

## Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible 036

Matthew 24:13

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Let's open our Bibles this morning to John 5:24. We are continuing our teaching of Calvinism, "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

There is where we are in our outline of the material, Roman numeral V: TULIP Through the Grid of Scripture.

### V. Running TULIP Through the Grid of Scripture

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

Calvinists teach that in our totally depraved state we are unable to respond to God at all. We saw that the Calvinistic teaching is an overstatement. Calvinists teach that the only people that, therefore, could respond to God are those that are elected.

So a small fraction of the world is elected unto salvation. The majority of people are left in their rock state, and that is a doctrine called double predestination. Some chosen to heaven; some chosen to hell. We talked about that. That does not really stack up biblically.

And since only the elect get saved, Christ did not die for everybody. That is the "L," Limited Atonement. We showed that Limited Atonement is not true. And since people are rocks, how do they get saved at all? Well, they are irresistibly drawn to the cross, through God either giving them the gift of faith, or regenerating them so that they can believe.

We worked our way through all of that, and we saw that those doctrines are not biblical either. So now we are on the "P," the Perseverance of the Saints. How do you know you are one of the elect in Calvinism?

Well, the answer is that you cannot know. You can hope a certain way, but you really do not know unless you get to the end of your life, and you are one of those saints that perseveres in doctrine and good works, which are very subjective.

I mean, how do you know that you have crossed the finish line? I mean, if that is true of you on your dying breath, then you could just go, "Phew! I guess I am one of the elect." Because you really do not know till you reach the end of your life. Because the elect will always endure.

So there is, as I will be showing you, no assurance of salvation in this teaching. And that is called Perseverance of the Saints. And that is where we are now in our study, and that is what we are critiquing biblically.

#### **E. Perseverance of the Saints**

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

So as we look at the Perseverance of the Saints, we have three things. (1) The Calvinistic definition, which I already gave a second ago; (2) some examples of where they actually teach this; and then I will be giving you (3) a lot of problems with it.

And then once we finish that, which we will not do today, that will be the end of our study on Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible. So, Perseverance of the Saints. What are we talking about here? Well, the first thing to understand is that we are not talking about eternal security.

If all Calvinists meant by Perseverance of the Saints is the doctrine of eternal security, I would be aligned with them. And in fact, that is one of the things—my confusion on this—that kept me in Calvinism for a long time.

I thought, "Well, I believe in eternal security. Once saved, always saved. So I am certainly not an Arminian, who teaches that you can lose your salvation. So I must be a Calvinist, right? Because if you are a Calvinist, you cannot be an Arminian. And if you are an Arminian, you cannot be a Calvinist."

That is how my brain worked. It is like saying—and I cannot even use this illustration anymore because of the trans-sexual movement, but roll back about ten years in your mind—"If you are not a man, you must be a woman, right?" (You cannot even use that expression anymore.) "If you are not a woman, you must be a man."

I mean, that is how I was looking at Calvinism for years and years. And it was people like Loraine Boettner, very Calvinistic, who wrote the book, "The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination," that helped confuse me on this. Boettner writes,

"It must be evident that there are just two theories which can be maintained by evangelical Christians upon this important subject; that all men who have made any study of it,"<sup>1</sup>

So, I mean, if you do not believe this, according to Boettner, you have not studied the issue.

"...and who have reached any settled conclusions regarding it, must be either Calvinists or Arminians. There is no other position which a 'Christian' can take."<sup>2</sup>

So I would say to myself, "I am certainly not Arminian, so I must be a Calvinist, because I believe in eternal security." And in the process I really did not understand what they meant by Perseverance of the Saints.

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<sup>1</sup> Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1932), 333.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Perseverance of the Saints is not the same thing as eternal security. Eternal security teaches that "once saved, always saved." Perseverance of the Saints teaches that you do not know if you are one of the elect. You do not know if you possess eternal security.

I mean, if you were one of the elect, you would have eternal security. But until your faith perseveres and dies kind of in an upward state, you do not know if you are one of the elect possessing eternal security.

Does that make any sense? So this has nothing to do with eternal security. This has to do with the notion that you can actually believe you are one of the elect, possessing eternal security, because nobody knows if they are going to make it across the finish line.

Because if you are one of the elect and God infused to you the gift of faith so that you could believe because you cannot believe any other way, because you are a rock. How do you know if your faith is from you or from God? How do you know if it is an authentic faith, as they call it, or a spurious faith?

Well, it always must persevere till the end. Well, how do you know you are going to persevere till the end? Well, you do not know until your dying breath, right? So that is why you can believe in eternal security, and understand it as something very different than the Perseverance of the Saints.

So here are some writers who say that it should be obvious that the Calvinist doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints is not one and the same as "once saved, always saved."<sup>3</sup> So here at Sugar Land Bible Church, we reject Perseverance of the Saints because, as I will show you, people can backslide very easily.

We reject Perseverance of the Saints, but we embrace eternal security. So just because you are an advocate of eternal security, that does not make you a Calvinist. What I believe is not in the Perseverance of the Saints. I believe in the preservation of the saints. And what that means is that God preserves you till the end.

Now, that puts the onus on who? On God. It takes the onus off who? Off me. And so if you want to talk about preservation of the saints, which is a synonym for eternal security, I am on board with that. But I am not on board with Perseverance of the Saints.

Here is a good text in which Peter describes properly the preservation of the saints.

*"to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you," (1 Peter 1:4).*

1 Peter 1:4 is describing how we are reaching, in the next life, an undefiled inheritance. Well, how do I know I am going to get there? Well, because God has made me a

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<sup>3</sup> Kenneth G. Talbot and W. Gary Crampton, *Calvinism, Hyper-Calvinism and Arminianism* (Edmonton, AB: Still Waters Revival Books, 1990), 52.

promise that I am going to get there. That is how I know. And it has nothing to do with my up days or down days.

It has nothing to do with whether I die in a victorious state or not, because the whole onus is on God's shoulders, not mine. And do not get me wrong. You know that you want to die in a victorious state that has a bearing on rewards at the Bema Seat judgment of Christ.

That state allows you to escape a lot of temporal consequences associated with sin. But whether your life ends on an upswing or a downswing, it has nothing to do with your arrival in heaven, because of the doctrine of the preservation of the saints and eternal security.

Now, if you were in a church that was teaching Perseverance of the Saints, they would call that kind of a statement heresy. And they would basically say that I was creating a climate for loose living, licentious living, because you have to scare the hell out of people every Sunday, right?

In their mind, the Arminians will scare the hell out of you every Sunday by telling you that you are going to lose your salvation, and the Calvinists will scare the hell out of you every Sunday by telling you that you never had salvation.

And you wonder why people in the body of Christ are so psychologically and emotionally messed up, having these two doctrines rammed down their throats week after week. I am not going to tell you anything like that because it is not in the Bible.

I am not going to tell you that you never had salvation. I am not going to tell you that you lost salvation. What I am going to tell you is that you are being protected by the power of God (1 Peter 1:5). And whether you die in an upswing or a downswing, it has nothing to do with eternal security, because your eternal security never rested on your shoulders to begin with, amen?

I mean, it was not you that got you in the door, right? It was the grace of God. So the grace of God that got you in the door is the grace of God that keeps you. "Grace" means "unmerited favor."

So I have one hundred percent assurance of my salvation because of my right understanding of the preservation of the saints, as opposed to the Perseverance of the Saints. I one hundred percent know if I were to die today, I would go to heaven.

Now, I did not always think that way because I was an acolyte of the Perseverance of the Saints, which says that I do not know. I have to die on a good note, or an upswing, or I am not in. I do not have enough proof to demonstrate that I am one of the elect.

So the truth of the matter is that our final arrival in heaven, and the reception of our heavenly inheritance, is being protected by the power of God (1 Peter 1:5). Notice that expression, *"the power of God"* (1 Peter 1:5). Not "the power of you."

*"...the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:5).*

So do not confuse Perseverance of the Saints with preservation of the saints. Do not confuse Perseverance of the Saints with eternal security, because those are two completely different teachings.

While we teach preservation of the saints, we do not teach Perseverance of the Saints. While we teach eternal security, we do not teach Perseverance of the Saints.

So, Bob Kirkland sums up the Calvinist position as follows. At the very top it says,

"Perseverance of the Saints = Perseverance in Good Works to the End of One's Life to Prove that He is One of the Elect. '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."<sup>4</sup>

Calvinism teaches uncertainty. You know, there was, this week, the death of one of the biggest promoters of Calvinism within evangelicalism, John MacArthur. And I remember a couple of friends of mine working on their dissertation being given interviews with him.

And the question was asked, "What is your assurance of salvation on a scale of zero to one hundred?" And he gave a number of about ninety-seven percent. So even the biggest names in Calvinism itself, I will show you through the quotes, themselves really do not know if they are saved.

And as they turn around and teach this stuff over and over and over and over and over again to the body of Christ, the body of Christ does not know whether they are saved or not. And that has a massive emotional and psychological negative impact on people.

I am not a big fan, as I will show you a little later today in the main service, of the integration movement, integrating psychology and the Bible. But Minirth and Meier did a study on this (and you could Google this) called, "The Psychological Effects of Lordship Salvation."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Bob Kirkland, *Calvinism: None Dare Call It Heresy; Spotlight on the Life and Teachings of John Calvin* (Eureka, MT: Lighthouse Trails, 2018), 34.

<sup>5</sup> Frank B. Minirth, *The Psychological Effects of Lordship Salvation*, Grace Evangelical Society, Journal Articles, <https://faithalone.org/journal-articles/the-psychological-effects-of-lordship-salvation/>

And they were trying to figure out what this doctrine is doing to people emotionally. And their conclusions were that it was destroying people. I will use this example. Dennis Rokser has used this one. I like it. It is like people that were working on the Golden Gate Bridge when it was being built.

Many of them were falling to their deaths. And somebody had a bright idea. "You know, maybe we should put a net under these people so they do not fall to their death, so they will be secure." And guess what? They discovered that the work productivity of the workers went way up.

Because if you know that you are secure, you are more productive in your calling. So how in the world can you be productive in your calling for Jesus when you do not even know if you are going to heaven or not?

I mean, to me, that kind of teaching is very similar to what you get in Islam, where Muslims really do not know if they have done enough good to outweigh the bad. And they do not know if Allah, whose name means deceiver, is going to lie to them and rip the carpet out from under them at the final judgment.

So there is no assurance of salvation in Islam. And once you understand that, you start to have pity on them instead of being mad at them. I mean, this is why they would fly a plane into a building. Because if you fly a plane into a building, well, that is like a guarantee you are in.

So Muslims do what they do because they have zero assurance of salvation. How is Calvinism any different in this regard? It is teaching this doctrine of uncertainty, which is emotionally crippling and emotionally destroying people, because I cannot work for Jesus when I do not trust Him.

And if the trust is not Him, then maybe I do not trust myself. Maybe I am going to mess something up. So how do I be productive for God? Well, I am very productive for God because I got this issue fixed. I hope this series will get this issue fixed in your mind.

Jesus is one hundred percent reliable. "Yeah, but what if I mess things up?" Well, you probably will. And I will too. But this whole thing does not rest on your shoulders anyway. See that? It is grace that got you in the door. It is grace that keeps you in the door. It is grace that sustains you even when you foul things up.

So this is what is meant by the Perseverance of the Saints. And, you say, "Well, Calvinists do not really teach this, do they?" That is why I labored to produce these quotes for you to show you that they do teach this. Let's go back to John Calvin. He writes,

"[T]hose who do not persevere unto the end belong not to the calling of God...."<sup>6</sup>

(The rest of the sentence we have already critiqued earlier in the series.) There it is in black and white: if you do not persevere till the end—not God preserving you to the end, but if you do not persevere—then you do not belong to God because you are not one of the elect.

And if God gave you the gift of faith, how could it fail? See that? Here is another citation from Calvin. He says,

"[W]hat they [the Christians at Corinth] had attained so far is nothing, unless they keep steadily on; because it is not enough that they once started off on the way of the Lord, if they do not make an effort to reach the goal."<sup>7</sup>

Boy, that looks like the onus is on you there. "So you Corinthians, you started off the right way," Calvin says in his commentary on 1 Corinthians, "but you know, if you guys stumble along the way, you are not persevering. So whatever faith you had was not real. It was spurious. It was your own faith, rather than receiving the gift of faith.

Were the Corinthians saved? Well, what does Paul say at the beginning of the book?

*"To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints..." (1 Corinthians 1:2).*

Paul does not say, "You are aints." He says, "You are saints."

*"...together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours" (1 Corinthians 1:2).*

Paul says, "Your salvation, you Corinthians, is just like mine." I mean, if you do not think the Corinthians were saved, then Paul was not saved. Do you see that? I mean, it just gets crazy.

And as you go through the Book of 1 Corinthians, the Corinthians were not acting very saintly, were they? That is why I like to call 1 Corinthians "1 Californians."

In 1 Corinthians 1-4, they are divided over their favorite Bible teachers. In 1 Corinthians 5, they are involved in incest. In 1 Corinthians 6, they are suing each other in front of unbelieving judges, and visiting temple prostitutes. In 1 Corinthians 7, there is rampant divorce and remarriage.

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<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960), p. 197.



In 1 Corinthians 8-10, those that understood their freedoms in Christ were flaunting their freedoms in the presence of the weaker brother who had less understanding, and causing division. In 1 Corinthians 11, they are drunk at the Lord's table.

In 1 Corinthians 12-14, they are all imbalanced in the area of spiritual gifts. They are putting tongue talkers on a pedestal with no interpretation. And Paul is saying, "If people came into your church right now, they would think you are stark raving mad." In 1 Corinthians 15, they are throwing overboard the doctrine of resurrection.

And I challenge you to find one place in that whole book where Paul says, "You guys are not saved because you are not persevering." They had been born spiritually. They were stumbling in growth, but not stumbling in birth and being born. Birth truths and growth truths are two different things that Calvinists do not separate.

So John Calvin could write a commentary on 1 Corinthians with all of this powerful language and say, "Well, we do not really know if they are saved until we see if they persevere in their calling." That is the Perseverance of the Saints.

And then after that whole mess up, how would you like to be the pastor of the Corinthian church? What a job that would be. After that whole mess up in the first book (1 Corinthians), Paul calls the Corinthians saints at the beginning of the second book (2 Corinthians).

Paul says,

*"To the church of God that is at Corinth, with all the saints..." (2 Corinthians 1:1)—*

in the same group that you just got finished talking about—

*"who are in the whole of Achaia" (2 Corinthians 1:1).*

So Calvin just—I do not know what is going on with him. I think he is reading too much Augustine and not enough Paul, but he just skipped right over these verses here and put a big question mark as to whether these people are saved at all, because we do not know if they are going to persevere.

Now, if they do persevere and they are the elect, then "once saved always saved," but we just do not know if they are the elect yet because they have not persevered.

Oh boy, everybody loves Paul Washer. Isn't Paul Washer wonderful? Well, just because someone has the gift of gab does not mean they are teaching you the right stuff. Can I get an amen on that? Just because you watch someone who is eloquent on YouTube does not mean you have arrived at truth.

And people, you know, quote this guy Paul Washer because they like the way he talks. But Paul Washer, when he talks, just regurgitates over and over and over and over and over and over again this Calvinistic Perseverance of the Saints.

And he says stuff like this:

"The doctrine of the carnal Christian..."<sup>8</sup>

Now, I did not know that the carnal Christian was a doctrine. Some call it a doctrine. I just call it reading comprehension, because Paul calls the Corinthians carnal. But Washer says it is this doctrine, meaning that it is some kind of thing floating around out there that has nothing to do with the Bible.

And carnal Christianity, as much as it is unfortunate and we do not promote it, is what we would call an unfortunate possibility. Paul Washer says,

"The doctrine of the carnal Christian has destroyed more lives and sent more people to hell than you can imagine!"<sup>9</sup>

So I guess in Washer's mind, because we teach the doctrine of the carnal Christian without promoting it, we are giving people an permission to live life sensuously, which proves they are not one of the elect. That is basically what he is saying here.

We do not promote carnal Christianity. We warn against it. But you cannot warn against something that is not a possibility. Calvinists, if you really get into what they are teaching, hardly believe in carnal Christianity. They do not think it is such a thing.

Yet Paul clearly talks about it in 1 Corinthians 3. If you ever read anything from A.W. Pink, he says this kind of stuff constantly. Towards the end of his life, he says,

"Readers, if there is a reserve in your obedience, you are on your way to hell."<sup>10</sup>

Boy, that will warm the heart, right? That will give you the assurance of salvation. Meaning if God has told you to do something and there is any hesitancy in your life about it, then that is just evidence that you are not one of the elect because you are not persevering.

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<sup>8</sup> Image heading by Living Hope Bible Church, "A Doctrine Opposed to Growing & Changing," introduction to *Growing and Changing in Christ: How All Christians Progress in Sanctification*, by Pastor Matthew Black, 6/23/2015, 9:35pm (<https://livinghopechurch.net/the-dangerous-doctrine-the-carnal-christian/>).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> A.W. Pink, *Practical Christianity*, p. 16.

"Well, A.W. Pink, you must reject eternal security." "Oh, I teach eternal security. I am just not going to let you know you have it or not, because I do not know whether you persevered." Of course he has persevered perfectly.

We could talk a lot about that. I mean, A.W. Pink is a guy that just died as an angry person at the end of his life, lashing out at everyone in his writings, which you can see if you read him. He was isolated from his local church, did not have a local church. He had just a one-man spirituality.

And, you know, it is kind of interesting that Jesus said that the standard you use will be used against you (Matthew 7:2; Mark 4:24; Luke 6:38). Well, if I took Pink's standard and used it against him, I could question whether he was a believer or not, because I am not sure that he persevered at the end exactly like he should have.

A.W. Pink says this concerning salvation.

"Something more than believing in Christ is necessary to ensure the soul's reaching Heaven."<sup>11</sup>

"So you believe in Jesus? That is great, but we gotta see more." "Well, why do I gotta see more?"

"I gotta see more because I do not know if you are one of the elect. I do not know if you really have the gift of faith unless you persevere. Because if you do not persevere, you were never given the gift of faith, and so your faith is just your own, and therefore it is spurious and not real."

Wow. I have no idea why people do not read this and just denounce it as heretical, because it is to me. It is faith plus perseverance equals salvation. By the way, is that what Jesus told the thief on the cross, a guy who trusted in Christ at the end of his life?

As you read that in Luke 23 (Luke 23:33, 39-43), there is nothing about "You'd better commit, obey, persevere, serve, get baptized." Immediately Jesus granted the thief the assurance of salvation upon faith by saying, "Today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43, paraphrase).

And what the Calvinists say to that is, "Well, he did not persevere because he did not have the opportunity to persevere, because he was nailed to a cross, and he was in imminent death."

In which case, my response is, "Well, then anybody that comes to Christ, we should pray that they die right away, because if that is the new rule, you gotta have an opportunity to persevere, and some people will not. I mean, I should lead people to Christ and then shoot them dead right on the spot."

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<sup>11</sup> A. W. Pink in December 1947, cited in Iain H. Murray's *The Life of Arthur W. Pink* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1981 edition), pp. 248-249.

So you can just take their conclusions to ridiculous places, logically, why these ideas do not add up.

Here is A.W. Pink again.

"[H]oliness in this life is such a part of our 'salvation' that it is a necessary means to make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in heavenly light and glory."<sup>12</sup>

"So if you are going to get your inheritance in glorification, then we gotta see holiness in this life." How much holiness? Calvinists do not say. So it is very subjective. So once you buy into this, you spend the rest of your life wondering if you have manifested enough holiness.

In the verse I gave you earlier from the Apostle Peter, Peter did not teach that. Peter taught how God preserves us. And Peter never says, "You are on probation. That is conditioned upon production of holiness." Now, Peter never said that in 1 Peter 1:4-5, but Arthur Pink turns right around and teaches that.

Here is a very Reformed individual, a Reformed minister, named John Otis, who stated that "maintaining an unforgiving spirit...will surely destroy our souls in hell."<sup>13</sup> So, boy, if you are not following the biblical command to forgive as you have been forgiven (Matthew 6:14-15; Mark 11:25-26; Luke 6:37), that is just evidence that you are not one of the elect.

And if you die in that state, you are on your way to hell. Now, should you forgive as you have been forgiven (Matthew 6:14-15; Mark 11:25-26; Luke 6:37)? I would recommend it because God told you to do that, and your life and emotions will be in a lot better state of equilibrium if you do, if you live that way.

But what if, at the end of your life, you just have not gotten rid of one of your grudges against somebody that hurt you in the past, and you are unforgiving towards them? Well, in Otis's eyes, that proves you are not one of the elect because you are not persevering, and so you are in danger of hellfire.

So Calvinists are taking relational forgiveness, and instead of putting it in the category of Christian growth, and Christian reward, they are putting it in the category of Christian birth, which is another gospel (Galatians 1:6-12).

Here is a quote from John Murray. He writes,

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<sup>12</sup> A. W. Pink, *The Doctrine of Sanctification* (Prisbrary Publishing, Kindle edition, Arthur Pink Collection Book 16), Kindle location 374, citing Puritan Walter Marshall, 1692. This book is also available on Amazon in a print edition published by CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, July 9, 2016, and the quote is found on page 27.

<sup>13</sup> John Otis, "Who is the Genuine Christian?" (The Council of Chalcedon, 1988), p. 20.

"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;..."<sup>14</sup>

Oh, you mean like David did? Yeah, but David came back, didn't he? Yeah, he did. But what if David died before he came back? Well, he is out. 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; he cannot come under the domination of sin; he cannot be guilty of certain kinds of unfaithfulness..."<sup>15</sup>

"Certain kinds."<sup>16</sup> What kinds are you talking about? Profanity? Are you talking about an anger problem? Are you talking about gambling? Are you talking about substance abuse? Well, Calvinists do not define that.

So the poor sheep are always figuring out, have they crossed the line? When no one tells them where the line is.

"...he cannot be guilty of certain kinds of unfaithfulness..."<sup>17</sup>

Where are you getting this from, John?

"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..."<sup>18</sup>

Translation: you have no assurance of salvation at all, according to John Murray, unless your life is in some kind of upward trajectory, spiritually. So your assurance, in Murray's mind, does not come from God's promises and God's commitment to keep you. It comes from performance.

And that performance had better be in an upward ascent to the end, or you are not one of the elect because you have not persevered.

"...The perseverance of the saints..."<sup>19</sup>

See how Murray keeps saying that phrase over and over again?

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<sup>14</sup> John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2015 edition), p. 152, 154-55, 165.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

"...reminds us very forcefully that only those who persevere to the end are truly saints."<sup>20</sup>

See that word "truly"? I mean, there are believers, but who are the true believers? That is what Murray is saying. That is why our missions committee took out some of that language in our missionary questionnaire about "truly saved," because we do not use that type of language around here, because that is Calvinistic.

You are either saved or you are not. I mean, you either have trusted in Christ for salvation or you have not. And they create this whole new category of believers that, well, there are people that believe, but are they truly believers? Maybe it is just their own faith rather than the gift of faith.

And if you start thinking that way, not only does it destroy you individually because you are always looking at yourself, but also you are not looking at the cross anymore. It is always all of this introspection, and I cannot think of a more depressing subject than looking at myself all day long.

I mean, I do not want to look at myself. I want to look at Jesus. But this whole Calvinistic system gets your eyes off Jesus and it gets you onto yourself. And not only are you looking at yourself all the time, you are looking at other people.

"Oh, sister so-and-so skipped choir rehearsal two Wednesdays in a row. I do not know, maybe she is not quite in." And it leads to this really hypercritical, judgmental spirit against other Christians that are having problems.

I was at a church in the Dallas area where this guy that was totally wrapped up in the teachings of John MacArthur and R.C. Sproul started telling me this.

He says, "You know, there are people at this church that are not saved," and then he went over to Matthew 7, "and they are going to hear those terrible words, you know, 'Depart from Me, I never knew you' (Matthew 7:23; Luke 13:27). They look saved, but they are not saved."

And I really did not at the time fully understand why he was talking that way. But tracing his theology, that is why he was talking that way. Because he was a believer in the Perseverance of the Saints. He himself, of course, was persevering perfectly. It is everyone else that is "Maybe they are going to get in, maybe they are not."

And you would not believe how this stuff is taught from pulpits constantly. Here is a quote from John MacArthur. I do not want to speak ill of the dead. I agree with John MacArthur on a lot of things, but I disagreed with him on the biggest thing, which is the gospel.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

He wrote a book called "Saved Without a Doubt," which, as God is my witness, is the most misnamed book in the history of Christianity. I mean, you read his book, and you will not think you are saved without a doubt. You will spend your whole life doubting whether you are saved.

So how does John MacArthur give people assurance of salvation? It is not based on what Jesus promised you at the point of faith. It is based on what you are doing. So here is his statement on page 177. He says,

"If a person fails to love and obey the Lord through the trials of life,..."<sup>21</sup>

Stop the quote right there. Have you ever gotten discouraged with the Lord on the trials of life? I sure have. I mean, I have had days where I am so upset by something going on in my life, I just throw a little pity party and say to the Lord, "I am not going to talk to You today."

As if, you know, that really throws off God's program. This little ant down here: "I am not going to talk to You today." So I can identify with people that get upset with the Lord, who fail to obey the Lord in the trials of life.

Now, when people do that, that is a growth problem. That is a rewards issue. That is not a "Maybe you are not a child of God" problem, because these kinds of things do not keep you as a child of God. What keeps you as a child of God, is God's promises and God's grace.

And once that net is built, as I said earlier, under the bridge there in San Francisco, the Golden Gate Bridge, watch your productivity for the Lord accelerate, because you got this issue fixed.

"If a person fails to love and obey the Lord through the trials of life, then there is no evidence that he possesses saving faith."<sup>22</sup>

Because there is the faith that saves and the faith that does not save. There is the faith that comes from God, and there is the faith that comes from you.

How many people do you know who came to church for a while, had a little trouble in their lives, and left, although they made a profession of faith? See, that is what he is getting at here. Their faith is not real if they are not persevering.

"Although they may have made a profession of faith in Christ, they cannot be identified as those who love Him because their lives are not characterized by enduring obedience."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> John MacArthur, *Saved Without A Doubt*, p. 177.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

If you are not enduring in obedience, if you are not enduring in doctrine, then you are not persevering. And if you are not persevering, maybe you have spurious faith rather than God's faith, and maybe you are not one of the elect. That is exactly what John MacArthur is saying.

All MacArthur is doing is reaching back 500 years to John Calvin and recycling the Perseverance of the Saints into modern evangelicalism. And all John Calvin did was reach back over a thousand years and grab these distorted doctrines from Augustine, Augustine being the Catholics' Catholic.

So what is all this stuff at the end of the day? I will show you a quote on this a little bit later in the series. It is recycled Roman Catholicism. All this stuff is Roman Catholicism repackaged for a Protestant audience. And that is why John MacArthur has so many ex-Catholics in his church.

I mean, he has got tons and tons and tons of ex-Catholics. Have you ever asked yourself why that is? I think I have a potential answer. Because the man, when he was alive, was a master wordsmith at transitioning people from one form of legalism to another.

That is why ex-Catholics gravitate towards MacArthur like bees to honey. What is all of this Calvinistic Reformed theology? It is the "mistress of Roman Catholicism." Wow. And I did not come up with that statement. Someone much smarter than me came up with it.

I am not going to mention any names because I want him to receive a full reward. Is that okay, Jim, if I say it that way? All right. Oh!

Here is a quote from Charles Hodge. Hodge is interesting because he is one of theirs, right? He is a Calvinist. Calvinist theologian Charles Hodge (1797-1878), in referring to the evidence of being elected, said,

"The only evidence of election is effectual calling, that is, the production of holiness."<sup>24</sup>

You'd better be producing holiness and you'd better not let up, or you are not one of the elect, because you are not persevering.

"And the only evidence of the genuineness of this call..."<sup>25</sup>

Some have the true faith. Some have the false faith.

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<sup>24</sup> Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1983 edition), p. 292.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.



"...genuineness of this call and the certainty of our perseverance, is a patient continuance in well doing."<sup>26</sup>

So there it is, in black and white, by one of Calvinism's premier theologians, that your genuineness, the authenticity of your salvation, is found in your personal, subjective life experiences.

It is not on the objective promises of God. It is on the subjective—which can vacillate from day to day—of your own personal experiences. So if someone caught in a cycle of sin of some sort comes to me for counseling, the first thing I am going to ask them is, "Are you saved? Have you ever trusted Christ for salvation?"

And if they have never done that, I am going to try to lead them to salvation through Jesus Christ. But here is what I am not going to tell them. "Yeah, I know you tell me you are saved, but you gotta prove to me you are saved. Because if you do not prove to me you are saved, you are not going to heaven."

Instead, what I am going to tell them is that God has given you resources at the point of faith alone in Christ alone, that will help you overcome your cycle of sin. And if you overcome your cycle of sin—I exhort you to do that, because that has a bearing on rewards, and that has a bearing on sparing yourself from a lot of temporal consequences,—then praise the Lord!

If you do not overcome your cycle of sin, and you are telling me that you are a saved person, I am not going to second guess whether you are saved or not, because I believe in the reality of a non-persevering Christian.

Calvinism says that you cannot have a non persevering Christian. The Bible says that you can. Not that it is good. But it is what we like to call an unfortunate possibility.

John Piper said this, quoted in Dave Hunt's book against Calvinism, which I recommend to you, which was published around the year 2000. Dave Hunt found this on Piper's website and put it in his book, "What Love Is This?"

Now, the John Piper ministry has long since scrubbed this from their website because it was really bad marketing. But I believe that Dave Hunt had the integrity to write down from the John Piper website what John Piper said. And so if you go looking for this quote, you are not going to be able to find it.

And the reason I bring that up is that a lot of people message me and say, "I cannot find the Piper quote." I am explaining to you why you cannot find it. But Piper, according to Hunt, had this posted on his website.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

"No Christian can be sure that he is a true believer...."<sup>27</sup>

I mean, just compare that to what Jesus said to the thief on the cross: "Today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43, paraphrase). Piper comes along and says,

"No Christian can be sure that he is a true believer. Hence, there is an ongoing need to be dedicated to the Lord and to deny ourselves so that we might make it."<sup>28</sup>

See the "might" there. Maybe you are going to make it. Maybe you are not going to make it. Because I really do not know if you are one of the elect until you persevere till the end. So you just took the net out from under the Golden Gate Bridge builders. That is what he just did with this statement.

Here is a recent quote from D.A. Carson, from a Calvinist perspective. He says,

"The evidence that your faith is genuine is in its perseverance."<sup>29</sup>

So if you have really got the faith from God, it is always going to persevere. So if you have doubts, maybe you do not have the real kind of faith. Maybe it is just your faith, and the reason you do not have the right kind of faith is that maybe you are not one of the elect to grant you the right kind of faith.

And then you have Thomas Schreiner, who is an academic who introduced something called "final justification." This is language you will find in Schreiner. It is language you will find in Piper. I do not have the Piper quote, but I will bring it for you next week. It is language you find in Michael Horton. All these are Calvinist writers.

They use this expression, "final justification," "final salvation." Schreiner says,

"The New Testament clearly teaches that bare faith cannot save..."<sup>30</sup>

I thought that was the whole deal: faith alone in Christ alone. I mean, I thought that is what the whole exchange with the thief on the cross was about. I thought the thief on the cross had nothing to offer but trust in the provision of Jesus (Luke 23:33, 39-43).

And Schreiner comes along and says, "That is not enough." That is not what Jesus told the thief on the cross. Schreiner says,

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<sup>27</sup> John Piper and Pastoral Staff, "TULIP: What We Believe about the Five Points of Calvinism: Position Paper of the Pastoral Staff" (Desiring God Ministries, 1997), 25, cited in Dave Hunt, *What Love is This?*, 379.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Image posted on Facebook by Glorious Gospel, Friday, June 20, 2025 at 6:00 AM (<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=756677996694183&set=a.235038548858133>).

<sup>30</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Faith Alone—The Doctrine of Justification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 191.

"The New Testament clearly teaches that bare faith cannot save and that works are necessary for final justification or final salvation."<sup>31</sup>

What in the world are you talking about here when you are talking about "final salvation" and "final justification"? Basically, what it means is that information needs to be collected on you throughout the course of your life to determine if the faith that you have is really from God.

Because if the faith is really from God—and you could not have it any other way because you are a rock—if it is really and truly from God, it is always going to endure. It is always going to persevere.

And so what God is doing is collecting data on you as your life progresses, and you are going to get to the very end of your life, and God is going to look at all the data and say, "Check, they're in. They persevered enough."

So your justification is not declared at the beginning of salvation, but at the end of salvation. Have you ever heard such a doctrine? I will show you that it is just flatly and patently unbiblical. But this is what these people teach.

They use this expression "final justification," "final salvation." Very similar to Islam. As I mentioned before, you get to the end of your life and maybe the good deeds outweighed the bad in your end. So your declaration of innocence does not come at the point of faith, like Jesus gave to the thief on the cross. It comes at the end.

If you say "final glorification," I believe in final glorification. But that is not what Calvinists are saying. They are saying "justification." You know what justification is, right? It is the declaration of innocence that the lost sinner receives at the point of faith alone, in Christ alone.

You are justified before God. A jury verdict is read. It is an announcement of your innocence. I thought that happened at the beginning of salvation, when you first trust in Christ. Calvinists are saying, "No, that actually happens at the end."

And these guys teach this stuff around the clock. I mean, 24/7, this is coming at you. Here is a quote from John Piper, following the quote from Schreiner. Piper says,

"Essential to the Christian life and necessary for final salvation is the killing of sin (Romans 8:13) and the pursuit of holiness (Hebrews 12:14)."<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> John Piper, "Does God Really Save Us by Faith Alone?" (<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/does-god-really-save-us-by-faith-alone>).

How do I know I am going to get to the end, and have enough data collected on me to show that I have persevered to the end, demonstrated I am one of the elect, and I get justification at the end? How am I going to get there?

Well, Piper says it is

"...the perpetual killing of sin and the pursuit of holiness (Hebrews 12:14)." <sup>33</sup>

Piper is quoting there Hebrews 12:14, which is used completely and totally out of context. So there is the language: "final justification," "final salvation." Elsewhere, Piper says,

"We must also own up to the fact that our final salvation is made contingent upon the subsequent obedience which comes from faith." <sup>34</sup>

"You believe in Jesus for salvation? We are not sure if you have the right kind of faith. So God is going to collect information on you throughout your Christian life. And if you persevere, demonstrating you are one of the elect, then you get your grant of justification at the end, rather than the beginning."

Piper goes on here and he says,

"God justifies us on the first genuine act of saving faith..." <sup>35</sup>

I wish he stopped talking there, because I would agree with that part of it.

"...but in doing so He has a view to all subsequent acts of faith contained, as it were, like seed in the first act." <sup>36</sup>

So the first act needs to be borne out by the subsequent acts to demonstrate that the first act was a genuine act. And this next statement, this is something recent. Piper said this in 2014, at a pastor's conference.

Notice how he is teaching all this stuff to a conference for pastors and church leaders. I mean, you go to a conference like this and you are a Piperite and you are just absorbing all this truth, and you are so excited about it, and you dump it on the poor people in your church.

And then we wonder why all the people in the church have emotional problems and everything else. Well, they have no security. They have no assurance. They have

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> John Piper and Pastoral Staff, "TULIP: What We Believe about the Five Points of Calvinism: Position Paper of the Pastoral Staff" (Desiring God Ministries, 1997), 28.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Piper and Pastoral Staff, 16.

nobody that has built the net underneath the builders at the Golden Gate Bridge. It is just tragic.

John Piper says,

"Election is unconditional and glorification is conditional."<sup>37</sup>

Do you see that?

"Election is unconditional and glorification is conditional."<sup>38</sup>

Why does he say that? Because we do not really know if you are really one of the elect unless you persevere, and until the data is collected on you and it can be demonstrated in heaven, that "I guess that you have enough good works"—How many are those? That is never defined—to prove that you're persevering—then I guess your election was true.

Final justification. Final salvation. Are there any problems with this? Here I have got eight things to talk through. So obviously I am not going to get to these today. I probably will not even get through the first one, but we did open to John 5:24, like forty-five minutes to an hour ago.

So we will just leave you with this. Just compare everything I have said to this verse, because these are the words of Jesus as recorded by the Apostle John. Which John are you more impressed by? John Piper, John MacArthur, or John the Apostle?

I mean, me and my house were more impressed with John the Apostle, because he wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. So if I am hearing things from John MacArthur and John Piper that violate the words of John the Apostle, I would say, "At that point I depart from what you are saying because my Bible reads differently."

Jesus said,

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

That is "amen" [ἀμήν] "amen" [ἀμήν] in Greek, meaning, "it is so."

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My Word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life..." (John 5:24).*

See that? Not, "Maybe your faith is spurious. Let's collect data on you to the end of your life to prove that it is real." Nothing like that here.

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<sup>37</sup> John Piper, 2014 biennial conference for pastors and church leaders.

<http://t4g.org/media/2014/04/preaching-sanctification> Time stamp about 04:48, (accessed April 12, 2014).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

*"...has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life" (John 5:24).*

*"Has passed out of"* (John 5:24) is perfect tense. It is a one-time action with ongoing results. *"Has eternal life"* (John 5:24) is present tense. You have it right now. And at the point of faith, you have already *"passed out of death into life"* (John 5:24).

So therefore your justification does not happen at the end. It happens at the beginning and the goal of progressive sanctification.

Now that your salvation is totally secure, and now that the net has been placed underneath you as you are building the Golden Gate Bridge, now your goal in progressive sanctification is to allow your practice to catch up with the position that has been eternally decreed of you.

See that? And by the way, God has given you resources to help you with that. And may we make great progress there. But if you do not, it cannot prevent you from being unborn. Bad nutrition does not negate the birthing process. See that? So anyway, hope you are enjoying this stuff.