

Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible 032

Romans 3:11

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Let's take our Bibles and open them to Matthew 19:28. We are continuing this study in Sunday School, "Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible," at the point of our study where we are looking at TULIP, which is the Calvinistic acronym, through the grid of Scripture: is this Biblical?

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

TULIP stands for "T," Total Depravity; "U," Unconditional Election; "L," Limited Atonement.

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**

Having covered all those, we are now dealing with Irresistible Grace, which is the "I."

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?

So we just have the "I" and the "P" (Perseverance of the Saints) left to cover. So if you are picking up for the first time, you can call this the "-IP" study.

What do Calvinists and Neo-Calvinists mean by Irresistible Grace? I like Bob Kirkland's definition. He says,

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

And I gave you a ton of quotes to show you that this is what the Calvinist movers and shakers teach.

"'I' stands for 'Irresistible Grace.' Faith is something 'God irresistibly bestowed upon the elect without their having believed anything...By such reasoning, man...'"²

Because of the "T," Total Depravity, which means you are like a rock with no capacity for spiritual things.

"By such reasoning, man...can't even hear the gospel—much less respond to the pleadings of Christ."³

So if you are one of the elect, God does something on the front end. He irresistibly draws you to Himself. Resistance is futile. You are irresistibly drawn. And if you are not

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.

³ Ibid.

one of the elect, well, that is just too bad. You are preordained to damnation—double predestination.

2. Calvinistic Arguments

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

So why do Calvinists think this? Well, they think that faith is a gift, number one (a). So we have dealt with that: why that really is not a biblical idea. TULIP is more of a philosophy read into the Bible, rather than a theology derived from the Bible.

Number two, Calvinists think that regeneration precedes faith. Regeneration, being born again, precedes believing, and we are in the process of dealing with that.

And the reason Calvinists think (a) and (b) are true is because of letter (c): lost man cannot seek God, Romans 3:11, one of their verses that they use.

b) Regeneration Precedes Faith?

- i. **Definition**
- ii. Calvinistic examples
- iii. Calvinist Proof texts
- iv. Biblical order
- v. Ordo-Salutis
- vi. An eschatological parallel
- vii. Why believe?

So we are in the process of comparing the Calvinists' arguments to Scripture. So we are on this part here (b): regeneration precedes faith. What is regeneration? Well, we have talked about it already. It is the impartation of divine life. The word "regeneration"

("palingenesia" [παλιγγενεσία]) is only used twice in the Greek New Testament, as I will show you: one time in relation to salvation, and a second time in relation to the end times.

Regeneration

- Definition – impartation of divine life
- *Palingenesia* (Titus 3:5)
- Needed because of spiritual death – Gen. 2:16-17; Eph. 2:1
- New birth – John 3:5
- Accomplished through exposure to God's Word (Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23; Rom. 10:17; 2 Tim. 3:15)

If you are born **once** you will die **twice**;
if you are born **twice** you will die **once**

So I would suggest that whatever you do with the end times interpretation of regeneration, you would also do, order-wise, with the salvation aspect of regeneration. "Regeneration" ("palingenesia" [παλιγγενεσία]) is used in the salvation sense in Titus 3:5, which says,

"He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration ["palingenesia" (παλιγγενεσία)] and renewing by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

You can see there in brackets that "regeneration" is a translation from the Greek word "palingenesia," a compound word, two words making up one word. "Palin-" [πάλιν] means "again"; "-genesis" [γενεσία] is where we get the word "genesis" from. So "palingenesia" [παλιγγενεσία] literally means "beginning again."

So it is the point in a person's life when their body becomes the permanent dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. And at that point they are born from above, or born again, they are regenerated. It is the impartation of divine life.

And what the Calvinistic system teaches is that regeneration happens first, and then you believe second, because you do not really have an ability to believe on your own. So God regenerates you first so that you can believe. They argue that faith is a gift.

So do Calvinists really teach this? I mean, I gave you a ton of quotes, but here is one, by way of a reminder, from the late R.C. Sproul. Sproul explains that, according to the "Reformed view of predestination before a person can choose Christ he must be born

again."⁴

So you are born again first, if you are one of the elect, and that gives you the ability to choose Christ, second. Calvinists have many, many proof texts that they use to prove this. As I have tried to show you, none of them are particularly persuasive. They use Ephesians 2:1.

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

Calvinists define death in Ephesians 2:1 as inability, which is not what death in the Bible means. Death means separation. And Calvinists say, because of this inability, because we were dead in our transgressions, according to Ephesians 2:5, God *"made us alive"*—see, He coerced it on you—*"together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)" (Ephesians 2:5).*

So God made us alive (Ephesians 2:5). And Calvinists say, "There it is in the Bible: regeneration precedes faith." I agree that God made us alive, but these verses do not tell you when and how He made us alive after we trusted in Him."

But Calvinists say, "No, God regenerates you first. He makes you alive, so that you can believe, second." The proper biblical order is spelled out in countless biblical passages. Several of these you will find in John's Gospel, which is the only evangelistic gospel.

Certainly someone can get saved by reading any part of the Bible, I believe. But John's Gospel is unique in the sense that it was written to those who had not yet believed and received the gift of life, which is regeneration. So there are a lot of evangelistic tools and emphasis that you can take from John's Gospel.

The famous one is John 3:16, which you all know by heart.

"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).

And as you look at this, what is first? Believing or eternal life? Believing is first; eternal life is second. So you believe, and then you are regenerated. Calvinism takes those two and reverses them. Eternal life comes first. Believing comes second.

So this is one of the problems I am having with this Calvinistic system. And I showed you example after example that the Bible teaches this. My problem is that Calvinists do not have any problem going into the Bible and just rewriting it. And if you start doing that, that means you are not really following the Bible. You are following an a priori lens.

So what is the Ordo-Salutis? That is a Latin word. And the reason it is Latin is that by

⁴ R. C. Sproul, *Chosen by God* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1986), 72.

the time the church started debating all these things, Latin was the lingua franca of the day. So a lot of these things get a Latin name. It just means "order of salvation." What is the proper order of salvation?

Well, number one, you are convicted of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:7-11). If God did not do that convicting ministry in us, none of us could be regenerated. None of us could believe. But that is not regeneration. That is conviction. And that is a ministry that the Holy Spirit is performing in the whole world. The whole wide world as I speak, is under that convicting ministry.

Some respond to it, some do not. But then when you come under this convicting ministry of the Spirit, and the Holy Spirit brings you to the point of decision, now you have to make a decision. And God does not override your free will. That is why these verses (John 16:7-11) here (we have talked about them a number of times) do not teach that God believes for us.

He, God, does not believe for us. God convicts us of our need to believe, and that conviction goes out into the whole world. And then as the Holy Spirit, through worldwide conviction, brings men and women, boys and girls, to the point of a decision. Then they respond or do not respond. They either receive God's free gift, receiving it God's way, or they do not.

They either trust in the finished work of the Savior for their individual forgiveness, or they do not. And the person that then goes into hell is really the person that is already headed there.

I mean, we like to say that God sends people to hell. Well, the reality of the situation is that we are going there anyway. What God is trying to do is to get us off the road that leads to hell. He has got to get us off the "Highway to Hell."

So, everybody's headed to hell. It is not like God sends people to hell. He is trying to get people off the highway that leads to hell. And He does that through worldwide conviction and invites men and women, boys and girls, on an individual basis.

You cannot do this as a group. You cannot do this corporately. You have to do this individually. God has no grandchildren. Everyone has to have their own faith. The way to get off the highway to hell is to receive the gift that Jesus paid for us 2,000 years ago, to get us off that highway. And there is only one way to receive a gift from God, and that is to believe in what He has done, which means to trust.

So Bob Kirkland, in his book "Calvinism: None Dare Call It Heresy," gives the proper Ordo-Salutis, order of salvation. He says,

"We see then that while it is the Holy Spirit's work to draw men to the Savior, it is incumbent on each individual to respond of his own free will

prior to conversion."⁵

And I do not think that this response is something that could happen unless the Spirit is convicting. But Calvinism confuses convicting with regeneration. "Faith is a consequence of regeneration," they say, and it is actually the other way around: regeneration is a consequence of faith.

Rene Lopez, my classmate, wrote a great article in *Bibliotheca Sacra* on this, published back in 2007. If you want to really drill down on some of these things, it is entitled "Is Faith a Gift from God or a Human Exercise?" Lopez lays out here the proper *Ordo-Salutis*.

"In His convicting work the Holy Spirit draws sinners to Himself and waits for their simple response of faith. God then imparts eternal life to them the moment they believe. As Paul and Silas told the Philippian jailer, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved (Acts 16:31).'"⁶

So that is the proper *Ordo-Salutis*. Now, this one here, you have to put your thinking cap on a little bit. This deals with what I would call an eschatological parallel. Eschatology is the study of the end.

The reason I am bringing this up is that the only other time the Greek word "palingenesia" [παλιγγενεσία] is used in the whole Greek New Testament, in addition to Titus 3:5, which we already read, dealing with salvation—the only other time that compound word ("palingenesia" [παλιγγενεσία]) is ever used is in Matthew 19:28, in relation to the coming kingdom.

So I would suggest that whatever sequence you are coming up with in Matthew 19:28 needs to be harmonized with the sequence in Titus 3:5. So there is Titus 3:5. This is how it is used in salvation.

"He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration ["palingenesia" (παλιγγενεσία)] and renewing by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

Now, regeneration ("palingenesia" [παλιγγενεσία]) comes post faith. That is what God's gift is. God's gift is not faith. God's gift is the regeneration that comes from receiving the gift by faith. See that?

Well, the only other time outside of Titus 3:5, that the word "palingenesia" [παλιγγενεσία] is used is in Matthew 19:28, where Jesus is talking about the coming Millennial Kingdom. Jesus said this, speaking to His disciples, because they were kind

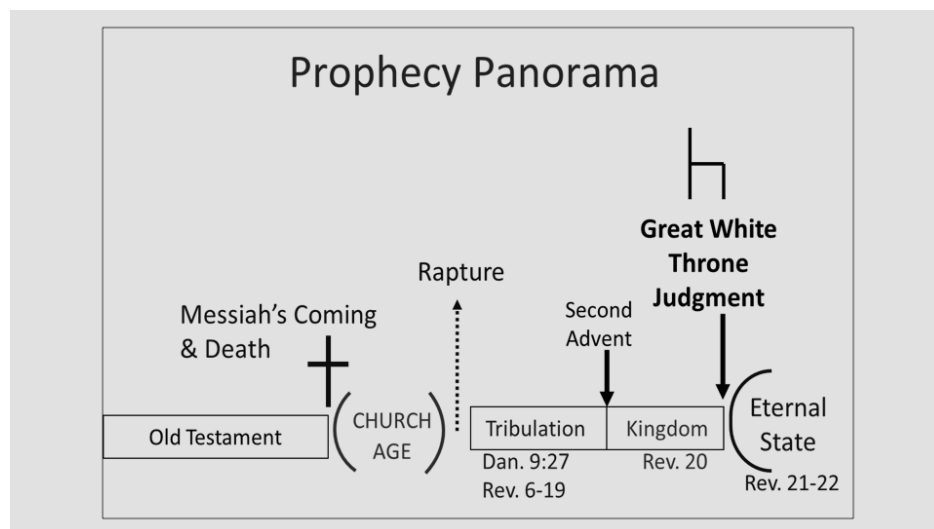
⁵ Kirkland, 40.

⁶ René A. Lopez, "Is Faith a Gift From God or a Human Exercise?," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 164 (July–September 2007): 276.

of in a mindset of "What is in it for moi," right? We can get like that. "Lord, we are following You. What is in it for us?" And Jesus says, "I will tell you what is in it for you."

"And Jesus said to them, 'Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration ["palingenesia" (παλιγγενεσία)] when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne,...'" (Matthew 19:28).

What throne would that be? That is the Davidic throne that is prophesied in 2 Samuel 7:12-16, in the Davidic Covenant. It is the throne that Jesus will sit on from Jerusalem, when in His Second Advent, not the Rapture, but His Second Advent (Matthew 25:31). It is described as His future throne that He is not yet on (Revelation 3:21), because Jesus is not right now on David's throne.



I spent a lot of years at Dallas Seminary with younger professors trying to tell me that Jesus is on David's throne right now in heaven. And I said, "He is not on David's throne right now. He is on the Father's throne. He is not functioning as king. He will be, but He is functioning as high priest, after the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:11, 15, 17)."

So do not confuse this era with the Kingdom Era. This era is great. Jesus is doing a lot of things as our faithful and sympathetic high priest. But do not confuse it with the Davidic throne. And this is the error of progressive dispensationalism, which very, very sadly, was in ascendancy when I was at Dallas Seminary.

And I do not think things have changed much since then because a lot of the older guys that did not believe it have either retired or died. You have a few guys that are still traditional in their viewpoint, but most of them have moved into this "kingdom now," "already not yet" mindset.

And by the way, this is how all this junk takes over the Bible churches, because you have search committees that do not know what the theological issues are. So they grab

a pastor from a school that used to be really good, and before you know it, the pastor incorporates all of this stuff into the life of the local church, and people sit around and wonder, "What happened to our church? What happened to our theology?"

Well, you had a hiring committee that did not understand theology and did not understand what was going on, and was leaning on what a school used to teach. See that? I cannot tell you how many churches I know have fallen apart because of what I just described.

At any rate,

"...Jesus said to them, 'Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration ["palingenesia" (παλιγγενεσία)] when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel'" (Matthew 19:28).

I mean, that is quite a perk to get that. And in the process of explaining this earthly kingdom, Jesus describes it as the "regeneration" ("palingenesia" [παλιγγενεσία]) of all things. So when the kingdom comes, it will be beginning again. That curse will be curtailed. Jesus will be governing planet Earth from his throne in Jerusalem.

And that is a "beginning again," just like salvation is beginning again. So if all of that is true, how does an amillennialist understand the kingdom? How do they understand the regeneration here? Well, they think the kingdom comes first: amillennialism, post-Millennialism. The kingdom comes first and Jesus comes second.

And when Jesus comes back, He is going to find the world in apple pie order, because the church will have brought in the kingdom. And you can go to conferences today where they teach this. They are advancing the kingdom. They are doing conferences, you know, Kingdom Builders.

And I guess they do not read the newspapers very much, because it does not look like to me we are bringing in any kingdom. If this is the kingdom I am living on the wrong side of the railroad tracks, obviously. I must be living in the ghetto section. Because I do not see kingdom conditions. When the King rules, there is not going to be any more war. They are going to beat their swords into plowshares, etc. (Isaiah 2:1-4).

So basically amillennialists' understanding is that the kingdom comes first and Jesus comes second. Roman Catholicism, with its Millennial understanding, teaches the exact same thing. But that is not what we teach here at Sugar Land Bible Church. We are not just pre-Tribulation. We are premillennial. We are pre-pre.

We believe that the Rapture comes pre—before—the Tribulation. And we believe that the coming of Christ comes pre—before—the kingdom. Because check me on this: Revelation 19 comes before Revelation 20. Isn't that high tech right there? Revelation 19, the Second Advent of Jesus precedes Revelation 20, the thousand-year kingdom.

So when you reverse the order and become a postmillennialist or an amillennialist, you take chapter 20 and you do not have any problems reading it before chapter 19 (Revelation 19-20). And that is where they go into these long-winded discourses about how you guys are too literal and it is not necessarily sequential and "blah blah, blah, blah, blah."

But the text says what it says. You are not going to have the kingdom without the King. I mean, go to all the conferences you want and go ahead and sign your emails, "For the Kingdom," like everybody does. But you can sign emails till the cows come home and go to conferences until the cows come home, and this age is not the kingdom.

This is the Church Age. The kingdom is coming, once Jesus sets it up. And so if you are trying to set up the kingdom without the King, as many people do. You know the New Apostolic Reformation? You've heard of that? I mean, this is their whole mindset. They are bringing in the Seven Mountain Mandate. You've heard of that, right?

The Christians are people like Lance Wallnau. Bethel in Redding, California. This is the connection with the charismatic movement. Because if this is the kingdom, we ought to see kingdom miracles, right? Their whole mindset is that we are in the kingdom now, and the King's going to show up at some point.

So you can go to conferences like that; you can read books like that; you can sign emails like that. But the truth of the matter is that you are not going to have the kingdom without the King. You are not going to have the regeneration of all things until Jesus touches down on planet Earth, right in His Second Advent.

So postmillennialism and amillennialism switch it around. You have regeneration first and Christ coming, second; whereas we think the right order is Christ coming first, regeneration second: premillennialism coupled with pretribulationism.

So what is the viewpoint of Sugar Land Bible Church? You can read this for yourself. I am not giving you some novel theology. It is right there in our doctrinal statement and position statements. We are pre-pre: pretribulationist and premillennial.

So do you see an order here with regeneration? Jesus comes first. Regeneration comes second. That is exactly what Titus 3:5 is saying about salvation. Jesus comes first: you trusted Him, He comes into your life. And the regeneration of all things—born again—happened second.

So a lot of people are premillennial, but they are almost postmillennial when it comes to salvation. But I think the two usages (Titus 3:5; Matthew 19:28) of "palingenesia" [παλιγγενεσία], "beginning again," are consistently used both times in Scripture to describe that Christ comes first, and then comes regeneration.

Salvation, you trust in Christ; then you are regenerated. You cannot be regenerated

unless you trust Him. And it is the same with the end times. First, Jesus returns to the earth. His feet touch the Mount of Olives, the Mount of Olives splits. Job, the oldest book of the Bible, talked about this. He said, "I know that my Redeemer lives, and in the end He will take His stand on the earth" (Job 19:25, paraphrase).

So Jesus comes back first, and then the kingdom comes second. So I would suggest people need to be consistent with their usages of "palingenesia" [παλιγγενεσία]. That is just a different way of thinking about it.

So the last point here on this "regeneration precedes faith" idea is if regeneration comes before faith, why believe at all? Because you are already regenerated. I mean, people need to believe so that they can be regenerated, but if they are already regenerated, there is no need to believe. So it kind of blunts the gospel presentation.

This is a great quote from Charles Ryrie. A lot of the Calvinists have hijacked poor Charles Ryrie, who is with the Lord now and is not here to defend himself. And they say, "Well, you know, Ryrie was a five-pointer," or, "He was a four-pointer," or, "He was a three-and-a-half pointer."

But as I read Ryrie, I do not really see him arguing for five-point or even four-point Calvinism. Look at the statement that he makes in his "Basic Theology," which is a great book, by the way. He says,

"In the Reformed statement of the 'ordo salutis,'..."⁷

And your average Christian looks at that and they have no idea what it means. But you know what it means, because you go to Sugar Land Bible Church, and these are the kinds of things we study over here, right? You know exactly what it means. It is a Reformed, Latin expression for "order of salvation."

"In the Reformed statement of the 'ordo salutis,' regeneration precedes faith, for, it is argued, a sinner must be given new life in order to be able to believe."⁸

Now that goes back to the "T," because according to Total Depravity, you cannot believe. You are like a rock.

"While this is admittedly stated only as a logical order,..."⁹

Boy, this thing is so logical, this TULIP. And Calvin was an attorney and he understood logic, and he used logic very well. If he is right on the "T" (Total Depravity), that man is like a rock, in an insensate state, the whole rest of the system flows nicely and neatly.

⁷ Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1986; reprint, Chicago: Moody, 1999), 326.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

This is why Calvinism appeals to intellectual types, because they can see the logic in it. But the problem is that it is human logic. Human logic is wonderful unless it starts at the wrong place. If there is something off at the foundational level, the whole system is off.

So logic—major premise, minor premise, conclusion—basic logic. If Calvinism is right, man is dead like a rock, then of course he has to be regenerated before he can believe. But I do not think Calvinists are right with the "T." I think they have overstated the "T," which causes the whole system to start to wobble, at that point.

And this is what Ryrie is pointing out this "regeneration precedes faith" stuff, this "faith is a gift" stuff. It is logical, but it is not exegetical. You did not start with the Word of God. You started with an Augustinian presupposition.

"In the Reformed statement of the 'ordo salutis,' regeneration precedes faith, for, it is argued, a sinner must be given new life in order to be able to believe. While this is admittedly stated only as a logical order, it is not wise to insist even on that; for it may as well be argued that if a sinner has new life through regeneration, why does he need to believe?"¹⁰

Ryrie is looking at this thing—and all the Calvinists are claiming Ryrie—and yet here it is in his book. He is looking at this thing and he says, "Something is not right with this. Because if regeneration comes before faith, there is no need for faith. I mean, there is no need to tell people to believe they already are alive spiritually."

So Ryrie is reaching his conclusion, which I think is the right one, by testing the major premise that the minor premise and the conclusion of Neo-Calvinism is built on.

And let me share with you this quote from John MacArthur. I am not trying to attack your favorite Bible teacher, but unless I put these quotes up, you will not know what to look for. It is not like I disagree with everything John MacArthur has ever said. He actually has a pretty big presence at the Ark exhibit, which we are going to visit.

He is really good on Genesis 1-11, and a number of other things, but I do not think he is right on this Calvinism thing. So he says this in his book, "Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles."

And this is not misspeaking in the heat of a moment. It is not a radio interview. It is not a sermon. It is in print where you have an ability to coolly, and calmly, and deliberately reflect on your thoughts. He says,

"Furthermore, because of human depravity, there is nothing in a fallen, reprobate sinner that desires God or is capable of responding in faith..."¹¹

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ John F. MacArthur, *Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1993), 62 & n. 8.

Now, I would say that is true. That is why the Spirit convicts us.

"...From the viewpoint of reason,..."¹²

Reason, not exegesis. He is following a logical syllogism.

"...From the viewpoint of reason, regeneration logically must initiate faith and repentance."¹³

In other words, without regeneration first, you cannot have faith and repentance, which I understand to mean in the justification sense, changing one's mind. You cannot have it unless you are regenerated.

Now, why does MacArthur argue this? Does he give it a bunch of verses? Sometimes he does—a lot of them out of context. But in this quote, he is relying upon reason and logic, which has some blind spots, particularly if it is human logic and the major premise is wrong. See that?

So that is what Ryrie is saying. These guys are arguing on the basis of logic to get this to work, but they are forgetting one thing. If a person is already regenerated, there is no need to believe.

Now, this quote comes from one of their own, Spurgeon. And this is interesting to me, because on my Facebook page, I used to get into a lot of trouble with people where I would put up all these verses, saying that regeneration does not precede faith, etc. And I got no response from people. I have a lot of Calvinistic friends, so to speak, on Facebook.

But when I put this up, they went hysterical. And I thought to myself, "Why are you reacting so aggressively against my use of a quote from a man, Spurgeon, and you are not reacting to my use of the Scripture?" And that is what started to alert me to the fact that their system is really not coming from the Scripture.

When you talk to Calvinists, when you argue with them, they will say, "Well, all the greats, like Spurgeon, have believed this five-point Calvinism stuff." So it is almost like they have moved in a Roman Catholic direction, where it is Scripture plus the sages of the past.

And if you can show them that the sages of the past, some of their most cherished and precious sages of the past, may not have believed what they believe, you are tampering with an authority base. To me all of these quotes from church fathers and things like that, they really do not mean much to me, because my final court of arbitration is the

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

Bible.

When the church fathers stay with the Bible, I am with the church fathers. When the church fathers depart from the Bible, I depart from the church fathers. And I think my method is far more Reformed than that of Neo-Calvinism, because I am really the one that is practicing "sola scriptura."

So I was putting up all of these Bible quotes, and I got no reaction, no reaction, no reaction. I put up a Spurgeon quote, and my page went crazy. It went insane. It was like a Calvinistic Armageddon or something.

And it is very similar to arguing with a non-pretribulationist. When you are arguing with a non-pretribulationist, someone that does not believe that the Rapture occurs before the seventieth week of Daniel, they say this over and over again, "But the church fathers never taught this." Have you ever heard that? "No one ever taught this until John Nelson Darby."

So when they do that, what they do is switch the rules, so that they are moving away from the Scripture alone, to defend a doctrine. And now it becomes almost a Roman Catholic hermeneutic, where it is Scripture plus tradition. And in the process, they are moving away from what a lot of the Reformers used to overthrow Roman Catholicism: "Scripture alone."

I mean, at Luther's famous debate with Doctor Eck at the Diet of Worms, Luther would quote verses and Doctor Eck would quote popes and priests. And Luther would say to Eck, "Show me the sun, and you give me lanterns." That is why Luther started to call Galatians "meine frau," which is German for "my wife."

And he would say things like, "Unless I am convinced by Scripture alone, I will not believe." And that is how the Reformers overturned Roman Catholicism. "Scripture alone, Scripture alone, Scripture alone." It does not matter what Pope A said or Pope B said or Priest A said or Priest B said.

And this is how they brought the doctrine of justification by faith alone, into the church. So when I see Calvinists and posttribulationists, midtribulationists, switching the discussion to the church fathers, I am thinking to myself, "Well, you guys sound more like Doctor Eck than you do like Martin Luther."

So it is almost devastating to Calvinists when you can show them that some of their most revered people in church history may not have believed what they teach. I mean, if you do that to them, it is like taking away some authority.

So here is the quote I put up. It is a quote from Spurgeon, whom Calvinists all claim as one of their own. And notice what he says here in a sermon entitled "The Warrant of Faith." He says,

"If I am to preach the faith in Christ to a man who is regenerated, then the man, being regenerated, is saved already, and it is an unnecessary and ridiculous thing for me to preach Christ to him, and bid him to believe in order to be saved when he is saved already, being regenerate. Am I only to preach faith to those who have it? Absurd, indeed! Is not this waiting till the man is cured and then bringing him the medicine? This is preaching Christ to the righteous and not to sinners."¹⁴

So you will find that in sermons. And we are living in this computer era where you can find all of these sermons from all of these guys, like Spurgeon, whom Calvinists claim, as they claim Ryrie, is one of their own. Here Spurgeon is saying, "I do not believe regeneration precedes faith, because it is like bringing the medicine to the cured."

And once you start tampering with that, you are tampering with an authority base in their system. And that is why my Facebook page lit up that particular day that I put that quote up. So all of that to say, the Calvinistic arguments for this "resistance is futile," "our faith is a gift," we have tried to dispel that.

And as there is a little time left, let's move into this third argument that Calvinists use to argue Irresistible Grace. They say the lost man cannot seek God (Romans 3:11). That flows from the "T" in Total Depravity, which states that man is a cadaver, spiritually lifeless. So he has no capacity to reach God, to seek God.

2. Calvinistic Arguments

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

Well, what about when he is convicted by the Holy Spirit of his need to believe? It does not matter. He is dead. Calvinists are misunderstanding dead as a cadaver; not understanding dead the way the Bible defines it: as separation. So what passage do they use? They use Romans 3:11, which says,

"THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS,

¹⁴ Spurgeon: Sermon, "The Warrant of Faith."

THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD" (Romans 3:11).

Now, I have to be honest with you. For years and years and years I called myself, first a five-pointer, then I got bartered down to four,—“I am a four-pointer.”—then I got bartered down to about three-and-a-half. Honestly, I called myself a three-and-a-half for years.

And the reason I kept hanging on to it was because of this verse. I mean, to me, it looks crystal clear. “No one seeks God” (Romans 3:11, paraphrase). So if no one seeks God, then God has to regenerate people first so that they can believe, and/or give them the gift of faith if they are one of the elect.

And this verse here, 2 Corinthians 4:4, is another one.

“in whose case the god of this world...” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Who would that be? The devil.

“...has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

So that one, 2 Corinthians 4:4, “blinded,” and Romans 3:11, kept me in the Calvinistic camp for much longer than I should have been there.

Let me ask you a question. If man has no ability to understand the gospel, even when he is convicted by the Holy Spirit, and if man is like a rock, a cadaver, why does Satan waste his time blinding people? Have you ever asked yourself that? I mean, that shows me that Satan is not a Calvinist. Because Satan is trying to blind people.

But why would you do that to a rock? Have you ever seen someone put a blindfold on a rock? That does not make a lot of sense. And I totally concur that Satan wreaks havoc and blinds people. The parable of the sower, you know, teaches that: some seed is thrown in unfruitful soils, and some of the seed is being choked and inhibited by the devil (Matthew 13:1-9; Mark 4:1-9; Luke 8:4-8).

Satan is clearly at work. But if the Calvinistic view of depravity is right, there would be no need for Satan to blind anybody. They are already blind.

So what started to rescue me out of that mindset is Acts 17:26-27. And I had read that for years, not even seeing that this was in here, to be honest with you. Here is what Paul says on Mars Hill.

“and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,” (Acts 17:26).

Meaning that God is the one that created nations and ethnicities. And He did it so that a Nimrod, Tower of Babel, type character would not get control of everything. Because if that happens, nothing will be impossible for them, Genesis 11 says.

So God disseminated power amongst nations so that people would have the time to do something. What would they have the time and ability to do with the decentralization of power at Babel? It is in Acts 17:27—

"that they would seek God,..." (Acts 17:27).

Well, wait a minute. I thought Paul said, "No one seeks God" (Romans 3:11, paraphrase). Here I have a chapter and verse in the Bible that says that man can seek God

"that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:27).

So I have one verse in the Bible that says that man does not seek God (Romans 3:11), which is very well known. Calvinists quote that all the time. I have another verse in the Bible that I never realized was here: the decentralization of power, the creation of the nation states around the world, the preventing of global tyranny that Nimrod was trying to bring in. This decentralization would give man time and space and resources to seek God.

So what a conundrum this is. How do we resolve one verse that says no one seeks God (Romans 3:11), and another verse that says people can seek God (Acts 17:27)? How would we even resolve that? Three things which I will not be able to finish today.

Lost Man Cannot Seek God?

1. No biblical verse indicates that lost man cannot believe when convicted
2. Lost man is held accountable for not believing (Matt. 23:37; John 3:18; 4:48; 5:40)
3. Lost man can believe (John 1:12; 20:31; 1 Cor. 1:21; 1 John 5:10)

But first of all, no biblical verse indicates that lost man cannot believe when convicted by the Holy Spirit. It is true that people have a natural proclivity to not seek eternal things.

But God has programmed into His universe provisions that give man enough grace to seek the truth if they want it.

The sad thing about it though, is what people do, Romans 1. They take the obvious truth of God and they suppress it in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18-31). At that point, it is not inability, it is unwillingness.

And once you take these provisions that God has given to the lost man, giving him an ability and an incentive to seek God, and you suppress it, God says, "Now we have a problem. The problem is not your inability to respond. Your problem is you do not want to respond."

So what are some of these grace provisions that God gives? We have already looked at one today, the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit, which goes out into the whole world. Jesus says, in the Upper Room,

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

"Convict" means "persuade."

—"the world concerning sin ["hamartia" (ἁμαρτία), singular noun] and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer see Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged" (John 16:8-11).

We spent a lot of time already in prior lessons unpacking these verses. But this is something that the lost man has. If God left the lost man to his natural devices, the lost man would not see God. But God did something through the gift of the Holy Spirit: not regeneration, but conviction.

What other means of grace has God given to the lost man? He has given him His Word. Man has a Bible. It is there for him to consult, if he wants it. Does the Bible have the ability to make someone aware of their need to be saved, and give them the information they need to be saved? Well, of course it does.

Second Timothy 3:15, Paul writing to Timothy, says,

"and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom ["sophia" (σοφία) in Greek] that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15).

Can you trust the Bible? Sure you can, because—

"All Scripture is inspired by God ["theopneustos" (θεόπνευστος)] and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

"All you have to do is open your Bible and read it. And you will have the information you need to be made right with Me. And I have the spirit at work convicting you of your need to read the Bible."

Isaiah 55:10-11 says of the Scripture, that when it goes forth, it does not return void. So the lost man has people around him all of the time that are talking to him about the Bible. Even the guys on TV get it right every once in a while.

Acts 2:37 says that when the Jews heard the word from Peter, they were pierced, which makes sense, because the Word is living and active and sharper than a two-edged sword, Hebrews 4:12.

There is Isaiah 55:10-11.

*"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
And do not return there without watering the earth
And making it bear and sprout,
And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;
So will My word which goes forth from My mouth;
It will not return to Me empty,
Without accomplishing what I desire,
And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:10-11).*

So unbelievers have that: they have access to the Bible. They hear spiritual things from people. Romans 10:17 says,

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

Look at what God has given to lost people. Let me just conclude with this. Do you remember the account of the rich man and Lazarus? People try to turn this into a parable, but I do not think it is a parable because Jesus does not use personal names in parables.

It was about the rich man that died and went to hell. And he said, "Well, I have five brothers. Send someone back from the grave and warn them about this terrible place so that they do not end up here" (Luke 16:19-28, paraphrase).

Do you remember the response that was given to him? It is in Luke 16:31.

"But he said, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not

be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

Luke 16:29 says,

"But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them'" (Luke 16:29).

So that kind of statement shows me that what is built into this Book (the Bible) is sufficient data to get someone to heaven.

So you have the constant proclamation of the Word of God, and the constant availability of reading the Word of God. And then if that were not enough, you have the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit, which is worldwide.

Unbelievers have some other things here, too, which I do not have time to go into. We will pick it up here next week. They have the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16).

They have Creation screaming at them every single moment of their lives, that there is an obvious Designer in our universe (Romans 1:18-23). And they have the law of God through conscience inside of them already (Romans 2:13-16). They already know the Ten Commandments, whether they have read them or not.

So Romans 3:11 is talking about a person's natural proclivity, without all of these gracious provisions. But because God has built into His universe all of these gracious provisions for the lost man, lost people have the ability to do what Acts 17:27 says they have an ability to do, which is to seek God.

So if a person is in unbelief, it is not that they did not have an ability to come to Christ. They took what was obvious and they held it down. And that is the problem. That is where the problem begins.