing physical birth to spiritual birth.

"Personally, we have no more to do with our spiritual birth than we had with our natural birth...[Man is] utterly incapable of willing anything...the sinner, of himself, cannot..."⁴⁷

Not, "does not." If it said, "does not," I would not have too much of a problem with it. But Pink does not say, "does not." He says,

"...cannot repent and believe."⁴⁸

⁴² A. W. Pink, *Sovereignty of God*, p. 57.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

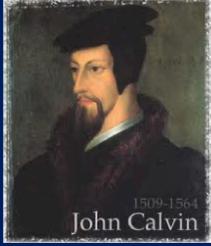
⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

So the starting point of the whole thing is the "T" (Total Depravity) in TULIP. We have defined what the "T" in TULIP means. And then today we got into what Calvinists mean by it.

A. Total Depravity

1. The starting point
2. Total Depravity properly defined
3. Calvinism: Total Depravity = inability
4. Calvinism's overstatement of Total Depravity



1509-1564
John Calvin

Next week when we reconvene, I will be taking you through how they have overstated something good in the Bible: the doctrine of total depravity. Calvinists have pushed it to an abnormal, unbiblical level and built a system of theology around it.