

Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible 037

Romans 5:1

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Well, y'all can find Romans 5:1. We are continuing 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 in our study where we are dealing with the TULIP acronym, and we are on the "P." So we are getting nearer—I do not want to say "near"—to the end of our study.

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 the "P," of course, in Calvinism, stands for the Perseverance of the Saints. At Sugar Land Bible Church, we do not teach the Perseverance of the Saints. What we teach is the preservation of the saints.

Peter tells us in 1 Peter 1:4-5,

"to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:4-5).

So how do I know that I am going to get to heaven, as a Christian, and receive this imperishable inheritance which is being reserved in heaven for me (1 Peter 1:4)? Well, I have a promise from God that I am going to be protected by the power of God (1 Peter 1:5).

So you will notice that I am not protected based on my ability to keep God's Word as a Christian. And we should keep His Word, but none of us are going to do it perfectly, amen? That is good. I got a strong amen on that one.

So, my security does not come from my ability to perform as a Christian. It comes from the power of God that keeps me (1 Peter 1:5). That is what we mean by the preservation of the saints.

Calvinism, of course, teaches something very different. Bob Kirkland summarizes.

*"'P' stands for 'Perseverance of the Saints.' This is what Calvinists say gives them the assurance of eternal security, but in actuality, 'the emphasis is upon the believer's faithfulness in persevering—not upon God's keeping power...uncertainty as to one's ultimate salvation is, in fact, built into the very fabric of Calvinism itself.'"*¹

So if you are perpetually looking at your life as a Christian, trying to figure out if you are persevering or not, you are never going to have assurance of salvation; because you are going to have up days as a Christian, and down days.

Your assurance of salvation comes, not from introspection and perpetually looking at yourself, but from taking the spotlight off of self and putting it on Jesus Christ and His promises. God cannot lie (Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18). God said that He is going to preserve you (1 Peter 1:5). That is what it means.

He is going to preserve and protect you until the day of your glorification. That is exactly what the passage means. And so we just say, "Oh, what a relief. I am glad that does 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.

depend on me, or else I would be in an emotional roller coaster. One day, I think I am saved. One day I am not saved."

Kind of like, you know, picking the petals of the flower. "She loves me. She loves me not." "Saved. Unsaved. Saved today. Unsaved." So you have this endemic of people running around today not knowing if they are Christians, or not knowing whether they are saved or not.

And Satan has used these doctrines, Calvinism and Arminianism to teach a lack of assurance. Calvinism says, "If you are not persevering, you never had salvation." Arminianism is saying, "If you are not persevering, you lost your salvation."

So, I have been in churches where they give altar calls, and I started noticing the same people walking forward every single week. And I would think to myself, "What is wrong with these people?" And then it occurred to me that it is just bad theology, there in an Arminian church that teaches they lost their salvation.

They went back to the flesh that particular week, so they think they need to get re-saved. They do not have a theology which says, "I am a blood-bought saint out of fellowship with God, so I need to get back in fellowship with Him." They think that they lost their salvation.

Calvinism says, "They never had salvation." So both systems (Calvinism and Arminianism), at the end of the day, are perpetually telling people that are authentically saved people, that, "Maybe you are saved, maybe you are not."

E. Perseverance of the Saints

- 1. Calvinistic definition**
- 2. Examples**
- 3. Problems with the Calvinistic understanding**

Do Calvinists actually teach this? I gave you several quotes last time showing you that they do. Here is just a little review.

Calvin himself said,

"[T]hose who do not persevere unto the end belong not to the calling of God."²

John Murray writes from a Calvinist perspective,

"The crucial test of true faith is endurance to the end, abiding in Christ, and continuance in the Word...He cannot abandon himself to sin;..."³

Of course, when I read this, I am thinking, "What about David, who really messed things up? If he had died before he repented, the Calvinist would say that he was not one of the elect." In which case, we should pray for people to die, shouldn't we?

When they get saved, let's pray for them to die right now. Because the Calvinist system says that if they retrogress, go back into sin, and come back, then they are one of the elect. If they do not come back, they are not one of the elect.

So therefore, if you lead someone to Christ, you should shoot them. Lead them to Christ, pull out a gun—dead. Because now they do not have a decision whether to retrogress a sin or not. See that? Should we start that as an evangelistic model?

I mean, I do not think that would work with church growth principles very well. So Murray says,

"Let us appreciate the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and recognize that we may entertain the faith of our security in Christ only as we persevere in faith and holiness to the end...The perseverance of the saints reminds us very forcefully that only those who persevere to the end are truly saints."⁴

So that is just showing you that Calvinists teach this, around the clock, 24/7. One of the phrases that you will run into is their phrase "final justification," or "final salvation."

Here is a quote from Thomas Schreiner, kind of the academic side of Calvinism teaching this. He says,

"The New Testament clearly..."⁵

² John Calvin, *Calvin's Calvinism: God's Eternal Predestination and Secret Providence* (Reformed Free Publishing Association, Kindle edition from the 2009 2nd edition), Kindle location 532.

³ John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2015 edition), p. 152, 154-55, 165.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Faith Alone—The Doctrine of Justification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 191.

So I guess if you disagree with the Calvinists, you are disagreeing with the clear New Testament teaching—which is not New Testament teaching, as I will show you, but it is in a Zondervan commentary, so it has got to be true, right?

"The New Testament clearly teaches that bare faith cannot save..."⁶

Wow. You should look at that and say, "That is heretical." I mean, that violates "faith alone," "sola fide." Right then and there. I mean, that is what saved the thief on the cross, who got saved at the very end of his life.

There is no requisite turning from sin in that account. What could the poor guy do? He was nailed to a cross. He could not even get baptized and join a local church. And he just exercised faith in the Messiah at the very end of his life. That is bare faith.

And Jesus at that point gave him one hundred percent assurance of salvation. He said, "Today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43, paraphrase). Schreiner says,

"The New Testament clearly teaches that bare faith cannot save and that works are necessary..."⁷

And I just do not know why the Christian world does not look at that and say, "That is heretical, because Schreiner is mixing faith plus works for salvation."

"The New Testament clearly teaches that bare faith cannot save and that works are necessary for final justification or final salvation."⁸

What in the world is this "final salvation" thing? Well, it is the idea that information is being stored on you, and if you make it to the end of your life in perseverance, then guess what? You were one of the elect.

And so your justification is declared about you, or to you, at the end of the process, rather than at the beginning. That is what Calvinists mean by "final salvation." It is an outworking of the Perseverance of the Saints.

So Calvinists talk a lot about "final salvation." Here is a quote that I did not give to you last time. So let me give this to you. This is from Michael Horton. I used to listen to him on the radio when I was living in California.

There was a show (I do not know if they still have it) called "The White Horse Inn," which I think was named after Luther and the Reformers, and where they had their theological discussions.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

And these guys on the White Horse Inn show are as Reformed as the day is long. I mean, right down to the amillennialism and everything else. And, you know, as a new Christian, I did not know any better. And I was searching for spiritual things. So I would listen to them.

And so this is what Michael Horton, who is very Calvinistic, says in one of his books,

"The New Testament lays before us a vast array of conditions for final salvation. Not only initial repentance and faith, but perseverance in both,..."⁹

Now, I do not know if you read that the way I do. It is "Faith plus perseverance equals salvation." "Faith plus perseverance proves you are one of the elect." So faith alone, even though the whole Protestant Reformation revolved around the Latin words "sola fide," "faith alone"—"faith alone" is not enough.

"Not only initial repentance and faith, but perseverance in both, demonstrated in love toward God and neighbor, are part of that holiness without which no one will see the lord (Hebrews 12:14)."¹⁰

And as I will be showing you in this section of the series, though not today, Calvinists are taking poor Hebrews 12:14 and totally mutilating it. Because that is not what Hebrews 12:14 is talking about.

It is not talking about final salvation. What it is talking about is our relationship with other people. "Without holiness, no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14, paraphrase).

Meaning, if I am not holy, you are not going to see the Lord through my life. "Without holiness, no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14) has nothing to do with faith plus holiness equals perseverance, proves I am one of the elect, and gives me final salvation.

So you go under the Calvinistic system, and there is just absolutely no assurance that you are saved. Because how do you know if you persevered enough? See that? It is a very subjective categorization. It is like the weather report, you know, "thirty percent chance of rain" kind of thing.

"Are you saved?" "I am about thirty percent—no, seventy percent,—yes." I mean, how are you going to live victoriously for Jesus with that? And we have used this illustration before (pardon me if you have heard it): it is the net under the workers of the Golden Gate Bridge.

⁹ Horton, Michael. (2006). *Introducing Covenant Theology* (p. 182). Grand Rapids: Baker.

¹⁰ Ibid.

When they started to work on the Golden Gate Bridge way back when it was built, some of the construction workers were falling and hitting the water. And of course, as you know, it is like hitting concrete, from that height, and you die.

So someone had a bright idea: "Maybe we should put a net under the workers so they do not fall to their deaths! So if they fall, the worst that could happen to them is that they hit the net and not the concrete-like water."

And then they did a study of these workers, and they found that these workers were way more productive when they had assurance of the net because they were not worried about whether they were going to die.

So this, in essence, is what the doctrine of assurance of salvation will do for you if you believe it. And you get the issue settled, that upon death you are going to heaven, then your mind is not perpetually divided on this subject, and you can focus all of that energy into productive pursuits.

But if you do not believe this, if you go into the Calvinistic Arminian teaching where the net is not there, then you are going to spend your whole life as a Christian with a divided mind, and you are not going to be as productive for the things of God as you can be.

So this is really not even eternal security we are talking about. Calvinists believe in eternal security. "Once saved, always saved." What they deny is the assurance of eternal security. What they deny people is knowing that you possess it.

Because how could you know until the end of your life whether you persevered to the end and thus demonstrated you are one of the elect, and final justification is declared of you?

So it is not, to be quite frank about this, too dissimilar from Islam, where you deal with the Muslim and there is like zero assurance of salvation in a Muslim, because the good has to outweigh the bad.

And one of Allah's names is "deceiver," meaning that he can say, "Well, I made you this promise and that promise. Just fooling. I am going to yank out the carpet from under you. Go to hell. See you later."

And so when you are dealing with Muslims, you have to understand the torment that they are under. And that is why a lot of them are willing to die martyrs' deaths and fly planes into buildings. Because the higher-ups tell them, "Well, if you go down as a martyr for the cause of Allah, then you are in one hundred percent. But if you do not do that, then you are not in one hundred percent."

So it is kind of easy to look at Islam, as it is growing in our country (and they are blaring the Islamic call to faith now in Minnesota, the Twin Cities, Minneapolis, I believe), and to

just sort of get real angry at them. You know, "They are taking away our country," which is true.

And it is easy to kind of develop an idea that, "You know, why don't you just get on your camel and go back to where you came from?" Sort of a Jonah approach to people. But you need to look at them through the eyes of sympathy and grace because they are under this horrific, horrific system.

And I am only describing the tip of the iceberg here. I mean, you are dealing with people in fear perpetually, and you are dealing with people with zero assurance of salvation.

"So, I gotta get to heaven somehow. Well, I will put my wife in a burka in the Houston sun and give her a little tiny slit where she can look out through the eyes, and she has to walk six feet behind me. Maybe that will work. Maybe Allah will accept me if I do that. Because that is what the leaders in the mosque tell me to do."

So you are dealing with people that are very sincere, but they are sincerely wrong. Just because you are sincere about something does not mean that you are right. The prophets of Baal were really sincere people at the time of Elijah.

And they wanted their god to bring fire down from heaven. And they were piercing themselves, the Bible says. Talk about sincerity. And yet the fire, as you know the story, did not fall for them. It fell for the true God, Elijah's God.

So just because someone works really hard at something, and tries really hard at something, and is really sincere at something, does not make you right. Sincerity does not equal accuracy.

And so that is how to look at Islam. It is really how to look at, to some extent, Calvinists and Arminians. They are under a Christian form of Islam, in a certain sense.

So, with all of that being said, how would we respond to this idea of the Perseverance of the Saints, now that we understand it a little better? Well, the first point we started to make last time is that final salvation is unbiblical.

There is not any such thing as final justification. What is in the future is your glorification. But your justification transpired the moment you placed your personal faith in Christ for salvation.

So what is justification? It is the announcement of a jury verdict. It is legal terminology. It is the declaration of innocence, the heavenly declaration of innocence that a person receives the moment they trust in Christ alone for their personal salvation.

Now watch this very carefully: justification does not make you holy. Justification does not, in and of itself give you the transferred righteousness of Jesus Christ. The only thing justification does is announces it.

That announcement would not be worth much unless there was some kind of jury verdict. The jury cannot announce something that it has not ruled on. So what exactly gives you positional righteousness? It is not justification.

It is imputation, which means "transfer," which you will find in Philippians 3:9, one of the greatest statements of imputation in the whole Bible. Paul, who had all this stuff going for him religiously before he met Christ, says,

*"and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own..."
(Philippians 3:9).*

I hope you are not planning on standing before God one day in your own righteousness. I am sure not planning on that, because it is not going to get me very far.

"and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ,..." (Philippians 3:9).

Meaning that this righteousness that we are dealing with does not come into a person's life through works or religion. It comes into a person's life through faith in Christ. When you exercise faith in Christ, what are you given at the nanosecond of faith? You are given the imputed righteousness of Christ,—

*"...the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,"
(Philippians 3:9).*

Faith makes it a reality in my life. The Protestant Reformers called it an "alien righteousness," meaning that it is otherworldly. Just like watching a movie about aliens, space aliens, coming from another planet and all this kind of stuff.

That is what "alien righteousness" is. It is otherworldly. It is coming from a different domain. It is not found in human effort. So what happens is that you trust Christ for salvation, and at that moment, God takes the righteousness of His Son and transfers it to you through imputation, which means "transfer."

And God looks at you as if you were just as righteous as Jesus Christ, which is a stunner, because we are not as righteous as Christ practically, but we are positionally. Now, justification is just the announcement that has happened.

So it is faith in Christ, then comes imputation, which happens in a split second, and then there is a heavenly verdict read, a declaration of righteousness. So a lot of people say, "Well, justification, what that really means is that it is just as if I have never sinned."

No no no no no no no no no no. That totally undersells justification. "Just as if you have never sinned" would really just put you back to zero. But see, what God has done

is not just taking you back to zero. He is taking you the other degree into infinity because He has given you the righteousness of His Son.

You trusted in Christ for salvation, and God takes the righteousness of His Son and transfers it to you. And it has nothing to do with whether you persevere or do not persevere. It has to do with a positional reality. It is a reality. This is a truth that comes from God, and God cannot lie (Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18).

So you just live your life believing this is true. And then when you are tempted to sin as a Christian—not "if," but "when" you are tempted to sin and go backwards into the old nature—

You just say to yourself, "Gosh, if I do this thing, or this gossip, or look at this movie, or use this profanity, or lose my temper with this person, or whatever," you just say, "you know, that kind of behavior is just not fitting of me, who am basking in the positional righteousness of Jesus. I mean, I am just not going to do that because it is not who I am."

And so what you will start to discover, when we start to live that way, is that our lifestyle will start to catch up with our position, and of course not perfectly, but you can start to see improvements.

And God is going to reward people at the Bema Seat for that. But it has nothing to do with whether they are going to show up in heaven at all. So first there is faith, with imputation simultaneously. Justification is the announcement that these things are true.

So there in that doctrine, there is nothing about, "Wait till the end to see if you are going to get this stuff, because the jury's out. We do not know how you are going to end up if you are going to persevere or not. If you do not persevere, you are not one of the elect. If you do persevere, you are one of the elect, and you are going to get some kind of final justification."

"Final justification," "final salvation," is a—why mince words?—it is a damnable heresy to teach this. It is absolutely heretical. And how these people get away with this is just stunning to me. It is like what Russ Miller says about creationism. He says, "We own the truth. They own the system."

We own the truth here. This is Bible. But they own the system, which is the publishing houses, and the radio shows, and on and on we could go. So Jesus says this,

"Truly, truly, I say to you..." (John 5:24)

Meaning you can take this to the bank, right?

"Truly, truly ["amen" (ἀμήν), "amen" (ἀμήν) in Greek], I say to you, he who hears My Word and believes Him who sent Me, has [present tense in

Greek ("echo" [ἔχω]) eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life" (John 5:24).

"...has eternal life..." (John 5:24)—present tense.

"...passed out of death into life..." (John 5:24)—perfect tense: meaning that it is a one-time action with ongoing results.

You have your imputation and your justification the moment you exercise faith in His Son, by the decree of Jesus Christ Himself, who cannot lie (Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18). And as if that were not enough, Jesus prefaces the statement by saying,

"Truly, truly..." (John 5:24).

So show me here anything about, "There is a waiting game to see if you are going to persevere enough, and then you get your justification after the fact."

Genesis 15:6 says of Abraham,

"Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned..." (Genesis 15:6).

See? It is Texan. Look at that. *"Reckoned"* (Genesis 15:6), which means "counted, to calculate, make a judgment, as in a past action."

"Then he believed in the Lord; and He [the Lord] reckoned it to him as righteousness" (Genesis 15:6).

Some versions say "credited it to him" (Genesis 15:6), meaning that Abraham got this on credit, because the price had not been paid yet. We would have to wait 2,000 years for that. Abraham is looking forward to a Messiah whose name he did not know. He got justification on credit.

Ours is the same, but different. We are looking backwards. We know the name of the Messiah, and we do not get it on credit, because it has been paid for, but it is the same principle.

"Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness" (Genesis 15:6).

There is nothing here about, "Let's see how you do, Abraham." Because this guy in Genesis 15 is about to mess everything up in Genesis 16. That is where the whole Hagar-Ishmael thing happens. God knew chapter 16 was coming after chapter 15, right?

But God reckoned it to Abraham as righteousness, even though God knew that Abraham was about to mess up a bunch of stuff (the repercussions of which were still paying for, by the way, in the Middle East and so forth—the Ishmaelites)—even though God knew that Abraham was about to mess everything up.

And then he was going to lie a couple of times about Sarai, later to become Sarah: "Oh, she is my sister," which is not a complete lie because she was like his half-sister, I think (Genesis 20). But it was just not telling the whole truth.

It is like when my wife says to me, "Did you go to the gym today?" And I said, "Yeah, I went to the gym." Of course, when I was at the gym, I got a massage, and I sat in the cafeteria for a good hour and ate a bunch of stuff, and the working out thing just kind of slipped my mind, you know?

So, "Yeah, I went to the gym today," but that is really not the complete story, right? What she means is, "Did you do anything at the gym?" And I kind of slight things by skimming a little bit. We are like that. God is not like that. We are like that.

So Abraham was about to mess a few things up, and even though he was about to mess a few things up, God still, immediately upon faith, gave him justification. No final justification here.

Romans 3:28 says,

"For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law" (Romans 3:28).

Nothing here about, "Confess your sins to make sure you are right with God." Nothing here about relinquishing all of your sins. Because that is how evangelists, so-called—I put "evangelists" in quotes—are sharing the gospel today.

You know, Ray Comfort—I call him Ray Discomfort—does this all the time where he says, "You are saved by grace alone, through faith alone." But then he tells these people on the beach, as he is cramming a microphone into their face, "You need to repent of all your sins."

So, Ray, which is it? Am I saved by faith alone through grace alone as a free gift? Or do I have to repent of all my sins? And what about sins I have committed that I cannot even remember I committed? What if I forget those? Am I not in?

So there is this huge mixture today of people trying to mix works and faith for justification. But if you just go by the Bible, which is true north, it is very clear.

"For we maintain that a man is justified..." (Romans 3:28).

That is the heavenly declaration we were talking about.

"...by faith apart from works of the Law" (Romans 3:28).

So if you are saying, "Lord, I want to be your child, so I am going to really white-knuckle it and I am going to give up this bad behavior and that bad behavior," do you know what God says?

God says, "I am not interested in that. I am not interested in you telling me you are going to keep a bunch of promises that we all know you are not going to keep anyway." God has absolutely no interest in our commitment, or in our relinquishing this, or relinquishing that.

What He wants is trusting Him who did it all in our place: trust in Him. Now, once that happens, now we can talk shop here, because that phase of your salvation has been executed. You are justified and the Holy Spirit is inside of you. Now you have a new nature. You have a new identity.

Now we can talk about sins, plural, and not committing this sin, or that sin, because it is unfitting of who you are. But they are not a prerequisite to getting your foot in the door. The world of religion hates what I am saying right now. And this is why they hated Jesus.

Jesus pretty much got along with everybody, the best I can tell, but the religious people He had a real hard time with. He got along with the tax gatherers, the sinners, the prostitutes. He would say to the religious crowd, "They are entering the kingdom before you, ahead of you."

And the religious people were just stunned that He could say something like that. When you get to heaven, there are two big shocks, people say. The first thing you are shocked by is, "Well, what are they doing here?" I mean, all those people, how do they get in here?

And the second shock is, "Well, where is so-and-so?" You are shocked by who is there, and you are shocked by who is not there. And this is just pure Bible. No final justification.

Romans 5:1 says,

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

No talk here about, "Maybe you have it. Maybe you do not. We will see how things play out. We have to collect information on you to see if you are going to persevere, so you can qualify to be one of the elect."

Here is a quote from "TDNT," "Theological Dictionary of the New Testament." You would be hard pressed to find a better original language lexicon than this. Gerhard Kittel, being the editor and compiler, says about justification,

"In Paul we first find a...legal use...."¹¹

"Hey, you sound like our pastor who just told us it was a jury verdict." Maybe I sound like Kittel, not the other way around.

"In Paul we first find a...legal use. The wicked are justified by faith on the basis of God's gracious action in Christ. This justifying is a saving acquittal which takes place in the present..."¹²

It is not something you wait until the end to figure it out—"Maybe you have it, maybe you do not." Kittel says,

"...which takes place in the present...a present act of grace through Christ...Once-for-all justification at the cross and personal justification in faith go together. Justification is a finished work of grace..."¹³

I mean, just the name "final justification" is different from this definition, because in final justification, the jury is out. The Bible does not say that the jury is out. The Bible says that justification is a done deal.

"Yeah, but we do not deserve it." Well, I am with you on that one. That is why it is so hard to factor all this stuff in. That is why it is hard for people to accept this. But the truth of the matter is that your own best intentions did not get you in the door.

So if your own best intentions did not get you in the door, your own good works and best intentions do not keep you in the door. God preserves you in the door (1 Peter 1:4-5). Once you are in the door, He preserves you (1 Peter 1:4-5).

So people say, "Well, can you really be sure you are going to heaven?" Absolutely. If what I just said is true, no problem. If you put the onus on my shoulders, now we have got some question marks. But God never says that the onus is on your shoulders.

Henry Clarence Thiessen writes

¹¹ Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 175.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

"Justification is a declarative act. It is something not wrought in man, but something declared of man. It does not make upright or righteous, but declares righteous."¹⁴

Your justification never made you righteous. It is imputation that made you righteous. Justification just announced that you are righteous positionally because of transfer.

Here is one of the Calvinists' own, Lewis Birkhoff, a Calvinist, and he gets it completely right here. That is why I am calling this critique "Neo-Calvinism," because the younger Calvinists like Horton and Piper and Schreiner, and all these guys, are not following what Birkhoff said here. They are coming up with these new definitions.

But Birkhoff, in his "Systematic Theology" written in 1932, says,

"Justification is a judicial act of God, in which He declares, on the basis of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, that all the claims of the law are satisfied with respect to the sinner. It is unique in the application of the work of redemption in that it is a judicial act of God, a declaration respecting the sinner, and not an act or process of renewal, such as regeneration, conversion, and sanctification."¹⁵

So your growth in Christ, which is a different animal entirely, is a process. But your justification, which is an announcement from your imputation which became in effect in your life when you trusted the Savior, is not a process.

The theologians have a way of describing this. They say that it occurs at a punctilious point in time. And I went to seminary to learn all these fancy words, so I have to use them on somebody. Nobody else will listen to me.

At a punctilious point in time—in a split second—as you exercise faith, came imputation. And following that, very rapidly, came justification. Period. "Yeah, but, pastor, you do not know the week I had last week."

That has nothing to do with it. That is a growth issue, not a birth issue. And what is happening is people are conflating growth issues and birth issues together constantly. Just watch them online doing this.

Watch it all happening, now that John MacArthur, the chief spokesman for Calvinism, has passed on. Look at all of the people trying to defend every little thing the man ever said and did. And John MacArthur said a lot of good things.

¹⁴ Henry Clarence Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 275.

¹⁵ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology: With a Complete Textual Index*, 4th and rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1932; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 513.

Now, this whole debate about lordship salvation is not a new thing. This has been going on since the 1980s, when MacArthur took birth, truth, and growth, and put them together, and turned justification into something that God never intended.

Justification to MacArthur is, "Faith plus submission to the Lordship of Christ to be justified." Show me that in the Bible. Show me that with the thief on the cross (Luke 23:43). Show me that with Paul and Silas, to the Philippian jailer.

"What must I do to be saved?" the jailer asked. Paul and Silas said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved" (Acts 16:30-31, paraphrase). None of this talk of, "Submit plus believe, and to really see if you are one of the elect that has done this, we gotta monitor your life, or God will monitor it, till the end."

"Yeah, but I agree with John MacArthur on Noah's Ark." I do too. He is really good on Noah's Ark. But we are not talking about Noah's Ark right now. We are talking about the most fundamental issue that you can ever deal with as a human being: how are people dead and lost in their trespasses and sins to be reconciled to the God who is holy that made them?

That is what we are talking about. We are not even talking about whether Jesus is Lord. We all know He is Lord. We are talking about what does the lost sinner have to do to be made right with God? That is what we are talking about. Charles Ryrie says, "Faith alone."

MacArthur said, "No, it is faith plus submission." And in the process, he took a growth truth—submission to Christ: you have to do that once the Holy Spirit is inside of you, to grow—MacArthur took a growth truth and turned it into a birth truth.

And in the process he mixed faith with works which God says in Galatians 1:6-9 is an "anathema" [ἀνάθεμα], which is a curse. God articulates a curse on people that do this. And the curse applies even if you happen to be correct about Noah's Ark, and all the other Genesis 1-11 issues.

But 1 Corinthians 1 talks about people who say, "Well, I follow Cephas." "I follow Paul." "I follow Apollos." "I follow Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:12, paraphrase).

I know what happens with people because I became like this at a certain section of my life. I was so thrilled with something that John MacArthur said that I agreed with him on—it was about three or four issues—that I became a MacArthurite, meaning that I did not just buy into my points of agreement with him. I bought into everything.

I took everything carte blanche. And if you came against one of my guys that I liked, I was going to defend him like there is no tomorrow, because I was following John. Not the Gospel of John, but John MacArthur. Not the Gospel of John, but John Piper.

And God help us not to become like this. You know, Paul even had a little tribe following him. And Paul says, "Was I crucified for you?" (1 Corinthians 1:12-13, paraphrase). Do not follow a man. Follow God; because men can get things wrong.

And if you become a worshiper of a man and just buy into something or someone because you like two or three things that they say, you are going to start uncritically accepting the bad things they say. And your intellect is going to be overridden at that point. And God created you with an intellect.

God wants you to use your intellect. I have no ambition to create a tribe of people after myself. My wife calls it "idols of Woods." We do not want idols of wood. We do not want idols of Woods. We do not want idols of anybody. We want the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible, amen?

And the reason that we like the Bible is not that we are bowing down to the Bible. It is just God has decided to speak to us through this Book. This is where His special revelation is. And if somebody deviates from the Bible, then you deviate from them on that point, even if you like what they said about Noah's Ark.

So, this justification is not a process; it is not something final; it is something instantaneously given.

Here is a quote from Lewis Sperry Chafer. Now, I like Chafer. We have a school named Chafer Theological Seminary. I happen to be the president of it. We like Chafer. But do you realize that not even Chafer Theological Seminary agrees with everything Lewis Sperry Chafer said?

"Well, then why do you call yourselves Chafer Theological Seminary?" Well, because we are trying to get back to his philosophy of education. It is not some kind of blind agreement to everything Chafer said.

Chafer had Hebrews 6 wrong. Chafer believed that there were two new covenants: one with the church; one with Israel. We do not think that is true. We think that there is one New Covenant, and we are partakers, not overtakers, of Israel's New Covenant. We have to divide it in two.

So there are things that Chafer said that we tweak a little at Chafer Theological Seminary, because we never set up the school to worship Chafer. But Chafer noticed in his day, with the Ivy League, particularly Princeton, that people were graduating from seminary and knew nothing about the Bible.

They knew all of the Presbyterian catechism and church polity, but they did not know anything about the Bible. So to pass their denominational requirement test, they had to go somewhere else and get a crash course on the Bible.

And Chafer said, "Huh? What is wrong with this picture? This is a little odd to have seminaries, and people graduate not knowing a thing about the Word of God. Why don't we do this? Let's set up a seminary where the curriculum and curricula is the Word of God."

So that is why we call ourselves Chafer Seminary, even though we make a few tweaks with some of the things Chafer taught, because we have no interest in defining a person. You know, we are not going to have a Chafer stained glass window, for example.

Chafer was a man. God used him, but he was just a man. And that is how you are to look at all human teachers. You do not get into, "I follow Paul," "I follow Apollos," "I follow Cephas," "I follow Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:12, paraphrase).

You enjoy human teachers. Human teachers can bring a lot into your life. But they are not the final authority. Final authority is right here, in the Word of God.

And if people get justification wrong, it does not matter how big of a platform they have, or how many bestsellers they have after their name. You say, "That is an error. Because I am not following a man. I am following the Word of God." And, boy, I could turn this into a sermon.

3. Problems with the Calvinistic Perseverance Definition

- a) **Final salvation is unbiblical**
- b) Scriptural examples of non-persevering saints
- c) Support only found in out of context verses
- d) Subtle form of works salvation
- e) Preferability of immediate death following conversion?
- f) Lessens the importance of practical sanctification
- g) Lessens the importance of the Bema Seat warnings
- h) Destroys the assurance of salvation

So, number one related to final salvation: final salvation is unbiblical, as I tried to show you. And number two, final salvation or the Perseverance of the Saints, is unbiblical, because I can show you people in the Bible that did not persevere at the end of their lives. And there is no doubt they went to heaven when they died.

I can show you that, chapter and verse, Old Testament and New Testament. So that is what this next section is about.

By the way, should you persevere? Yeah. Let's leave here on a high note. Paul did. He says this, at the end of his life. He was about to die here, because he, in 2 Timothy 4:16, says that he is already being poured out as a drink offering. He says here,

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness,..." (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

Now, the crown is not salvation. The crown is a reward above and beyond salvation.

"...which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day;..." (2 Timothy 4:8).

What day? The Bema Seat judgment of Christ.

"...and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

So let's persevere. I think you would be wise if you did. But what if you do not? Does that mean you are not a Christian? If you have ever seen a situation in the natural world where someone is not growing because of physiology issues, or bodily issues, or diet issues, or nutrition issues, or something, does that mean they are not born?

That is insanity to say something like that. So we all understand instinctively that there is birth, which is different from growth. Even in the medical world, there are obstetricians that help with the birthing process; and then there are pediatricians that help the child develop as a process normally or regularly.

And people that are in the medical field have told me that rarely do you have an obstetrician, who is a pediatrician or vice versa, because those are two different disciplines. Birth and growth in the natural world are two different things.

So your perseverance, your commitment, your service to the Lord: those are related to your growth. They have nothing to do with your birth. And this is what the MacArthurites have done by merging the two.

So Paul persevered till the end. He did not live a perfect life, but he went out on a high note. And we ought to follow that example. But just as we have Paul's positive example, the Scripture is replete with negative examples of people that were saved, but did not persevere until the end—but they were clearly saved.

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So I have an Old Testament list which I will not be able to finish today, obviously. I will just be able to introduce it. And then I have a New Testament list. These include every example I could find in the Bible of a non-persevering believer.

Examples of Old Testament Non-Persevering Saints

1. Noah (Gen. 9:20-23; Heb. 11:7)
2. Lot (Gen. 13; 19; 2 Pet. 2:7-8)
3. Moses (Num. 20:11-12; Deut. 32:5; Matt. 17:1-3; Heb. 11:23-29; Rev. 11:6)
4. Exodus' generation (Num. 13-14; Heb. 11:29)
5. Samson (Judges 13-16; Heb. 11:32)
6. Saul (1 Sam. 28; 31)
7. Solomon (1 Kgs. 11:4, 9-10)

And I am showing this to you to show you that this Perseverance of the Saints doctrine is not scriptural. It is something that is desirable, but it is not automatic. And the reason these negative examples are given is not so that you can say, "All right, pastor said I can live like the devil this week."

That is not the point. The point is, do not be like these people. But the warning does not make any sense unless the possibility of a non-persevering believer exists.

So the first one on my list here is Noah. Noah did not persevere in good works until the end of his life, because according to Genesis 9:20-23, he was drunk.

And the Calvinists would say, "Well, that means he was not saved because he did not persevere." Well, how could the man not be saved when he is in the Hall of Faith, Hebrews 11:7?

The second example I have here of a non-persevering believer is Lot. I even have a sermon entitled, "Are You a Lot Like Lot?" There was not a lot of perseverance in Lot's life. He is the one, Genesis 13:12, who pitched his tent toward Sodom.

He was infatuated, I think, with walking by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). And Lot was very interested in what was happening in this very wicked city called Sodom and Gomorrah.

Genesis 19:1 shows that Lot was popular with that crowd in Sodom and Gomorrah, because he was sitting on the city council. He was there at the city gates. And in the ancient Near East. That is where the deals went down. There is a lot in a place of prominence there in Sodom.

In Genesis 19:6, the Sodomite crowd surrounds Lot's house and demands that he releases two guests for sexual purposes. And he says, "Take my daughters instead." Does that sound like a guy who is walking out the spiritual life, offering his daughters to a Sodomite crowd?

In Genesis 19:14, Lot is told to get out of the city of Sodom because God is going to destroy it. And then he turns around and tells his in-laws and his family, "Get out of here, because God's going to destroy it."

And Genesis 19:14 says that they thought Lot was jesting. In other words, he had no credibility to speak even with his own family, because his lifestyle did not match his profession of faith.

In Genesis 19:30-38, after the whole city is destroyed, Lot is in a drunken state, just like Noah, having an incestuous relationship with his two daughters. And from those unholy unions came the Ammonites and the Moabites, who became perpetual enemies of the nation of Israel.

So there is absolutely nothing in Lot's life that I can find where he is a perseverer. Yet he was saved. Well, you say, "Well, pastor, how do you know he was saved?" Well, one of the reasons I know he was saved is Genesis 19:15, which says, "Get out of here, Lot" (paraphrase).

The angel who was dispatched from God to destroy Sodom said, "Get out of here, Lot, because I have been commissioned by God to destroy this city" (Genesis 19:22, paraphrase). And then the angel in the course of this conversation says something very interesting to Lot:

"Hurry, escape there, for I cannot do anything until you arrive there..."
(Genesis 19:22).

So, "Your presence in this city is preventing its destruction" (Genesis 19:22, paraphrase). Why would the angel say that? Because Lot, even in his messed up state, was one of God's people, because he had exercised faith alone in the Messiah.

And when you go to 2 Peter 2:7-9—(and I say, "Lord, thank you for putting these verses in the Bible, because to be completely honest with you, looking at Lot, and how he was acting, I would never think the person was saved like Abraham was saved [we have a clear declaration of that in Genesis 15:6])—I would look at Genesis 19 and say, "How could Lot be saved? He is not saved.

But Peter, commenting on the Lot story under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says, "The man was saved" (2 Peter 2:7).

Peter says,

"and if He rescued righteous Lot,..." (2 Peter 2:7).

Whoa!

"...righteous Lot..." (2 Peter 2:7).

Positionally righteous, not practically.

"and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds)," (2 Peter 2:7-8).

Maybe that is the evidence. Because Lot really was not happy with his life, but it sure did not look like it on the outside. I hope you understand something. An out-of-fellowship Christian can out-sin an unbeliever any day of the week.

Any day of the week you can go right back to the flesh. I could go right back to the flesh. And my life can look just as bad as an unsaved person. You say, "Well, how do you know that?"

Because Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5:1 concerning incest in the Corinthian church, he says to the believers there, "The unbelievers do not even act this way" (paraphrase). And that is who Lot was.

2 Peter 2:9 says,

"then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment" (2 Peter 2:9).

And I say, "Lord, thank you for these verses (2 Peter 2:7-9), because it says 'righteous' three times, and it says 'godly ones.'" And I would not know the guy [Lot] was even saved at all, but he was saved.

The Bible says he was saved, even though you would not be able to tell from his conduct. So how does that fit with the doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints? It does not. See that? And I will keep showing you several examples of this kind of thing.