

Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible 026

Romans 4:4-5

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Take your Bibles and open them to Romans 4:4-5.

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

It has been a little while since we have been in this Calvinism series, but we are actually making progress, believe it or not. We are at that point in the study where we are examining the acronym TULIP, which is the Calvinistic acronym, and we are trying to figure out what parts of it are biblical and what parts are unbiblical.

V. Running **TULIP** Through the Grid of Scripture

- A. **T**otal Depravity
- B. **U**nconditional Election
- C. **L**imited Atonement
- D. **I**rresistible Grace
- E. **P**erseverance of the Saints

So we have done that examination through the "T," Total Depravity, of which the

Calvinists basically believe that you are like a rock with no capacity to believe. You will start seeing today, I hope, how these five things that they believe are linked in a chain.

We took a look at their view of Unconditional Election, which is the idea that God chooses people before the foundation of the world to be saved; and He chooses people from the foundation of the earth to be damned. And humanity has almost no choice in the matter. We took a look at their view of "L," Limited Atonement. They basically believe that Christ shed His blood, not for the entire world, but for a very small subset of humanity.

Now today we are beginning to look at something called "Irresistible Grace." According to Calvinism, if man is like a rock, unable to respond to God (Total Depravity), then how in the world would anybody get saved? Well, God picks people from the foundations of the earth long in eternity past to be saved (Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement).

How can they get saved then? Well, if you are fortunate enough in the Calvinistic system to be one of the elect, then God (Irresistible Grace) irresistibly draws the elect to Himself. Resistance is futile, so to speak. God does a work on the front end to a person that is dead like a rock. He imparts to them the gift of faith so that they can believe, because they cannot believe on their own. He regenerates them first, so that they can believe (Regeneration: born again.)

The impartation of divine life in the Calvinistic system is not something that comes as a direct result of believing, as we teach, but it is something that God does on the front end, only for the elect. The rest of humanity goes into hell. But according to Calvinism, He does this on the front end: He regenerates first, making believing possible. That is a different order from what we teach.

So those are the two big ideas in Calvinism, related to Irresistible Grace. 1. Regeneration precedes faith. 2. Faith is a gift. It is not your faith. It is God imparting to you the gift of faith. You get that impartation if you are fortunate enough to be one of the elect.

Here is our outline as we are going to start studying this concept of Irresistible Grace in Calvinism to see if it is biblical.

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 going to look at the Calvinistic definition (1) and I will give you their own quotes. I bore you with these quotes to show you that Calvinists really teach this. We will look at the Calvinistic arguments (2) that they use, to support the idea that man cannot believe; that regeneration precedes faith; and that some receive the gift of faith.

Then (3) we are going to look at some clear examples that man actually can resist God's grace. They claim that you cannot. If you are one of the elect, you are coming whether you like it or not. You are almost pulled, kicking and screaming. Also I will show you some clear examples of people in the Bible that had the grace of God coming to them, but rejected it. Then I will show you (4) that this is big picture stuff: man indeed can resist by disbelieving.

Then finally (5), I will take you to John 6:44, which is the Calvinists' favorite verse. What does John 6:44 say? This is practically the Calvinists' favorite verse. Instead of putting Isaiah 9:6-7 on their Christmas cards, they put John 6:44—Merry Christmas. John 6:44 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" (John 6:44).

I will be talking our way through that: how to handle that. You can see from the volume of material that I have here that we are not going to get very far. Let's start with the Calvinistic definition.

Bob Kirkland, critiquing Calvinism, says,

"'I' stands for 'Irresistible Grace.' Faith is something 'God irresistibly bestowed upon the elect without their having believed anything....'"¹

So you just wake up one day and you are born again, and you really do not even know why. And you say, "Well, praise the Lord, I am born again because I am one of the elect. I am not like those rocks that are on their way to hell." Basically, is what Calvinists are saying.

"By such reasoning," Kirkland says, "man can't even hear the gospel—much less respond to the pleadings of Christ."²

Here is where the cause of evangelism is very much damaged by Calvinism. Because basically, Calvinists are saying that you can try to evangelize someone, just like you could try to evangelize a rock—it is not going to do any good. The only thing that really matters is whether they are one of the elect. And if they are one of the elect, God is going to do a miracle on the front end, by causing them to be born again first, so that they can believe, and secondly, by imparting to them the gift of faith.

So this is what Calvinists mean by Irresistible Grace. For years and years I called myself a four-point—first a five-point—Calvinist. I became a four-point Calvinist, then a three-and-a-half-point Calvinist, and now I do not even take the name "Calvinist." I am a Biblicist at the end of the day. I was misunderstanding all the points in TULIP. I was tweaking them so much to stay in the Calvinist camp or to make certain people happy: I was just rewriting what Calvinism actually teaches.

So this is what they mean by Irresistible Grace. A little humor here: there is a caveman that represents God that comes and smacks a young lady with his caveman stick, and grabs her by the hair, and pulls her around as if it is a leash. At the bottom it says, "THE CALVINIST IDEA OF A LOVING RELATIONSHIP."

The late Norman Geisler called this doctrine that Calvinists teach (Irresistible Grace),—and pardon my crassness for saying this—cosmic rape. God puts Himself into your life and you have no choice whatsoever in the matter. God brings people to faith all the time, and their will is almost irrelevant.

You hear me talking like this, and you are wondering, "Come on, do Calvinists really say that?" Here come some quotes.

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 Ibid.

This is from the Westminster Confession. Notice what it says here. It says,

"All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation, by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills,..."³

Do you see that? God is overriding the will. The Calvinists are not saying what we teach: that the Spirit convicts people, giving them an opportunity. It goes much deeper than that in Calvinism. God is actually regenerating people before they believe, imparting to some the gift of faith.

"...renewing their wills, and by his almighty power, determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so, as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace."⁴

That quote brings out a little bit of it. It is probably not the most transparent quote that Calvinists have. I will give you a few others.

Here is a quote from Steele, Thomas, and Quinn in their book, "The Five Points of Calvinism." They say that the "efficacious call of the Spirit or irresistible grace" is "the special inward call of the Spirit [that] never fails to result in the conversion of those to whom it is made. This special call is not made to all sinners what is issued to the elect only."⁵

So that is how people get saved in Calvinists' estimation. You are one of the elect; God chose you; so He makes you able by regenerating you first to be saved. Well, what about the rest of us? Let's say that we are not one of the elect. Well, we just did not get picked. And as you go into hell, with no capacity to ever respond to the grace of God, somehow in their system, God receives glory from this.

If you challenge it, you are going to get a very quick retort: "Who are you to question Almighty God?" They say that all the time. I am going to question their system because it does not comport at all with the Bible. Because the way I see it is that God is now, John 16:7-11, convicting the whole world. Calvinism says He is really not doing it very effectively.

Well, if He is not doing it very effectively, then why is He doing it at all? Why is John 16:7-11 even in the Bible? As that conviction goes out to all of humanity, every single person

³ Westminster Confession X, i.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, and S. Lance Quinn, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1963), 52-53.

on the face of the earth now has the ability to respond to the gospel. Calvinism says, "No, they do not. They are rocks. So God has to do a miracle on the front end."

Calvinists love Ephesians 2:1-5. In fact, I know a number of very young people that go to Calvinist colleges and schools. This is how the professors pull them in. They read to them Ephesians 2:1, which says, *"you were dead in your trespasses and sins,"* and they define "dead" as nonexistence.

"You were dead in your trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1).

And when Calvinists see the word "death" there, they define it to these young people as "non-existent"—you could not respond to God if you wanted to. Now, you remember in our series that we define "death" differently. "Death" does not mean "nonexistence." It means "separation." That is the biblical definition of death. But to Calvinists, it is nonexistence.

Well, if that is the case, how does anybody get saved? Paul says in Ephesians 2:5, *"even when we were dead in our transgressions, [He] made us alive."* So you have no choice in the matter: God made you a Christian. God has to do it that way because you are spiritually dead is the way they are interpreting this.

I believe Ephesians 2:1-5 as they do. But my definition of "death" is different. It is not theirs; it is "separation," meaning that a person separated from God is not non-existent—it is not that their spiritual man is non-existent. Their spiritual man is just in a place of separation, in which they are capable of responding to conviction. And when Ephesians 2:5 says that God makes us alive, it does not say how He gives life, but only that He gives it.

So my understanding is that first comes the conviction, which gives you an opportunity to trust in the Savior. Whether you are going to trust in the Savior or not, it is your call. You can accept it at that point or reject it, but the offer is on the table. You have the full ability to receive it. You, by volition, then receive it; and then God makes us alive. By what does He make us alive? By giving to us the gift of the Holy Spirit by which we are now regenerated.

So I have an understanding of Ephesians 2:1-5 that I think fits with the text. But Calvinists do not want you to know that alternative interpretation. They want death to be inability; and they want *"made us alive" (Ephesians 2:5)* to mean that God on the front end, to a rock, has to do a miracle: regeneration precedes faith; the impartation of faith is only to the elect. That is how they are understanding "made us alive" (Ephesians 2:1-5).

So that is the definition Calvinists give to these young people. And these young people, because they do not know the alternative interpretation, are sucked very quickly into Calvinism, in countless Calvinist colleges, schools, seminaries, etc.

R.C. Sproul (you know him, right?) says,

"No human being can possibly come to Christ unless something happens that makes it possible for him to come."⁶

Now, at that point in the quote, I am in agreement with Sproul, because the Spirit has to convict a human being. So that is how unbelievers are able to come. But Sproul does not define it that way. He defines that necessary condition not as conviction, but—

"That necessary condition Jesus declares is that 'it has been granted to him by the Father.'"⁷

Now what verse is that which Sproul has quoted? The one we just read earlier, right? John 6:44.

"Jesus is saying here that the ability to come to Him is a gift from God."⁸

What gift would that be? Being the one of the elect; being given the gift of faith before you understand anything.

"Man does not have the ability in and of himself to come to Christ. God must do something first."⁹

When Sproul says "God must do something first,"¹⁰ It is only for the elect. It is the gift of faith, and regeneration precedes faith. Some of this quote I think is fine: "God must do something first."¹¹ I agree with Sproul if the Spirit's necessary conviction is how he defines that statement; but that is not how he is defining it.

The thing that God does first is conviction: John 16:7-11. Conviction is not the same thing as regeneration. Nor is it the same thing as being given the gift of faith.

Here is another quote. This one comes from Andrew Lincoln. (These are all Calvinist quotes that I am giving you here.)

"God takes the initiative and enables them [the murmuring Jews] to believe."¹²

I like that word "enables," because to me that is a conviction thing. But Lincoln does not define "enable" as conviction. He defines "enable" as giving some rocks the gift of faith:

⁶ R.C. Sproul, *Chosen by God* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1986), 68.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to Saint John*, Black's New Testament Commentaries (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 230.

God takes the initiative and enables them—in this case, Lincoln is dealing with the murmuring Jews in the wilderness—to believe.

Our understanding is that God will take you to the point of decision through conviction, but He is not going to believe for you. If He were to believe for you, He would be overriding how you are manufactured. You are given something very special in Creation. You are an image bearer of God. And even in our fallen state, our image-bearing status has been effaced, but it has not been erased.

God has to respect the free will of people, or else we are just robots. It is like flipping on your computer every morning and it says, "I love you." How gratifying is that, when the computer has no choice in the situation?

So if you are defining "enable" as conviction, bringing people to the point of decision at which now they must believe or not, I am fine with that. But that is not what Calvinists mean by it. What they mean by it is that "enable" means that God believes for you. He imparts to you a gift of faith whether you want it or not. And He only does that for the elect.

Here is another quote by John Gerstner saying basically the same thing. Gerstner argues that if John 3:16 "is supposed to teach that God so loved everyone in the world that He gave His only son to provide them an opportunity to be saved by faith...such love on God's part...would be a refinement of cruelty..."¹³

Here he is shrinking the word "world" to the elect. Why is he doing that? Because according to Calvinism, people do not have an ability to believe. Look at what Gerstner says here: If you interpret John 3:16 as Jesus died for the whole world, "such love on God's part...would be a refinement of cruelty..." That would be like "offering a gift of life to a spiritual corpse, a brilliant sunset to a blind man, and a reward to a legless cripple if only he will come and get it." These "are horrible mockeries."¹⁴

So here Gerstner is giving his excuse, or his defense. This is why he took John 3:16, "For God so loved the world," and is shrinking it to only include the elect. He says that if you make it too broad and you move from Limited Atonement to unlimited atonement, you are offering a gift to a bunch of people that cannot receive it.

What is what is unelect humanity to Calvinism? It is a spiritual corpse. It is totally blind. It is a legless cripple. What Gerstner is saying here is that anybody that has a brain would not interpret John 3:16 to refer to the whole world.

¹³ John H. Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth: A Critique of Dispensationalism* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth and Hyatt, Publishers, Inc., 1991), 124.

¹⁴ Ibid.

They view themselves as very intellectually sophisticated in this Calvinistic system. In fact, when you challenge it, they say, "Well, you just do not understand it." Well, try me—try me. See if I can understand it. I may not be the sharpest tool in the shed, but I have studied this stuff for a long time. I think I might have a chance at understanding it.

What Calvinists are saying is that if you expand the word "world" to the world, you are giving a gift to a bunch of people that cannot receive it, because you are giving a gift to a bunch of rocks. And we know that those rocks are going to stay rocks because they have no capacity for faith. So it is like giving a gift to a spiritual corpse, a sunset to a blind man, or a reward to a legless cripple. And these are horrible mockeries.¹⁵

Here is a quote from Arthur Pink. Arthur Pink's book, "The Sovereignty of God" is a Calvinistic classic. I quote a lot from Arthur Pink in my "Coming Kingdom" book, and the reason I do that is that Arthur Pink had, from what I can tell, some kind of mid-life crisis in which he used to think the way we think about the doctrine of salvation and dispensational eschatology. He reached a point in his life at which he threw the whole thing out.

This quote is latter Pink. When you quote Arthur Pink, you have to figure out what era you are dealing with. Early on, he said a lot of wonderful things, but something happened to him—I do not know exactly what it was—and he became very anti-dispensationalist, very anti-pre-Trib-Rapture, very anti-any kind of giving man any room whatsoever in the salvation process, later in his life.

So this quote is from Pink later in life. He says,

"Personally, we have no more to do with our spiritual birth than we had our natural birth...[Man is] utterly incapable of willing anything...the sinner, of himself, cannot repent and believe."¹⁶

"Cannot" indicates an inability to "repent and believe."¹⁷ So, Pink is comparing spiritual birth to physical birth. I did not really have a choice whether I was going to be physically born, right? I did not have a choice as to how tall I was going to be. It is not like I put in an order, you know,—"Six foot six, please." "And here is the hair color I like." I had no choice in it. I was just born.

Pink says, "Well, that is how you are spiritually born." No choice in the matter whatsoever. You just wake up one day and you are a believer because you are one of the elect. Now, I think that when Pink compares physical birth to spiritual birth, he is making an apples and oranges comparison.

Jesus Himself conditioned spiritual birth on believing. That is how a person is born again. Physical birth has nothing to do with that. So Calvinists are running two things together

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Arthur Pink, *Sovereignty of God*, p. 57, 113, 120.

¹⁷ Ibid.

that do not fully comport. If you say this to a young person fresh out of high school, in a Calvinistic college, it sounds really good to them. So they leap onto the Calvinistic bandwagon and become, the young, the reformed and the restless, as we call them.

Now, look at this quote from Steele, Thomas, and Quinn. This really lays the whole thing bare. They are trying to promote the five points of Calvinism in this book "The Five Points of Calvinism." The book says,

"Because of the fall, man is an unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel."¹⁸

That is what Calvinists mean by Total Depravity: inability.

"The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God;"¹⁹—

They are defining "dead," of course, as nonexistence; whereas I am defining it as separation.

—"his heart is deceitful and desperately corrupt. His will is not free,"²⁰—

Luther wrote the famous book, "The Bondage of the Will." He was trying to say in that particular book that the will is in a state of bondage and has no inclination to God whatsoever. Now to a point, I agree with him on that. We are totally depraved and it has affected our will. But, you see, God in his grace has made accommodations for that.

One of the accommodations that He has made for us in that regard is the worldwide convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit, John 16:7-11, which I am going to show you in just a minute. But Steele and Thomas say that "The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God."²¹

By the way, can you see how this destroys evangelism? Why would you ever evangelize? It is like screaming at a person that cannot hear you.

—"it is in bondage to his evil nature, therefore, he will not—indeed he cannot—choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. Consequently, it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ—"²²

So, worldwide spiritual conviction by the Holy Spirit, which Jesus predicted would come is not enough to lead a person to Christ. Okay, I have a question: If that is true, then why

¹⁸ Steele, Thomas, and Quinn, 5-6.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

does God convict the world? If worldwide conviction cannot bring a person to the point of decision, then why does God waste His time doing it?

—"it takes regeneration by which He makes the sinner alive"—
misinterpreting Ephesians 2:1 and 5—"and gives him a new nature. Faith
is not something man contributes to salvation, but is itself part of God's gift
of salvation—it is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God."²³

So the point that is being made in this quote is that people in their insensate state—the authors are misunderstanding depravity—could not make a decision for Christ if they wanted to. Our answer to that is, "Well, that is why the Holy Spirit convicts the world." Their answer to that is, "That is not enough."

If it is not enough, I would counter by saying, "Why does God do it? Well, if the Spirit's conviction is not enough, then what does God have to do to get anybody saved?" "Oh, that is where some are given the gift of faith on the front end. God does a miracle in which He regenerates somebody so that they can believe." That is what Steele, Thomas, and Quinn are talking about here.

Our model is very different. God does not do a miracle on the front end. Oh, by the way, who does God do that for? He does it only for the elect. You see, our model of salvation is very, very different from what Calvinists are teaching. What we believe is that the Spirit convicts, bringing people to the point of decision. Whether they receive Christ or not, it is their call. God is not going to believe for them.

If God believed for them, which is what Calvinists are teaching here, then He would be overriding how we are manufactured as image bearers, because part of our image-bearing status that God gave us is something awesome: it is free will. Every single day of my life, even as a Christian, I have the ability to walk with God, or not.

Sometimes I wish that God had not given me that capacity, but the capacity is mine. In the very first chapter of the Bible He told us that we are made in His image. And just as He has the power of free will, He has given it to us. And obviously, the smartest thing you could ever do with your free will is give it right back to God.

That is what Jesus modeled for us when He said, "Not My will be done, but Thy will be done" (Luke 22:42, paraphrase). That is the smartest thing you could ever do: keep giving your free will back to God. But Calvinists are saying that a person does not even have free will. You wake up one day, and you are regenerated, and you are a believer, and your neighbor is not—because you are one of the elect. And you could not even understand these things unless God did this massive miracle on the front end.

²³ Ibid.

So the Holy Spirit can convict sinners all day long, but it is an exercise in futility, according to Calvinists' mindset, without this prior miracle (God giving the gift of faith). I realize that some of this can get a little sticky, and it is semantics.

But here is John 16:7-11, which five-point Calvinists hardly ever interact with. It is almost as if you were to read their Bible, and this paragraph would not even be there. Jesus said this to the disciples in the Upper Room:

"But I tell you the truth,"²⁴—

When Jesus says, *"I tell you the truth"* (John 16:7), that means that it is the truth, amen? Anything Jesus says is true, but it is more highlighted when He says, *"I tell you the truth"* (John 16:7).

"But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper"²⁵—

That is the Paraclete, the one who comes alongside to assist.

—"will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict"²⁶—

That word "convict" means "to persuade." Who is the Spirit persuading? The elect?

—"the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;" (John 16:8).

Right now, as I speak, the Holy Spirit is in a worldwide ministry, convicting sinners of those three things: sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:7-11). He is not believing for them, but He wants to bring them to the point of decision through this perpetual conviction and persuasion.

Then fortunately, Christ goes on here, and defines what He means by sin, righteousness, judgment:

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

The Holy Spirit is not believing for people. He is convicting them over and over again of the single sin that they are committing against God, whereby if they die in this state, never having trusted in the Savior, they are hurtling towards a Christless eternity.

There is only one sin that sends you to hell. It is not profanity, drinking, sexual immorality,

²⁴ John 16:7.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ John 16:7-8.

child abuse, or whatever sins are out there today. That is not what sends people to hell. Those kinds of things determine the degree of torment in hell. But that is not what sends them to hell.

What sends people to hell is the sin of unbelief. And that is what the Holy Spirit is doing in the lives of unsaved people. Through His worldwide convicting ministry, He is not believing for them, but He is bringing them to the point of decision. That is why "sin" ("hamartia" [ἁμαρτία]) in John 16:8-9 is a singular noun.

The Holy Spirit, as I speak, has ministries in the Christian; in the church; and in the world. One of the things that He does in the world, over and over again, is convicts unsaved people of the sin of unbelief. He is not trying to morally reform unregenerate people.

So when you come to an unsaved person, and you evangelize, and you dump all this legalism on them: "Hey, you need to do this, and you need to do that, and you need to, you know, stop talking that way,"—you are involved in an endeavor that the Holy Spirit is not doing. The Holy Spirit is not doing that in unsaved people. He is convicting them over and over again of the sin that they are committing against God: unbelief—never having trusted in Christ. It is the only sin that can send them into hell.

Now, believe me: when a person receives Christ and that is their call, the Holy Spirit will come into them and start to deal with all kinds of moral issues. But that is not what we are talking about here. We are not talking about what the Holy Spirit is doing related to saved people. We are talking about what He is doing related to unsaved people.

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

So when you get the opportunity to evangelize a lost person, that is where you focus the discussion. "Yeah, but what about the age of the earth and Noah's Ark and dinosaurs?" Well, we will talk about that later. There are apologetic answers you could give. But those are really tertiary issues.

The main issue is, "Are you going to trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins or not?" You keep moving the discussion back to that. As you do that, you are going to start seeing a lot more fruit in your evangelism, because you are talking about something that the Holy Spirit is already doing in people.

"concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me;" (John 16:9-10).

"What you need, lost sinner, is not your own self-righteousness. You need the transferred righteousness of Christ that He imputes, or imparts, to you, the moment you trust in the Savior. You do not want to stand before a holy God in your own righteousness, do you? I sure do not.

Yet that is what Adam and Eve were trying to do with the leaves that they sewed together. They were trying to fix their own problem. That is what the world of religion is trying to do: do enough good to maybe compensate for the bad. That is just a losing game. You cannot win that game.

But what you can win is receiving by grace Christ's righteousness transferred to you, so that now God the Father looks at you as if you are just as righteous as His Son. And I say to that, "Thumbs up. I can stand before God with that." This is what the Spirit is convicting people of.

"and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged" (John 16:10-11).

Satan is a defeated foe. He is going down. He went down 2,000 years ago. He just does not know it yet. It is like that movie "Frequency." Did you ever see that? It deals with people traveling back in time. One of the heroes in the movie, I think it was Dennis Quaid, says to a bad guy who he knows is going to go down, "You went down 20 years ago, pal. You just do not know it yet." He said something to that effect.

Not that I am endorsing movies and things like that up here, but that is the analogy that comes to my mind. Satan is done. It is just that the penalty has not been executed yet in a court of law. There is a guilt phase, followed by a sentencing phase. Satan is convicted, but the sentence has not been carried out yet.

So what you say to an unsaved person is, "If you are not going to receive the transferred righteousness of Christ by faith alone, then you are going down too (with Satan)."

This is exactly what Jesus meant when He says that when the Spirit comes, He is going to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:7-11). The Spirit is not believing for anybody, but He is bringing lost men and women to the point of decision, and He is revealing the consequences of it if they happen to reject it.

Now the Calvinist comes along—you saw the quote from Steele, Curtis, and Quinn, right?—

"...Consequently, it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ—it takes regeneration by which He makes the sinner alive and gives him a new nature. Faith is not something man contributes to salvation, but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation—..."²⁷

²⁷ Steele, Thomas, and Quinn,, 5-6.

What Steele, Curtis, and Quinn are saying here is that what Jesus articulated in John 16:7-11 does not work. That is what they are saying: it is irrelevant. What is important in their Calvinistic system is the gift of faith to the elect when the elect are unsaved, so that the elect can be saved. That is what these authors are saying here.

So, hopefully you are seeing some contrast between what they teach and what we teach. Now, here is a quote from John Piper, a very rigid five-point Calvinist.

"If our doctrine of total depravity is true, there can be no salvation without the reality of irresistible grace. If we are dead in our sins,"²⁸—

Piper is defining "dead" as nonexistence in the spiritual man, or inability, like a rock. He is not defining it the way we have defined it, the way the Bible defines it, as separation.

—"totally unable to submit to God, then we will never believe in Christ unless God overcomes our rebellion."²⁹

Well, how's God going to overcome the rebellion in the Calvinistic system? He is going to regenerate and give the gift of faith to some that happened to be the elect. The worldwide convicting ministry of the Spirit whereby Jesus said of the Spirit that He is bringing the world to a place of decision—that is completely a waste of time. That does not regenerate a rock.

I am just giving you their verbiage that they use. Piper goes on and says,

"Since men are blinded to the words of Christ, a miracle is needed..."³⁰

"What miracle will that be, Mr. Piper?" "Oh, glad you asked. That is regeneration preceding faith. That is God imparting the gift of faith to some." "Well, Mr. Piper, who gets that blessing?" "The elect do." "Mr. Piper, what about the rest of humanity?" "Well, tough tacos. They go into hell with no capacity to believe at all. And when these rocks in hell say to God, 'Why am I in hell? I never had a chance to believe.' God says, 'Who are you to question Me?'"

Do you see that? This is such a perversion or a distortion of God. It is quite clear, is it not, in the Bible, that God desires all to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9)? That is not what these Calvinists are teaching.

²⁸ John Piper and Pastoral Staff, *TULIP: What We Believe about the Five Points of Calvinism: Position Paper of the Pastoral Staff* (Desiring God Ministries, 1997), 10.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

"Since men are blinded to the words of Christ, a miracle is needed for them to come to see and believe...Those who are called have their eyes opened by the sovereign creative power of God so that they no longer see the cross as foolishness but as the power and the wisdom of God. The effectual call is the miracle of having our blindness removed. This is irresistible grace."³¹

So why do Calvinists go down this road with this teaching? Well, it starts with their misunderstanding of total depravity. They believe that people in their lost state, even when they are under conviction, cannot believe. This has always seemed strange to me, because why does Jesus say the Spirit is coming to convict the world, if the conviction bears no fruit whatsoever?

So, what Calvinists do based on this corrupted definition of total depravity is that they now have their arguments that they use—and you will hear these over and over again in Calvinistic circles.

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. (Now, I am here to tell you that faith is not a gift. Faith, which is non-meritorious, is the one thing that God will receive from a lost person, Romans 4:4-5. God is not going to receive any kind of work from a person to be justified; but He will receive one thing to be justified: faith, because Romans 4:4-5 defines faith as non-meritorious. It is not a work.)

³¹ Ibid.

The Calvinists' arguments are that faith is a gift, that regeneration precedes faith, and that lost men cannot seek God (Romans 3:11). So God does a miracle on the front end, if you are one of the elect. Look under "Faith is a gift": look at all those things we have to talk about.

a) Faith is a Gift?

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

Calvinistic examples: do they really teach this? Is faith a work or not? By the way, Calvinists are good at using the Bible. The devil quotes the Bible too, though, does he not? The issue with quoting the Bible is not who quotes the Bible.

Paula White quotes the Bible too. Kenneth Copeland quotes the Bible. In fact, if you listen to Kenneth Copeland, and you do a little opposition research, which is something I do every once in a while, he is in the Bible all the time quoting it. But is he quoting it correctly? The Calvinists have all their verses—I will show them all to you in this series—but they are out of context.

So, (i) faith is a gift, the Calvinists' first major argument—what are some examples of them saying that?. (iii) Is faith a work? (iv) What are Calvinists' key proof texts? (iv) And number 4, what are some miscellaneous problems with faith as a gift?

For example, why did Jesus say to the centurion, "I have never seen such great faith in all of Israel?" (Matthew 8:10, paraphrase). In that statement, why did Jesus make a distinction between a lesser faith and a greater faith, if God is the one that gives faith. If God is the one that gives faith, all faith should be great. But Jesus did not say that. He made a comment about the centurion's faith.

I will give you some miscellaneous problems like that, as we are just examining now the more narrow category: faith is a gift.

Here are some examples that Calvinists teach that faith is a gift. Arthur Pink says,

"Faith is a spiritual grace, the fruit of the spiritual nature, and because the unregenerate are spiritually dead—"32

"Dead" meaning inability.

"dead in trespasses and sins"33

He is quoting from Ephesians 2:1.

"—then it follows that faith from them is impossible, for a dead man cannot believe anything."34

Now when he says that "it follows,"35 he is saying that Calvinism is a logically constructed system. John Calvin, the lawyer, was a master at logic: human logic. The whole thing makes sense unless the starting point is wrong. If the starting point is wrong, then the whole syllogism collapses: major premise—minor premise—conclusion.

Calvinism is a very philosophically oriented system because I do not think you would ever come to this conclusion simply by being a Bible reader. But if you buy into a logical syllogism, the whole thing makes sense, because you are deceived into thinking that the Calvinist starting point is correct. Starting point: Total Depravity, man is like a rock—inability is basically what Calvinists mean by Total Depravity.

This is how they hook the young people: the professor says that people are dead—Ephesians 2:1 says that. Once the young people believe that, then the Calvinists construct the rest of the syllogism in the minds of the young: if people are dead—inability,—"then it follows."36 Because if people have no ability to receive Christ, even when they are convicted, which is what Calvinism is teaching in Total Depravity, "then it follows"37—it is logical—"that faith from them is impossible, for a dead man cannot believe anything."

At that point I say, "Hold the phone. I do not think your first point in your logical syllogism is right. That is why I am no longer a five-point Calvinist. I think you are misunderstanding Ephesians 2:1, and I think you are misunderstanding the convicting nature of the Holy Spirit."

³² Pink, 57.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

So, Pink, when he says "it follows,"³⁸ is basically revealing the logic of the Calvinistic system. This is why when you talk to Calvinists, they say over and over again, "Oh, you just do not understand." They mean that they have not had enough time to brainwash you into a logical syllogism.

Now, I love logic, but I know where it is weak. It is weak when the major premise is wrong. A syllogism is a major premise, a minor premise, and a conclusion. The Calvinists are wrong on the major premise.

Tom Wells says,

"Faith is God's gift. In no degree could a natural man produce faith. It is utterly beyond him...."³⁹

Well, if that is true, why does Jesus, over and over again in the Gospels, tell people to believe? Why is He telling them to do something that they cannot do?

"Faith is God's gift. In no degree could a natural man produce faith. It is utterly beyond him. Let us adore the God who gives it."⁴⁰

God gives you the faith. It is not your faith. That is what Calvinists mean by, "faith is a gift."

Tom Wells continues. He uses a Christmas tree analogy. Wells compares spiritual deadness to "an old dry [Christmas] tree with—no fruit or ornaments of his own [faith]." He does not have any 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."⁴¹

So you are like an old Christmas tree with outdated ornaments on it, and you do not have the faith ornament. How do you get the faith ornament? Well, God comes along, just like you decorate a Christmas tree, and puts the ornament on the tree, because the tree in and of itself has no ability to produce the faith ornament. Do you see that?

By the way, what trees does God put the faith ornament on? The elect trees. What about all the other trees? Well, you just leave those as dirty, outdated Christmas trees that are destined to be burned.

James Bridges says,

"Faith for salvation is a gift from the Saviour...."⁴²

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Tom Wells, *Faith: The Gift of God* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1983), 55.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Wells, 56-57.

⁴² James K. Bridges, "The Gift of Faith," in *Conference on the Holy Spirit*, ed. Gwen Jones (Springfield, MO: Gospel, 1983), 225.

Wow. "Faith...is a gift."⁴³

"The entirety of our salvation depends on God's gift of faith."⁴⁴

You have no faith on your own. God gave it to you, if you are a believer. And you should praise the Lord that you have it, because that proves He chose you.

Lorraine Boettner, in his book "The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination," said,

"The elect of God are chosen by Him to be His children, in order that they might be made to believe,"⁴⁵—

Resistance is futile. God will impart the gift of faith to some that happened to be the elect.

—"not because He foresaw that they would believe."⁴⁶

A lot of people will throw this one at you when you deal with this: "Yeah, but Calvin did not say anything like that. That was just Calvin's followers." I hear that all the time. Everybody gives Calvin a free pass. "Oh, that was just Calvin's followers that out-Calvined Calvin. But Calvin never taught anything like this."

Yes he did. Here is a quote from his commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians. Calvin is pretty easy to research. He commented on almost every Book of the Bible, verse by verse. 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. Hence we infer, that faith is not in one's own power, but is divinely conferred."⁴⁷

According to Calvinists, it is not just Jesus or the Holy Spirit bringing people to the point at which they exercise their own volition by trusting or not. It is God that gives some the gift of faith. So even the faith that we have is God's gift. Here are Steele, Thomas, and Quinn again. We have already given you this quote. It says,

"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."⁴⁸

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Lorraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1932, 14th printing), page 101, citing Augustine.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ 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.

⁴⁸ Steele, Thomas, and Quinn, 5-6.

The Calvinists do not want man to have any type of role in salvation. This belief is called monergism. Calvinists do not even want man to have credit for believing, because they say that faith is a work. I am saying that faith is not a work, Romans 4:4-5. Next week we will prove that.

John MacArthur said,

"...Genuine faith...is granted by God..."⁴⁹

See how MacArthur is just throwing at you constantly this "faith is a gift" mentality? It is not as though John MacArthur does not have anything good to say, but boy, he sure works this Calvinism into almost everything he teaches.

"...Genuine faith...is granted by God...Faith is a supernatural gift of God...It seems that what Paul had in mind [in Ephesians 2:8-9] was the entire process of grace, faith, and salvation as the gift of God..."⁵⁰

Here is MacArthur's verse: he is quoting the Bible. It is right there in Ephesians 2:8-9. He is not telling you that there is a word gender problem there. He is putting two things together that are lexically and exegetically impossible, because they are different genders in Greek. I will have more to say about that as we get there.

"Faith is not something that is conjured up by the human will but is a sovereignly granted gift of God. (cf. Philippians 1:29)..."⁵¹

MacArthur is completely abusing Ephesians 2 as I will show you, and he is abusing Philippians 1.

"The faith that God begets includes both the volition and the ability to comply with His will (cf. Philippians 2:13)." ⁵²

So, faith is a gift. The first MacArthur quote comes from his "Gospel According to Jesus." This second quote is from the same book:

"Either way, the meaning is inescapable: 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). Faith is also spoken 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'),"⁵³—

⁴⁹ John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, p. 172-73.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ MacArthur, 69.

He is abusing Acts 3:16, as I will show you. Then he quotes Philippians 1:29.

—"Philippians 1:29 ('To you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake'),"⁵⁴—

He is abusing Philippians 1:29, as I will show you.

—"and 2 Peter 1:1 ('Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours')."⁵⁵

One more quote and I will stop. This quote is from Steven Lawson.

"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,"⁵⁶—

Yay! I believe all that! Great quote, Steven. Oh, there is more to it.

—"draws him to Christ, raises him to life, and grants him faith."⁵⁷

Now we will just close with this happy thought: Steven has a problem. Steven fell into immorality recently. Have you followed the story? Do you know what the Calvinists are saying about him? "Well, he obviously never received the gift of faith, because a person who did what he did could not be one of the elect."

So, Steven, you made your bed. Now you gotta lie in it. You got a bunch of people out there that are questioning your salvation. What I think happened to you, Steven, is you gave way to your sin nature, which is still within you as a saved person. And you are suffering temporal consequences. But I am not going to take away your salvation. The Calvinists will.

Alistair Begg said about a transsexual wedding, that not only should you go, but you should bring a gift. You watch the Calvinists, like sharks, circle around Steven Lawson. I do not agree with what he said, but I am not going to sit here and second guess his salvation. The Calvinistic system will. Because if your faith is suffering, it could not be faith given from God. So we have grounds, they say, to question whether you are one of the elect.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Steven Lawson, quote posted by Tiffany Gaskin on Pinterest, <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/desiring-god--82753711894276595/>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.