

Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible 027

Romans 4:4-5

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Take your Bibles and open them to Romans 4:4-5. Last week I had you open up to Romans 4:4-5, and we never talked about the verses. So we are going to try to interact with the verses today. We are in the middle of our study on Neo-Calvinism versus 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

We are looking at the Calvinistic acronym TULIP and comparing it to the Word of God.

V. Running TULIP Through the Grid of Scripture

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

The "I" in TULIP stands for Irresistible Grace.

D. Irresistible Grace

1. **Calvinistic definition**
2. Calvinistic arguments
3. Man can resist God's grace
4. Man can resist God by disbelieving
5. John 6:44?

What do Calvinists mean when they say Irresistible Grace? Bob Kirkland summarizes as follows. He says,

"'I' stands for 'Irresistible Grace.' Faith is something 'God irresistibly bestowed upon the elect without their having believed anything...By such reasoning, man...can't even hear the gospel—much less respond to the pleadings of Christ.'"¹

So going back to the "T," the way Calvinists define total depravity: we are dead like a rock, unable to respond to spiritual things. God imparts the gift of faith to some, the elect, that are chosen before the foundations of the earth. I have given you this quote before. Thomas, Steele, and Quinn, in their book "The Five Points of Calvinism," say,

"Consequently, it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ—it takes regeneration by which He makes"²—

"'Makes'" is a key word.

—"the sinner alive and gives him a new nature. 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."³

That is a pretty typical, Calvinistic treatment of faith and regeneration: faith is not yours. It is something God gave you. It is not that the Spirit, as John 16:7-11 says, brings you to the point, through enablement of believing, which is what we teach—the Spirit brings

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

² 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.

³ Ibid.

you to the point of decision, but does not decide for you in terms of whether you are going to trust Christ or not.

But Calvinists think the Spirit actually believes for you, so to speak, on the front end. So, we looked at some of the Calvinistic arguments that are used for this, and we are going through three of them.

2. Calvinistic Arguments

- a) **Faith is a gift**
- b) Regeneration precedes faith
- c) Lost man cannot seek God (Rom. 3:11)

1. Faith is a gift.

2. Regeneration precedes faith. You are born again so that you can believe. You do not believe so that you can be born again.

3. They think this way because they believe that lost man has no ability to seek God or believe anyway.

Faith is a gift, regeneration precedes faith, and the inability of man—that is where Calvinists' thinking is on this on Irresistible Grace. We are critiquing each of those in this part of our study entitled Irresistible Grace.

We are starting here with "Faith is a gift."

a) Faith is a Gift?

- i. **Calvinist Examples**
- ii. Faith is a work?
- iii. Calvinist Proof texts
- iv. Miscellaneous problems

I gave you a ton of quotes last time showing you that this is really what Calvinists teach. A lot of people like somebody on TV or radio, and because that person blessed them in an area, they do not want to believe that the person's doctrine can be off in another area. It is like what Paul said to the Corinthians: one group follows Cephas; one group follows Apollos; one group follows Paul; one group is very spiritual—that is the Jesus-only group. Paul says, you are divided because you have put speakers on a pedestal (1 Corinthians 3:1-23).

So one of the reasons I give you these laborious quotes is to show you that Calvinists really do teach these things. They may bless you in an area, but that does not mean that everything they say is right.

Here is one of the quotes I gave you. It is by Tom Wells. He compares spiritual deadness to an old dry Christmas tree. (It is kind of hard to think of Christmas trees in Houston coming up in June, as we are close to June.)

"...an old dry [Christmas] tree with—no fruit or ornaments of his own [his faith]. 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."⁴

So that is the Calvinistic understanding: you are an old dry Christmas tree. You cannot produce any new ornaments on your own, particularly faith. So God has to hang that jewel on you. So if anybody gets saved, it is not their faith.

A lot of people, you know, will post things on Facebook, on our Facebook page or website; and they will say, "Well, you know, John Calvin himself never taught this. And Calvin's followers out-Calvined Calvin." There is a really strange attempt to want to preserve the life and legacy of John Calvin against all odds. It is almost as if people do

⁴ Tom Wells, *Faith: The Gift of God* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1983), 56–57.

not want his name, likeness, or image to come under any criticism whatsoever.

One of the ways that they try to do this is by saying, "Well, Calvin did not really believe that. It was his followers." But Calvin clearly in this quote taught that faith is a gift. This is his commentary on the letters to the Corinthians. Calvin said,

"Had he [Paul] said men are not willing to be wise, that indeed would have been true, but he states further that they are not able."⁵

That is a key understanding of Total Depravity. It has to do with inability: "not able." When Calvinists talk about Total Depravity, they mean inability. Total depravity is a doctrine I believe in, as we have talked about, if it is defined correctly.

So because of the Calvinists' belief in inability, people cannot believe even when they are convicted by the Holy Spirit. That is why the elect get imparted to them the gift of faith. Calvin said,

"Had he [Paul] said men are not willing to to be wise, that indeed would have been true, but he states further that they are not able. Hence we infer, that faith is not in one's own power, but is divinely conferred."⁶

Do you see the word "infer" there? "Infer" shows you that the Calvinists' system that they have constructed is a logical syllogism. It really does not come from an exegesis of the biblical text. It comes from logic: major premise, minor premise, conclusion. Calvin was a lawyer, a master at logic. Logic is a wonderful thing, but it has limitations. If your starting point is off, then what you derive from your logical syllogism is off as well.

That is why I said the whole thing really begins and ends with the Calvinists' understanding of Total Depravity, meaning, as they believe, inability. If total depravity means inability—earlier we have tried to explain that it does not mean that—then it is easy to infer that if anyone believes, it must be God's gift.

So who gets who gets the gift of faith? The elect, the small fraction of humanity that God has predestined to salvation. Everyone else has no ability to believe because they are predestined unto hell. This is double predestination.

That is why that word "infer" is such a big deal. "Hence we infer," Calvin says, "that faith is not in one's own power, but is divinely conferred."⁷ So Calvin did teach the concept that faith is a gift, at least here in his commentary on the Books of Corinthians.

It is really not hard to figure out what Calvin taught on a lot of things, because he was a verse-by-verse teacher of the Bible. There are a few books he did not teach on, like the

⁵ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, trans. William Pringle [Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, n.d.; re- print, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003], 116–17.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

Book of Revelation, but he basically has left us commentaries on every single verse of the Bible, except the Bible books he never got to.

Calvin was a voluminous writer, a voluminous commentator, a voluminous teacher. So with computer programs and things, we have access to all of Calvin's writings. It is really not too difficult to figure out what he taught on this or that, because Calvin leaves quite a paper trail. So, he did teach that faith is a gift, contrary to what a lot of people will say: "Calvin never taught that."

I give you this quote from Steve Lawson, who is a product of John MacArthur. I think he was working at the Master's Seminary for a number of years, and the MacArthur Seminary. He said,

"No one just wakes up one morning and decides to believe in Jesus Christ. The reason he believes is because the Holy Spirit convicts him of sin,"⁸—

I say to that, "Thumbs up! That is a true statement so far.

—"draws him to Christ"⁹—

Thumbs up on that.

—"raises him to life,"¹⁰—

Now, we believe that happens after faith in Christ. I am reading this quote saying, "Yeah, this is good, this is good, this is good, this is good. And then whoops. Looks like the record scratching.

—"and grants him faith."¹¹

So there is Steve Lawson saying that faith is a gift. Now, this is a big problem for Steve Lawson, because he fell into immorality recently. If you have watched that whole sad story unfold, it is like, "Steven, you know, you made your bed, now you have to lie in it." Now a bunch of people have come around and are saying, "Well, he obviously was never one of the elect. He never received the gift of faith or he would not have acted like this."

So you have all these people online questioning his salvation. That is an outworking of this Calvinistic system. I, for one, do not question his salvation. I think the man has a sin nature, like we all do, post-conversion. Are you guys ever tempted to sin as a Christian?

⁸ Steven Lawson, quote posted by Tiffany Gaskin on Pinterest, <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/desiring-god--82753711894276595/>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

I am not seeing any hands go up. So you are standing right there, y'all are a bunch of liars, which is a sin.

What I would say about Steven Lawson is that he stumbled, and there go I but for the grace of God. I am not throwing stones at the guy, but he stumbled in his middle tense of salvation. His growth has been inhibited because he gave place to the sin nature, which we are not supposed to do as Christians. That does not mean that the sin nature just disappeared. That does not happen till glorification.

So if Steven Lawson had some good theology around him, he could have people around him that could help him with this issue, and I believe, see him restored to ministry. But that is not what happens in these circles. They just throw rocks at people till they are dead, basically. He has a bunch of people around him saying, "Well, he is not one of the elect. If he really had the gift of faith, he would not act this way."

It is like, "Steven, you created this monster, and now you have to lie in the bed that you have created." I feel sorry for the man. This is why theology matters. Theology matters because you will handle these situations differently depending on which theological system of soteriology that you advocate, or believe is true.

Lawson is a lordship salvation advocate, which is a doctrine that says that if Christ is not Lord of all, he is not Lord at all. Well, that includes you, Steven. So he created a monster—he created a bed that he has to lie in. It is a tragic thing. So you get this really aggressive, fruit-inspecting mentality in these very reformed circles. They will throw each other under the bus really, really fast. I think it is their theology that pushes them in this direction.

So there are some Calvinistic examples that they really believe that faith is a gift. You can augment those quotes I gave you with the ton of other ones that we looked at last week.

One of the Calvinists' big issues with this "faith is a gift" belief is that they believe that faith is a work. And because salvation is not by works (Isaiah 64:6, we are not justified by good works—our righteous works are as a filthy rag), because they believe that faith is a work, they think that if someone gets saved, he cannot believe on his own, even when he is convicted by the Holy Spirit. Because if you allow someone to believe and be saved, then you just taught a works-oriented system because they teach that faith is a work.

Notice what John MacArthur says in one of his famous books, "The Gospel According to Jesus." He says,

"Faith and works are not compatible."¹²

So faith is a work. MacArthur says,

¹² John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, 33.

"There is a sense in which Jesus calls even the act of believing a work (John 6:29)—"¹³

I will show you in a minute that he abuses John 6:29.

—"not merely a human work, but a gracious work of God in us. He brings us to faith, then enables and empowers us to believe unto obedience empowers us to believe unto obedience (cf. Romans 16:26)."¹⁴

Why does MacArthur say that? Because he believes that faith is a gift, and that humans in their depravity cannot believe, even when they are convicted to believe by the Holy Spirit. We Calvinists had better work it out this way according to our logical syllogism, because we believe that faith is work. And if you believe that humans can do anything to achieve salvation, such as believe, then you are no better than a works salvationist. That is the Calvinistic mindset.

Here is a quote from Sam Storms, a very aggressive Calvinist. He says,

"...even if what he or she does is simply to repent and believe the gospel, God's grace is seriously, albeit unwittingly, compromised."¹⁵

If you are telling me that you were saved because you were convicted by the Holy Spirit and you exercised your faith in the promise of the gospel,—well, faith is a work, and you just chipped away from the grace of God, and you just chipped away from the glory of God. Because the way Calvinists think is that God has to do everything to receive glory. Whereas the way I think is that God gave free will.

God's creatures use their free will against Him, and God's purpose is accomplished through that, like it is with Joseph's brothers (remember, we studied that last week). "What you meant for evil, God meant for good" (Genesis 50:20, paraphrase). The brothers were a rebellious group of people that exercised their free will against Joseph. And yet it ended up achieving God's purpose of the preservation of the nation of Israel in the midst of famine.

When free will is used against God, and God's purpose is accomplished through that, that does not take away from God's glory—that maximizes God's glory, in my mind. Only God can use the free moral will of his enemies to achieve His purposes. Does that sound like that subtracts from God's glory? To me, that adds to God's glory. But the way Calvinists think is that unless you create a situation in which God caused Joseph's brothers to betray him, then you are taking away from God's glory.

Calvinists want to give man no room at all for exercising his free will; which, to me, is

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Sam Storms, *Chosen for Life: The Case for Divine Election* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, a ministry of Good News Publishers, revised and expanded edition, 2007), 77.

very problematic, because we are made in the image of God, and part of our image-bearing status is free will. Even in our fallen state, we still bear God's image. It has been effaced, but not erased. God constantly uses the free will of people, whether it is for God or against God, to achieve God's purpose.

We are going to see the big picture, probably when we all get to heaven, and we are going to see how even God used His enemies to accomplish His will. He even used Satan to accomplish His will. He used Judas to accomplish His will. He used the Antichrist to accomplish His will without interfering with the free will choices of Antichrist, Satan, Judas, etc.

We are going to see that, and we are just going to step back and just be amazed at what God pulled off. So I am not going to sit in heaven and say, "Boy, this is a sad state of affairs. God, Your glory is being chipped away because You allowed people free will." To me, it is the opposite. But, you see, the Calvinist does not think that way. God has to do everything.

Last week we went into the doctrine of omni-causality: God has to cause everything, or else you are subtracting from His glory. This is the way Calvinists think related to the gospel. You cannot allow human beings to do anything, even believe, or else you are teaching a doctrine of works. That is what Sam Storms is saying here.

James White, a very aggressive five-point Calvinist, wrote a book called "The Potter's Freedom." 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."¹⁶

Now comes the big word time, right? Calvinists are really good at using big words. It is like anything: if I am dealing with an IT guy and he starts using words I do not understand, I feel stupid because I do not know the nomenclature that he knows. You will see this in Calvinism constantly. They throw these big words at you to try to make you feel like, well, you are just really not smart enough to understand their system.

And they say this over and over again: "Well, you disagree with Calvinism because you do not understand it." You hear this constantly, and using big words makes you feel like you cannot understand it. But you can. You can understand it. Synergism has a meaning. Synergism is the opposite of monergism. You know, "mono-" as in "monopoly."

Monergism means that God does everything. That is all it means: omni-causality—God causes everything. God causes salvation—human free will has nothing to do with it. Synergism is just the idea that man, through free will, plays a role, and in that sense, cooperates with salvation.

Here is James Wyatt saying, "No synergism." That is why Calvinists will title a lot of their

¹⁶ James R. White, *The Potter's Freedom* (Amityville, NY: Calvary Press Publishing, 2000), 247.

websites and things as "monergism." So when Wyatt denies synergism, he is saying that man has no role whatsoever in salvation. And if he were saying that man has no role in salvation, related to works, I would agree with him.

But he is not saying that, related to works. He is saying that in terms of the capacity to exercise faith. God has to do that. Otherwise it is a work. So that raises the question, "Is faith a work?" That is why I had you open up to Romans 4:4-5, because Romans 4:4-5 clearly teaches that faith is not a work.

John MacArthur in this quote brings up John 6, but he does not even interact with Romans 4. It is a ghost passage in this quote, which is really not good scholarship. Good scholarship is acknowledging the points of your opponent and interacting accordingly. John MacArthur does not do that here. It is a one-sided presentation. That is what you are getting from his book, "The Gospel According to Jesus."

If you read John MacArthur, you would probably not even know that Romans 4:4-5 exists. But Romans 4:4-5, in a very clear, somewhat famous, epistolary literature to the Church Age, is very clear that faith is not a work. Here is what Romans 4:4-5 says. As Paul is outlining the doctrine of justification by faith alone, he says,

"Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due" (Romans 4:4).

The wage that you get from your job is not a gift, right? When your employer pays you, do you say, "Thank you for the gift"? No, because you put in some blood, sweat and tears to gain that paycheck. A paycheck is not a gift. But in contrast to a paycheck, which is achieved through work, faith is different. Romans 4:5 says,

"But to the one who does not work, but believes..." (Romans 4:5)

There it is, as clear as it can be said: *"the one who does not work, but believes" (Romans 4:5)*. Quite clearly, Paul is putting works over here, and faith over there (distinguishing them).

"But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness" (Romans 4:5).

Is faith the work? If you believe that, then you have to deny man any capacity to believe in justification. But I do not have to do that, because my Bible says—and your Bible says—that faith is not a work. In the mind of God, faith is the only thing a lost sinner can do before God that is non-meritorious.

That is why God has set up the whole plan of salvation on the basis of faith. Hebrews 11:6 says, *"...without faith it is impossible to please Him,..."* God has set up everything on the basis of faith, because according to the way God thinks, which is expressed here in Romans 4:4-5, faith is not a work. In fact, the Bible teaches justification by faith alone

at least 160 times.

That is why, here at Sugar Land Bible Church, when we give the gospel after explaining what Christ did for us, we just keep saying, "Believe." "Well, yeah, but you guys are really weird. Why don't you guys, like, have people walk an aisle or something?" Well, you can walk an aisle if you want to, but walking an aisle did not did not save you.

"Well, yeah, but you need to have everybody close their eyes and bow their head. And you need to have people raise a hand and the evangelist needs to say, 'I see that hand out there. I see that hand out there.'" If you want to receive Christ by closing your eyes and bowing your head, go for it. But closing your eyes and bowing your head does not save anybody.

It is the faith expressed in bowing your head and closing your eyes that saves. It is the faith expressed in walking the aisle that is the issue. Because closing your eyes and bowing your head, in and of themselves, are just more works. Walking an aisle is just another work, unless you explain to people very clearly that walking the aisle does not save anybody.

I am not necessarily against giving altar calls, as long as people understand that they do not have to walk an aisle. If you want to, go for it. "Yeah, but pastor, I see people on TV, you know, when they receive Christ, they are crying and they are sobbing." And hey, if you want to cry and sob, we have some Kleenex boxes up here in the front, by the way. Let those tear ducts flow. That makes you feel better. But crying does not save anybody.

The word for "salvation," when used as a synonym for "faith," is "metanoia" [μετάνοια], which means changing your mind. The way I am using it here is as a synonym for believe. Different words. Same meaning. If God required a motion for salvation, it would be a completely different word.

Do you realize that it would be "metamelomai" [μεταμέλομαι]. Do you recognize the word "mellow"? "Hey, dude, you need to mellow out."—that kind of thing. "Mellow" is about emotion. God does not use "metamelomai" [μεταμέλομαι]. He uses "metanoceo" [μετανοέω] (verb related to "metanoia" [μετάνοια]), which is a synonym for "faith."

So if people want to pray, if people want to cry, if people want to walk an aisle, go for it. But just understand that those things do not save anybody. The only thing that God is looking at in terms of justification of a lost sinner is faith, which means "to trust." Are you trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ or not?

By the way, you do not have to even tell anybody about it. Today we have the ABC method: admit, believe, confess. Confess to who? "Well, confess to somebody." Well, what do you do if you are awake in the middle of the night, and you read the Gideon's Bible, and you come across John 3:16 in a hotel room, and there is no one to confess to? Well, then you have to order room service. You have to confess to somebody.

There is no such doctrine that states you have to confess One hundred and sixty times the Bible says "Believe." By the way, what do you tell someone that is Islamic, in an Islamic country, that just received Christ by faith alone? You say, "Well, you need to follow the ABC method. You need to confess."

But the moment they say one single word about their newfound faith in Christ, their life is endangered. The lives of their loved ones are endangered. Heinous, horrific things can be done to your family members, because you said something about Jesus. Are you really going to tell me that that person is not saved? The confession for them becomes more of a rewards issue, but not a salvation issue.

A lot of things that work in America, are not going to work real well in Saudi Arabia, or Iran, or someplace like that. So for whatever reason, we have gotten really sloppy with all this stuff, and we have just gotten our minds off of what the Bible says; because a lot of people, when they are putting together their evangelistic program, are not thinking Bible. Do you realize that?

They are thinking slogans: here is a slogan that will stick. That is marketing. That is not biblical exegesis. We have a tract rack, set up there on the wall. If you find some problems in it, let us know and we will try to fix it. But we work really hard at putting tracts out there that reflect this truth that I am going into here: salvation is by faith alone.

Because most evangelistic tracts that you read today will tell you that salvation is by faith alone, not by works. Then at the end of the tract, they give you five or six works to do. You have to confess, you have to go to church, you have to raise your hand, you had better say this prayer. They are all unbiblical ideas.

That is why faith is such a big deal, because it is the only thing that you can do in the eyes of God that is non-meritorious. So the Calvinistic idea that faith is a work misses the whole point of what I am trying to explain here. Faith is not a work. Faith is the one thing that you can do before God that is non-meritorious.

Notice Ephesians 2:8-9. (A lot of you have this memorized.)

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;" (Ephesians 2:8).

Now, do not think that the gift of God is faith, because we are going to go into that later on in the series. "Gift" and "faith" are different genders in Greek. "Gift" cannot be modifying "faith" as we will see later.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Faith is over here, and works are over there. Never shall the two trains meet, in the eyes of God. Abraham believed God and it was credited to him for righteousness (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3, 22; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23). And that obviously was not something that happened in which Abraham made some kind of commitment to live better, because in the next chapter he had a sexual relationship with someone he was not married to (Genesis 16:1-4).

It was not, "Abraham, you are saved. But you are on probation, buddy," because in the next chapter, Genesis 16, he messed the whole thing up. But he was clearly justified in Genesis 15. Why? Because at that moment he believed. He believed what God said. Genesis 15:6 is Paul's favorite passage when he talks about justification. He talks about in Romans 4, in Galatians 3, and in many other passages (Romans 4:3, 22; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23; and surrounding context). He talks about Genesis 15:6 constantly.

Paul, here in Ephesians 2:8-9, does exactly what he does in Romans 4:4-5, in which he says, "Here is faith over here, and it is very different from works." So this idea that faith is a work, which is the logical syllogism that Calvinism is based on, has been tried in the scales and found wanting, when you are a Bible person.

Oh my goodness, I have had a little bit of experience with this. We had a guy at this church that was teaching Sunday school when I first got here (thankfully, he is not here anymore, sorry): Robert Lightner, my ecclesiology professor. He was such a great teacher. He said, "Men, there are some people you just have to pray out of the church." And then he said, "I call that blessed subtraction."

And I thought to myself, "Well, that is not very loving." But then I became a pastor, and I found some wisdom in what he was saying. There are a lot of people—nobody in here, do not get nervous: you guys are the good people—whom we have prayed right out of this place. And Lightner called that "blessed subtraction." We have had a little bit of blessed subtraction in the history of Sugar Land Bible Church. Fortunately, now it is more blessed addition.

But Lightner would get up and while he was teaching Sunday school, he would just openly say, "Faith is a work." He was a graduate of John MacArthur's school. At the time, I really did not catch why he kept promoting that "faith is a work." "Faith is a work."

Why did he keep saying that? Well, he was trying to unleash his five-point Calvinism. Because if you believe that faith is a work, you have to go into monergism. You cannot allow man any role, even believing, in salvation.

There are other situations I have been in, I was doing one of the Bill Perkins cruises, and you get all kinds of people from all kinds of doctrinal backgrounds. One guy in the middle of one of my sessions raised his hand and said, "Even our faith is a gift." And I very aggressively said, "No, it is not," because I did not want everyone else to believe what he said.

So when people start going on and on about how faith is a gift, and faith is a work, they are setting you up for the syllogism of monergism, that they want to unleash on you. You have to understand that. But when you are a Bible person—at Sugar Land Bible Church, Bible is our middle name—when Calvin departs from the Bible, I depart from Calvin.

It had better be the same with you. If I get weird and depart from the Bible, you had better depart from me, because the authority at Sugar Land Bible Church is not the teachers—it is the Word of God. That is our standard. The Bible clearly says right here that faith is non-meritorious. The Bible says it here: faith is the opposite of works. The Bible says it over in Romans 4:4-5.

Look at the date of this quote: 1942. Do you realize that to get good teaching today, I have got to skip a generation? I have to skip all the hot conferences and topics and best-selling books, and I have to go back to 1942 for someone to get it right. Alfred Martin writes in "Bibliotheca Sacra" in 1942,

"Faith is never presented in Scripture as a meritorious act, but only as a channel of salvation."¹⁷

And I say, "He has got it right." I just wish the date were, you know, 2022 or something, not 1942. In fact, my dissertation advisors got real mad at me when I was at DTS (Dallas Theological Seminary) because I was quoting people from 50 to 100 years ago. They said, "Why are you quoting all of these people? Don't you know that we know more now, and we have evolved?"

Well, my Bible says to seek out the ancient path. That is what my Bible says. I am not really interested in who is hot, and who is not. I was never interested in the guy with all of the European degrees as a teacher who was 29 years old, or something. I wanted to learn from, like, Doctor Toussaint, Doctor Pentecost, people in their nineties.

I find that the further back in time you go, there is a ton of wisdom, and you really sacrifice a lot as a Bible teacher by ignoring older commentaries. In fact, one pastor has a saying. He says, "If they are not dead, they are not read." That might be a little extreme, but I just find that these older guys knew a lot of stuff that we do not give them credit for.

They are rather overlooked because, "Oh, they thought all that stuff before the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, which was a 1947-1956 discovery." There was, like, no wisdom in Christianity prior to the Dead Sea Scrolls—that is the mentality that you have. So I started getting these really strong red-letter comments on my dissertation by my readers that said to me, "Look, you cannot quote someone who lived more than five years ago, because you are not in vogue with contemporary scholarship."

¹⁷ Alfred J. Martin, "The Sovereignty of Grace as Seen in Romans 8:28–30," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 99 (October–December 1942): 460.

That is why I never really fit in with scholarship, because scholarship is always trying to get you to come up with something new. The whole system pressures you to come up with something new, and I do not see that as a calling in the Bible. What I see is that we are supposed to grab what God said and give it to a new generation. Maybe in our generation, we use pictures and PowerPoint and whatever, but it is the same message.

And Solomon said, "There is nothing new under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9), didn't he? People said to me, "Well, if you want to graduate with a PhD, you have to come up with a new contribution." So how would a guy like me graduate with my mentality? I asked the Lord that. "Why am I in this program? I do not even fit here." And the Lord gave me an idea.

Here is what was my idea: do not come up with something new. Go to where they are coming up with something new, and then react against their newness, which makes your newness more new than their newness. So that is what I did. I critiqued this guy, Kenneth Gentry, who was teaching preterism, and I reacted against him, and they said, "That is a fresh contribution. You get to graduate." So here I stand today with a PhD.

It is just a really interesting phenomenon that takes place in academia, by which you are always pressured to come up with some new thing, which is contrary to what we are called to do. We are called to search for the ancient path and teach what God says.

Here is a quote from Dr. Rene Lopez, who is a classmate of mine. We went through the PhD program together. He has a great, wonderful article in "Bibliotheca Sacra" entitled "Is Faith a Gift From God or a Human Exercise?" And he gets it right. He says,

"Scripture never considers faith a work. Instead faith is always juxtaposed to works, as Paul stated in Romans 4:3-5. Human faith is but a passive response that receives God's free gift of eternal life. Who would accuse a beggar of working by holding out his hand to receive a dollar bill? No one!"¹⁸

I mean, if you give a beggar money and he puts out his hand to receive it, are you going to say, "Well, you just worked for the money"? His putting out the hand to receive a gift is nothing more than a passive response, which is non-meritorious.

If I get you a big Christmas gift, and put the nice, colored wrapping paper on it, and the bow, and everything, and then I give you this present, does the fact that you took it, and peeled off the wrapping paper and opened the box, mean that it is not a Christmas present anymore? What a ridiculous assertion that would be. But that is what Calvinists are saying.

God reveals Himself in the gospel, and you trust in it, which is nothing more than a minimal passive response. It is just like a beggar receiving money by putting out his hand. You are not going to turn around and say, "Well, boy, you are teaching a doctrine

¹⁸ Rene A. Lopez, "Is Faith a Gift From God or a Human Exercise?," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 164 (July–September 2007): 266.

of works." Yet that is what Calvinism is saying. The mere passive response of faith subtracts from God's glory. It is a works-oriented salvation, etc., etc., etc.

So there certainly must be Calvinistic proof texts that they use to teach this doctrine of "faith is a gift," right?

iii. Calvinist Proof-Texts

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| (a) John 6:27-29 | (f) 1 Cor. 12:9 |
| (b) John 6:44-45 | (g) Rom. 12:3 |
| (c) Acts 3:16 | (h) Eph. 2:8-9 |
| (d) Acts 11:18 | (i) Philip. 1:29 |
| (e) Acts 16:14 | (j) 2 Pet. 1:1 |

Here is the list. Do you notice what I am doing here? I am not doing what John MacArthur does in his book, where he just presents his side of it. I am giving you all the verses that they use. They must have verses. These people claim to be biblicists. They must have verses that they use to teach that faith as a gift.

Here they are. There are about ten of them that you will hear over and over again. This one here, Ephesians 2:8-9, is the big kahuna. The other ones are kind of minor.

We are not going to be getting to Ephesians 2:8-9 for a little while, because I presented these in basically canonical order, starting with the Gospels, Acts, and the Epistles of Paul, then the General Epistles. These are not the order of importance. This is just a canonical order.

And you also should know something about the history of Sugar Land Bible Church. We had a beautiful doctrinal statement and position statements when this church started. It completely started on the right path. But somewhere in the 90s, things here kind of went sideways.

There was a fellow (I was not here when he was here, but a lot of people have told me about him) who was a very strong advocate of John MacArthur. He was the kind of person that people were intimidated by. Kind of a bully, I guess you might put it that way. And he had some kind of influence on the elder board. And the elder board changed one of our position statements to reflect this more lordship salvation Calvinistic mindset.

One of the founders of this church was not happy about that. And so he messaged me and he said, "Now that you are the pastor, can we change the position statement back to the way it read originally?" And my response to him was, "Wait a few months, because some of those guys are still on the board and we are going to have a problem changing it, and I know when they are rotating off the board."

See, I was a little bit sneaky. I am sorry to say that, but Jesus said to be wise as serpents and gentle as doves (Matthew 10:16, paraphrase). In the parable of the unjust steward (Luke 16:1-13) Jesus says that the unbelievers are more wise in their dealings sometimes than My own children (Luke 16:8, paraphrase). It is almost like a rebuke. So if you are put into a system, sometimes you have to play by the rules and see if you can get a change done.

Fortunately, those fellows rotated off, not enemies of mine at all. Then we got the doctrinal statement changed back to what it said originally. So all the lordship salvation stuff, Calvinism stuff, is basically out of the Sugar Land Bible Church doctrinal statement and position statement, I am happy to say.

That is a commitment to you, not that people cannot come in here believing weird stuff—that happens all the time;—our commitment to you is that when we teach from this pulpit, you are getting truth from the angle that is described in our position statements. You are not going to get some weird doctrine. And if weird doctrine comes out, we have the teeth in our doctrinal statement to correct that. You cannot correct a problem if the doctrinal statement supports the weird teaching you follow. So that is just more of an example of why theology matters.

Notice John 6:27-29. This is the verse that John MacArthur quoted. It says,

"Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.' Therefore they said to Him, 'What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?' Jesus answered and said to them," (John 6:27-29)—

Now, it is a dialog, so Jesus does not correct every problem with the Jews' question. He just focuses on one or two things, and that is important to understand.

—"What shall we do that we may work the works of God?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God,'" (John 6:28-29)—

See how it switched from plural to singular?

—"that you believe in Him whom He has sent" (John 6:27-29).

Now, Jesus does not correct every single problem with the Jews' question. He corrects some things, but not everything. It is almost as if He buys into the premise of their

question just for the sake of conversation. This is a long, long conversation here in John 6. (The Gospel of John has a ton of long, long conversations.)

So your go-to passage is not John 6:27-29, but it is Romans 4:4-5. But Jesus is not saying anything here, as I will show you, that contradicts Romans 4:4-5. So what do people do with this question:

"... 'What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent'" (John 6:28-29).

Calvinists take "believe" and "works of God," and they connect them. Do you see that? And they develop an idea that to believe is one of the works of God. So it is really not you believing; it is God believing, because faith is a gift. That is basically what Calvinists are trying to do with John 6. I have a couple of things on that.

"... 'What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?'" (John 6:28).

"Works of God" connected with "believe" is used to teach that faith is a gift. Now, you notice what the Jews say in their question: *"What shall we do...?" (John 6:28)*; not "What shall God do?"—"What shall we do?" (John 6:28). So God, in the Jews' question, is not the intended performer of the action.

When Jesus answers this question, He does not correct them, that it was something that God did, and not something they did. So when the Jews say, *"What shall we do so that we may work the works of God?" (John 6:28)*, Jesus does not turn around and say, "Well, that is God's work, not your work."

Do you see how Jesus never corrected that? That is kind of interesting. He answers, and shifts from "works," plural, to "work," singular. He moves to the singular word "work," not "works," because He is trying to get the point that there is one work.

Now, when we factor in Paul, it is not even a work. But we have to wait for Paul, to get the full explanation. This is just something that Jesus said very briefly in a dialog. He moves from the plural to the singular because He says, "There is one work, singular, and that one work is to believe." He is gently correcting the premise of their question.

So Jesus answers with the singular word "work," not "works," because there is only one thing to do, which is to believe. Jesus says this:

"... 'This is the work of God, that you believe...'" (John 6:29).

In other words, "You people are in the works": *"What shall we do so that we may work the works of God?" (John 6:28)*—"What do I have to do to be right with God?" Jesus is saying, "You people are in the works. Here is My response to you. Here is the work,

singular, to do: to believe. Now, Paul's going to later tell us that even believing itself is not a work."

This expression is not a subjective genitive work of God. What is a subjective genitive? It would say "'work by God.'" This is what you call an objective genitive, and it is work for God. In the process of a conversation—"What shall we do so that we may work the works of God?"

Jesus turns around and says, "You people are in the works to please God. Okay. I'll accept the assumption, in the conversation. I will change 'works' to 'work' and define it as 'believe.'" That is how Jesus answers a works-oriented group of people that are wanting to do what they have to do, to curry favor with God.

So really, when you look at it that way, you cannot use this dogmatically to build some kind of doctrine, that the only way people get saved is that God imparts faith. That is not what this is saying.

Well, what about John 6:44-45? What are we going to do with that one? This is the second passage Calvinists use.

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who has sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught of God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me" (John 6:44-45).

So what Calvinists are doing with these verses?

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him;..." (John 6:44).

"Come" is defined by Calvinists as "believe." And they say that it is the Father that imparted to them the gift of faith so that they could come. That is what Calvinists do with John 6:44-45. How do we answer it? We will postpone it for next week. I am saved by the bell.