

## Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible 033

Romans 2:14-15

June 29, 2025

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Take your Bibles and open them to Romans 3:11. We are continuing on with our series on "Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible."

### Neo-Calvinism vs. The Bible

- I. Calvinism's Mixed Blessing
- II. Why Critique Calvinism?
- III. The Source of Calvin's Theology
- IV. Calvin's Manner of Life
- V. **TULIP Through the Grid of Scripture**
- VI. Conclusion

We are looking at, as you can see, Roman numeral V: TULIP through the grid of Scripture.

### 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**

And we are now on the part of Calvinism which is the "I" in their mnemonic device: Irresistible Grace.

#### D. Irresistible Grace

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

And it really flows from Total Depravity, which Calvinists believe to mean that man is a cadaver spiritually, a corpse. He has no ability to respond to God.

So how does anybody get saved? Well, if they are one of the elect—that is the "U," (Unconditional Election)—and by the way, Christ only died for the elect: that is the "L" (Limited Atonement)—if you are one of the elect, then God irresistibly draws you to Himself. Everyone else is passed over, and they show up in hell, having been given no opportunity to respond to the gospel.

The "P" (Perseverance of the Saints) indicates that if you are one of the elect, then you are always going to persevere in good works and doctrine. And once you let the "P" out of the bag, now you have got a lot of major counseling to do, because a lot of Christians sin.

Do you guys ever sin as Christians? Yeah. Put your hand up if you ever sin. And those of you that do not have your hand up, you are sinning right now. Because one of the commandments is, "Thou shalt not lie" (see Exodus 20:16; Deuteronomy 5:20).

Once you let the "P" (Perseverance of the Saints) out of the bag, then you have all these people that sin during the week. And the reason they have sinned is that they are not following the principles of the spiritual life, in which Jesus does not just save us, but also gives us power to live for Him.

But if you do not live for Him on a particular day, people are so poorly taught today that they think they are not one of the elect, because they did not persevere during that week. So you have this huge endemic in the body of Christ of people that might believe in eternal security, but they have no idea whether they possess it or not. That is called assurance.

Once the Perseverance of the Saints is unleashed, then the assurance of salvation,

which is your birthright, goes out the door. So we will deal with that in the area of "P" (Perseverance of the Saints).

And a lot of the counseling issues that you run into in pastoral work could be resolved just by getting people under good theology, which is what this series is trying to do.

But back to the "I" (Irresistible Grace): if you are one of the elect, then you will be irresistibly drawn to God. Calvinists call that "Irresistible." Resistance is futile. It is like a magnet. Once God pulls on you, then it is a process that cannot be stopped.

So in terms of the Calvinistic definition, Bob Kirkland defines the Calvinistic understanding of Irresistible Grace as follows:

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

So you just wake up one day and you believe. Why would you wake up one day and believe? Because God irresistibly drew you to Himself. Kirkland says,

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

I gave you a ton of quotes from leading Calvinists showing you that they do actually teach this. And their three major arguments are (1) faith is a gift (and we have explained why that is not true). The second argument is that (2) regeneration precedes faith. We have explained why that is not true. And then we move here to their third argument: (3) that lost man has no ability to seek God (Romans 3:11).

## 2. Calvinistic Arguments

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

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

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

If lost man has no ability to seek God, then how does anybody get saved? Well, God has to do a supernatural work on the front end to some, if you are one of the elect. You are given the gift of faith, and/or regeneration precedes faith, and you are born again, without really having believed anything.

So let's deal with (c) here: lost man cannot seek God (Romans 3:11). The key verse that is used on this- and this is the verse that kept me in the Calvinistic camp for years—is Romans 3:11. Calvinists will quote this over and over again. It says,

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

So Calvinists will put that on their Christmas cards and send it to you. And basically from that, if no one can seek God, well, how does anybody ever get saved? Well, they get saved because they are one of the elect. And God did a work on the front end, as I have tried to explain.

So I read that verse (Romans 3:11) for years and years and years, and it kept me in the Calvinistic camp and circles. But then one day I discovered this verse. Well, even before we get to that verse, another verse Calvinists quote is 2 Corinthians 4:4—

*"in whose case the god of this world 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 there is an interesting thing you can ask: if man is unable to seek God, why does Satan waste his time blinding people? I mean, that shows me right there that Satan is not a Calvinist, because why would you put blindfolds on a rock? See that? So that is a little question that a lot of the Calvinists have never really given much of an answer to.

So these are the kind of verses that kept me Calvinistic for years. But then one day I discovered this verse, by the same author, Paul, giving his speech on Mars Hill. The same Paul that wrote 2 Corinthians 4:4, the same Paul that wrote Romans 3:11. Paul speaks concerning what God did at the Tower of Babel, in terms of creating the different nation states, ethnicities—not different races: different ethnicities.

The Christian belief system does not have races in its belief system. You know where races came from? They came from Charles Darwin. The subtitle of one of his most famous books is "The Preservation of the Favored Races in the Struggle for Life."

And it is interesting that when that book is promoted today in the public schools, they take the subtitle out. But go back to the original 1859 edition when Darwin says, "The Preservation of the Favored Races in the Struggle for Life." That is the subtitle of his book, "On the Origin of the Species by Means of Natural Selection."

So what did Charles Darwin mean by "races"? Well, he meant that man goes from the goo to you by way of the zoo, over billions of years. And some races, according to Charles Darwin, are further along the evolutionary scale than others. So white people are here on the evolutionary scale. Black people are here: they are closer to the monkey.

And so that was used in some of the teachings in the United States of America to say that black people are inferior to white people. And Adolf Hitler used the exact same logic to declare a holocaust on the Jews, because the Aryan race is here, and the Hebrew race is less evolved. So that becomes the philosophical justification for the Holocaust.

But you cannot do that if you are a biblicist, because the Bible does not teach anything like that. It says that all people, regardless of skin tone or melanin or whatever you want to call it, bear God's image. So it is wrong to say that whites are superior to blacks. It is wrong to say the Aryan race that Hitler wanted to produce is superior to the Jews, etc.

So it is just something that is part of our thinking. We just have to get the concept of "race" out of our vocabulary, because once you move into talking about different races, you are talking like an evolutionist, not as a biblicist.

So what happened at the Tower of Babel was not racial. What happened at the Tower of Babel was ethnic, where God confounded the universal language at the time. And those that spoke one particular language went to one part of the world. Those that spoke a different kind of language went to another part of the world, etc.

And within a few generations there would be extra melanin in some secreted. I am not much of a scientist. The Answers in Genesis people explain it way better than me. That is what accounts for the different skin colors. It is what accounts for the different eye shapes, and things of that nature. But it has nothing to do with races because there is only one race, the human race.

So what God did at the Tower of Babel was not anything racial. He confused the language, which created ethnicities and nationalities. So Acts 17:26-27 says,

*"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).*

Now, why did God do that?

*"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).*

There, Paul on Mars Hill clearly says that people can seek God. So that is the same guy that wrote Romans 3:11, which says that no one seeks God.

So what do you do with this? Is Paul contradicting himself? That Calvinistic system wants you to focus on Romans 3:11, and it does not want you to believe that Acts 7:26-27 is in the Bible.

That is the way I approached Scripture for years and years and years. So whatever you are doing in terms of this belief about whether the lost person can seek God, you have to put all of the Scripture together.

So here is my attempt at reconciling this apparent contradiction. It basically relates to three points.

#### 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)

The first point is this: no biblical verse indicates that lost man cannot believe when he is convicted. So yes, people in their natural state do not seek God. I concur with that. However, God has built into His universe, into His world, into our world, certain graces. We might call them certain blessings. These can even penetrate the mind of a lost sinner, allowing them to seek God.

So if God did not add these additional things, we absolutely do not seek God on our own. But when these things are added, lost man has the ability to seek God, being prodded by these additional graces that go out to the whole world, which can bring a lost sinner to the point of salvation, allowing them to hear the gospel and to believe it.

So Romans 3:11 is a statement that is made, not considering these additional graces that I am going to cover here. But when these additional graces are introduced and they are all around us, they can even penetrate the mind and heart of a lost sinner.

Now, these additional graces are not to be confused with salvation, but they can certainly make the lost sinner aware of the fact that he or she needs salvation. See, the Calvinistic system says that man does not even have the ability to seek God in any sense.

Romans 3:11, I think, is a statement that is made about what we are like without these additional graces. But when you throw these additional grace measures into the equation, you can start to see why people are seeking God. I mean, I have two examples in the Bible of lost people seeking God.

One of them is the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8, who was brought to the point of decision, having not understood what he was reading in the Bible, Isaiah 53. And so God brought, in Acts 8, Philip, a deacon, to share the gospel of grace with the Ethiopian eunuch. But that Ethiopian eunuch very clearly was seeking God.

The second example we have in the Bible of someone seeking God is a man named Cornelius, an uncircumcised Gentile. It is very clear when you study Acts 10:1-2 that the man was seeking God, although he was not saved yet. And so God, in that instance, through these graces, as we might call them, brought the man named Cornelius to the point of salvation.

But then he also brought Peter in Acts 10 to share the gospel of grace with Cornelius. Cornelius (and his household) believed it, and so he was saved. And so, if lost, man cannot seek God at all, even with these additional grace measures, then you might as well take Acts 8 and tear it right out of your Bible. And you might as well take Acts 10 and tear it right out of your Bible.

So the problem I was having with Calvinism before I left Calvinism behind is that I was so focused on Romans 3:11, that I was not factoring in the whole counsel of God's Word. So whenever you develop a mindset on any topic—I do not care what it is: abortion, race, capital punishment, people seeking God—look at all of the Bible, not just a singular verse.

So what I have here is God's grace(s) to the unsaved.

#### God's Grace to the Unsaved

- Holy Spirit's conviction
- God's Word
- Gospel
- Creation
- Conscience
- Conclusion

These do not save the lost sinner, but they allow the lost sinner to have a God

consciousness, a God awareness, to the point that they actually will have an openness, if they do not suppress this truth, to the gospel. So the problem with people is not so much a lack of opportunity, but a lack of not wanting it.

Romans 1 says that what people typically do with this information is suppress it, and that is their call (their decision). If you make that kind of decision, you are in a lot of trouble. You can miss the opportunity to go to heaven, not so much because of inability or a lack of opportunity, but because you did not want it.

And that largely is going to be the answer, I think, that is given, as, no doubt, many people wind up in hell protesting. The answer is, "This is what you wanted." You took the obvious truth of God in these grace measures given to all people, and you suppressed it.

So the problem is not lack of ability, or inability, or lack of opportunity. The problem is an unwillingness to respond to what God has given to all people.

So what are these things that God has given? The first thing He has given is the Holy Spirit's conviction. You know very well, do you not, John 16:7-11. We have taught this many, many times. It is an explanation of what the Holy Spirit right now is doing in the unsaved world. Jesus says,

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

The disciples were hitting the panic button—these eleven disciples in the Upper Room, Judas having already left the Upper Room, the only unbeliever in the group. They were having a lot of trouble with Jesus' statements that He was leaving.

But Jesus says, "It is actually to your advantage that I leave. Because when I leave, someone else is going to come. And that one that is going to come is the Holy Spirit." And He starts to explain what the Holy Spirit will start to do in the world once He leaves.

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

That is the Greek word "Paraclete" ("parakletos" [παράκλητος]), the one who comes alongside to assist, the Holy Spirit.

*"—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 to persuade. The Holy Spirit is not believing for people. The Holy Spirit is persuading people to believe.

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



Well, what does "the world" mean? It means the world. It does not mean some narrow group called the "elect." It means the whole planet. In other words, the whole planet, even as I speak, is under this conviction. Now, they might try to suppress it. They might try to deny it. They might try to get angry at it.

And that is how you know that it is working: when people start getting mad. The reason they are getting mad is that their file drawers are about to be rearranged, and no one likes their file drawers rearranged. That is upsetting to us.

So the person that you are at work with, and they are always blowing their fuse every time they see your Bible or something, that is a person that is extremely close to salvation. The person that I worry about is the person that has no response at all. "Oh, I am glad you found enlightenment in your guru. I found enlightenment in my gurus." No emotion at all.

I worry about that person because I do not see them getting angry. If they were under conviction, they'd get angry. You know, David, when he was confronted by Nathan about his sins, murder and adultery, blew his stack.

So if people are just getting mad at you and calling you all kinds of names, do not look at that through the lens of discouragement. That person is under the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit, which Jesus said would go out to the whole world the moment He left, 2,000 years ago.

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

"Sin" ("hamartia" [ἁμαρτία]) is a singular noun, right? Not "sins," but "sin."

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

That is the conviction that the Holy Spirit is doing right now in the world. "You have never trusted in Christ for salvation." He is not even convicting them of personal sins. Our whole approach, unfortunately, is to go after people's personal sins.

You know, "Stop using profanity," "Stop looking at pornography," "Stop gambling," "Stop getting drunk," "Stop taking drugs"; when in reality those are just symptoms of the problem. The real problem with people is that they have not trusted in Christ for salvation.

And once Jesus comes inside of them through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (regeneration, which takes place post-faith), then presumably the Holy Spirit will start to deal with people in these outer layers of sin. But those outer layers of sin are not the problem. The real problem is what is happening inside of people in terms of refusing to respond to the convicting ministry of the Spirit, and to trust in Christ for salvation.

*"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 16:9-11).*

"If you stay in your state of unbelief, you are going down just like the devil, who is already a defeated foe, because you are on his team, until you trust in Christ as your Savior. Then everything changes."

So when people make these bold statements that lost people cannot seek God, yeah, in their natural state, lost people do not seek God. But we are not dealing with lost people in their natural state, are we? We are dealing with lost people under the heavy conviction of the Holy Spirit, which has gone out into the entire world.

That is how you have Cornelius seeking God (Acts 10-11). He was under this conviction. That is how you have an Ethiopian eunuch seeking God under this conviction (Acts 8:26-39). I agree that without this conviction (John 16:7-11), no one would seek God. But that is not what we are dealing with here. We are dealing with the lost sinner under the grace that God affords.

Jesus in John 12:32, speaking about this ministry of the Holy Spirit, says,

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

Being "lifted up from the earth" (John 12:32) is the cross, culminating in the resurrection; then Acts 2, when this worldwide convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit started. And right now Jesus is drawing, because He has been lifted up.

*"...all men to Myself" (John 12:32).*

That can compensate for a Romans 3:11 lost person. You might wonder, was this kind of ministry going on in the Old Testament? I think it was. You see it happening pre-flood. Pre-flood there are 120 years of grace, before God sends judgment.

In fact, who is the oldest man in the Bible? Methuselah. And they had him set up there in the ark Encounter, you know, kind of warning people and that kind of thing. And he died at the ripe old age of 969. And Methuselah, his name in Hebrew means, "When he dies, it will come." That is literally what it means. Meaning the flood would come the moment Methuselah died.

And that shows you the grace of God. Because Methuselah is the oldest living man. I mean, even Adam died at 930. Methuselah lived all the way to 969. And because we do not believe that there are gaps in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11, Methuselah knew Noah. He knew other people back in the chain, I think going all the way back to

even Adam, if I have got it right.

So pre-flood was an interesting time. It is like saying, "Do you know who won the Civil War? You know, my daddy fought in the Civil War. My granddaddy fought in the Civil War. My great granddaddy fought in the Civil War. I wonder what it was like. Oh, we can fix this problem. Let's just go next door and talk to him about it: 'What was it like fighting in the Civil War?'"

Because, pre-flood, you have multiple generations overlapping, not like today. So you can see the knowledge capital that was passed down. That is why this group, pre-flood, were not a bunch of toothless hillbillies the way we portray them. They were technologically sophisticated. They even had writing, because there is a book of Adam in Genesis 5. You cannot have a book without writing, amen?

And Genesis 4 talks about how Cain was building a city. Have you built a city lately? And Noah built an ark that was capable of enduring the great floods—a global flood. The pagans post-flood develop their own history of how the flood happened. Although they changed things around, they took the real events and they twisted them. They turned them into polytheism.

They say that the flood came because the gods were mad that the humans were making noise. But they still have an ark. Sometimes in their flood accounts they just take out the sin issue. So we have pagan flood accounts. One is called the "Gilgamesh Epic." There is another creation type account called "Enuma Elish" (Enūma Eliš).

There are about 300 of these creation accounts, and they all bear a very similar storyline to what the Bible describes. So we think that those flood accounts came into existence pre-Bible, pre-Moses. And they kept the storyline intact. But they changed some things like sin. And they got rid of monotheism and they put into it polytheism to harmonize with their worldview.

And all Moses did in 1446 BC, roughly, as he came along, was explained what actually happened. So Moses did not borrow from the pagan flood accounts. The similarities between the Mosaic account and the pagan accounts can be explained in terms of how the pagan accounts are reflecting the actual event, but altered at places to reflect paganism.

And these people, by the way, were, Genesis 4, not only building cities (Genesis 4:17), but were also working with bronze and iron (Genesis 4:22), simultaneously, which is fascinating. Because all the anthropologists tell us we had the Bronze Age, then we had the Iron Age. And here are these people, pre-flood, working with both metals simultaneously, which shows their level of sophistication.

And by the way, in the pagan flood accounts (they have got pictures and statues of them at the ark Encounter), none of the pagan arks would float. They are kind of set up like a cube. They would just kind of, you know, bauble over and over again, like a bottle

or something like that.

But the ark was built with such technological sophistication that when you redraft it and put it together again, the way it supposedly looked in pre-flood times, it would float perfectly. In fact, there is a great study out. The author's last name is Woodmorappe, and he has a book out called "Noah's Ark: A Feasibility Study."

And he says that unlike these pagan accounts, the ark was perfectly designed so that it would float in a global storm perfectly. So this was the type of thing that was happening pre-flood. You have technological sophistication, but you have people that were rejecting the grace of God. And they did that for 120 years.

And God loved these people so much that he said he would not send the flood—this is what Methuselah's name means—until Methuselah dies. And God attached coming judgment to the oldest living man, which shows us the forbearance and the patience and the grace of God.

But as all of this was happening, these people, just like people today, were under conviction. It is right there in Genesis 6:3. It says,

*"Then the Lord said, 'My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years'" (Genesis 6:3).*

"So you guys have 120 years to get your act together before judgment comes," which is a long time. I mean, that is roughly a little less than half the length of the United States of America. "And keep your eye on Methuselah. Make sure he gets his vitamins and gets enough rest, because when he dies, the judgment is going to come."

But you can see through all of these things that God was striving with people. In other words, these people could have sought God if they wanted. And we know how that story tragically ended. They did not want God. They suppressed the knowledge of God that they had. And consequently, we only have eight people on the ark.

Henry Morris, the creation scientist, says that there were probably about seven billion people on planet Earth at the time. So the Earth—Morris runs all the numbers, given man's long lifespan, etc.—could have had about seven billion people on it.

Now, Ken Ham says nineteen billion. So I am not sure why the numbers are different, but the fact of the matter is that there was a population explosion in that day, just about the same amount of people on the earth that we have in our world today, with the seven billion figure. I think there are over eight billion now, something like that.

And God loved these people and was striving with people, just like the Holy Spirit right now is in the world convicting men and women of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:7-11). So yeah, I can believe Romans 3:11, that no one seeks God, but I also

have to factor in the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-11), which allows people to seek God if they want God.

And if they are honest seekers of God, God will send them the information they need to be saved. That is why he sent Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-39) and that is why he sent Peter to Cornelius (Acts 10-11). So people, if they show up in hell, cannot complain of inability or lack of an opportunity. It has to do with suppression of the graces that God gives.

The second thing that unsaved people have is the Word of God. The Word of God has within it sufficient information allowing a person to be saved, if you will take it out and read it and study it.

In 2 Timothy 3:15, Paul writing to Timothy, says,

*"and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings..." (2 Timothy 3:15).*

What would those be? What are "the sacred writings"? That is the Scripture. Do you think Paul is talking about the Old Testament or the New Testament there? I think he is talking primarily about the Old Testament, because the New Testament was just being compiled.

"Timothy, you are blessed, because you had a Lois and a Eunice, a grandmother and a mother, in your life, that taught you the Scriptures from infancy." That is in 2 Timothy 1. So all this stuff about how kids cannot learn is a bunch of nonsense. Timothy was taught the Scriptures from infancy. And why was he taught the Scriptures from infancy Because the Scriptures—

*"...are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ" (2 Timothy 3:15).*

So lost people have a Bible. I mean, even if they do not have access to a Bible, particularly here in the United States, that problem is easily solved. Just check in at a hotel and read the Gideon's Bible. Now the Book of Mormon stuff, you might want to just leave that aside. But the actual authentic Bible, people have access to.

And the truth of the matter is that the information contained in the Bible can lead a lost sinner to salvation in Christ Jesus. And we do not just have an Old Testament anymore. We have a New Testament. This statement in 2 Timothy 3:15 was made probably relative to just the Old Testament.

But whether you are talking about the Old Testament, whether you are talking about the New Testament, whether you are talking about both Testaments, the Bible has within it the information that can lead a lost sinner to salvation in Christ Jesus. And that is the second thing that God has given that can break through the shell of the lost man who

does not want to seek God.

Lost men do not seek God. That is true. But they have the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit which allows them to seek God. And they also have the Scriptures. That is why when Philip, through God's power, converted the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-39).

The eunuch was studying the Bible, right? He was studying Isaiah 53, which is a Messianic prophecy about Jesus, given 700 years in advance. And Philip said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" (Acts 8:30). And the eunuch said, "How can I, unless I have a teacher?" (Acts 8:31, paraphrase).

"Tell me, is Isaiah 53 speaking of Isaiah or somebody else?" (Acts 8:34, paraphrase). So the Ethiopian eunuch had an awareness of the "somebody else," of the Messiah that was coming, because the Scriptures gave the Ethiopian eunuch that kind of information and that data.

So that is a clear case where the Scripture is being used to break through the shell of the lost sinner, who on his or her own is not a God seeker. Should we pay attention to the Scriptures? I would, because 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says

*"All Scripture is inspired by God ["God breathed" ("theopneustos" [θεόπνευστος]) in the original manuscripts] 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).*

So the Scriptures have, built within them, the information that leads us to faith alone in Christ alone, and they have built within them the information that helps us to grow as a Christian. So should we consult the Scriptures?

Well, that is like saying, "Gosh, I am going to take a cross-country trip, but I am not going to consult a map." That is insanity. "I am just going to go by feeling. I am just going to go by what feels right." I mean, nobody in their right mind would do that.

So why in the world do people have this idea that they can get to heaven just by doing things their own way, and by feeling? You are not consulting the map that God gave, and every human being has access to that. I mean, there is only a very small number of people groups on the earth (the 10/40 Window) that do not have access to the Scripture.

Everyone else has access to it. So read it and then believe it and get saved. And then keep reading it so you can grow. Lost people have that. The Scripture has within it incredible power.

Isaiah 55:10-11 says,

*"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..." (Isaiah 55:10-11).*

Oh, so the preaching ministry here is not about the preacher's word. It is about God's Word. If you want this promise, you gotta teach God's Book in context.

*"So will My word be 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 55:11).*

So God's Word does not return empty. It accomplishes and succeeds (Isaiah 55:10-11). Lost people have access to this, which is a grace that God has given them, which can overcome their natural tendency on their own not to seek God.

If you want to see God's Word in action, all you have to do is look at Acts 2:37, where Peter gave a tremendous sermon on the Day of Pentecost to unsaved people, quoting Scripture, after Scripture, after Scripture, after Scripture. He quotes Joel 2. He quotes Psalm 110. He quotes Psalm 16. On and on it goes.

And the Jews hear all this, and what is their reaction? These are lost people. I mean, these are the people that Paul says do not see God (Romans 3:11; 2 Corinthians 4:4). And I am showing you that God built in a grace called His Word, allowing them to become aware of God.

*"Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?'" (Acts 2:37).*

Now why would they be pierced to the heart? Because Hebrews 4:12 calls God's word living and active, and a sharp, two-edged sword. That is why the Jews in Acts 2 are pierced to the heart. I mean, the piercing of the Word of God is so strong that it overcomes the unsaved person's natural proclivity not to seek God on their own. The Word of God accommodates for that.

Romans 10:17 says,

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

Now, hearing the Word of God, by itself, does not save. Faith in Christ saves. But the Word of God, accompanied by the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit of God, makes someone aware of their need to believe so as to be saved.

So do you see what God is doing here? He is building in these graces which overcome man's natural proclivity not to seek God on his own. That is what is happening with Cornelius (Acts 10-11). That is what is happening with the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-39). That is what is happening with the 3,000 people that were about to be saved on the Day of Pentecost.

James 1:18 says the same thing. Feel free to follow me around in your Bible. You guys can be Bible stalkers if you want. James 1:18 says,

*"In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures" (James 1:18).*

First Peter 1:23 says the same thing.

*"for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God" (1 Peter 1:23).*

See what the Word of God does? It makes people aware that they need to be saved. It does not save them. They have to believe themselves. But the Word of God can break through the shell of people, making them aware of their need for salvation.

Now, if someone hears that and suppresses it, then they have a problem. The problem is not lack of opportunity. The problem is not inability. The problem is that they just made a decision. But the decision is theirs and the Word of God brings them to the point of decision.

Look at Luke 16:26-31, about the rich man that died and went into hell. The rich man starts to complain, and Abraham says,

*"And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us" (Luke 16:26-31).*

So the rich man is becoming aware of the fact that his condition in hell cannot be changed. "Send Lazarus over to dip his moist finger on my tongue, for I am in agony" (Luke 16:24, paraphrase). And the word comes back from Abraham: "It is too late. You have crossed over into the eternal realm. Everything's fixed now" (Luke 16:25-26, paraphrase).

Then the rich man starts to worry. It is interesting how in hell you can remember things. He remembers very clearly. He has five brothers that are coming to the same place. Luke 16:27-31 says,

*"And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's*



*house—for I have five brothers—in order that they may warn them, so that they will not come to this place of torment.' But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead'" (Luke 16:27-31).*

The reference there is that the rich man's brothers have the Bible. In this case, it is Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament. They have everything they need to have the wisdom necessary that leads to salvation (2 Timothy 3:15). And if they are going to suppress that and ignore that, then a miracle itself is not going to help them.

Because if they are going to suppress the Bible, they are just going to come up with some naturalistic explanation for a miracle. So the Scripture therefore, is very, very powerful in the sense that it not only gives us the data that we need to be aware that we need to be saved, but it also gives us the information we need to be saved.

So what does the Romans 3:11 man have? He has the Holy Spirit's conviction. He has God's Word. He also has the proclamation of the gospel. Because when the gospel goes out in accuracy, it has power. Paul says, in Romans 1:16,

*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel,..." (Romans 1:16).*

"Ashamed" would be "embarrassed." "I am not embarrassed by it at all." Why not, Paul?

*"...for it is the power ["dynamis" (δύναμις)] of God for salvation..." (Romans 1:16).*

The word translated "power" is the Greek word "dynamis" [δύναμις], where we get the word "dynamite," "dynamic." Power to do what? "For salvation" (Romans 1:16). It has the power necessary to make a person lost in their trespasses and sins, aware that they need salvation; and it has the information they need to experience salvation, which is to believe.

The Word of God will not believe for you. It will tell you what to believe in. It will tell you your need to believe, but it will not believe for you. So the lost sinner has that also.

What else does the lost sinner have? They have the witness of creation itself. Psalm 19:1-4 says,

*"The heavens are telling of the glory of God;  
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.  
Day to day pours forth speech,  
And night to night reveals knowledge.  
There is no speech, nor are there words;*

*Their voice is not heard.  
Their line has gone out through all the earth,  
And their utterances to the end of the world.  
In them He has placed a tent for the sun," (Psalm 19:1-4).*

So, every single day of the natural man's life, he has sermons being preached at him constantly, called "creation," which make him aware that God exists. There is something bigger than you which should give a logical person that is seeking truth, the incentive to seek God.

Because you cannot explain the complexities of this world that we are living in without a designer—it is impossible—any more than you can explain a Boeing 747 as being formed by a hurricane going through a junkyard and assembling the parts randomly. That is ridiculous. They put you in the funny farm for such things.

And yet people look at this creation and they say there is no God, which is insanity. That is why the Bible says, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God'" (Psalm 14:1; 53:1). I mean, right now as we are speaking, our world and our heliocentric universe is traveling at I do not know what speed around the sun.

We are at a point where we are not too close to the sun so that we burn up (although sometimes in Texas it feels like that), and we are not too far away from the sun in our rotation so that we freeze to death (although I see Veronica up here getting cold, putting her sweater on).

We orbit at a great speed around the sun, at just the right distance that sustains life. And you want to tell me there is no designer? You look at snowflakes under a microscope: no two snowflakes are the same in all of the snowflakes that have ever fallen in human history.

And of the eight billion people on this planet, you look at their fingerprints and they are all different. I mean, there is an obvious handiwork to this world that we are living in. And the unsaved man has that to look at every day.

Romans 1:18-20 says,

*"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress..." (Romans 1:18).*

There is the problem: not inability, but suppressing what is obvious.

*"...who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse" (Romans*

1:18-20).

Creation is another grace that God gives to all unsaved people.

The last grace He gives is conscience. All people have this. It is a built-in barometer of what is right and what is wrong. If you do not think people have this, the test you can run with your kids or your grandkids is to say to kid A, "If you take out the trash, I will take you to Dairy Queen." You say to kid B, "If you take out the trash, I will take you to Disney World."

What is kid A going to say? "That's not fair!" Well, who in the world ever gave you the idea of fairness? Where does that come from? How do you instinctively know what is fair and what is not? Because of conscience that God has put in all people. God put the Ten Commandments in every person's heart, whether they read the Bible or not. Paul says this is for all people.

*"For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a Law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing and or else defending them," (Romans 2:14-15).*

If they obey conscience, conscience defends them. If they violate conscience, conscience accuses them. They are under this every single day. So they all know that there is something higher than themselves, and they have the information they need to seek God.

That is why God said to Adam and Eve after they fell, "Now they know good and evil." In other words, their conscience was working, so that even in their fallen state, they had a knowledge of what was good and what was evil. That is called conscience.

So what conclusion do we draw from all of these things given to unsaved people? I am going to quote here in closing Robert Congdon, who writes,

"While I do agree that salvation comes through the workings of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, I disagree with the idea that God must first predispose some to believe and receive it, for the Word of God and the Holy Spirit are sufficient in and of themselves in bringing about the new birth. Instead of forcing individuals to be saved through the irresistible prompting of the Holy Spirit, God uses His Word and the convicting work of the Holy Spirit to confirm its truth in order to bring individuals to the point of decision. It is certainly God's grace that offers it, but at this point they are free to accept it or reject salvation....their [Calvinism's] definition of total depravity negates the sufficiency of the power of the Word of God

and the Holy Spirit to give life..."<sup>3</sup>

So yes, people in their natural state do not seek God, but they do and can with all of these graces that we have talked about. So that dispels, I think, the Calvinist misuse of Romans 3:11.

So, do people seek God? Not in their natural selves. But when you throw in all these other things: conviction, Word, gospel, creation, conscience, that is why you have a Cornelius seeking God in Acts 10(-11), and an Ethiopian eunuch seeking God (Acts 8:26-39). And once a person starts to do that, then God will send them the information they need to understand and hopefully believe the gospel.

So that is my response to Irresistible Grace. God does not irresistibly draw some to Himself because man cannot see God. Man can see God when you build in all of these graces. That was my main point I was trying to make.

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<sup>3</sup> Dr. Robert R. Congdon, *Oops! I Thought I Was a Four - Pt Calvinist* (Greer, SC: Congdon Ministries International, 2014), 48, 69-70.