

## Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible 029

2 Peter 1:1

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Let's take our Bibles and open them to Philippians 1:29.

### 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 in the midst of this study that we have been doing "Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible." And you say, "Well, when is this study going to end?" Well, it depends on when God chooses it to end, if we are studying Calvinism.

We have been looking at this whole issue of Neo-Calvinism, which is on the rise today, and we are at Roman numeral V, examining TULIP, which is the Calvinistic acronym, through the grid of Scripture, which is what you want to do with everything.

## 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**

You always want to run it through the grid of Scripture. We have been comparing each of these points to the Bible to see if these things be so: Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement. I hope by now you are seeing that it is very much a logical syllogism. If one point falls then the others start to fall.

### 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?

We are already at letter "D," Irresistible Grace. When Calvinists use the expression (that is the "I" in the syllogism) Irresistible Grace, what are they talking about exactly? Bob Kirkland summarizes as follows:

"'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...'"<sup>1</sup>

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

That is the "T," how Calvinists are understanding Total Depravity—misunderstanding it, I should say.

"By such reasoning, man...can't even hear the gospel—much less respond to the pleadings of Christ."<sup>2</sup>

So if you find yourself in Calvinism as a believer, it is not because you exercised faith in the Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins. It is because God infused faith into you. So it is really not your faith. It is God's faith. And this is what Calvinists mean when they say that faith is a gift.

And if you have that, well, then praise the Lord. That means you are one of the elect. You are one of the small fraction of the human race that God has ordained for salvation. If you do not have it, then you know, tough tacos, so to speak. God's grace passed over you, and you are not one of the elect, and you will find yourself in hell having done nothing—let me put it this way: having never received the grace of God so that you could avoid hell.

If you find yourself in hell, you were basically double predestined to go to hell, in that sense. So that is what Calvinists mean by Irresistible Grace. So, as they talk about this issue of Irresistible Grace, there are basically three things that come up. They say that (1) faith is a gift. That is what we are looking at here.

## 2. Calvinistic Arguments

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

Calvinists say that (2) regeneration precedes faith, which we will be looking at maybe next week. And they say that this all has to be that way because (3) lost man cannot seek God, Romans 3:11.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

a) Faith is a Gift?

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

We are in the midst of looking at each of these things and seeing if they are biblical, because I am of the contention that this Calvinistic system is not biblical.

It is a logical syllogism imposed on Scripture, rather than getting the theology from the Scripture. So if you do not learn anything else from me, if you learn this one thing, it would be enough. Whatever theology you hold on anything, make sure that it is biblical. And if you find points in which it is not biblical, then readjust your theology.

I have been guilty of this in times past, when I have been so in love with my theology that my temptation is to rewrite the Bible to fit my theology. I have used this example before, of people in forensics. If they are really good at solving crime mysteries, and who the bad guy is, they try not to develop a theory on the case too early, before all the evidence comes in.

Because if you develop a theory on the case too quick, the temptation is to make the evidence fit your theory, rather than readjust your theory according to the evidence. See that? It is the same way in Bible study, and a lot of people are so in love with, for whatever reason, this Calvinistic system. Nobody likes their file drawers rearranged, so to speak.

You can watch Calvinists on social media. They do this constantly. They just fight with you and they try to rewrite the Bible. We do not want to be that way, because this is Sugar Land Bible Church. It is not Sugar Land Calvinism Church or Sugar Land Arminianism Church. Sugar Land Pre-Trib Church, or whatever. It is Sugar Land Bible Church, meaning that whatever we believe about anything, we want it to come from the Bible.

So what are the Scriptures that Calvinists use to support this idea that faith is a gift? The truth of the matter is that everybody uses the Bible. I was watching (I do not do this for my own doctrinal nourishment; I do it as opposition research) a Kenneth Copeland podcast this week, and he pulled out his Bible, and man, was that thing marked up, and

he had all the little note tabs and things coming out of it.

If you watch Kenneth Copeland, man, that guy quotes the Bible. But you should say to that, "Well, so what? The devil quotes the Bible too, right?" In the three temptations, Satan quoted the Scripture to Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12, 13; Luke 4:1-13).

The issue is not who quotes the Bible. The issue is who is rightly dividing the Word of God. Are these things that Calvinists are saying biblical, or are they yanking verses out of context? So the Calvinists, man, they quote the Bible. They have a bunch of verses that they use to support the idea that faith is a gift.

### iii. Calvinist Proof-Texts

- |                  |                                |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| (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) <b><u>Philip. 1:29</u></b> |
| (e) Acts 16:14   | (j) 2 Pet. 1:1                 |

We have gone through a lot of these verses. Let's pick it up here with two more to consider: Philippians 1:29 and 2 Peter 1:1. Paul writes to the Philippians, and says to them,

*"For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Philippians 1:29).*

So the Calvinists say, "There it is, right in the Bible: God granted faith to the Philippians." There is a wonderful article written in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Dallas Seminary's academic journal, by a guy I went through the PhD program with, Dr. Rene Lopez, who wrote a great article.

You can just Google this and find it online. It is entitled "Is Faith a Gift from God or a Human Exercise?" I highly recommend that article to you, because I am using it to rebut these Calvinistic claims that faith is a gift. So let me just read to you what Lopez says here about Philippians 1:29, and then I will come back and explain it a little bit more in depth. Lopez says,

"However, the gift of faith is not the topic of the verse. In fact the word 'granted' (... 'give graciously') should be understood here as conveying a

privilege. It is a graciously granted privilege that God allows a person to believe in Christ and to suffer for Him."<sup>3</sup>

That is how to handle "granted" (Philippians 1:29). It is not some kind of faith that has been imposed. It is that God gave an opportunity for people to believe. And had God not done that, no one would believe. But the verse does not say that God infuses faith. Lopez goes on and he says,

"Since 'to believe' and 'to suffer' are parallel,..."<sup>4</sup>

Notice that:

*"For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Philippians 1:29).*

Notice that "believe" and "suffer" are parallel to each other. Here is the word "believe" right here. Here is the word "suffer" right here. So whatever I am doing with believing, I have to also do with suffering. Whatever I do with suffering, I also have to do with believing.

That is one of the points that Rene Lopez is making in this article, which we will talk about in just a second. He says,

"Since 'to believe' and 'to suffer' are parallel, it follows that if faith is a gift then so is suffering. But the Bible nowhere speaks of suffering as a divine gift."<sup>5</sup>

The Bible does not teach that all things are good. People misquote the Scripture constantly: "All things are good, Romans 8." That is not what the Bible says. The Bible never says that all things are good. It says that God uses all things together for good to accomplish His will in the life of the Christian (Romans 8:28).

Do not get this idea that suffering is a gift. Do not do not tell people that. "Just got diagnosed with cancer." "Man, what a gift you have in the Lord." That is not good counseling. What you would say is that we are living in a terrible, fallen world where bad things happen to good people, and what happened to you is bad.

But the promise of Scripture is that God is going to use it together for good (Romans 8:28), which is completely different from telling somebody that something bad happened to them as a gift. So if faith is a gift, then logic dictates that suffering is a gift. But the Bible does not teach that. The Bible nowhere speaks of suffering as a divine gift.

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<sup>3</sup> René Lopez, "Is Faith a Gift From God or a Human Exercise?," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 164 (July–September 2007): 269-70.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

"Furthermore," Lopez says, "it is not God who suffers, but man. Likewise, it is not God who believes but man. Both believing and suffering are actions of people."<sup>6</sup>

So whatever you are doing with "believe" in Philippians 1:29, you also have to do with suffering, since the two are held there symmetrically. So, drilling down a little bit more on what Dr. Lopez is arguing here in Philippians 1:29, let's focus first of all on "granted."

*"For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Philippians 1:29).*

Does that mean that faith is a gift? No, it does not. Does that mean that faith has been infused into some people's lives and not others? No, that is not what it means. What it means is that God has granted people the opportunity to believe, but He will not believe for you.

So I run Philippians 1:29 through the grid of John 16:7-11, where Jesus is very clear that there has gone out into the world a convicting ministry. The Spirit of God convicts people. Who does he convict? He convicts the world. He does not just convict the elect—so-called. He convicts the world.

And as people come under that conviction, they have an opportunity to believe. Without that conviction, no one could believe. That is what Philippians 1:29 is talking about. Jesus said,

*"But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away;..." (John 16:7).*

This is the Upper Room. The disciples were panicked that Jesus was leaving. Every time He said, "I am leaving," it panicked them more. These eleven disciples that He had there in the Upper Room, Judas having already left the upper room.

*"But I tell you the truth, is your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper..." (John 16:7).*

That is the Greek word "paraclete," the one who comes alongside to assist. "How dare you call a woman a helper?" Have you ever heard that? That the woman is the helper of the man. "How dare you? What kind of sexist are you?" Well, it is not much of an insult, because the Holy Spirit is called the Helper. So if anything, being a helper elevates the role of a woman, not tears her down. Anyway, that is another sermon for another day, I guess.

*"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*

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

*you" (John 16:7).*

"So it is good that I am leaving, because when I leave," Jesus says, "via the Ascension, this is what you get: you get the Helper. And when He comes, He will convict the elect." Oh, it did not say that.

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

"Sin" is "hamartia" [ἁμαρτία], singular noun. Very interesting. The Spirit is not convicting the world of sins.

Just before I came in today, I was watching the Hal Lindsey broadcast, and he was going through John 16, and he was talking about how when he was an unbeliever, he would sort of go and get liquored up, there in Bourbon Street, I guess, (I do not have a lot of experience with it, fortunately) there in Louisiana—New Orleans.

And Lindsey was recalling how the Baptist churches of that time were doing these crusades up and down the street, trying to speak out against alcohol and liquor. And Lindsay says, "If one of them had just come and told me that my alcohol or liquor was not the problem, I could have gotten saved."

Because alcohol and liquor is not the problem with unbelievers. It is the single sin that they are committing against God, which is unbelief. That is the only sin that sends people to hell: unbelief. Now, I am not pro-immoral living, or anything like that.

And I would presume that when the Holy Spirit comes into a person, He will start to deal with them in the realm of sins, plural. But that is not what He is doing on the front end. He is, over and over again, convicting the world of the single sin that they are committing against God. That is why the noun "hamartia" is singular.

*"...concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me;" (John 16:8-9).*

That is the sin that unbelievers are committing against God. That is the sin I was committing against God before I got saved.

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

Unbelievers do not have the righteousness of God.

*"and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged" (John 16:11).*

So if you continue in that state of unbelief without the imputed righteousness of Jesus



Christ, which you receive at the point of faith alone in Christ alone, then you are just stuck with a losing leader, the devil, who is going down. He went down a long time ago. He just does not know it yet.

Understanding Satan is a lot like understanding the two phases of a trial. There is a conviction phase and a sentencing phase. Satan is living between the two. He has already been rendered guilty and defeated. It is just that the sentence has not been carried out yet. So if you are not going to place your personal faith in Christ, then you are stuck with this losing world system.

First John tells us in 1 John 2:15-17 that the world is passing away. It uses the present tense verb "is passing." Well, if the world is passing away, how come it is still here? Because there is a way to use the present tense in such a way that you are so confident it will happen that you use the verb in the present tense.

That is the biblical perspective on this world system. It is not that it will pass away. It is passing away, because to God, it is a done deal. So the moment you place your trust in Christ, your whole allegiance changes and you are now on the winning side of history.

Hal Lindsay's point in that broadcast that I just watched was, "Boy, if one of those protesters had explained that to me, I would have been saved a long time ago. But they were not focused on that. They were focused on all the external things that unbelievers do, like drinking and all that kind of stuff."

You know, I am not totally against protests and things of that nature. They probably have their place. But I think sometimes we miss the point. We are trying to moralize the world, when the Holy Spirit is not trying to moralize the world.

The Holy Spirit is convicting them over and over again of the sin that they are committing against God. If they stopped committing that sin, then the moral issues would probably take care of themselves.

So that is what it means to Philippians 1:29.

*"For to you it has been granted..." (Philippians 1:29).*

"You came under the convicting ministry of the Spirit. You had an opportunity to believe." Philippians 1:29 is not talking about how God infuses faith into the lives of the elect. So Calvinists are misusing the verse.

And we said a little earlier that whatever they are doing with suffering, they have to do with believing, since the two are held parallel there. If "believe" is a gift, then so is "suffer." And yet suffering is not a gift. Nowhere does the Bible say suffering is a gift.

Does God use suffering? Yes, He does. But suffering itself is bad. And beyond that, it is not God who suffers, but man. In the same way, it is not God who believes for us, but

man must believe. So that is just another example of how Calvinists are hijacking a verse.

Let's go to another one. Go to 2 Peter 1:1. It is in what are called the General Epistles. After you get out of Paul's letters you will see 2 Peter 1:1, written by the Apostle Peter.

I think I shared with you that our Sugar Land Bible Church position statements read the wrong way. When this church was founded, it was founded on the right view. And then, over the course of time, there was an elder board that started to change a few of the position statements to make them more Calvinistic.

Fortunately, early on, when we brought up this issue to our elders, we had an elder board that changed this particular position statement back to what it originally said. We have tried to sort of de-Calvinize—de-Reformed theology—Sugar Land Bible Church.

So when we were going through all that, there were some people that wanted it to stay the way it was, and they quoted, in the process, 2 Peter 1:1. It says,

*"Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:1).*

The Calvinist holding that faith is a gift says, "Well, there it is, right in the Bible: Peter is talking about those who have received a faith, meaning faith has been infused into them because they are one of the elect. So if they are believing it is not their belief. It is faith that God gave them."

Well, there are a couple of ways to handle this. One way is to understand that the word "faith" could be something objective rather than subjective. A lot of Bible teachers go that direction, meaning that faith is not something that happens inside of us, but it is receiving objective content, which is the Scripture itself.

If that is true, all 2 Peter 1:1 is saying is that Peter is saying to his readers that they received the Old Testament and were receiving the New Testament, which was then being compiled. I could point to countless Bible commentators that hold that position.

I am not completely sure that argument should be pushed as far as it can be pushed, because the word "faith" [πίστις] in the Greek is anarthrous. What does that mean? It means that "faith" [πίστις] does not have a definite article in front of it. It does not say "To those who have received the faith."

If 2 Peter 1:1 said that, I could probably buy into the argument that this is some kind of objective content, rather than something subjective thing taking place in the life of a believer. That is an argument, and that is one way to dispel the Calvinistic view. Just argue that faith here is objective content, rather than something that happens subjectively inside a person.

But a stronger argument is that this word "received" ("lagchano" [λαγχάνω]), a participle ("lachousin" [λαχοῦσιν]) in Greek, is not in the passive voice. What is the passive voice? It describes something that is done to you.

If 2 Peter 1:1 were describing something that were done to Peter's audience, it would be in the passive voice. But "received" ("lagchano" [λαγχάνω]) is not in the passive voice. It is in the active voice. The active voice means that Peter's audience is not the recipient of the action. They did something to receive the action.

So if the Calvinistic view on 2 Peter 1:1 were correct, this participle "received" ("lagchano" [λαγχάνω]) would be in the passive voice. But it is not. It is in the active voice. So, "have received" ("lagchano" [λαγχάνω]) is in the active voice. The readers received faith, but 2 Peter 1:1 does not say how. It does not say that God did it to them.

In fact, 2 Peter 1:1 puts "received" in the active voice, meaning that the readers did something. "Have received" ("lagchano" [λαγχάνω]) is in the active voice (the readers received faith, but 2 Peter 1:1 does not say how) rather than the passive voice, which would mean that the readers attained the faith from God.

If 2 Peter 1:1 were saying that the readers obtained faith from God, "received" ("lagchano" [λαγχάνω]) would be in the passive voice instead of the active voice. This is just another example of how Calvinists are stringing a bunch of verses together to form a doctrine. But when you examine these doctrines in particular, they do not really seem to hold up to what the Calvinistic system says.

So when you find yourself in that situation, what you want to do is readjust your theology. But Calvinists do not do that. They drill down harder and they start attacking people that point these things out, because the Calvinists do not want to give up their system. No one likes their file drawers rearranged.

At some point, we are going to have to be humble about things. Can we do that? If I am dead wrong about something, and it can be demonstrated from the Bible, then I just admit I am wrong. I correct myself and move on. That is part of growing. But as long as people just double down as they do with these kinds of issues, they cannot grow beyond the narrow confines in which they find themselves. We do not want to be like that.

So here is the outline for "Faith is a Gift?"

a) Faith is a Gift?

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

(1) There are some Calvinistic examples of it. (2) They think that faith is a work, which it is not. (3) We have gone through their Calvinistic proof texts that they use. I want to wrap up this section with some miscellaneous problems with this idea that faith is a gift. Here are some miscellaneous problems.

iv. Miscellaneous Problems

- Degree of faith mentioned? (Matt. 8:5-13)
- Responsibility to believe?
- Responsibility for not believing (John 3:18; 5:40)
- Confuses the instrument with the agent
- Reverses the subject (man)–object (God) relationship
- Romans 10:17
- Confuses how the Gospel is shared
- A lively corpse indeed?
- Roman Catholic roots

The first problem with it is why would Jesus mention the degree of faith as He interacted with people in the Gospels?

Notice Matthew 8:10. Here Jesus is interacting with a Gentile centurion. You can read the whole thing in Matthew 8:5-13. Jesus says something very interesting in Matthew 8:10. This is where the centurion said to the Lord,

*"... 'Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, fearfully tormented.' Jesus said to him, 'I will come and heal him.' But the centurion said, 'Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers*

*under me; and I say to this one, "Go!" and he goes, and to another, "Come!" and he comes, and to my slave, "Do this!" and he does it"* (Matthew 8:6-9).

So the centurion effectively said to Jesus, "I know that You are a man of authority. I am a man of authority, but You have more authority than me. All You have to do is speak the word, and my servant will be healed." How did Jesus react to this?

*"Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those who were following, 'Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel'"* (Matthew 8:10).

So just ask yourself a very simple question: If Jesus is commending this centurion because of the degree of his faith, why would He have to do that, if God gave him the faith? If every time in the Bible someone exercises faith, and God is the one that infused that faith into them, then all faith would be great, wouldn't it?

You would not have to single out one guy for exhibiting greater faith than all the others. It obviously was not God infusing faith to him. This man was exercising his own faith.

Back to Dr. Rene Lopez. He says,

"A Roman centurion is another example of a person who exercised faith (Matthew 8:5-13). Marveling at his faith, Jesus said, 'Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel' (v. 10). Jesus' reference to the centurion's 'great faith' makes sense only if that faith came from the centurion and not God. For why would Christ emphasize the centurion's degree of faith if it came from God?"<sup>7</sup>

Everyone's faith would be great if it came from God. But Jesus singles out this man for exercising extraordinary faith, because it was his faith that was being exercised.

Jesus says something very interesting to Peter in Luke 22:32. He says,

*"but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail;..."* (Luke 22:32).

If God is the one that supplies faith, then there is no need to pray for it not to fail.

*"but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again,"—repented, in other words—"strengthen your brothers"* (Luke 22:32).

So, very clearly, as Jesus is interacting with Peter here and praying for him, he calls it, not God's faith infused to you, but *"your faith"* (Luke 22:32), and it is weak. If God gave

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<sup>7</sup> Lopez, 264.

it to you, it would not be weak. It has the potential of failing. If God gave it to you, it could not fail.

This is where in Calvinism you get this very strong fruit-inspecting mentality about people that fall away, or lapse away. I have seen some of the harshest things said about them.

"Oh, they stopped showing up to church. They must have never received the gift of faith, because if they had received the gift of faith, they would be in church, and they would be in Sunday school and they would be singing in the choir." We do not have a choir, but whatever they had, they would be singing in it.

And if they lapsed in any way, "Oh gosh, goodness gracious, they never received the gift of faith. Maybe they were never one of the elect." Do you know how that goes? I was in a church where a guy said, "There are people in this church—I do not know if they are saved or not. They are so wayward in faith."

That was a strange comment. At the time, I did not fully understand all the theology, but what he was basically saying was that, if faith is a gift, these people would not be acting the way that they are acting. You get this real strong kind of judgmentalism in Calvinistic circles.

But Jesus in Luke 22:32 is very clear that it is Peter's faith. And because it is Peter's faith, it has the potential to fail. So Jesus is praying for Peter, something that would be unnecessary if faith is a gift.

I know this is not rocket science. It is just basic reading comprehension.

Number 2 (see outline above), if faith is a gift, then why does the Bible over and over again put on us the responsibility to believe? Here are all the verses.

#### The Responsibility to Believe

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| a. John 1:12-13 | f. Acts 16:31   |
| b. John 3:16    | g. Rom. 3:21-22 |
| c. John 3:36    | h. Rom. 3:25-26 |
| d. John 5:24    | i. Rom. 4:3-6   |
| e. John 6:47    | j. Eph. 2:8     |

Do we have to look up each one? Probably not. All of these verses tell us to believe. We will look up one. Why not? John 1:12-13—

*"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13).*

John 1:12-13 people to believe. John 3:16, which you know by heart, tells people to believe. John 3:16 says,

*"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).*

Same thing in John 3:36. Same thing in John 5:24, which we quote often here. What does John 5:24 say?

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life" (John 5:24).*

Same with John 6:47. Same with the Philippian jailer who asked Paul and Silas life's most important question, "What must I do to be saved?" Acts 16:31 says,

*"They said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household'" (Acts 16:31).*

Same with all of these verses. Well, these verses do not make any sense, placing the responsibility to believe on unsaved people, if, number one, they cannot believe, and number two, if they do believe, God infused that into them.

A third problem with this "faith is a gift" mindset is that the responsibility for not believing is placed on unbelievers in the Bible. Notice John 3:18.

*"He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already..." (John 3:18).*

In other words, it is the sword of Damocles hanging over a person, ready to fall at any minute, if they have never trusted in the Savior for salvation.

*"He who believes in him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18).*

So if you are an unbeliever, in unbelief, the Bible is saying that it is your own fault. The

reason you do not believe is because you made a decision not to believe. So you have no one to blame but yourself. So on the day of judgment, do not blame God. Do not say, "I could not believe. It was impossible for me to believe."

Because God gave you everything necessary to believe. Number one, He gave you the completed canon of Scripture. Number two, He gave you His own Son. And number three, He gave you the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit, John 16:7-11, to bring you to the point of decision.

What more do you expect God to do? He is not going to believe for you. If He were to believe for you, He would be overriding how He has manufactured you as an image bearer of God, which is an awesome responsibility because it involves free will. So what the Bible says is that if you are an unbeliever, then do not blame anybody but yourself.

Notice John 5:39-40. Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees

*"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life" (John 5:39-40).*

Jesus is effectively saying, "The basic problem is that you have the opportunity to come to Me, but you do not want Me." Now, how could those texts make any sense if the Pharisees have no ability to come to God? And if anyone comes to God, God gives them the gift of faith. There is no way that the Lord could hold unbelievers responsible for their unbelief.

I mean, sometimes we think, "Gosh, if we could just be a little bit more loving or if I could maybe get in the right conversation and present it in such a way." I have unsaved people in my life like you do. "Maybe, maybe if that would happen, they would believe." But the truth of the matter is, the reason they do not believe is that they have made a decision not to believe.

So unbelievers have absolutely no one to blame but yourself. Yes, we should try to get into the right conversations. Yes, we should evangelize. Yes, we should try to present the gospel with clarity. But the truth of the matter is that there are a lot of people—the parable of the sower teaches us this—that are just going to turn it down.

And it is not your fault. It is not that you did not articulate it exactly the right way. That person that you are dealing with is a free moral agent. God made them that way as an image bearer of Him. And if they do not want to believe, then at the end of the day, they made a choice.

That is what the Bible teaches about unbelievers. It teaches that men love darkness, rather than light, because their deeds were evil, so they stay away from Christ (John 3:20).



There are people that I was with in a restaurant last night. We had to sit in the bar section. Not that we were looking to sit in the bar section. But you could either sit in the bar and eat, or you can wait two hours. Your choice. So I exercised my own volition to sit in the bar section.

The piano player was really good. And he came over and talked with us. The truth of the matter is, there are people that I was with last night that would never show up at a church like this. In a million years, they would not show up. Why is that?

I even tried giving the guy my card, our card that we use for Sugar Land Bible Church. Why wouldn't they show up? Because they are making a decision. They understand enough about Christianity, that if they get too close to the light, they do not really like that because their deeds are evil, as all of ours are.

So people have a tendency to stay away from the light, because light by its nature exposes (John 3:19-21). And when they stay away from the light, they just made a choice. And that is how the Bible explains unsaved people. They are in the state that they are in, and it is their own fault.

At the bare minimum, they should search for God because, look at the design of this world that we are living in. Do you think that this universe came into fruition accidentally? That is the craziest thing I have ever heard. I mean, even now as we are sitting here, we are really not sitting.

Did you know that our planet is moving around the sun. And we are not so close to the sun that we burn up, although it feels like it sometimes here in Texas. We are not so far away from the sun that we freeze to death. Here we are, orbiting around the sun at exactly the right distance to sustain life.

And people want to say there is no God. That is just dumb. As the late Jerry Falwell used to say, "You got to go to school to be that dumb." The Bible says, "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God'" (Psalm 14:1; 53:1; paraphrase).

So why do unsaved people think this way? Well, they are making a decision. They are rejecting the light that they have. And if they reject that, what are they going to do with the Scripture or with an evangelist? They will not listen to them either.

Remember the rich man that died and went into hell, who wanted someone to go back and warn his five brothers? The Lazarus story. It says this in Luke 16:29-31—

*"But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead'" (Luke 16:29-31).*

In other words, unbelievers are already making a choice to reject truth. Giving them more truth is not going to help them. The only thing giving unbelievers more truth is going to do, is increasing their accountability on the day of judgment. So you have to understand that.

I wish the whole world would come to Christ. But the truth of the matter is that it is just not going to happen. Many will—praise the Lord—but most will not. And it has nothing to do with, "Boy, if I were a little bit more articulate or something." It has to do with that they are making a decision.

They are exercising volition against God. They do not want God. What did they do with the Son of God when He showed up? They nailed Him to a cross. That is how much they appreciated Him. That required volition. So these kinds of statements do not make sense if unbelievers cannot respond.

That is what the Calvinists are saying: it is impossible for unbelievers to respond. Well, then why does the Lord hold unbelievers accountable for their own unbelief? Dr. Robert Congdon, in his very good book, "Oops! I Thought I Was a Four-Point Calvinist," writes,

"Furthermore, why would God admonish and warn unbelievers for being spiritually blind and deaf if it were not in their power to respond?...Is this not a mockery? It would be like chiding a legless man for being unable to walk."<sup>8</sup>

Why does God rebuke unbelievers for their unbelief, when they cannot exercise faith anyway, according to the Calvinistic system? Nonsensical.

Another problem with this idea that faith is a gift is that it confuses the instrument with the agent (see outline above). The instrument is faith. The agent of power within a person's life is the Holy Spirit. Faith is not the agent; it is the instrument that unlocks the power of the agent.

It is like car keys. There are my car keys right there. Those car keys are able to accomplish absolutely nothing, sitting right there. But once I use them as an instrument, it unlocks a power. Put the key in the ignition. Turn it. Engine revs up. There is a power there.

The power is in the engine. The keys are the instrument. See that? What is faith? It is the only thing God requires of us to be justified. Faith is the car keys. It is the instrument which revs up the agent, which is the Holy Spirit coming into a person's life once they have trusted in the Messiah.

Now, if you think that faith is a gift, you are confusing instrument with agent. If faith is something that God infuses; you're confusing instrument with agent. Charlie Bing

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<sup>8</sup> Dr. Robert R. Congdon, *Oops! I Thought I Was a Four - Pt Calvinist* (Greer, SC: Congdon Ministries International, 2014), 51.

addressed this in his excellent dissertation done at Dallas Seminary entitled "Lordship Salvation: A Biblical Evaluation and Response." (All these quotes you can find online.) He has actually taken this and put it into book form. Bing says,

"When faith is called a dynamic (the same as calling it a power), it is confused with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the agent of salvation and the Power that effects a changed life. Faith is the instrument of salvation which, when exercised as a response to God's grace, secures the Spirit's salvation."<sup>9</sup>

So if the Holy Spirit is doing everything on the front end, as Calvinists say, including infusing faith into the elect, then what Calvinists just did is confused the instrument with the agent. That is an interesting way of thinking about it.

Here is something else that may help (see outline). The "faith is a gift" mentality reverses the subject-object relationship. Who is the subject? Man. Is he going to be saved or not? Who is the object? God. Bryant writes this:

"It is not God who believes but man, even though a work may have occurred previously to enable man to believe."<sup>10</sup>

I think Bing is referring to the convicting ministry of the Spirit, which does not believe for you. It makes you aware of your need to believe. So he says,

"It is not God who believes but man, even though a work of God may have occurred previously to enable man to believe. It is man who performs the action."<sup>11</sup>

And this is what the Calvinists do not want. They do not want man to have any role in salvation. And I am saying that he does have a role. It is not a role of works. It is a role of doing the one thing before God that is non-meritorious, which is to exercise faith.

"It is man who performs the action. Linguistically, man is the subject, God is the object. Saying that faith is a 'gift from God' reverses the subject-object relationship."<sup>12</sup>

Man becomes the object. God becomes the subject. That is just a different way of thinking about it.

Here is one of the verses that we used to dethrone the Calvinistic hijacking of one of our position statements, here at Sugar Land Bible Church. At the time, we used Romans

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<sup>9</sup> Charles C. Bing, "Lordship Salvation: A Biblical Evaluation and Response" (Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1991), 53.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

10:17, which says,

*"So faith comes from hearing,..." (Romans 10:17).*

Hearing what? Your favorite talk show host? No.

*"...and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17).*

That is where faith comes from. Do you want to see people get saved? I sure do. Then give them the Word of Christ. The Word of Christ is not going to save them, but it is going to make them aware of their need to be saved.

It never says in Romans 10:17 that faith comes from God, does it? "Faith is infused from God." It does not say that. It says,

*"Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17).*

Here is another problem with this "faith is infused" mentality is that it confuses how the gospel is shared. Over and over again, the Bible teaches—we were just talking about it with some folks earlier who were visiting—that justification occurs through faith alone in Christ alone. Period.

The Latin name for that is "sola fide." There are all the passages that you can look up, showing you that this doctrine is true.

Passages Conditioning Salvation  
on **Faith Alone** (*Sola Fide*)

- Genesis 15:6
- John 3:16; 5:24; 6:28-29, 47; 16:8-9; 20:30-31
- Acts 16:30-31
- Romans 1:16; Ephesians 2:8-9
- Hebrews 11:6

Genesis 15:6; John 3:16; and Acts 16:30-31.

## Belief – God's One Condition for Justification

### Gen 15:6

Then he **believed** in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

### John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever **believes** in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

### Acts 16:30-31

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They said, "**Believe** in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved..."

Lewis Sperry Chafer says,

"...upwards of 150 passages of Scripture condition salvation upon believing only (cf. John 3:16; Acts 16:31)." <sup>13</sup>

So what does John MacArthur, a Calvinist, do? This is a transcript from a sermon he gave at his church. In this particular sermon, he does not tell people to believe in Christ alone for salvation, probably because in his mind, unsaved people cannot do that.

So do you know what he tells them to do at the end of the sermon? "Pray for the gift of faith." He says at the very end,

"That's true faith, and it's a gift that only God can give, and if you desire it pray and ask that He would grant it to you." <sup>14</sup>

Is that the gospel? Can you give me a single example anywhere in the Bible where evangelism occurs, and people are told "You cannot believe, so pray for the gift of faith"? That is not what the Bible teaches us.

What the Bible says over and over again is that we all have a responsibility to exercise faith in the Messiah. So the reason MacArthur's quote bothers me is that in this sermon because of his Calvinistic underpinnings, he is distorting how the gospel is even shared. This is not even the right gospel that he is sharing here.

Jay Adams, with Limited Atonement, says that when people are on his counseling couch—I guess he is a counselor. He says here that when he talks to people whom he

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<sup>13</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, vol. 7, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993), 265-66.

<sup>14</sup> John MacArthur, Jr., Tape GC 90-21 on Lordship salvation, last part of tape, comments made during the closing invitation.

is counseling, he never tells people that Christ died for them, because he does not know. They may not be one of the elect.<sup>15</sup>

If you come to me for counseling, you may not get the couch, but you are going to get the gospel. I am going to tell you that Christ died for you, because I am not a believer in Limited Atonement. I am a believer in unlimited atonement.

So this Calvinistic stuff is distorting how the gospel itself is even shared. Ask yourself this: "If a person cannot exercise faith, because they are dead like a rock, how in the world do you expect him to ask God for the gift of faith?" Does that make any sense?

If you are dead like a rock, not only can you not believe, but you do not even have enough spiritual sensitivity to ask God for the gift of faith. This is what we call a lively corpse indeed.

Here is John MacArthur telling people to pray for the gift of faith.<sup>16</sup>

Roy Aldrich says,

"Thus an unscriptural doctrine of total depravity leads to an unscriptural and inconsistent plan of salvation. Doubtless the sinner is 'dead in trespasses and sins' (Eph. 2:1b). If this means that regeneration must precede faith, then it must also mean that regeneration must precede all three of the pious duties Shedd outlines for the lost [as seen in the following sentence]. A doctrine of total depravity that excludes the possibility of faith must also exclude the possibilities of 'hearing the word,' 'giving serious application to divine truth,' and 'praying for the Holy Spirit for conviction and regeneration.'"<sup>17</sup>

That is what Shedd, a Calvinist, wants unbelievers to do, because they cannot believe. So they are to pray for these three other things. Aldrich correctly says,

"The extreme Calvinist deals with a rather lively spiritual corpse after all. If the corpse has enough vitality to read the Word, and heed the message, and pray for conviction, perhaps it can also believe."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Jay Adams, *Competent to Counsel*, 70.

<sup>16</sup> MacArthur, last part of Tape GC 90-21 on Lordship salvation.

<sup>17</sup> Roy L. Aldrich, "The Gift of God," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 122 (July–September 1965): 249.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*