

Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible 034

Acts 17:26-27

July 6, 2025

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Find Matthew 23:37-39. Well, for those of you coming in, if this is your first exposure to the Sunday School class, I apologize in advance for that, because you just came right into a pretty heavy study on Calvinism, the doctrines of Neo-Calvinism and 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

Calvinism is known by the TULIP acronym: Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, Perseverance of the Saints.

V. Running TULIP Through the Grid of Scripture

- A. Total Depravity
- B. Unconditional Election
- C. Limited Atonement
- D. **Irrresistible Grace**
- E. Perseverance of the Saints

So we are sort of at a part of the study where we are just screening those, and their understanding of those through the Word of God, which is what you do with any anything you hear and see if these things are actually biblical. And we are coming to the conclusion that a lot of it is more of a philosophy read into the Bible rather than a theology derived from the Bible.

So we are right in the middle of 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?

"'I' stands for 'Irresistible Grace.' Faith is something 'God irresistibly bestowed upon the elect without their having believed anything...By such reasoning, man...can't even hear the gospel—much less respond to the pleadings of Christ.'"¹

So this kind of backs up to the "T" in the Calvinistic acronym: Total Depravity. If you ask me if I believe in total depravity, absolutely I do. But not the way Calvinists are explaining it. To them Total Depravity means that you are like a rock. You are unable to respond. Total Depravity equals inability.

So how does anybody get saved in the Calvinistic system? God picks people ahead of time who are going to be saved. And if you are fortunate enough to be in that group, then God irresistibly draws you to Himself. Resistance is futile.

So God does something on the front end for the elect. A lot of Calvinists say that God gives people the gift of faith. So it is really not their faith: it is God's faith. That is how anybody can believe. How else can a rock believe?

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

And then Calvinists also teach the idea that regeneration, being born again, precedes faith. According to Calvinists, being born again is not the consequence of believing the way we teach it: you believe, then you are born again. But according to Calvinists, faith is the result of being born again. You are born again first so you can believe.

So Calvinists take the natural order in the Bible and they invert it. So their three big arguments are (1) faith is a gift (we dealt with that extensively, and showed it to be not true); (2) regeneration precedes faith (we dealt with that extensively, and showed it to be not true); and then (3) their last argument in this mindset: lost man cannot 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)**

So Calvinists will quote over and over again Romans 3:11. I mean, if you ever deal with a Calvinist online, on social media, as I have had the privilege of doing (in fact, it is such a privilege that I do not want to do it anymore, because it is like everybody just talks past each other), at some point they are going to bring up Romans 3:11.

Romans 3:11 says,

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

The problem is that there is another passage given by the same author, the apostle Paul, who wrote Romans and also gave his address on Mars Hill. Same exact guy. And on Mars Hill Paul seems to contradict what he said in Romans 3:11.

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..." (Acts 17:26).

Boy, that sounds like borders to me. That is a hint of what is coming.

"...the boundaries of their habitation, 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 17:26-27).

So Acts 17:26-27 says that you can seek God as an unsaved person. Romans 3:11 says that you cannot seek God. So which is it?

So, whenever you develop a theology, you try to look at not just a verse. This is what people do constantly. They isolate a verse and they cherry pick it, and they use it to support whatever it is they are promoting. And that is really not the way to handle the Bible.

What we are into here at Sugar Land Bible Church is the full counsel of God's Word: all sixty-six books. So what do all sixty-six books say on a particular topic? That is what you want to come down on the side of.

So what do all sixty-six books say about man seeking God? It appears that we have verses that contradict each other. Well, last time we started a three-point rebuttal to this idea that lost man cannot seek God.

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)

I showed you last time that yes, man in his natural state, given that his nature that is hostile to God, typically does not wake up in the morning and say, "Boy, I am going to find Jesus today." That is not what the natural man does.

And that is what Romans 3:11 is saying. Man, if left to his own devices, is not a God seeker. However, God has built into his universe certain graces, giving lost man enough data, or information, whereby he will seek God if he wants God.

Now at that point, the lost man has a choice. He can either take what God has given and hold it down in unrighteousness, which is more of a statement of will than inability. That is Romans 1 (Romans 1:18-32).

Or you have people showing up in the Bible like the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8), Cornelius the Gentile (Acts 10-11), who are obviously seeking God. So why is it that the Ethiopian eunuch and Cornelius were seeking God? Because they were responding to the graces that God has built into His world. So Romans 3:11 is a statement about what we are like without these graces.

Acts 17:26-27 is what we are like and what we have the ability to do with these graces built into God's universe. So we went through these last time. What are these graces?

God's Grace to the Unsaved

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

There is the Spirit's conviction, which is happening all over the world as we speak. That is John 16:7-11. There is also the perpetual proclamation of God's Word, which never returns void, Isaiah 55:10-11.

And then there is the hearing of the gospel itself, which Paul the Apostle describes as the power of God unto salvation, Romans 1:16. When Paul uses the word "power," that is an English translation from the word "dynamis" [δύναμις] from where we get the word "dynamite" or "dynamic."

So when the lost man hears that power of the gospel, he has the ability to hear it and believe it, because the gospel itself is powerful. In fact, there is a story of a guy doing a microphone test getting ready to do a crusade, an evangelistic type meeting. And so, you know, as is common, they wanted him to do a microphone test ahead of time.

So it was kind of like my experience in Germany. Boy, when those people in Germany do a microphone test, I mean, it goes on for like twenty-five minutes. Here in America, we do it for like thirty seconds. But you have to keep talking into the microphone over and over again because they want to get it exactly right.

And so the preacher, whose voice was being tested for the microphone, kept quoting John 1:29: "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" He just kept quoting it. "All right. Sounds good. Can you say something? Can you say that again?" And he repeated it and he repeated it and he repeated it.

Well, it just so happens that one of the staff people kept hearing that over and over again, and got saved as a result. That is the power of the gospel. It is something that has a power independent of the speaker. See that?

I felt really bad one time. I was kind of maligning somebody on TV, a TV preacher, and the person I was maligning this TV preacher to said, "Well, it is from that TV preacher that you are maligning that I actually heard the gospel and got saved." So even a broken clock is right two times a day, right?

And it just so happens that this TV preacher, whose doctrine is off in so many areas, set it correctly at that given point, just as this guy was watching this TV preacher on TV and got saved as a result. So that is the power of the gospel.

I mean, the devil himself could give the gospel, and if he gives it correctly—and we know that Satan mixes truth and lies, so he is capable of some truth—if the devil gives the gospel correctly, people could get saved, because the power of the gospel is not in the speaker: it is in the gospel itself, because that is what God said about it. It is "dynamis" [δύναμις], the dynamic power of God.

So that is going on constantly amongst unsaved people, particularly here in the United States where you have media, Christian media, and a Christian influence. And another God-given grace is that creation itself reveals God. It is sort of obvious that we did not get here by accident, right?

I mean, the atheist position I have never felt was very academically defensible, because how in the world do you explain the design of this world that we are in without a designer? It is impossible. That is like saying a hurricane went through a junkyard and assembled a Boeing 747. I mean, it is just ridiculous.

If you go around saying stuff like that, they will probably put you in the funny farm somewhere. And yet, here we are in this world that is so intricately designed and people go around saying there is no designer.

No two of our fingerprints are the same of the eight billion people or so on planet Earth. All of the snowflakes that have fallen in the history of the world, when you look at them under a microscope, no two are identical. And here we are, moving at great velocity in our heliocentric solar system around the sun, and we are not so close to the sun that we burn up, and we are not so far away from the sun that we freeze to death.

The Earth orbits the sun at exactly the right distance to sustain life. Some have called this the privileged planet because there is no planet that exists like ours, completely capable of sustaining human life. So did all of that just happen accidentally? I mean, that is silly to say that. There is an obvious designer.

So the lost man has sermons being preached at him all the time, whether he ever opens his Bible or not. God is preaching sermons to him about his existence and his nature, just by his looking at creation.

And then the lost man also has something called conscience. We will bring that up in our sermon today. Conscience is the barometer that God puts in the hearts of all people. All people have a basic standard of right and wrong, whether they know Jesus or not, whether they go to church or not, whether they read the Bible or not.

According to Romans 2:14-15, God has put His laws into our hearts, and we either obey and conscience excuses, or we disobey and conscience accuses. That is Romans 2:14-15. And if you do not think this is true, just take this out for a test drive with your kids or your grandkids.

Tell kid A, "If you take the trash out, I will take you to Dairy Queen." And tell kid B, "If you take the trash out, I will take you to Disney World." What is kid A going to say? "That's not fair!" It is interesting to look at little kids that have an instinctive awareness of fairness.

Who taught them that life is supposed to be fair? There is something—there is an internal barometer in them so that they could recognize injustice and they could recognize inequity. It does not have to be taught at all. That is what conscience is.

So these are the things that the lost person has. So that is why if a lost person is responding to these sources of light, he or she can become a God seeker, like the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8), or like Cornelius (Acts 10-11).

And if a person is responding to this light, you know what God does, because He desires none to perish (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). He sends them more specific information they need so as to be saved. So that is why you have Philip showing up and helping the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8. And that is why you have Peter showing up and helping Cornelius in Acts 10.

So when people just quote Romans 3:11 and they say, "No one seeks God," they do not give you any of this other side of the story. So lost man cannot seek God, Romans 3:11, is a statement about man without these graces. But Acts 17:26-27 is a statement about lost man with these built-in graces.

So number two in our list here of why the lost man can seek God is that we know that the lost man can seek God, because if that were not true, why in the world does the

Bible hold them accountable for their unbelief? See that? I mean, the Bible is pretty clear on this. If you are in unbelief, then it is your fault.

I will show you the verses. You cannot blame it on anybody else but yourself. It is not an inability issue; it is an unwillingness issue. And the Bible would not hold people accountable for their own unbelief, if they do not have the ability to believe. That would not be fair.

It is like telling a rock to believe, and then getting mad at the rock because the rock does not believe, when the poor rock cannot believe anyway. That would be a gross unfairness by God, to look at human beings that way.

So that is why I had you open up to Matthew 23:37-39. (You might want to keep your finger in John's Gospel, because I will show you a few more verses.) Matthew 23:37-39 is Jesus speaking to first-century Israel. He says,

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings,..." (Matthew 23:37).

This is what Jesus wanted to do with Israel in His First Coming. But there was a problem—

"...and you were unwilling" (Matthew 23:37).

Jesus does not say "unable." He uses the expression "unwilling" (Matthew 23:37). "You did not come to Me naturally because you did not want Me." So then Jesus starts giving the consequences.

"Behold your house..." (Matthew 23:38).

That is their temple. Notice that He calls it "your house" (Matthew 23:38). That is a change. Because he used to say things like this in the Gospels: "My Father's house will be a house of prayer" (paraphrase, Isaiah 56:7; Matthew 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46).

He always referred to the temple as His house, or His father's house. Now he says, "It is your house. And the reason that it is your house is that you kicked Me out."

"Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until..." (Matthew 23:38-39).

So Israel's blinding is not forever. A better way of saying it is that her unbelief is not forever.

"...until you say, "BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!" (Matthew 23:39).

That is a citation from Psalm 118:26, which is a messianic psalm. And what Jesus is saying in Matthew 23:37-39 is, "I am not coming for this nation until this nation acknowledges Me as the Messiah. This group will not do it, but there is a future group that will."

But in the process of all of this, He says, "The reason you will not have Me is not that you are unable to have Me. You do not want Me. So you have taken all of the light that I have given"—and He gave, boy, talk about a group of people that had a lot of light.

In fact, in Matthew 11, Jesus says, "It is going to be better off for Sodom and Gomorrah on the Day of Judgment than for you, because you had a lot of light that you rejected" (paraphrase, Matthew 11:20-24). To whom much is given, much is required (Luke 12:48).

I mean, they had fulfilled prophecy. They had miracles. They had the Sermon on the Mount. They had all this stuff. And they took it and they suppressed it. So Jesus says that it is not an inability issue. It is an unwillingness issue. And that is why He held them accountable, something that He could not do and would not say if they were like rocks and were unable to respond.

Go over, could you, to John 3:18. John's Gospel is filled with this kind of teaching. John 3:18, Jesus speaking—

"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).

So there Jesus uses the word "believe" three times, and He basically says, "The reason you are in unbelief is that you want to be in unbelief." So it is not an inability issue, it is an unwillingness issue.

Notice one chapter to the right: John 4:48. This is right before one of Jesus' great miracles. It says in John 4:48,

"So Jesus said to him, 'Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe'" (John 4:48).

So he says there, *"...you...will not believe"* (John 4:48). "The problem is not Me. The problem is you. Unless I fit your box of what a Messiah should be, you will not accept Me," which Jesus never did. Jesus never fit into someone else's box.

And by the way, if you put God in a box, He is coming out, because He is the God of the universe. And the Jews thought that a Messiah should do this, this, and this. And the Messiah showed up and did not do what they thought.

So basically Jesus is saying, "Unless you can fit me in your box, you will not believe. So the problem is not Me. The problem is you. The problem is not an inability. The problem is not a lack of data. The problem is not a lack of information. The problem is unwillingness."

Notice John 5:39-40. Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees.

"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life" (John 5:39-40).

"The reason that you [Pharisees] are in unbelief is that you have willed Me out of existence." So there is nothing here about inability. So when you look at everything, lost man is held accountable for not believing. The Bible would never hold lost man accountable for not believing unless they had an ability to believe.

And this is something that Calvinism denies. Calvinists say that people have no ability to believe. They say that is why God imparts the gift of faith to some, if you happen to be part of that small fraction of the human race that is called the elect.

The third rebuttal to this idea that lost man cannot seek God is that man in his lost state, particularly when he is convicted by the Holy Spirit, which is happening all over the world, can indeed believe.

So notice (I have it on the screen here) John 1:12.

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12).

So basically what John is saying there is that light has come into the world, and now it is incumbent upon lost man to receive and believe. Nothing here about "You cannot believe on your own."

Also, John 20:30-31 is a very helpful passage. We have taught John's Gospel at this church. (Did you guys know that we were in John's Gospel longer than Christ's earthly ministry?) And one of the reasons I wanted to teach John when I came to this church was that it just fixes our mindset on what is necessary to be saved.

John says ninety-nine times, "Here is what you need to do to be saved." And that is why the word "believe" ("pisteuo" [πιστεύω]) is found ninety-nine times in John's Gospel.

John's Gospel is written to the unsaved. To my knowledge, it is the only biblical book that I can think of that is evangelistic—that has, as its target audience, people that do not know Jesus.

So when you get that question—and you are going to get it at some point—from a coworker, or a family member, "You know, I see you are a very serious Christian. You know, I would like to investigate the claims of Christianity. What book of the Bible should I start with?" And you do not send them to Leviticus at that point, right? You send them to John, because John tells you why he wrote.

John recorded seven miracles of Christ. Actually, there are nine because the first one is the water to wine at Cana of Galilee; the seventh is the resuscitation of Lazarus from the dead. So within those two miracles there are five others. But then the eighth sign is Christ's bodily resurrection.

And then John says, "Here is a bonus episode, chapter 21. Here is a ninth sign." And that is the miraculous catch of the [153] fish in John 21(:1-11). So you are reading all this stuff and you are seeing the signs of Jesus, all these miracles.

And after you are done, you are not supposed to just say, "Great teaching," and put it away. Because John says, "When you see these things, you need to conclude that Jesus is the Son of God, the Christ" (John 20:30-31, paraphrase).

Christ is the Messiah. "Christ" is not Jesus' last name, right? We do not refer to Jesus as "Mr. Christ." Joseph and Mary were not Joseph Christ and Mary Christ. The Christ is the Messiah, the Mashiach, the Anointed One, the one that all of Hebrew Bible points to.

So you are to conclude, after watching these nine signs in the Book of John, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:30-31). And then you do not just put down your Bible. There is another step that has to be taken. After all of this learning you are supposed to believe: trust in Jesus for your eternity.

And when you trust in Him, there is a promise that He makes to you. He is going to give you life. So first you believe. Then Jesus gives you life. Life is regeneration. So very clearly in John 20:30-31, regeneration does not come before believing. If you just look at the order in the sentence (John 20:30-31), it comes after believing.

So John 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..."
(John 20:30-31).*

So John, who was an eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus, says, "You know, I could have told you a ton of stuff Jesus did" (John 20:30), and I am glad he did not. In this sense, John's Gospel would read like the IRS tax code. There would be no end to it.

In fact, John says at the end of the book, "If I told you everything He did, the world itself could not contain the books written therein" (John 21:25). John says, "But I am just going to focus on seven plus two: nine signs; because they are sufficient in accomplishing my literary purpose, which is evangelism."

"but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God;..." (John 20:31).

You are not dealing with an ordinary person here. This is not a David Copperfield act that is going on here with Jesus. And then do not just leave it there. If you just leave it there, you have missed the point of the Book of John. John says,

"and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31).

So, boy, you want to evangelize? You want to create a conversation with people about Jesus? Say, "Hey, why don't you read through John's Gospel this week and we will come back and talk?" That'll give you something to talk about. Because John is writing for a evangelistic soteriology purpose.

Is John writing for a Christological purpose? Yes, he is showing who Jesus is. But that is not all there is to it. This is just not a biography there. Beyond the Christological purpose is the sole purpose of salvation.

Notice, 1 Corinthians 1:21. I am just giving you more examples that it is very clear that lost people can believe. In 1 Corinthians 1:21 Paul says,

"For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21).

In the eyes of the natural man, what we teach here week after week after week is just complete foolishness, because it does not accommodate itself to the world system, which is totally based on merit. You get ahead when you do the job. You get paid when you do the job, you get the good grades when you study.

I mean, everybody knows that. That is how the world works. And here the gospel comes along and wants to give you something that you cannot earn, that is completely and totally unmerited. And that point in and of itself causes people to just stumble right over the gospel (1 Corinthians 1:21-25).

But for those of us that are foolish enough to believe it, it is the power of God unto salvation to those who believe (Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:23-25). First Corinthians 1:21 does not say that they cannot believe. It says that they have the ability to believe.

It is just that a lot of people do not want to believe that. Because if you believe that, then you do not get any credit. I cannot strut through heaven proud as a peacock, "Look at me. Look at me. Look at all my works."

And so a lot of people hear the simplicity of the gospel, and because pride is so strong that they want credit for their own works, they cannot believe something that is unmerited. It just is outside their ability to appreciate.

I mean, I hear this all the time: "It cannot be that easy." My friend Dennis says, "That is how you always recognize a false gospel. Where does it put the spotlight? You hear someone preach the gospel—is the spotlight on Jesus or is the spotlight on man's performance?"

I am very sad to say that there are a lot of alleged proclaimers of the gospel that are not preaching the gospel at all, because they put the whole spotlight on man. "This is what you have to do." "You have to commit. Obey. Persevere. Serve."

We call it "COPS," right? Like a cop looking at your behavior. "C" stands for "commitment." "O" stands for "obedience." "P" stands for "perseverance." "S" stands for "service." Not that those things are wrong, and not that God will not encourage you into those things after you are His child.

But we are not dealing with that here. We are dealing with how to become a child of God. And when you hear someone preaching the gospel and it is all COPS, and it is like five percent what Jesus did for you, that is a false gospel. That is a gospel of works.

I mean, Paul wrote the whole Book of Galatians to condemn that very practice in that very mentality. He calls it "anathema" [ἀνάθεμα] ("accursed"; Galatians 1:8-9).

So, a true gospel is always one that puts the focus on Jesus, and man simply responds by receiving a gift by faith to what Jesus did. It is not all this other stuff you have got to do to get saved.

Lewis Sperry Chafer says,

"...because upwards of 150 passages of Scripture condition salvation upon believing only (cf. John 3:16; Acts 16:31)."²

How in the world could 150 passages of Scripture say that you are justified before God through faith alone, if man does not have the ability to believe? That makes no sense.

² Lewis Sperry Chafer, vol. 7, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993), 265-66.

So that takes us to the end of these Calvinistic arguments for Irresistible Grace. (1) Is faith a gift? No. It is your faith, not God's faith. He is not going to believe for you. Faith is the only thing that we have that God looks at as non-meritorious. That is Romans 4:4-5. Everything else we do is meritorious.

You know, you can be like Cain and bring a bloodless sacrifice if you want. You can be like Adam and Eve and clothe yourself in your own fig leaves. Whatever it is you are doing, God is not going to accept it. The only thing that He is going to accept is your faith to be justified before Him.

Because faith is the only thing that we have that in the mind of God is non-meritorious. That is why the whole man's relationship with God is set up on the basis of faith. That is why Hebrews 11:6 says things like this: "without faith, it is impossible to please God" (paraphrase).

"Abraham believed God and it was credited to him for righteousness" (paraphrase, Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3, 9, 22; Galatians 3:6; James 2:23). The story of the Bible is not man climbing up to God. Now, the world of religion believes that. But that is not the Bible.

The Bible never teaches that man climbs up to God. The story of the Bible is God reaching down to man, ultimately in the person of Jesus Christ; and man responding to that light by receiving a free gift by faith. That is the Bible. If you are in an environment where you are always being encouraged to push your flesh more to get right with God, you are not in a gospel-teaching environment.

So the Calvinists' arguments are (1) faith is a gift—that is not right. Their arguments are (2) regeneration precedes faith—that is not right. And their arguments are (3) lost man needs the first two because he cannot seek God. I have tried to explain why that is not right either.

So we have looked at the Calvinistic definition of Irresistible Grace, and the Calvinistic arguments for Irresistible Grace. Let's move on here to this one.

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?

The Calvinists say that when God bestows His grace, you cannot resist it. I can show you a ton of examples in the Bible where grace goes out to people, and people, through their own free will, turn it down. It happens all the time. It is happening all the time in our world right now.

And you say, "Well, do you have any biblical examples of that?" "I am glad you asked. Thank you." The first one is Genesis 6:3. And you know this. In these verses, everybody wants to talk about the Nephilim and all that. We could talk about that if you want, but I am just trying to use Genesis 6:3 to show you the grace of God going out pre-flood.

Genesis 6:3 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 that is a long time to manifest God's grace in the midst of these people. The whole earth was filled with violence, as the rest of Genesis 6 says. And yet for 120 years, God allowed them to do what they wanted to do. But His grace was striving with them. He was working with them, trying to bring them to their senses, I believe, ultimately trying to bring them to salvation.

And he did that for 120 years. That is a long time. That is more than the length of America times two. That is a long time to strive with people. And God attached the flood to Methuselah, the oldest living man. The name "Methuselah" in Hebrew means, "When he dies, it will come."

Meaning, "When this guy dies, the flood is going to hit." That is what Methuselah's name means. Could you imagine living with a guy like that in the neighborhood? Every time he gets a cold or something, everybody gets nervous. And we saw him, by the way, at the

Ark Encounter. There was an Ark exhibit of Methuselah, telling people to get right with God. It was wonderful.

So Methuselah lived to the ripe old age of 969. He is the oldest living man in the Bible. He lived even longer than Adam, who lived 930 years. So God is so merciful that he attached the date of judgment to the oldest living man. That is how much God loves people and wants to see them get right with Him.

And during that time period, God dispatched His Spirit. The Spirit was striving with people like the Spirit is doing now through conviction that is happening in the whole world—the same kind of thing. So how many people were on the earth at this time?

Henry Morris, the creation scientist, who has run all the numbers (because people were living much longer and they were having a lot more kids), says, if you look at the numbers, the total could have been around seven billion people.³

I noticed that at the Ark Encounter Ken Ham's group said it was nineteen million, so I am not sure mathematically the difference. But my point is that there are a lot of people, right? Whether it is seven billion or nineteen billion. So here (Genesis 6:3) is God's Spirit striving with billions of people for 120 years.

Now, how many people who experienced that grace got converted? The Bible gives you the number: eight. And that was just the family on the ark. You will find that number in 1 Peter 3:20. It says that there were eight souls on the ark. You will also find it in 1 Peter 2:4-5 when it talks about Noah and seven others.

So of seven billion people, you have eight people on the ark after 120 years of striving. I mean, how in the world do you explain that? And by the way, if you think you are discouraged in your ministry, think about Noah. Because the Bible says he was a preacher of righteousness.

So Noah was preaching, I would think for 120 years, building this ark, being completely laughed at because the people did not even know what rain was. They had no concept of rain. Genesis 2:5-6 says that the water came up from the ground and watered Eden.

So here is this guy building this giant ark in his driveway, preaching about a coming deluge in a world that did not even understand what rain was. And he was doing this for 120 years. And what does he have to show for 120 years of work? Eight converts. And those are all family—seven, not including himself.

So there were Noah and Mrs. Noah in the ark; Noah's three sons, Ham, Shem, and Japheth in the ark; and their respective wives. Eight total out of billions of people on the earth, with God's Spirit striving with man.

³ Dr. Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*, 144.

And you are going to tell me that when God's grace goes out, it is irresistible. These people, this pre-flood generation, completely and totally resisted the grace of God.

Notice Proverbs 1:24-25.

*"Because I called and you refused,
I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention;
And you neglected all my counsel
And did not want my reproof;" (Proverbs 1:24-25).*

God calls. People refuse. God stretches out His hand. People do not pay attention. God counsels, and they do not want it. So how do you describe calling, stretching, and counsel in Proverbs 1:24-25? That is God's grace to people. And what these people in the Book of Proverbs are doing is they are rejecting it. So God's grace is resistible. Proverbs 29:1 says,

*"A man who hardens his neck after much reproof
Will suddenly be broken beyond remedy" (Proverbs 29:1).*

So it is possible for a person to experience much reproof. But it is also possible for people to harden their hearts to that reproof. And when you do that, you are careening for judgment. There is no inability here. It is just that people just do not want God for whatever reason.

Matthew 23:37, which we already read earlier, says,

"...I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings,..." (Matthew 23:37).

Can you think of a more beautiful statement of God's grace than that? I cannot. I mean, that is just beautiful imagery.

"...and you were unwilling" (Matthew 23:37).

"The problem," Jesus says, "is not Me. The problem is you."

In John 12:32, Jesus says,

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

That is not just "y'all." That is "all y'all."

"...I...will draw all men to Myself" (John 12:32).

So that, the drawing process, is happening because He has been lifted up. So everybody gets saved, right? No, there are a ton of people that do not get saved. It is those that are going to show up at the Great White Throne Judgment.

Scripture's Four Judgments				
NAME	SHEEP AND GOAT	JUDGMENT OF THE JEWS	BEMA SEAT	GREAT WHITE THRONE
SCRIPTURE	Matt 25:31-46	Ezek 20:33-44	1 Cor 3:10-15	Rev 20:11-15
PLACE	Earth, Jerusalem	Earth, wilderness	Heaven	Earth
AUDIENCE	Gentile Tribulation survivors	Jewish Tribulation survivors	Church Age believers	All unsaved
WHEN	After Tribulation	After Tribulation	After rapture	After Millennium
PURPOSE	Saved Gentiles enter kingdom	Saved Jews enter kingdom	Reward believers	Degree of punishment in hell
EVALUATION	Treatment of Christ's brethren	Passing under shepherd's rod	Works taken through fire	Not in the book; judged by books

These are the four judgments in the Bible. The last one on the right is the Great White Throne Judgment for unbelievers. That one is going to occur after the Millennial Kingdom has run its course, before we enter the new heavens and new earth.

And you read those verses and it is just horrible. To me it is just senseless and pointless why anybody would ever have to show up at that judgment when God has done what He has done for the human race. And yet, here are a ton of people showing up at that judgment to receive their sentence.

Revelation 20:11-15 says,

"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:11-15).

My understanding of the Book of Life is that it is a record of everyone who has trusted in Christ for salvation. So if you show up at this judgment, you have never trusted Christ for salvation. And when Jesus and God the Father show you that, because your name is not in the book, you are judged by the books.

Well, what is in the books Revelation 20 does not say. I would think that it is a record of sins. Every time we violate God's law. And I will tell you this much from personal experience, the bad outweighs the good. I do not want that as part of my judgment.

And that is why these people are now escorted into the lake of fire. They fell short of the divine standard of God. The works in the books determined their degree of punishment in the lake of fire. And so there are obviously a lot of people that experience this.

That is why Jesus says, "Broad is the road to destruction, and many there are that go that way. Narrow is the road that leads to life, and fewer those that find it" (Matthew 7:13-14, paraphrase). What is the unsaved world? It is like a five-lane highway. What are the saved? They are that little tiny access road on the side.

And all of this, in spite of the fact that Jesus is drawing people. We just read the verses

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

It is a consistent drawing of people. And yet people, in great volume, if I am reading my Bible right, show up at the Great White Throne Judgment, meaning that they never received Christ as Savior by faith. So what happened to these people? They made decisions to resist God's grace. So God's grace can be resisted.

So if God's grace can be resisted, you have to just take the Calvinistic doctrine of Irresistible Grace and throw it out. Because we are not Arminians or Calvinists here. We are biblicists. And the Bible says that people have the ability not just to believe, but to resist the grace of God.

Oh, wow. Look at this one. Acts 7:51. This is Stephen, the first martyr of the Church Age. We studied this on Wednesday night a few quarters back. This is how Stephen wraps up his sermon. I mean, no wonder they wanted him dead. He says—and what if I wrapped up a sermon like this?—

"You men who are stiff necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears..." (Acts 7:51).

Wow, that is quite a closer. And then he says,

"You...are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did" (Acts 7:51).

Stephen says, "The whole problem here is that you are resisting the Holy Spirit." He is not saying, "You do not have an ability to believe the Holy Spirit." He is not saying, "The Holy Spirit is not doing things to draw you to Himself." What he is saying is, "You do not

want it, and you resist it, and you push it down and you turn it down, and you suppress it" (Acts 7:51, paraphrase).

So how can grace be irresistible, when Steven says to his first-century group, "You...are always resisting the Holy Spirit;..." (Acts 7:51)? The Holy Spirit can be resisted.

In Calvinism, there is such an emphasis on God's sovereignty that they make it sound like anybody that God moves towards in grace has to receive it. And that is not how God works. Could God do that? Yes, He could, but He does not. Why not? Because we are made in His image.

And being an image bearer of God, you have something that is very, very powerful. It might even be the most powerful thing you possess, which is choice, and a will. And if you make a choice one direction or the other, you know what God does. He honors the choice, because He builds you to have a choice.

Because you are not a goldfish or a monkey or a baboon or whatever. You are different. You are an image bearer, which includes volition. You know, sometimes I wish some of the choices I have made—I have made some good ones, but I have also made some bad ones—I sometimes wish that I did not have the choice.

But for God to deny me choice, to deprive me of choice, would be for Him to disrespect how He has manufactured me as an image bearer. So God's grace is not something that just takes people hostage. God is an absolute gentleman. If you do not want God, He leaves the room. Eventually He gives people over to what they want to do.

There are some scary words in the Bible, but to me some of the scariest are there at the end of Romans 1 where Paul says, "*God gave them over*" (Romans 1:21, 26). He gives you permission finally to do what you want to do, and that never ends well.

One more verse showing us that God's grace can be resisted. Notice Hebrews 12:25. This is speaking of that Kadesh Barnea generation that came out of Egypt, that we are studying in the Book of Exodus. In the Book of Numbers, they got right up to the borders of the Promised Land. They are in the south, at a border named Kadesh Barnea.

And the very generation that saw the hand of God through the Exodus, the ten plagues, the Ten Commandments, and the sustaining in the wilderness, could not trust God to conquer some giants. And God was very displeased with that generation because of their unbelief.

The Book of Hebrews is describing that, and the author is saying, do not be like them. So it says in Hebrews 12:25,

"See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking...." (Hebrews 12:25).

Which means we have the ability to refuse Him who is speaking, right?

"...For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven" (Hebrews 12:25).

So there is a generation that missed God's best because they rejected His grace. He, the author of Hebrews, is saying, "Do not be like them. You have that same power and ability" (Hebrews 12:25).

So you put all these verses together—and there are many more we could look at—we see very clearly that man can resist God's grace. When we are together next time, next Sunday, we will look at 4: Man can resist God by disbelieving.

And then we are going to spend a lot of time right here on John 6:44, because the Calvinists use that over and over again to say that God irresistibly drags people to Himself. So that is one of their favorite verses. And so we will look at that next time.