

Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible 031

John 3:8

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Well, good morning everybody. Locate John 3:8, as we are going to continue our look at "Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible."

Neo-Calvinism vs. The Bible

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

We are at a section of our study where we are trying to examine the Calvinistic acronym TULIP through the grid of Scripture. Is this really a scriptural doctrine?

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**

We have done that as we have examined the "T," Total Depravity; the "U," Unconditional Election; and the "L," Limited Atonement. We are right there on the "I,"

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?

What do Calvinists mean by Irresistible Grace? They say this:

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

And in the Calvinistic system, it has to work that way, because they have taken the "T," Total Depravity, and turned it into something that really is not biblical. To them Total Depravity does not just mean that we are contaminated by a sin nature. It means inability: a person has no ability to choose Christ, even when they are convicted by the Holy Spirit.

They do not have an ability to choose Christ. John MacArthur uses the word "cadaver" to describe it. A cadaver is a corpse. Since they are in that state, God does something on the front end. He imparts faith to some, and then He regenerates first so that they can believe, second.

So in the Calvinistic system, not only is faith a gift, but also what they believe is that regeneration, being born again, the impartation of divine life, precedes faith.

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

So how do people get born again? God causes it, if they are one of the elect. If you are one of the small handful of people that has been chosen before the foundations of the earth to receive this, then happy day for you! If you happen to be outside of that elect

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.

group, then you are double predestined unto damnation. So you will wake up after death in hell, having had no chance to trust in the Savior whatsoever.

So that is what is meant by this double predestination doctrine. When Calvinists teach this, they have three arguments.

2. Calvinistic Arguments

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

They think that (a) faith is a gift. And we have analyzed that. They think that (b) regeneration precedes faith. We are looking at that. And they think that (c) a lost man cannot seek God at all, even though you have got examples in the Bible where lost people—Cornelius, Acts 10; the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts 8; and others—are clearly seeking God.

Well, we will be talking about that a little bit down the road, although not today. So one of their key planks is (a) regeneration precedes faith.

a) 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?

According to Calvinism, regeneration is not a consequence of believing, which is the

way we teach it. According to them, regeneration is the cause of believing. And what do we even mean by regeneration? Well, the word "regeneration" is used in Titus 3:5, where Paul writes to Titus and 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 of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

Now that is only one of two times in the Greek New Testament where that expression "regeneration" is used. It is a translation, "regeneration," from the Greek compound word "palingenesia" [παλιγγενεσία], a compound word, or basically two words that make up a single word. "Palin-" means "again"; "genesis," you recognize that the Book of Genesis has this name, meaning "beginning."

"Regeneration" literally means "beginning again," because what happens to a person at the point of faith alone, in Christ alone, is that the Holy Spirit enters them, and their body becomes the permanent temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19).

So this is something called "regeneration." It is much more than the Spirit's conviction. Those are not to be confused on the front end. The Spirit convicts you of your need to believe. Then you believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And then you receive regeneration, which is the impartation of divine life: "palingenesia" [παλιγγενεσία].

It is something that we desperately need because of Adam's original sin. We are all born into the world separated from God. That is what the sin barrier did. So every lost human being, in order to be made right with God, needs that gap bridged, and that gap is bridged through regeneration.

And that is when the dead sinner, dead in his trespasses and sins, alienated from God, comes alive spiritually. Jesus, in the "Nick at night" discourse, as I call it, as he is talking to Nicodemus at night, called it "being born again": being born from above (John 3:3-8).

And Jesus, when He talked this through with Nicodemus in John 3, made it very, very clear that unless a person is born from above, they cannot see, understand and they cannot enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3). So "Born Again" is not a denomination within Christendom, right? Which is what I used to think before I got saved.

You know, there are the Methodist Christians, the Presbyterian Christians, the Baptist Christians, and oh, yeah, then there are the Born Again Christians. I thought being born again was like a denomination within Christianity. But the Bible is very clear that there is only one kind of Christian: the born again Christian.

If you have not been born again, then you are not God's child. You may be God's creation, but you are not His child. You are not His son or daughter until you have been born from above. And it really does not matter where you go to church, as far as that is concerned.

You might be a MethoCathoBapterian or a BapticostalFundamatic, or whatever you are. The truth of the matter is that those denominational labels mean almost nothing, as far as God is concerned. If you are not born again, you are not a believer: you are not His child.

So there are only two kinds of people living on Planet Earth: those that have been born of the Spirit and those that have not. It is that simple. The ones that have been born again are on that narrow road leading to life. The ones that have not been born again are on that broad road leading to destruction (Matthew 7:13-14).

And the new birth, as we tried to explain, happens through an exposure to the Word of God. *"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by"* the what? *"Word of Christ"* (Romans 10:17). It is the Word of God which creates in people an understanding that they need to be born again. A motivational talk will not get it done, even though you can pack auditoriums by giving sort of Stephen Covey speeches.

What you have at the end of the day, if that is your church, is a crowd of people. But you do not have opportunities for people to become born again. And being born again is an absolute necessity. The Bible teaches if you are born once, you will die twice. If you are born twice, you will die once.

Meaning that I am physically born, which happened to me. On September 21, 1966, I was physically born into this world. I have a birth certificate to prove it, if you do not think I have been born into this world. But then in 1983, I heard the gospel, about the age of 16, in the spring, and I trusted in the work of the Savior. And the Holy Spirit entered me.

Prior to that point in time, I was probably a pretty good person by standards, right? Very religious. But I was not born again. And so, because I have been born twice, the worst thing that can happen to me is I will die once. I will physically die. But to be absent from the body is to be what? Present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). I have no part in the second death, which is the lake of fire.

Conversely, if you have been born only once physically, but you have never been born again, then here is your future: you will die twice. You will physically die, and then you will show up at the Great White Throne Judgment, Revelation 20:11-15. And as your name is not found written in the Lamb's Book of Life, you will be cast forever into the lake of fire.

So since this issue is such a big deal, the most important issue in a person's life is whether they have been born again. So, you may share your faith with people, and the person you are sharing your faith with will start rattling on and on about where they go to church, what their parents believed, what kind of life they lived.

And you very kindly and gently say, "That is irrelevant. That does not matter at all. The

only thing that is of any pertinence and significance is, have you experienced the new birth?" And if they have no idea what you are talking about—and I am not putting people down for not understanding this.

I did not understand it until someone loved me enough to explain it to me. Once you get this kind of response about, "I am a good person and I go to church here or there," that is your clue that you need to tailor the conversation to what is important. You need to start talking about the new birth, just as Jesus did with Nicodemus, and its necessities.

So why bring up this whole subject of regeneration? Because of what Calvinism does with this. Calvinism says that regeneration is first, and faith is second. In other words, faith is the consequence of regeneration for the elect. What we are saying is the exact opposite: faith first, regeneration second. So we believe that regeneration is the cause of faith, not the consequence of faith.

Do Calvinists teach this? I gave you a ton of quotes where they all teach this. And I put up these quotes, not to put down your favorite Bible teacher on the radio. But I want you to know that this doctrine is just very aggressive out there. R.C. Sproul says that according to the "Reformed view of predestination, before a person can choose Christ he must be born again."³

So you are born again first, and you choose Christ second. I gave you this quote from Steele, Thomas, and Quinn last time. I will not reread the whole thing, but they say this, as Calvinists. (Sproul is also Calvinistic.)

"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 that 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."⁴

There is a lot of language that we could have explored here, but for now, just notice their order: regeneration, then faith. What we are saying is, faith, then regeneration.

So do the Calvinists have proof texts that they use? Yes they do. I gave you several last time, but let's pick it up with John 3:8 in the Nick at night discourse.

³ R. C. Sproul, *Chosen by God* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1986), 72.

⁴ David N. Steele, Curtis C. Thomas, and S. Lance Quinn, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1963), 5-6.

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**

Calvinists love to quote this. It says,

"The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8).

So the wind is something that human beings cannot control, Calvinists say, which is true. It does what it wants to do. And that is how the new birth happens. The new birth just kind of happened spontaneously in the elect, without their having made any decision through volition, whatsoever, for Jesus Christ.

And Calvinists love to quote this verse. They say, "Just as the wind is a mystery and cannot be controlled, that is how the salvation of the elect occurs, as God regenerates his elect pre-faith."

So the Calvinistic understanding of John 3:8 is that the wind, which is analogized here to the Holy Spirit, arbitrarily comes upon pre-selected individuals, forcibly regenerating them regardless of personal choice. So when you are under Calvinistic teaching, they give you all this kind of verbiage about the mystery of God and the mystery of the Holy Spirit, and we cannot understand it.

And if you are born again, just praise the Lord that God picked you. It is a mystery, just like the wind. And, you know, there is a lot of erudite preaching that happens around John 3:8. The problem is that Calvinists are quoting one verse, and you guys know enough about Bible study to know that every verse means something when it is inserted back into its context.

And if you read through John 3, it is very clear that the people that experience this wind, or the Holy Spirit, are those who have first believed. This is so clear when you look at the whole chapter that it is hard to imagine that anybody came up with anything different.

So, for example, notice John 3:12, which is just a few verses after John 3:8 here. Jesus is speaking and He says,

"If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" (John 3:12).

Here the emphasis is not on some mystery. It is on the fact that the lost sinner has to do something in order to receive regeneration—which thing is to believe. John 3:12 mentions the word "believe," the Greek word "pisteuo" [πιστεύω], the noun being "pistis" [πίστις], coming from the same verb ("pisteuo" [πιστεύω]).

Notice John 3:15.

"so that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life" (John 3:15).

Notice John 3:16, just a few verses after John 3:8. You know this one 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).

Do you want eternal life? Do you want regeneration? Then do something. You have to believe, which means to trust, in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Notice John 3:18.

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

There are three usages of the word "believe" in John 3:18. A lot of people are very hung up on, "Boy, if I commit this sin, adultery; if I commit that sin, drug abuse; if I commit this sin, profanity; if I commit that sin, not honoring my mother and father; or drunkenness; or gluttony; or you name the sin; is that going to send me to hell?"

The answer to that question is that there is only one sin that sends you to hell. It is the sin of unbelief. It is the sin of having gone through one's life, having had multiple opportunities to receive the gospel through faith, and you just say, "No, no, no, no, no." And you die in that state.

That is what sends people to hell. Sending people to hell has nothing to do with personal sins. It has to do with a singular sin that we are committing against God, which He is convicting the world of as I speak.

So that is very clear in John 3:18. John 3:36 is even clearer.

"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son..." (John 3:36).

Now why does it say "obey"? It means that you disobey the instruction that Christ gave to believe. If you do not want to believe, you are disobeying His command. That is why John 3:36 says "obey" there. It is not, "Boy, I have got to clean myself up and come to Jesus."

A lot of people think Christianity is forsaking a bunch of sins, when the truth of the matter is that Jesus does not require that. And we do not even have the power to forsake our sins, in all honesty. They are such a natural part of us, in original sin.

This is why I am having a problem with evangelists like Ray Comfort. You know, I call him Ray Discomfort. I remember going out watching him on the pier, my wife and I, at Santa Monica pier, I think it was, in the late 90s. He was a very able apologist in the sense that he would invite evolutionists and things like that up to his microphone and he would contend with them.

Ray Comfort is really, really good at getting people lost. He is really, really good at showing people that they are lost, because he holds up the standard of the law to the lost sinner. He says, "Have you ever committed adultery?" "Oh, no, I have not." "Well, have you looked at a woman with lust in your heart?" "Well, I guess if that is the standard, you know, I am a sinner."

So Ray Comfort is really good at getting people lost. He is just lousy at getting people saved, because what he inevitably says is that you have to renounce all your sins to come to Christ. And that is not the gospel, okay?

The gospel is not "clean yourself up and come to Jesus." The gospel is "trust in the Savior." Something greater than yourself enters you. You have been transferred from death to life. You are eternally sealed now, as you walk out your Christian faith.

And whether you are successful at this or not, it has nothing to do with regeneration that has happened to you. You cannot get unborn. Just like you cannot be unborn in the physical world, you cannot be unborn in the spiritual world. And I cannot get depressed one day and say, "I just wish I was not born."

It does not work that way. If you are born, you are born. But the forsaking of your sins, and all of that stuff that has to do with your growth in Christ, has nothing to do with your birth. And Ray Comfort and all of these Calvinistic type teachers that he props up and follows, just do not understand this basic thing.

So it is like, "I agree with you, Ray, on evolution versus creation. I agree with you on abortion and pornography and all of that stuff. It is just that you do not understand the gospel. You do not understand it. And you need to come and sit under someone that

can explain it to you a little bit, so that you are not out there confusing all of these people."

So John 3:36 is very clear that the only sin that sends you to hell is unbelief. So that is how Calvinists are taking John 3:8 out of context.

Let me give you one other verse that the Calvinists love to cite. They love this one. It is in Ephesians 2:1. (We have looked at these verses before.) Paul says,

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

Now Calvinists define "death" as not just separation from God, but as inability. And we have refuted that as we have gone along here. But Calvinists look at it as if you do not have any ability to respond whatsoever. So God does something on the front end if you are one of the elect. He imparts to you the gift of faith, some say.

And then they kind of add to that: He regenerates you further so that you can believe. And Calvinists will quote Ephesians 2:5 to make that point. Ephesians 2:5 says,

"even when we were dead in our transgressions, [He] made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)" (Ephesians 2:5).

So Calvinists will say, "There it is, right there in your Bible. God forcibly came upon the elect. And He jammed His Holy Spirit right down their throats, whether they wanted it or not. He 'made us alive.' There it is, right there in your Bible: forcible regeneration for the elect."

Well, by way of response, you will notice that Ephesians 2:5 does not talk about how God made us alive. All of that theology about how God makes us alive is read into the passage. I do not have any qualms with the idea that God makes us alive, but God makes us alive after we have believed, amen?

So what the Calvinists do is they look at those words, "made us alive," and they read into it: regeneration precedes faith, which Ephesians 2:5 is not talking about. They also read into it "faith is a gift," which Ephesians 2:5 is not talking about. They just focus on "made us alive," and they do not focus on how God makes us alive.

And it is almost as if Calvinists have a theological system, and they just download it into the Bible when they read it. So they read the Bible with Calvinistic lenses. I have done this in passages, but let the passage just speak for itself. Ephesians 2:5 does not tell us how God makes us alive.

How does God make us alive? God makes us alive, consulting other passages, after we come under the conviction of the Holy Spirit and respond to it via volition, through faith alone. So Ephesians 2:5 is another verse among many that you could add to the long list of verses that Calvinists used.

So with that being said, what is the proper biblical order of salvation?

Belief – God’s One Condition for Justification

Gen 15:6

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

John 3:16

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

Acts 16:30-31

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

Let's start with John 3:16 in the middle square there.

These are really good verses that condition salvation upon believing only.

"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).

Take your theological glasses off when you read John 3:16. What occurs first: "believes" or "eternal life"? "Believe" is first. "Eternal life," or regeneration, is second. Do you see that? What does Calvinism do? It just switches it around.

They do this constantly. Here is John 3:16.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes"—that is number one—"shall not perish, but have eternal life"—that is number two (John 3:16).

I mean, if I were stranded on a desert island and I just had my Bible, and I had no outside influences, theologically, I would never think that eternal life comes before believing in John 3:16. I would never interpret that verse that way.

Unless some Calvinist came swimming to the shore and tried to get me to put on Calvinist glasses, that the unsaved cannot believe, I would switch the order around. But if I did not have that presuppositional bias, I would think that belief comes first and eternal life comes second.

Calvinism says, "No, they are the opposite." So they are reading the Bible through a

philosophical grid. That is what I am trying to expose here. Notice John 5:24 (Jesus speaking).

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

Which is first in John 5:24? Believing or eternal life? It is not a trick question. Just belt it out there. Gotta believe first. Well, when do you get eternal life, or regeneration ("born again," "palingenesia" [παλιγγενεσία])? That comes second. Simple.

This is like a kindergarten level homeschool project. All right, kiddies (and we have had a lot of those in this building this week) you want to have a snack? Okay, here is what you have to do. Tell me what occurs first in this passage: believe or eternal life? They all know the answer.

How about John 6:40 (Jesus speaking)?

"For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day" (John 6:40).

So what do you see comes first in the sentence? Is it "believes" or "eternal life"? It is "believe." The first thing you have to do is behold the Son. You have to have somebody proclaim the right gospel to you. That does not make you a Christian. A lot of people have the gospel preached to them all the time, but they are not Christians, because they have never put their personal trust in Jesus.

But after hearing the proclamation of truth then the second thing that happens is that you believe. And then as a consequence of believing—what happens then? Eternal life, or regeneration, occurs, number three in the sequence. "Yeah, but I am going to lose eternal life. I have heard this stuff about the unpardonable sin. I am going to lose eternal life."

When people talk like that, ask them, "Well, what is the unpardonable sin?" And none of them know. They just know that it is something really bad. Yeah, there is an unpardonable sin for national Israel, Matthew 12, but we are not dealing with first-century Israel and how they are going to go off into A.D. 70 and suffer consequences under Rome, nationally.

That is what Matthew 12 is talking about. Matthew 12 is not dealing with individual salvation. John's Gospel, where I am getting all of these biblical citations from, is dealing with individual salvation.

So I behold the Son; I believe, meaning I am trusting Him for the safe keeping of my soul, because He died on the cross for me as an individual, just like He died for you. I

believe, or trust, in that. And then Jesus regenerates me. He takes a lost, dead sinner separated from God, and their body becomes the permanent dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

And you cannot lose that, because it is eternal life. Is that not an oxymoron? You know what an oxymoron is: a self-contradiction. "Jumbo shrimp" would be an example. Some of my personal favorites are "Microsoft Works," "government efficiency," "government intelligence," "postal service"—two words that come together and contradict each other.

Eternal life and loss of salvation contradict each other. Because if you could lose eternal life, then eternal life is not eternal. So once you have eternal life, you are stuck with it. Now, you can quench the Spirit, grieve the Spirit, resist the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19). You can do all kinds of things as a Christian, but you cannot lose the Spirit.

Jesus is very clear that the Spirit will be with you forever. And you are stuck with God because He made you a promise. When it comes to the last day and the final resurrection, which for us is the Rapture, you will be raised up. You will receive that resurrected body.

So the order is behold, believe, eternal life. Calvinism takes "eternal life" and "believe" and switches them, because they are reading the Bible through a lens, which we do not want to do.

John 6:47—Jesus says,

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life" (John 6:47).

Now what comes first in this sentence? "Believes" is first. "Eternal life" is second. Eternal life, or regeneration, is a consequence of believing, not the reason for believing. And Calvinism looks at that and just switches the order. And they do this all the time.

That is why I am convinced that what you are dealing with in the Calvinistic system is what we are warned about in Colossians 2, about not being hoodwinked by man made philosophy (Colossians 2:8).

Well, why are you quoting all these verses from John's Gospel? Because John's Gospel is the only gospel that was set up to reach the lost. Did you know that every single gospel writer is written to people dealing with doubt, or some other issue, in their progressive sanctification?

John's Gospel is unique because it is set up to reach the lost. That is why at your workplace, in your cubicle, as you get into lunch conversations with people about spiritual things, and they say something like this to you, "I am interested in Christianity. I guess I should read the Bible. Where should I start?"

And you do not send them to the Book of Leviticus at that point, okay? You know where to send them. You send them to the Book of John, because the Holy Spirit gave us John to reach the lost. How do I know that? Because John gives us his purpose statement at the end of the book.

It is in John 20:30-31. It says,

"Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30-31).

So John's Gospel centers around seven signs—that is the Greek word "semeion" ("semeion" [σημείον])—that Jesus performed. There were a lot of others John could have talked about, but he says, "If I told you everything Jesus said or did, the Bible would read like the IRS tax code. It would just go on and on and on forever (John 21:25). So I am going to just focus on seven signs."

The first sign is the water to wine at a wedding in Cana of Galilee in John 2; the last one is Jesus' resuscitation of Lazarus from the grave in John 11. And then John throws in a bonus sign. Do you know what number eight is? The bodily resurrection of Jesus.

And then John says, "If you read to the end of the book, I will give you a second bonus sign." You know what that one is? That is in John 21. It is the miraculous catch of the fish. But why all these signs? To show us Jesus was like a David Copperfield type of character?

No. it is to convince us that Jesus is the Christ, the Meshiach, the Christos. What does that even mean? He is the one we have been waiting for. He is the long awaited Messiah. Christ is not his last name. We do not get to heaven and call him Mr. Christ or Dr. Christ.

We do not think Joseph and Mary were Joseph Christ and Mary Christ, right? "Christ" simply means that He is the long awaited Messiah. And just to make sure we are not confused about this, He is the eternally existent second member of the Godhead (*"Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God;" John 20:31*).

So that is why these seven signs are here. By my count, there are nine. But you are supposed to read this and figure out who Jesus is, and then it is not like, "Okay, take a break and go home. Have a nice day." There is a purpose that John writes all of this: so that people might believe.

And once they believe that, they might have what? Eternal life (John 20:31). That is why I keep quoting John's Gospel. Because John's Gospel is set up to evangelize the lost. It is obviously written to people that did not know Jesus was the Christ. They did not know he was the Son of God.

So here is the proof. And it is obvious that they had not experienced regeneration yet. Because John says, "If you believe, you will get regeneration." And it is obvious that John's audience had not believed yet, because he is writing to get them to believe. See that?

So again, you just see a real simple order in all of this. Does believing come first or second, relative to life, in the passage (John 20:30-31)? What do you do first? You believe. And as a consequence of believing, what do you get? You get life or regeneration in His name (John 20:30-31). Calvinism comes along and says, "No, those two are reversed."

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:17. Jonathan Smith and myself here in Houston went to watch Dr. James White, five-point Calvinist, debate Leighton Flowers. We went, I think, about a year or so ago, and Leighton Flowers brought this verse up to James White: 2 Corinthians 5:17. It says,

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature;..." (2 Corinthians 5:17).

"New creature" meaning you are born again. You have the Holy Spirit in you. So what comes first? Being in Christ, or being a new creature? "In Christ" is first. "New creature" is second.

So how did James White respond to this? And you can watch it on YouTube if you are interested. He said, "I do not think that verse lays out an Ordo Salutis." That is what he said. What is an Ordo Salutis? Is that like a meal at a restaurant? What is that?

Well, it is Latin. "Ordo": order. "Salutis": salvation. Order of salvation. "You cannot just throw a verse at me like that and make it an Ordo Salutis that does not lay out the order of salvation. My Calvinistic system lays out the order of salvation." I am looking at that. That looks like an Ordo Salutis to me. What do you think?

I mean, if that is not an Ordo Salutis, I have never seen an Ordo Salutis. And people that are tuning in now for the first time, thinking I am speaking in tongues or something, it says very clearly,

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ,..." (2 Corinthians 5:17).

How do you get to be in Christ? You have to trust in the work of the Savior. Once that happens, orderly speaking, you become a new creature in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17). These do not happen simultaneously. There is a step one and a step two. You do your part; God does his part.

Calvinism will take that and just switch the order. You are a new creature first; then you come to be in Christ. So what is the proper Ordo Salutis, order of salvation?

So you are going to go home today, you are going to have a meal with your family for Father's Day, and someone's going to say, what did you guys learn in church today? And your answer is, "I learned in church today the proper Ordo Salutis."

They will probably change the subject on you. What is the proper Ordo Salutis? What is the proper order of salvation?

1. Conviction by the Holy Spirit, who will not believe for you.
2. Faith alone in Christ alone, as a result of that conviction. Do not confuse conviction with believing. The Holy Spirit does not believe for anybody. He brings people to the point of salvation. But whether or not you are going to become a Christian, get saved. That is your call.

Number one, conviction. Number two, faith.

3. And then number three which happens very, very rapidly after faith is regeneration.

Calvinism takes the whole Ordo Salutis and reverses the whole thing around conviction. They do not even see a need for that, because a lost sinner cannot believe. So the elect are regenerated and then they believe, second.

So what is the Holy Spirit, as I speak, doing in the hearts and lives and minds of unsaved people? The Holy Spirit has a lot of ministries. He does ministries inside the Christian. He does ministries inside the church. He does ministries in the unsaved world.

And if you do not believe that, just read Genesis 6 where the Spirit was striving with man pre-Flood. So He does ministries in the world. He does ministries in the Christian. He does ministries in the church. Well, doesn't He get tired? No, because He is the eternally existent third member of the Trinity, so He can do a lot of things.

And one of the things that He is doing in the life of the unsaved person is not convicting them of every sin they have ever committed. He is not regenerating them. He is fulfilling a ministry of conviction, which means persuasion.

Jesus was crystal clear about this as He was speaking to the disciples.

"But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage 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 16:8)—

"Convict" means to persuade. Who does the Holy Spirit convict? What does it say?

"the world concerning sin ("hamartia" [ἁμαρτία], singular Greek noun) and righteousness and judgment;" (John 16:8).

Well, what does that mean? Well, Jesus says, "I am glad you asked."

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

That is what the Holy Spirit is convicting lost people of constantly: the only sin that will send you to hell, which is unbelief in the Savior. He is not trying to fix alcohol problems, divorce and remarriage problems, spousal abuse problems, pornography problems.

He is not interested in that with unsaved people, because he is not interested in unsaved people morally reforming themselves, which they really do not have much of an ability to do anyway. What He is interested in is something bigger than themselves coming inside them, by which, as they are walking out salvation, they will start to get help with some of these other personal sins.

But on the front end of it, the Holy Spirit is not persuading the world against personal sins. Now, the church out there at large, that is all they talk about. You know, "Look at all these sins of these unsaved people. Look at what they are committing."

And the churches are doing stuff that the Holy Spirit is not involved in. So when you get the opportunity to evangelize someone, you do not go on a rant about personal sins in their life. What you try to get them to understand is what God is already convicting them of, which is the sin of unbelief.

"concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father..." (John 16:9-10).

They do not have the righteousness of Christ.

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

You are on a sinking ship if you are an unbeliever. The ship is going down—you just do not realize it yet—because Satan is already a defeated foe. Satan went down 2,000 years ago. The sentence just has not been carried out yet. You align with Satan through unbelief. You are going down with a convicted criminal. The sentence just has not been imposed.

So when you evangelize unsaved people, those are the kinds of things that you talk about. And so that becomes the proper Ordo Salutis.

"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

Last quote:

"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."⁶

So that is the proper Ordo Salutis.

⁵ Kirkland, 40.

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