

Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible 028

John 6:44-45

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Well, let's take our Bibles and open them to John 6:44, continuing on with the topical series that we have been doing in Sunday School entitled, "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

We are at the place in our study where we are looking at the TULIP grid, and we are at the "I" Irresistible Grace in the Calvinistic system.

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

Here are the categories that we are looking at under Irresistible Grace. As we get to the

Calvinistic definition of Irresistible Grace, Bob Kirkland 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, according to the Calvinistic system, if you find yourself in faith this morning, that is something that God did on the front end. He infused to you the gift of faith, and therefore, it is really not your faith. It is the faith that God gives.

And if you have it, you should rejoice, because that means you are one of the small fraction of humanity that is called the elect. Everyone else that is not chosen does not get the gift of faith because they are going back to the "T," the Calvinistic understanding of Total Depravity, which they take to mean inability.

That is how all of these words link together in the Calvinistic system. You cannot believe, because of Total Depravity. So if you do believe, that means that God gave you the gift of faith because you are one of the elect. That is the Calvinists' definition of Irresistible Grace.

The last time I was with you, we went through a few of the Calvinists' arguments.

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?

In fact, we just introduced one argument: why do Calvinists believe Irresistible Grace? Why do they believe that grace is something God irresistibly bestowed on the elect without their having believed anything? Why do they believe that? Well, they have three arguments that they use:

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. 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.
3. Lost man is a rock. He could not believe anything, even if God convicted him. So therefore, faith has to be infused into your life.

We will postpone (2) regeneration precedes faith for another time. We will be getting to that eventually. We will postpone (3) lost man cannot seek God for another time. We will be getting to that eventually. Here, we are just dealing with the first part of the Calvinist "I," Irresistible Grace, argument: (1) 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 some examples the last time we were together that yes, Calvinists really teach this. Tom Wells, for example, compares spiritual deadness to "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."²

Calvinists talk frequently about faith being a gift. I gave you this quote from Steven Lawson, and probably the first three quarters of this I agree with, until the last clause. Lawson says,

"No one wakes up one morning and decides to believe in Jesus Christ. The reason he believes is because the Holy Spirit convicts him of sin, draws him to Christ..."³

Now if Lawson had stopped there, I would say, "Amen." But he does not stop there.

"...raises him to life, and grants him faith."⁴

Do you see that? If a person comes to faith, it is not their faith. It is infused faith. This is why Calvinists believe that people are irresistibly drawn to Jesus. People wake up one morning and they have faith that they did not have before, because God put it there, and they could not have gotten out of their Christianity if they wanted to.

Part of their mindset is that faith is a work. If faith is a work, and we are not justified by works, then God will not even accept our faith in Christ. Sam Storm says,

"...even if what he or she does is simply to repent and believe the gospel, God's grace is seriously, albeit unwittingly, compromised."⁵

So the Calvinists' mindset is that faith is a religious work. Therefore, God does not accept people on the basis of personal faith. God has to give unbelievers faith. So in their system, there is no wiggle room at all for man to do anything. The last time I was with you I tried to show you that faith is not a work.

Faith is the one thing that God will receive from us that is non-meritorious. All you have to do is look at Romans 4:4-5 to see it. Paul writes,

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

So when you are at your job, and you work your half-month, or month, or whatever amount of time, and you get your paycheck, you do not say to your boss, "Thank you for the gift," because you earned that paycheck.

² Tom Wells, *Faith: The Gift of God* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1983), 56–57.

³ Steven Lawson, quote posted by Tiffany Gaskin on Pinterest, <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/desiring-god--82753711894276595/>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ 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), p. 77.

"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).

Faith, to God, is the one thing that a lost person can do that is a non-meritorious work. So therefore, God will receive your faith. That is why the Bible places such a huge emphasis on faith. Abraham believed God and it was credited to him for righteousness (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3, 22; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23). But it was Abraham's faith.

Does God convict people and bring us to the point of decision? Absolutely. If that is all Calvinists were saying, I would be on board with that. But that is not what they are saying. What they are saying is that even your faith is really not your faith, because faith is a work. But here in Romans 4:4-5 you can very clearly see that faith is not like working a wage.

My classmate, Rene Lopez, wrote an article for Bibliotheca Sacra entitled, "Is Faith a Gift From God or a Human Exercise?" It is a great article. I recommend that to you. I am going to be drawing some things from his article. He writes this:

"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!"⁶

You see someone on the street, or someone that is down on their luck, and you give them some money. And then they reach out their hand to receive it. The beggar is not going to say, "Well, I worked for this one hundred dollar bill because I reached out my hand to receive it."

That is insanity to say something like that. The beggar's reaching out to receive the money is just a normal passive response involved in receiving a gift. That is what faith is. It is not a work. it is just like the beggar reaching out his hand to receive something coming to him.

So in the Calvinistic system, they want you to believe that faith is a work, because they want to take you to the next level, where your own faith is not even your own. It is something that was infused only to the elect. The last time I was with you, we were going over some Calvinistic proof texts that they use. That is what we are going to do today.

⁶ Rene A. Lopez, "Is Faith a Gift From God or a Human Exercise?," Bibliotheca Sacra 164 (July–September 2007): 266.

iii. Calvinist Proof-Texts

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| (a) John 6:27-29 | (f) 1 Cor. 12:9 |
| (b) <u>John 6:44-45</u> | (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 |

What are the passages that Calvinists use to support this idea that faith is a gift? We have already looked at John 6:27-29. Take a look at John 6:44-45. It says,

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on 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).

When John 6:44 says, *"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him;"* Calvinists read into that passage that what the drawing means is that God infuses faith into some people. But is that really what the passage says? Do you see the word faith in this passage at all?

The Greek word noun "pistis" [πίστις] and the Greek verb "pisteuo" [πιστεύω], which John use a ton of times, are not even in John 6:44-45 at all. John 6:44-45 is not talking about God infusing faith into some. It is talking about the drawing ministry of the Spirit, whereby the Spirit brings people to the point of decision.

It is really interesting that when the Calvinists quote John 6:44-45, they never quote John 12:32, which uses the same verb "to draw."

"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself" (John 12:32).

This drawing that Jesus is describing is something that happens to every single human being. That gets fleshed out in John 16:7-11, which we will refer to a little later: the universal ministry of the Spirit of God, in which He draws all men to Himself (see John 12:32). He does not believe for people. The Holy Spirit will not believe for you.

Whether you believe or not is your call. I would encourage you to believe, but the Holy Spirit is not going to do that for you. He is not going to override how God has made us as image bearers. As image bearers of God, we have volition. The Holy Spirit will not

override that, but He will bring you to the place where you can make a decision of believing or not believing.

It is interesting in John 6:44-45 that when the drawing is mentioned, it is not about being drawn to salvation, although that is probably assumed. If you just keep reading John 6:44-45, it says, quoting Isaiah 54:13,

"... 'And they shall all be taught of God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me" (John 6:45).

So if you really want to know what Jesus is talking about in John 6:44-45, it is not even a drawing to salvation. It is a drawing into discipleship, to being taught by God as a disciple. My point is that the Calvinistic system reads a ton of stuff into John 6:44-45, and the passage really does not say what they purport that it says.

Now, we are not going to say goodbye forever to John 6:44-45. We are going to come back to it. But I just wanted to mention it here briefly, relative to this idea that faith is a gift. John 6:27-29 we covered in our previous session. John 6:44-45 we looked at there.

Take a look at Acts 3:16. Here is another passage that Calvinists use for this idea that faith is a gift. It says,

"And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all" (Acts 3:16).

So, obviously the Calvinists would zero in on *"the faith which comes through Him"* (Acts 3:16)—Jesus—given to the man who was healed. So from that, Calvinists believe that faith is an imparted gift to some, and this man was fortunate enough to be one of the elect. So he goes to heaven, and everyone else goes to hell. That is the mentality.

But again, it is a contextual thing. This is dealing with a healing. This is dealing with the faith the man had to exercise in order to be healed.

Now, we had in our Sugar Land Bible Church position statement, this idea that faith is a gift. It was not in the original statement going back to the 1980s, but in the 1990s the statement was changed to include the statement that faith is a gift. We had a discussion about that as elders, and we decided to change it back to what it said originally.

When you change a position statement, our constitution says that it has to be submitted to the congregation for their input. So we did that, and there were a few voices here at the time that wanted to keep the change, that faith is a gift. So basically what they would do was sling together all these verses, which is very common.

Theologians do this a lot. They make a point, and then they have a parenthetical break,

and they just run together a bunch of passages. Here I have several. And you look at those passages and you say, "Wow, there is a really overwhelming case that faith is a gift." But the problem when you sling together a bunch of passages within some kind of parenthesis, is that you are not really looking at what each passage says.

When you take the time to stop and look at each passage, you see that those passages are not teaching that faith is a gift. They are all being yanked out of context. But your average person does not do that type of analysis. They just are kind of intimidated. "Look at all these passages that have been quoted. So 'faith is a gift' must be true."

So fortunately, the elder board at the time had enough sense to say, "No, let's look at these passages individually. None of these passages teach that faith is a gift. So let's take the position statement and change it back to what it originally read, rather than how it was reading at the time, that faith is a gift."

These are some of the passages that we dealt with. One of the passages cited was Acts 3:16—

"...the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all" (Acts 3:16).

So here is a quote from John MacArthur, a five-point Calvinist who believes that faith is a gift. In fact, John MacArthur, at the end of one of his sermons, gave the gospel like this: (I will be quoting this language a little later in the study) he gave the gospel as "pray for the gift of faith."

Why would he say that? Because he does not think that people can believe on their own even when they are convicted. Which is a little odd, is it not? If I do not have the ability to believe, then how can I have the ability to pray for the gift of faith? It is just weird. I guess the corpse is a little bit more lively indeed, as we like to say. Here is John MacArthur writing in "The Gospel According to Jesus." He says,

"Either way, the meaning is inescapable:"⁷—

I do not like that word "inescapable," because MacArthur is saying that it is "my way or the highway." He is not even acknowledging that there is another way of thinking about this.

—"Faith is God's gracious gift. Jesus explicitly affirmed this truth: 'No one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father' (John 6:65)."⁸—

(We just dealt with a similar passage.)

⁷ John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, 69.

⁸ Ibid.

—"Faith is also spoken of as a divine gift in Acts 3:16 ('The faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all'),..."⁹

And he quotes Philippians 1:29. We will be dealing with that. Then he quotes 2 Peter 1:1. We will also be dealing with that. So, you start running verses together and you start stringing verses together, kind of like beads on a chain or on a string.

And your average person thinks, "My goodness, look at the scholarship of these people. Faith is obviously a gift to some." But as the saying goes, "the devil is in the details." Here is Rene Lopez's response. (And if you do not take it all in immediately, do not worry. I am going to break it down a little bit.)

"MacArthur says that the phrase 'faith which comes through Him' means faith is a divine gift. However, in the first part of this verse faith is the means by which the healing took place, and 'in His name' stresses the object (God) of that faith."¹⁰

You are not even dealing here with a situation in which someone is getting saved. You are dealing here with a situation where someone is being healed.

"The man's faith in Peter's words resulted in healing through Jesus. 'Such faith was possible through Jesus: the proclamation of his power made it possible for people to believe.' Therefore, nothing in Acts 3:16 supports the gift-of-faith view."¹¹

Notice what Acts 3:16 says, before you read the bottom part, which Calvinists are focused on, which says *"the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health"* (Acts 3:16). Before you read the second part, you should read the first part. What does the first part say? It says,

"And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man..." (Acts 3:16).

So according to the first part of Acts 3:16, faith is the means of healing and Jesus is the object of the faith. And then you move into the second part of Acts 3:16. It says,

"...the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health..." (Acts 3:16).

"The second part of the verse," Lopez says, "is repetitious so as to rule out any other

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Lopez, 268-269.

¹¹ Ibid.

source for healing."¹²

So what was this man believing in, exactly? He was believing in Peter's proclamation, that God had the ability to heal the lame man if he wanted to be healed. Acts 3:6, which comes before Acts 3:16 says,

"But Peter said, 'I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!'" (Acts 3:6).

Acts 3:12 which also comes before verse 16, says,

"But when Peter saw this, he replied to the people, 'Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk?'" (Acts 3:12).

So it was the proclamation of God's power that made it possible for the man to believe. You are dealing with man's faith in Peter's words, which were a true statement of God's power. And that is how the man gained his health in Acts 3. That is the context of this.

You can read this story, this historical account, all day long, and you just will not find in it the whole idea that Calvinists insert in it, that God gives faith to some people for justification, if they are the elect. It is a healing context.

I would just urge you to look at the context of the whole thing and ask yourself, "Is this passage really saying what the Calvinists think it is saying?" When Calvinists run the verses together and string the verses together in a parenthetical comment, Acts 3:16 is one of their favorites.

Also one of their favorites is Acts 11:18. You might want to turn over there. This is dealing with the church at Jerusalem which is dealing with the subject: can a Gentile get saved? Because Cornelius was saved in Caesarea, and they need to have a big meeting back in Jerusalem to figure out, is this a real salvation?

They discovered that Gentiles could get saved, and would continue to be saved. In the midst of that conversation, this is what Acts 11:18 says.

"When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, 'Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life'" (Acts 11:18).

So the Calvinists say, "There it is in the Bible: God granted to this particular Gentile repentance, or faith, that leads to life." The interesting thing about this is that faith is not mentioned in the passage. And the word "granted" means that it is like a gift. It is not something that is rammed down your throat.

¹² Ibid.

So what does this mean?

*"...God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life"
(Acts 11:18).*

Well, God gave the Gentiles a gift. The gift was not faith. The gift was that He brought them to the point of faith. He gave them John 16:7-11. And if God had not granted them this, then the Gentiles, or anybody else for that matter, could not be saved.

John 16:7-11 talks about the universal dwelling of the Holy Spirit. It says,

"But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, he will convict the world..." (John 16:7-8).

Do you see that? The whole world is under this conviction.

"...concerning sin"—singular noun "hamartia" [ἁμαρτία]—"and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me;..." (John 16:8-9).

The only sin that sends someone to hell is never having trusted in the Savior, and dying in that condition. People do not get sent into hell because they were not moral, or they watched the wrong movies or whatever. Those are not sins that send people into hell. The only unforgivable sin is unbelief.

The Holy Spirit convicts a person of unbelief. It says, "You gotta believe," and you say no and go throughout your life saying, "No, no, no, no, no, no, no." And then you die in that state—that is what sends people to hell. The other, personal, sins determine the degree of torment in hell. But entrance into hell itself is only accomplished by one thing, which is unbelief.

We naturally do not want to believe, but the Spirit comes and convicts us. That is what Acts 11:18 means when it says "granted":

"...Well then, God granted to the Gentiles..." (Acts 11:18).

How did He grant it to them? Because of what Jesus said in the Upper Room (John 16:7-11) was going to happen. The Holy Spirit was going to come, and He was going to begin this worldwide convicting ministry. And without that worldwide convicting ministry, no one could be saved.

But the worldwide convicting ministry itself should not be confused with the infusion of faith into the heart or mind of the elect. That is what "granted" (Acts 11:18) means. That is what the early church was celebrating as Cornelius was brought to Christ.

The Spirit was at work in this man, Cornelius. He was convicted, and as he was convicted, he exercised his own faith in the Messiah. And when you read Acts 10, particularly Acts 10:44-45, and perhaps some surrounding verses, talks very clearly about Cornelius's own faith, not some divine faith infused to Cornelius and his household.

"Granted" (Acts 11:18) refers to the conviction, which is a gift. When you are under conviction, you should praise the Lord. It is like pain in the body. For instance, you are walking on the beach and your feet hurt. You feel sharp pain in your feet. You should praise the Lord that you feel that pain, because the pain tells you that there is glass under the sand. And if you keep walking, you are going to do irreparable damage to your feet. So pain is like your best friend in that circumstance.

That is what the convicting ministry of the Spirit is. It is a gift. Praise God that He grants it. Praise God that He grants it to the whole world. But do not confuse it with faith itself infused into the elect. That is not what Acts 11:18 is teaching. Acts 11:18 does not even use the word "faith." The gift being granted is the convicting ministry of the Spirit. That is what I am trying to say.

Let's go over to Lydia, Acts 16:14. She was a dealer in purple in Philippi. She was Paul's first convert in Philippi. This was a rare time in Paul's missionary journeys when Paul did not go to the synagogue first, because in Philippi, there were no synagogues. Lydia was by a river.

I have actually visited Philippi and stood by the very river where Lydia became a believer. And how did she get saved? Acts 16:14 says,

"A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken of by Paul" (Acts 16:14).

And you get the idea that she could not have responded to the things spoken of by Paul unless the Lord had opened her heart. So here come the Calvinists and Neo-Calvinists hijacking a verse once again, saying, "Well, there it is. Lydia received the gift of faith. That is what it means when it says 'the Lord opened her heart.'"

But that is not what Acts 16:14 says.

"...the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul" (Acts 16:14).

The Lord did not believe for her. The Lord did not, you know, infuse faith into her, because she was one of the elect. The Lord brought her to the point of making her own decision, and she had to exercise her own faith in the teaching of the gospel.

When Acts 16:14 says, *"the Lord opened her heart,"* what was she experiencing? She was experiencing John 16:7-11, in which the Helper, the Paraclete, according to Christ's own words, would convict—that means to persuade—the world concerning sin. What sin?

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

Lydia's fundamental problem was not in her worldview, or in her own personal sins, although those are a byproduct. The number one problem that she had was that she had not exercised her own faith in the finished transaction of Jesus Christ.

So what did the Lord do for her? The Lord sent her a preacher. Paul and his companions showed up in Philippi. The preacher could not force her to believe. The Holy Spirit does not force her to believe. But the Holy Spirit brought into her life at exactly the right time the proclamation of the good news of the gospel.

And He, simultaneously, as that was happening, was opening her heart, revealing things, and convicting her of things (John 16:7-11) so that she could, in her own response, in her own faith, exercise faith in the Messiah.

Here is how Rene Lopez describes this passage. I think his explanation here is really good. He says,

"The Greek...('opened') refers to the 'opening of the eyes to make understanding possible and enable perception.' Many of the New Testament occurrences of...('heart') refer to the mind, as it does here; God opened Lydia's 'eyes of the heart,' as if removing a mental veil (2 Cor. 4:3-4), so that she would understand and respond. God enabled her to understand Paul's message so that she could believe and be saved. But opening her heart (or understanding) is not the same as giving her faith. Acts 16 does not say God gave her faith."¹³

I mean, is that what Acts 16:14 says? Does it say here that God gave Lydia faith? None of these passages that Calvinists quote in their big parenthetical insertions say what they advocate these passages are saying. It is just a matter of taking the time to look at each passage individually.

"Instead He enabled her to understand so that she could exercise faith..."¹⁴

And thank God that the Lord does that at least, for us. He enables, or no one could be saved. But He is not going to believe for you. I really do not know what more God could do for our human race lost in original sin. He died on a cross for all of our sins, past,

¹³ Lopez, 264 and n. 20.

¹⁴ Ibid.

present, and future. He brings into our life proclaimers. He issues a worldwide convicting ministry. He brings us to the point of decision.

So if a person, after all that, is not going to believe, then it is really their own fault. Enablement is not the same thing as infusing.

"Paul wrote in Romans 3:11, 'There is no one who understands, there is none who seeks for God.' However, God was drawing (cf. John 6:44-45) Lydia to Himself before Paul arrived."¹⁵

I can just categorically tell you that before I officially got saved, which I believe was spring of 1983, at the age of 16, God did all kinds of things in my life to prepare me for that point. I remember being very God-conscious and aware of God, wanting to understand God, wanting to know God. I just did not have the specifics to believe, by which I could be saved.

That is what God did for Lydia. That is what God did for you. That is what God is doing for the whole world. Well, why isn't everybody saved, then? Because they resist it. That is the problem. They use their own volition to resist it. And once you start doing that, now the problem is yours, and not God's anymore.

"However, God was drawing Lydia to Himself before Paul arrived. Nevertheless giving the person the ability to understand differs from giving him or her faith to believe. God enlightened (a type of drawing) Lydia so that she could believe, but it was still her faith, not God's faith."¹⁶

Amen to that. Calvinists also like to use 1 Corinthians 12:9. Let's look at that real quick. It says,

"to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:9).

Calvinists say, "There it is in the Bible: God gave someone faith." Yes, but that is in the context of spiritual gifts. This is not a justification context here. We all know that we have differing gifts, right? First Corinthians 12:27-31 says,

"Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? All do not have the gift of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? But earnestly desire the greater

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way" (1 Corinthians 12:27-31).

So when Paul is talking about someone receiving the faith (1 Corinthians 12:9), he is talking about a saved person, a person that is already justified, receiving a spiritual gift. And in this case, there is a gift in the body of Christ called the gift of faith.

It is like softball. In fact, let's go over there and tell those people over there that we are going to use a softball analogy today. It is like softball: everyone gets a turn at bat. But some people can hit the ball a lot further than others. And of the people that can hit the ball a lot further than others, we say they have a natural inclination towards that.

That is how these spiritual gifts work. I mean, we all exercise faith or we would not be Christians. But there are some people you will notice that are able to believe God, at almost insurmountable odds, for provision and for whatever God wants to do. And those are the people that kind of irritate you, because you try to talk to them logically: "Don't you see everything's falling apart?" And they are just, you know, cool as a cucumber.

They are trusting the Lord, and it is like, why do they have this astronomical faith, but I do not? Well, God gave them a gift. See that? It is the context of spiritual gifts. We all exercise faith, but some really know how to trust God much better than others.

Just like on a softball team, everybody takes a turn at bat, but some people can hit the ball a lot further than others. That is what Paul's dealing with. There is absolutely nothing here—zero—about God infusing faith, for justification, to the elect. It is another Calvinistic hijacking of a passage.

Let's go over to Romans 12:3. This one is very similar to the prior verse. Romans 12:3 says,

"For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith" (Romans 12:3).

Just like 1 Corinthians 12:9, that again is not faith infused to some for justification. Romans 12:3 is dealing with spiritual gifts. How do I know that? Because Romans 12:4 follows Romans 12:3, amen? Romans 12:4 says,

"For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to each of us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness" (Romans 12:4-8).

In other words, if you have a spiritual gift, God has accompanied that gift with the faith to use it. That is what Paul is talking about. He is not talking about what unsaved people receive from God, without their having believed anything, because they happen to be one of the elect.

In fact, if you want to get into the subject of unsaved people, Paul left that subject behind a long time ago. He addressed unsaved people in Romans 1-3. If you want to talk about what a person has to believe to be justified, Paul left that subject behind a long time ago. He addressed that in Romans 4-5.

If you want to talk about sanctification, Paul left that subject behind a long time ago. He addressed that in Romans 6-8. If you want to talk about Israel, Paul left that subject behind in Romans 9-11. What he is dealing with here is the life of the church, which has to encompass spiritual gifts. So that is what Paul is talking about when he says,

"...God has allotted to each a measure of faith" (Romans 12:3).

It has zero to do with justification. Yet that was one of the verses in our bracket, given to us as elders.

Now, here is the big kahuna. This is the big one. Are you guys ready for this? This is the one they quote over and over again that faith is a gift—faith is a gift—faith is a gift. It is Ephesians 2:8-9.

These verses you probably know by heart:

"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. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Calvinists say, "There it is, right there in the Bible. Faith is the gift of God." "That," modifying 'faith,' stating that faith is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8-9). And Calvinists just say, "Slam dunk. Case closed. Nothing more to discuss."

Here is Gordon Clark trumpeting this verse to promote his Calvinistic idea that faith is a gift. He says.

"A dead man cannot...exercise faith in Jesus Christ."¹⁷

So right there, Clark is misunderstanding total depravity, which we have covered.

¹⁷ Gordon H. Clark, *Predestination* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1987), 102.

"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."¹⁸

That is why when you watch Calvinistic videos and things online or on YouTube, they are really down on what they call "decisional Christianity," which they define as walking an aisle and all of these kinds of things. Well, we do not preach walking aisles here, but we do preach that you have to make a decision. You are either going to believe or you are not. So in that sense, I like decisional Christianity.

"The Scripture is explicit, plain, and unmistakable:"¹⁹—

There is no point in even arguing with these people. They have got such mountains of proof on their side.

'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."²⁰

So it is your typical Calvinistic mindset, and it is trumpeting Ephesians 2:8-9. But we have a problem. The problem is found when studying Ephesians 2:8-9 in Greek. When you study this in Greek, you will find that "faith" ("pistis" [πίστις]) is a feminine noun. The pronoun that supposedly modifies "faith" ("pistis" [πίστις]) is neuter. Whoops!

And "gift" is neuter. So if the pronoun "that" and the word "gift" are neuter, "that" cannot be modifying "faith," which is feminine. See that? In Greek, if one thing is modifying something else, the genders have to all be the same. It is a funny way of thinking in English, but in the Greek language, gender is a big deal. And if two different words are separate genders, then word B cannot be modifying word A.

This is what Calvinists do not tell you in all their commentaries. They just want you to read it in English. What it says in Greek is,

"For by grace you have been saved through faith ["pistis" (πίστις), feminine noun]; and that ["touto" (τοῦτο), neuter pronoun] is not of yourselves, it is the gift ["doran" (δῶρον), neuter noun] of God."

"That" and "gift" cannot be modifying "faith" because "that" and "gift" are different genders from "faith." Do you see that?

Harold Hohner says this in his Ephesians commentary. I have to tell you something

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

about Harold Hohner. Harold Hohner was probably one of the greatest scholars evangelicalism has ever had, and he worked on this Ephesians commentary for decades.

I remember joking around with a prior alumni from Dallas Seminary, and they asked me, "Is Hohner still working on that commentary? I graduated in 1971. He was working on it back then." I mean, he poured his whole life into this.

He had two doctorates, one from Dallas Seminary, one from Cambridge. He was one of these, like, really fit guys, you know. He was always coming down on the students for being overweight and things like that. He was just a tremendous human being, a tremendous scholar.

And I think I killed him, to be honest with you. And the reason I think that is because he came home from a jog, jogging into his house, and he just fell over and died. Sudden death. And he was my third reader on my dissertation, which is your most important reader because they are outside your department.

And when I saw the website that he had died, I very selfishly thought to myself, "Well, what is going to happen to my dissertation?" And so what happened was that my dissertation showed up in my mail, snail mail, and I looked at the date. He had signed off on it the day before he died.

I kind of looked at that as God's providential protection of me. But then I started to feel guilty. I mean, maybe I killed him. I may have bored him to death. Or another theory is that I wrote about the Book of Revelation in my dissertation. Maybe he read it and was so eager to get into heaven, he just went right ahead and died.

But he was just huge in the world of scholarship. And when you quote Harold Hohner, it is not like you are quoting, you know, Jack Van Impe or something like that. And this is what Hohner says in his Ephesians commentary. You should get it. It is very thick, but it is the best commentary, in my opinion, that has ever been produced on the Book of Ephesians in church history. That is my assessment of it.

So obviously, if I am speaking that highly of it, I want to know what Hohner said about Ephesians 2:8-9. And here is what he says:

"The real problem is with the demonstrative pronoun τοῦτο, 'this.' Barth states, 'The neuter pronoun "this" may refer to...the noun "faith." some commentators think that it refers to πίστεως, the nearest preceding noun. A serious objection to this is that the feminine noun does not match the neuter gender of the pronoun...Furthermore, to refer back to any one of these words seems to be redundant.'"²¹

²¹ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 342-43.

So Hohner is acknowledging the gender problem that I am trying to make you aware of. He says this,

"Rather than any particular word it is best to conclude that τοῦτο refers back to the preceding section. This is common and there are numerous illustrations of such in Ephesians. For example, in 1:15 τοῦτο refers back to the contents of 1:3-14, in 3:1 it refers back to 2:11-22, and in 3:14 it refers back to 3:1-13. Therefore, in the present context, τοῦτο refers back to 2:4-8 and more specifically 2:8a, the concept of salvation by grace through faith."²²

That is what "that" ("touto" [τοῦτο]) (Ephesians 2:8-9) refers to—not faith. It refers to the package of grace that is delivered to you the moment you trust Christ. That is the gift. The gift is not the faith. That is what the Calvinist wants you to believe. The gift, rather, is the whole package of salvation.

Something that is real interesting is that when you take the word "faith" ("pistis" [πίστις]) and "gift" ("doron" [δῶρον]) and you travel through the Bible, "gift" ("doron" [δῶρον]) is a Greek word that never refers to "faith" ("pistis" [πίστις])—ever. Did you know that?

It can refer to everlasting life: "doron" [δῶρον] is used that way. It can refer to eternal life. It can refer to the Holy Spirit. It can refer to justification. It can refer to Jesus Christ. Those are all called "gifts" with that Greek word ("doron" [δῶρον]).

But not a single time is the word "gift" ("doron" [δῶρον]) ever applied to faith. So therefore, it is kind of hard to let faith be defined as a gift in Ephesians 2:8-9.

What "Gift" and "Not by Works" Do Refer To

- "Gift" (*dōron*) never refers to "faith" (*pistis*) but...
 1. Everlasting life (John 4:10)
 2. Eternal life (Rom. 6:23)
 3. Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; 8:20; 10:45; 11:17)
 4. Justification (Rom. 5:15, 17)
 5. Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 9:15)

George Zeller, "What Is The Gift of God? A Study of Ephesians 2:8-9," online: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/godgift.htm>, accessed 04 November 2019.

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²² Ibid.

²³ George Zeller, "What Is The Gift of God? A Study of Ephesians 2:8-9," online: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/reformed/godgift.htm>, accessed 04 November 2019.

Furthermore, Ephesians 2:9 says that this gift is not the result of works. "Not by works" never refers to faith in the whole Bible. It can refer to justification. There are all the passages.

What "Gift" and "Not by Works" Do Refer To

- "Not by works" never refers to "faith" (*pistis*) but...

1. Justification (Rom. 3:20, 27, 28; 4:2, 6; Gal. 2:16)
2. Election (Rom. 9:11; 11:6)
3. Righteousness (Rom. 9:32)
4. Salvation (Titus 3:5; 2 Tim. 1:9)
5. Calling (2 Tim. 1:9)

George Zeller, "What Is The Gift of God? A Study of Ephesians 2:8-9," online: <http://www.middletownbiblechurch.org/reformed/godgift.htm>, accessed 04 November 2019.

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It can refer to election, righteousness, salvation, or calling. But it never refers to faith. So when you see the words "faith," "gift of God," and "not as a result of works" (Ephesians 2:8-9), and you are linking all three together, you are doing something that the Bible never does. This is in addition to the gender problem that I have tried to point out here.

Hohner concludes,

"...Therefore, the gift of salvation has its origin in God, its basis is grace, and it is received by means of faith."²⁵

So here is how it works: the Spirit convicts you because He is convicting the whole world (John 16:7-11). You exercise your personal faith in the completed transaction of Jesus Christ for the complete forgiveness of your sins. At that point, you are given grace, unmerited favor.

At that point, the whole grace package, as I like to call it, is transferred to your account. But you would not get any of it unless it was received by means of faith. Do you see that? It is your faith.

That is a lot of information, but I wanted to talk you through how to handle Ephesians 2:8-9, because that is Calvinists' go-to passage. The big problems with it are that there is a gender problem ("gift" and "that" are neuter, and "faith" is feminine) and that faith is never called a gift in the whole Bible (other things are called gifts but not faith,

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Hohner, 343-344.

and the concept of not by works is never applied to faith in the Bible—it is applied to other things).

So anyway, I hope that helps you out a little bit. We will pick it up with Philippians 1:29 next time.