

## Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible 040

2 Corinthians 1:1

August 31, 2025

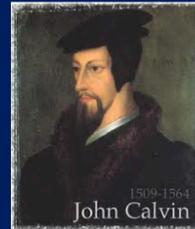
Dr. Andy Woods

Let's open our Bibles, if we could, to 2 Corinthians which is right after 1 Corinthians. (So just get past the Gospels in the New Testament, get into the Book of Acts, then Romans, and then you will see 1 Corinthians, followed by 2 Corinthians.)

Open to 2 Corinthians 1:1. We are continuing our look at Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible. Here are the things that we have studied thus far in our series.

### Neo-Calvinism vs. The Bible

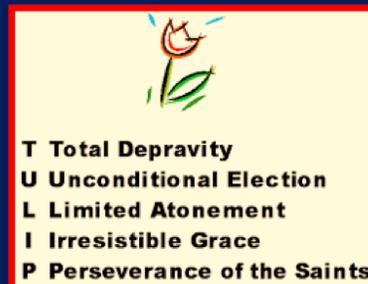
- I. Calvinism's Mixed Blessing
- II. Why Critique Calvinism?
- III. The Source of Calvin's Theology
- IV. Calvin's Manner of Life
- V. **TULIP Through the Grid of Scripture**
- VI. Conclusion



We are dealing with the movement of Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible, looking at the mnemonic device that they use constantly, which is called TULIP. We are running TULIP through the grid of Scripture.

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

- A. **T**otal Depravity
- B. **U**nconditional Election
- C. **L**imited Atonement
- D. **I**rrresistible Grace
- E. **P**erseverance of the Saints



By Total Depravity, essentially what Calvinists mean is that man is like a rock, and that he is incapable of choosing God. So how does anybody get saved? Well, God unconditionally elects some to salvation before the foundation of the earth.

In the Calvinist system, Jesus did not die for everyone. He died just for those that he chose. That is represented by the "L," Limited Atonement. The small fraction of humanity that God chose, He irresistibly draws to Himself, because a rock cannot do anything unless God does a miracle on the front end.

So God imparts the gift of faith to some. He, God, now regenerates first, so that people can believe second. That is how these rocks that happen to have been chosen by God are drawn to God. So if you happen to be one of those rocks, congratulations, you are a rock. But you are a chosen rock, if you happen to be one of those.

Then what is going to happen? Because God did all this work on the front end—He chose you; He regenerated you first; He gave you the gift of faith;—then you are going to persevere in good works and doctrine.

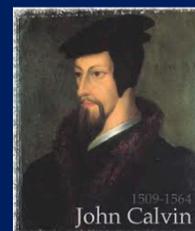
And there is not too much wiggle room for being backslidden or moving out of fellowship with God—those kinds of concepts. There is not too much wiggle room for carnal Christianity, because if you really are one of the elect, then you are going to always overcome in good works and doctrine.

And if your life moves away from that, what Calvinists say is that, "Well, maybe you were not one of the chosen." See that? So the "P," Perseverance of the Saints, is the authentication—the sign—that you are really one of the elect. So that is how the Calvinist system works.

We have been looking at each of these ingredients in TULIP, an acronym, or mnemonic device, and comparing it to Scripture. And I have tried to show you over and over again that although the Calvinists seem to start in the right place, they end up doing something that the Bible really does not teach.

## E. Perseverance of the Saints

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



So that is what we are doing with the doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints. What we teach here at Sugar Land Bible Church is not the Perseverance of the Saints. We teach the preservation of the saints. We do not teach that, "Boy, if you are one of the elect, then you have to be doing all of these good works and have pure doctrine to prove that you are one of the elect."

Rather, what we teach is that God preserves us, which puts the onus on God. First Peter 1:4-5 says,

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

Notice where the Scripture places this preservation: it places it on God. The onus is on God to preserve us. That is not what the Calvinist teach, though. Here is what they teach: Perseverance of the Saints equals 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>1</sup>

So when you are in Calvinistic circles, the onus is basically not placed on God to preserve you, but on your ability to preserve yourself.

We think that is a problem. We think the way the Calvinists are handling that doctrine is problematic. Look at what John Calvin himself said. Calvin said,

*"[T]hose who do not persevere unto the end belong not to the calling of God."*<sup>2</sup>

So once this doctrine is unleashed in the minds of people, it puts them in a perpetual state of insecurity. They really do not know if they are doing enough. They really do not know if they are working hard enough. They really do not know if they are believing the right thing to persevere, and thus prove they are one of the elect.

This doctrine is a statement that comes right from John Calvin. Once this doctrine is unleashed in the minds of people, there are a lot of people who do not really know if they are actual Christians or not, which is a tragic thing.

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

<sup>2</sup> 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.

One of your birthrights as a new believer is the assurance of salvation. God wants you to know, number one, that you have eternal life; and number two, that you can actually know that you have eternal life. There should not be any question mark in your mind once you have trusted Christ—"Am I going to heaven, if I were to die today?" You can have one hundred percent assurance of that because the onus is on God, not on you.

But Calvinism places the onus on you. See that? "Have I done enough? Have I worked hard enough? Because if I am really one of the elect, this fruit should be showing up." So I am always in this state of introspection to determine whether my assurance of salvation is real or not. And that is no way to live.

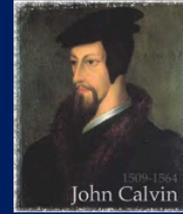
The way you live the Christian life is you just take to the bank the promise of Jesus Christ that is given in many places—John 5:24, 6:47; among others—that once you place your personal faith in Christ, He promises you the assurance of salvation. That promise is true whether you have an up day as a Christian or a down day. Ups and downs in the Christian life are not the things that give you the assurance of salvation.

Calvinism says that is what gives you the assurance of salvation, if things are in an upswing. So you are always looking at your life wondering, "Have I done enough to prove I am one of the elect?" Whereas the Bible is coming along and wanting to free you of that mindset and wanting you to understand that you have eternal life because you placed your personal faith in Jesus.

And Jesus made you a promise (John 5:24, 6:47; among others), and it is impossible for God to lie (Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18). So, you may leave this teaching and have a great week. You may leave this teaching and have a lousy week. You may be totally obedient this week, one hundred percent. You may not have such a great week—maybe you are disobedient. Yet that never alters the assurance of your salvation, because your assurance of salvation does not come from human performance. It comes from the promise of Jesus.

### 3. Problems with the Calvinistic Perseverance Definition

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



So with all this that Calvinists are saying, what we have been talking about are the problems associated with the Calvinistic doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints. One of the first things we talked about was how final salvation is unbiblical. You see that a lot today in Calvinistic circles. I gave you some quotes relative to this called final salvation.

What is final salvation? Well, final salvation is the idea that you really do not know if you are one of the elect or not. There is a lot of information that has to be kept on you. And finally, you will get to the end of your life, and the good outweighs the bad in your life. And if that happens, then guess what? I was one of the elect after all. Praise the Lord! And God grants me final salvation at the end of the process.

So this is where the lack of assurance of salvation in people that are taught this way comes from. You really do not know if you are one of the elect or not. Information has to be kept on me. And then if I reach a certain level in my life and I die in that state, then God says, "Guess what? You were one of the elect to begin with." And you just say, "Praise the Lord. Glad that worked out." which is a completely and totally unbiblical way to think.

Justification is not declared at the end of the salvation process, at the end of the Christian life. It is declared when at the beginning.

What did Jesus say to the thief on the cross when he trusted in the Messiah at the very end of his life? He did not say, "Well, let's see how the next few hours go as you are dying here. Let's see if you end up cursing Me, like the other thief was cursing Me. Because, you know, we are really not sure if you are one of the elect."

Jesus did not say that to the thief at all. What He said was,

*"...today you shall be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43).*

So Jesus grants justification at the beginning. The moment you place your personal trust in the Lord, you are justified before a holy God. It is not something that God declares of you at the end.

And this is one of the problems with the Calvinist movement, as it keeps talking about—I gave you a lot of the quotes—this concept of final salvation. There is no such thing as final salvation.

There is such a thing as future glorification—absolutely. But there is no such thing as final salvation, final declaration, or final justification. You already have your declaration of innocence the moment you trust Christ as Savior.

You could have a great Christian experience, or spend your Christian life in rebellion against God (which does happen, very tragically) and that never changes the fact that God justified you on the front end. You see the difference there? So the first problem with this Perseverance of the Saints idea is this concept of final justification.

And you hear this now from people like Scott Horton, using this expression. You will hear it from people like Thomas Schreiner, who is the academic who came up with this. These people are talking about this final salvation. Where are they even getting this from? It is an outworking of the Perseverance of the Saints idea. I gave you a lot of evidence that the final salvation concept is unbiblical.

The second way, as you look at our list here, to debunk this Perseverance of the Saints idea is to look at all the people in the Bible, Old Testament and New Testament, that clearly were saved, but their lives did not end on a positive note.

### Examples of Old Testament Non-Persevering Saints

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



They did not go out of this world with a big bang, so to speak. They did not go out of this life on a note of victory.

Should you leave this world on a note of victory, having lived for Jesus—like the apostle Paul said, "I have fought the good fight. I finished the race, etc." (2 Timothy 4:7, paraphrase)? Yes, we should all strive for that under God's power. But whether you attain that or not does not in any way detract from—subtract from—whether you are God's child. These examples refute the Perseverance of the Saints teaching.

The reason I reject the Perseverance of the Saints teaching as it is now being espoused in Neo-Calvinism is all the examples in the Bible of people who were clearly saved, but did not end their lives on a note of victory.

We worked through each of these: Noah, who was in a state of drunkenness at the end of his life. Are you going to tell me that Noah was not saved? I mean, Noah's in the Hall of Faith, Hebrews 11:7.

Lot, in the Old Testament, is another example. Lot was drunk and in incest at the end of his life. It did not sound as though Lot ended his life on a note of victory. And yet, 2 Peter 2:6-9 clearly says that Lot was saved.

Moses died having not entered the Promised Land. Did you know that? His life did not end in a note of victory. Are you going to say Moses was not saved? That would be crazy.

The whole Exodus generation, whom we are studying in the main service, did not end their lives on a note of victory. They died having built a golden calf and having never entered Canaan. And yet they are in the Hall of Faith (Hebrews 11:29).

Also, Samson. We know about his problems. He was a "he" man with a "she" problem. His life ended in suicide. Are you going to tell me that Samson was not saved? Or what is he doing in the Hall of Faith (Hebrews 11:32).

Saul—how did his life end? In necromancy and all kinds of problems. And yet, when Samuel came up in the necromancy that Saul was involved in at the end of his life, Samuel said of Saul, "Today you will be with me" (1 Samuel 28:19, paraphrase). I showed you the Scripture verse in 1 Samuel 28 where that happens: 1 Samuel 28:19. Saul's life ended in necromancy. Saul's life ended in suicide. And yet the Bible indicates that the man went to heaven.

Solomon—how did his life end? Well, not too well. He had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. Isn't that a little too many? First Kings 11:4 says that at the end of his life, Solomon's wives turned his heart away from following the Lord, and that Solomon's heart was not fully devoted to the Lord, as had been his father David's.

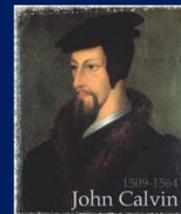
So what are you going to do with Solomon? Are you going to say Solomon was not saved? If you say that Solomon was not saved, we have a big problem. We have three books in the Bible written by an unsaved person. Solomon contributed the Song of Solomon to the Old Testament canon as well as most of the Proverbs and all of Ecclesiastes. If you are going to play games with Solomon's salvation, now you have an unregenerate author of Scripture.

These are the reasons that I moved away from the Perseverance of the Saints idea, because I see all these examples of people in the Bible who did not finish well. And do not misunderstand me. We should finish well. We are warned against not finishing well with all of these examples. And these examples would not be examples if every single child of God automatically persevered in doctrine and good works.

And at that point, after we covered those examples, you felt relieved because we were done with that. And I said, "Do not celebrate yet, because the New Testament is filled with similar examples."

### Examples of New Testament Non-Persevering Saints

1. Untrustworthy believers (John 2:23-25)
2. Non-confessing believers (John 12:42)
3. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)
4. Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:13)
5. **Immature believers at Corinth (1 Cor. 3:1-3)**
6. Unrewarded believers at Corinth (1 Cor. 3:15)
7. Disciplined believers at Corinth (1 Cor. 11:27-32)
8. Demas (2 Tim. 4:10; Col. 4:14)
9. Immature believers in Hebrews (Heb. 5:11-14)
10. Seven churches in Asia Minor (Rev. 3:19)



The untrustworthy believers in John 2:25 and the non-confessing believers in John 12:42 are examples of folks who believed in Jesus but did not want to tell anybody.

Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 were slain in the Holy Spirit. In other words, God disciplined them to the point of death. They did not finish well.

Simon the sorcerer in Acts 8 is another example. The tendency of people—and not just Calvinists but also Arminians—is to wave a magic wand over these examples and pretend that all of these people were unregenerate.

But I have tried to show you that all these people were saved. That is where the biblical evidence points. They were saved people who were non-persevering.

Last time we left off with the immature believers in Corinth (1 Corinthians 3:1-3). In 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, we see developed very strongly the doctrine of the carnal Christian. The doctrine of the carnal Christian is the idea that there can be Christians who are regenerated and on the path to glorification one day, who are still living for the flesh—still living for the sin nature. Calvinism will say that the carnal Christian is an impossibility. We say that it is a possibility, though an unfortunate one. It is a warning not to go that direction.

Paul Washer, very strong Calvinist, whom you can see on YouTube and social media everywhere, who is very popular, says,

"The doctrine of the carnal Christian has destroyed more lives and sent more people to hell than you can imagine!"<sup>3</sup>

I would reject that. I would reject the idea that there is no such thing as carnal Christianity. There is such a thing as carnal Christianity. I will show it to you in a minute.

What Washer is saying is that because we give permission to people to live carnally, they are obviously not one of the elect, and they are on their way to hell. That is basically what he is saying.

Yet the truth of the matter is that we are not giving people permission to live like this. What we are saying is that carnal Christianity is an unfortunate possibility that we are warned about over and over again in Scripture. And if you, as a Christian, drift into carnal Christianity, it is not a statement that you are not a Christian. It is a statement that you are doing some dumb stuff.

You are going to pay a huge price for it in terms of temporal consequences. You are not going to be rewarded like you could have been rewarded at the Bema Seat judgment of Christ. You are going to look back at your life and have a whole lot of regrets. But it does not mean you are not a Christian. Calvinism says that if you are living carnally, you are not a Christian.

We are saying that carnal Christianity is an unfortunate possibility. If carnal Christianity is something that exists, then in the New Testament that damages the doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints very severely.

So here is what John Calvin himself said about the Corinthians. Now, the Corinthians were a messed-up group of people. I call 1 and 2 Corinthians "1 Californians and 2 Californians."

In 1 Corinthians 1-4, the Corinthians are fighting and dividing over their favorite Bible teacher. In 1 Corinthians 5, they are involved in incest. In 1 Corinthians 6, they are involved in prostitution and litigation against each other. In 1 Corinthians 7, there is rampant divorce and remarriage. In 1 Corinthians 8-10, the stronger are flaunting their freedoms in the presence of the weaker brother. In 1 Corinthians 12-14, the Corinthians are messed up on the idea of spiritual gifts, so that they are elevating people who so-called speak in tongues to the platform in a church with no interpretation.

And Paul said, "If an unsaved person were to walk in here right now, he would think that you are stark, raving mad, the way you are handling the worship service" (1 Corinthians

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<sup>3</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/>).

14:23, paraphrase). In 1 Corinthians 15, the Corinthians are on the precipice of throwing the doctrine of the resurrection overboard.

And Paul says, "What are you guys doing? Don't you understand? If there is no resurrection, then Jesus Himself did not rise from the dead. And if Jesus Himself did not rise from the dead, then we are all still dead in our trespasses and sins." (By the way, how would you like to be the pastor of that group of people?) Paul goes through this litany of all this unsaintly behavior. And yet, what does Paul call them at the beginning of the book? He calls them "saints" (1 Corinthians 1:2).

1 Corinthians 1:2 says,

*"To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be 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, ESV).*

So Paul is saying, "Just as I am saved, you Corinthians are saved." And he says the same thing in 2 Corinthians 1:1. He says,

*"To the church of God that is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia" (2 Corinthians 1:1, ESV).*

So what do you do with the whole subject matter of 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians? Well, you are dealing with people who are regenerated. They are positionally right with God, and yet their lifestyle is not consistent with their profession. So what you do with the Corinthians is you say, "These are people who have satisfied the first tense of salvation. They are justified. They believed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and they are saved.

"But they are stumbling in the middle tense of their salvation, which is their growth. They have been born, but they are not growing right."

Just like in the natural world, you can have a birth, but then you could have a person, a child, who is underdeveloped, perhaps having malnutrition, or a vitamin deficiency. So when you see a child in that state, you say, "Well, there is something wrong with the child's development." You do not say that the child has never been born.

That is what Paul is dealing with in 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians. Paul was not just an evangelist. He was a pastor. Catching the fish is one thing. Cleaning the fish is completely different. Paul is in the fish cleaning business. He is not sitting there second guessing whether these people are regenerated or not. What he is saying is, "You are not accessing the resources that you have in Christ in order to grow properly."

Now Calvinism comes along and says this: "Well, we are not sure if the Corinthians are saved at all, because they are not persevering."

So here is what John Calvin himself wrote in his commentary on 1 Corinthians. He says this:

"[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 did not make an effort to reach the goal."<sup>4</sup>

Do you see what Calvin is saying here? He is saying, "You Corinthians, the jury's out on you, because we do not know if you are persevering. "If you keep this up, you are obviously not persevering. And if you are not persevering, I have grounds to question whether you are saved at all."

That is classic Perseverance of the Saints teaching. Whereas what we are saying is that they were saved, they were regenerated, and they were on their way to heaven. They had been spiritually born, and yet they were stumbling in growth. And because they were stumbling in growth, number one, there were a lot of temporal consequences that they were going to bring on themselves, which they could have avoided.

Number two, they were going to stand before the Lord at the Bema Seat Judgment, not fully rewarded. They were going to look back at their life and see that their life was not invested the right way. And the Corinthians would have a lot of regrets as they looked backwards. But we are not saying that these people were never saved, which is what Calvinism, with its doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints, is opening the door into.

So with all of that being said, what I was talking you through last time with the first bullet point was all the examples you can go to in 1 Corinthians which show that there is no doubt that the Corinthians were saved.

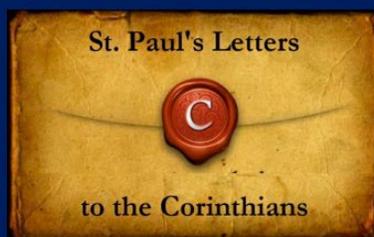
So when Calvin says that we do not know if they are saved or not—we have to wait to see if they persevere—that is just unbiblical.

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<sup>4</sup> John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960), p. 197.

## The Corinthians' Assumed Believing Status

- **1 Corinthians** – 1:2; 3:1, 5, 6:11, 19-20
- **2 Corinthians** – 1:1, 21-22, 24; 3:2-3; 6:14-16; 8:9; 10:15



Example after example after example in 1 Corinthians (first bullet point up) indicates that the Corinthians clearly were regenerated. So that is where I left you last time.

Let's do the same thing in 2 Corinthians. I just want to show you examples that very clearly these people were saved. Look at 2 Corinthians 1:1, which we actually had on the screen a little earlier.

*"To the church of God that is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia" (2 Corinthians 1:1, ESV).*

And as J. Vernon McGee used to say, "You are either a saint or you are an ain't." There is no doubt that the Corinthians were saints positionally. They just were not living out their calling.

But Paul, when he started 2 Corinthians this way after criticizing the Corinthians up one side and down the other in the first letter. The second letter never calls into question the Corinthians' birth. Paul calls into question the Corinthians' growth, which is completely different.

Calvinism will call into question the Corinthians' birth. Let me show you a few more. Look at 2 Corinthians 1:21-22. Just use what I call the desert island test. You are stranded on a desert island. You have nothing but the Bible to read. There is no theologian swimming to the shore, giving you a set of theological glasses through which to reinterpret everything.

You do not know anything about theology. You do not know anything about Calvinism. You do not know anything about Arminianism. You are just an honest Bible reader.

You tell me if you could, in any way, shape, or form, read these verses and have some kind of question mark in your mind as to whether the Corinthians were saved.

Look at 2 Corinthians 1:21-22. It says,

*"Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God" (2 Corinthians 1:21).*

Paul says, "I am anointed and you are anointed." So Paul is saying, "I am saved like you are saved." And if you are going to play this game of, "Well, we are not sure if the Corinthians were saved," then you have to say, "Well, maybe Paul was not saved."

And if Paul was not saved, we have big problems because we have thirteen books in the Bible written by an unregenerate man. Look at 2 Corinthians 1:22.

*"who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge" (2 Corinthians 1:22).*

"I have the Spirit. You have the Spirit." That is an impossible statement to make if Paul is talking to people who are potentially unsaved.

Slip over, if you could, to 2 Corinthians 1:24, not too far down. Second Corinthians 1:24 says,

*"Not that we lord it over your faith, but are workers with you for your joy; for in your faith you are standing firm" (2 Corinthians 1:24).*

Paul keeps saying "your faith," "your faith," "your faith," "your faith," over and over again. The Corinthians were obviously saved.

Go over to 2 Corinthians 3:2-3.

*"You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (2 Corinthians 3:2-3).*

Do the Corinthians look saved or unsaved to you? They obviously have all the earmarks of someone who is regenerated. The Spirit has written on their hearts. And Paul says, "The Spirit is written on your hearts, and He is written on my heart. He is written on our hearts."

Slip over to 2 Corinthians 6:14-16, where Paul tells the Corinthians, "Do not be bound together with unbelievers" (paraphrase). Can an unbeliever be bound together with another unbeliever? That does not make any sense. This whole exhortation only makes sense if they are already believers.

You cannot tell someone, "Do not be yoked to an unbeliever," if the person is still an unbeliever. This is the desert island test, right?

There is no way you could read this and assume that the Corinthians are unsaved, the way John Calvin is flipping a coin concerning the certainty of their salvation.

Second Corinthians 6:14 says,

*"Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with the darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we..." (2 Corinthians 6:14-16).*

"We"—first person plural. "I have this," Paul says, "and you have it."

*"...For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, 'I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE'" (2 Corinthians 6:16).*

So you have a group of people in Corinth, whether it is marriage, or false doctrine, or a temple prostitute, they are wanting to be joined to an unbeliever.

And Paul says, "What are you doing? Don't you know who you are? Don't you know that you are a child of light? Don't you know that you are a child of righteousness? "Don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and the temple of the living God? Don't you know that God dwells with you because you are His people? "Why in the world, if that is your spiritual status, would you join yourself in any way in an unequally yoked situation to an unsaved person?"

So again, that exhortation makes no sense at all if we are not sure whether the Corinthians are saved or not. Notice 2 Corinthians 8:9. In the context of this passage, Paul is raising money, and he is laying out the principles of grace giving, which is the financial system we are under.

A lot of people are saying, "If you do not tithe, then God is not going to release the blessings of heaven on your life." That is what the Book of Malachi says. That is the old covenant. That is dealing with Israel under the Mosaic Law. We are not under the Mosaic law. We are under the law of Christ. And if you want to know what principles of giving to follow, read 2 Corinthians 8-9, where no financial number is given.

"Well, pastor, how much should I give?" "Well, I don't know. That is between you and the Lord. Look at the principles of grace giving in 2 Corinthians 8-9 and make your decision accordingly." "Yeah, but, pastor, I want a precise number." "Well, the Bible is not going to give you a precise number." "Yeah, but it is there in Malachi." "Well, if you want to go under Malachi, you should be giving more than ten percent, because Israel took three tithes—did you know that?—two annually, and another every three years." So the Israelites were giving twenty-three and a third of the percentage of their income to the Lord. So if you want to go under Malachi, then you need to start ponying up a little more, folks.

But we are not under Malachi. We are under grace giving. And the Bible is not going to give you some kind of financial number to give from.

Now, if you want to tithe, that is great, but that is between you and the Lord. It is where you are at in terms of the principles of grace giving. You study the principles of grace

giving: give generously, give cheerfully, give secretly—these kinds of things. And then you go to the Lord with it and ask the Lord what you are supposed to give.

So in the midst of all of this context, Paul says,

*"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that through He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).*

If that is what the verse says—I think I am reading it right—how are unsaved people spiritually rich? And why would Paul ask for money from unsaved people whose salvation is in doubt?

You never ask for money from unsaved people. The responsibility of subsidizing the work of God rests in the hands of God's children, not unsaved people.

So my point is, the things that Paul says would not make sense if Paul had some kind of nagging doubt whether these people were saved, because they are not persevering enough.

Go over to 2 Corinthians 10:15. Paul says,

*"not boasting beyond our measure, that is, in other men's labors, but with the hope that as your faith grows, we will be, within our sphere, enlarged even more by you," (2 Corinthians 10:15).*

See where Paul says, "your faith grows" (2 Corinthians 10:15). How does that statement make any sense, if there is a nagging question mark in Paul's mind as to whether the Corinthians were saved or not?

So when John Calvin, as smart as he was, erudite as he was, as much as he was a good writer, says something here in his commentary on 1 Corinthians, that is just completely bogus.

It is just unfounded. Calvin says,

"[W]hat they [the Christians at Corinth] had attained so far is nothing,..."<sup>5</sup>

Does it sound like all those verses that I just read are nothing?

"...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>6</sup>

How does that statement fit any of the verses that we just went over?

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<sup>5</sup> John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960), p. 197.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

I just showed you the verses in 2 Corinthians. The last time we were doing this series, a couple of weeks back, I showed you the verses in 1 Corinthians. There is no way, being stranded on a desert island with no knowledge of Calvin or Calvinism, you could ever read the Bible that way.

So what Calvin has done is taken a system and imported it into the Scripture. So this, I think, becomes one of the great refutations to the doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints.

Now let's go over to 1 Corinthians 3:1-3. Let me show this to you. In 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, Paul says,

*"And I, brethren,..." (1 Corinthians 3:1).*

Who are the "brethren"? Saved people. You do not call unsaved people "brethren."

*"And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:1).*

You show me one time where Paul uses that prepositional phrase "in Christ" (my professor J. Dwight Pentecost says that phrase, "in Christ," sums up Paul's theology)—

You show me one time in the New Testament in Paul's writings where "in Christ" refers to anyone other than a believer.

*"And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you..." (1 Corinthians 3:1-2).*

What does a carnal Christian look like? And what does this word "carnal" even mean? "Carnal" means "flesh": being devoted to the flesh—being saved but still living for the sin nature. "Carnal" is where we get the word "meat" or "flesh." We talk about the incarnation of Christ. That is the enfleshment of Christ, who had no sin nature.

Have you ever had some chili con carne, chili with meat? That is what "carne" means: "meat," similar to "carnal," which means "flesh."

*"And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:1).*

Well, what does that look like?

*"I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able;" (1 Corinthians 3:2).*

In other words, "You have been in this position of carnal Christianity for a long time."

What Paul is saying is, "You guys should have grown up a long time ago. You guys are thriving on milk, but you are rejecting meat. "I mean, you guys love the three-points-and-a-poem sermons, but verse-by-verse exposition, no thank you."

That is carnal Christianity. "You guys like motivational speakers, but you do not like in-depth Bible study." And when Paul criticizes them for this, he never says "You all have not been born," because birth had happened. The problem was growth.

The problem was not the first tense of salvation, justification. The problem was the middle tense of salvation, progressive sanctification.

*"and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal..." (1 Corinthians 3:2-3, NKJV).*

When an infant is sucking their thumb, it is cute, right? When they are doing it at the age of sixteen, the cuteness kind of wears off.

And it is not a problem with the sixteen-year-old's birth. It has to do with their maturity.

*"...you are still carnal. For where there are..." (1 Corinthians 3:3, NKJV).*

And how do you know if you are living for the flesh? Because your life is characterized by the following:

*"...envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?" (1 Corinthians 3:3).*

Who are the "mere men"? The unsaved. Paul says, "I look at your lives and I see no difference between you and unsaved people." And let me let you in on a little secret, folks. An out—of-fellowship Christian can out-sin an unbeliever any day of the week.

Do you want an example? David—first adultery, then murder. Those are pretty big, right? And yet, this is the guy that is writing most of our Psalms. So if you are going to play this game of, "Well, David did not persevere. And if David had died in that state, we do not know if he would have gone to heaven."—you have a big problem because most of our Psalms are written by David. (A lot of the Psalms are written in regret for what he did.)

In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul says, "There is immorality here in Corinth. A man has his father's wife—incest." And Paul says, "It is so bad that the unsaved do not even act this way."

So that is why I tell you that an out-of-fellowship Christian, a carnal Christian, can out-sin an unbeliever any day of the week.

And if you do not believe that you can do that as a Christian, then the devil has you right where he wants you. How can you be warned against carnal Christianity if you do not think you have the potential of becoming a carnal Christian?

## 4 Kinds of People from 1 Corinthians 3:1-3



So you will notice that what the Apostle Paul does here is he takes the world and divides it into two (represented by blue and green).

First is the "mere men" (1 Corinthians 3:3). Those are the unsaved. Then the rest would be saved people. Green represents saved. Blue represents unsaved.

Now, Calvinism would stop right there. You are in or you are out. You are saved or you are unsaved. You are one of the elect or you are not one of the elect. You are persevering or you are not persevering.

And I am here to tell you that their analysis is a very poor reading on what Paul is saying, because what Paul just did in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 is he took the world of the saved and he divided it into three. Don't take my word for it. Read it for yourself. In 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, you will see the expression "mere men" referring to the unsaved. You will see the expression "carnal" referring to the saved. You will see the expression "infants" referring to the saved; and you will see the expression "spiritual people" referring to the saved.

When Paul Washer says that this doctrine of carnal Christianity has sent more people to hell than any other doctrine,<sup>7</sup> I am thinking to myself, have you ever read 1 Corinthians 3? First Corinthians 3 talks about carnal Christianity. Is it promoting it—"Yay! Let's all end up like this"? Absolutely not. It is warning against it. But you cannot warn against something that is an impossibility.

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<sup>7</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/>).

So you can be in a Reformed, Calvinistic environment, and hear nothing like this, because they will not bring up stuff like this, since it goes against the "P" in TULIP, the Perseverance of the Saints.

So Paul (green half in the diagram) took the world of the saved and divided it into three. There are the spiritual believers. These are the people that are not sinless, but they are sinning less. They are growing.

By the way, as a pastor, these are people that will bless your socks off. They are a complete joy to be around. They are a blessing. And you wonder, "Why isn't everybody else in the church like them?"

Well, because Paul says, "Let's start dividing up the saved a little bit." Underneath the spiritual are the infants. These are people sucking their thumb, because it is age-appropriate.

But after you move through the infants, you get the carnal people, who are still acting like infants, although they should have grown out of it a long time ago.

They are still sucking their thumb at the age of sixteen. They are carnal because they keep going back to the sin nature. They keep going back to the flesh over and over again, and their life is characterized by such.

They are filled with envy and strife, and they come into churches and cause division (1 Corinthians 3:3). They cannot sit through much.

"Boy pastor, you sure preached for a long time,"—always looking at the clock. "You are interfering with my lunch hour"—that kind of thing.

And you just look at them and you just say, "I hope they grow beyond where they are. Because at some point, you have to start taking in deeper truth to mature correctly."

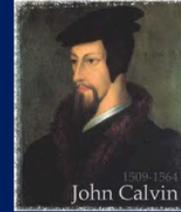
The carnal Christian is a legitimate category. I think it was Earl Radmacher who said that the evangelical church is the biggest nursery on Planet Earth. Our churches are filled with people like this. And you should not be in that condition, and you should come out of that condition. But you cannot come out of a condition if you do not even think the condition is possible.

That is why, when someone is living in a carnal way, I do not sit there and say, "Well, they were not saved. I do not know if they are saved or not." That is God's business. I just know that God, in His Word, in the Church Age in particular, has a category for people who are saved, but are not persevering. This fact takes the Perseverance of the Saints and throws it out.

And this one is related here. Let me show this one to you.

## Examples of New Testament Non-Persevering Saints

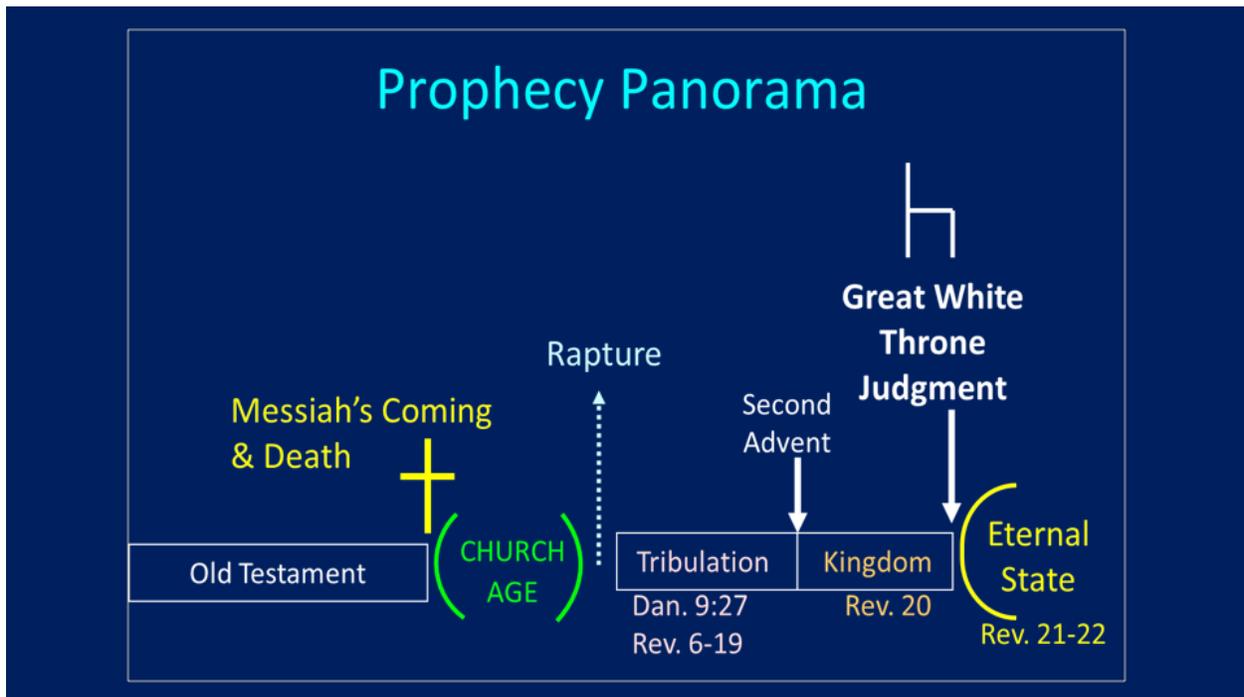
1. Untrustworthy believers (John 2:23-25)
2. Non-confessing believers (John 12:42)
3. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)
4. Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:13)
5. Immature believers at Corinth (1 Cor. 3:1-3)
6. **Unrewarded believers at Corinth (1 Cor. 3:15)**
7. Disciplined believers at Corinth (1 Cor. 11:27-32)
8. Demas (2 Tim. 4:10; Col. 4:14)
9. Immature believers in Hebrews (Heb. 5:11-14)
10. Seven churches in Asia Minor (Rev. 3:19)



Another example of non-persevering saints is found in 1 Corinthians 3:15—the unrewarded believers at the Bema Seat Judgment.

There is coming into your future, whether you like it or not, a judgment of rewards. Second Corinthians 5:10 says,

*"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ..." (2 Corinthians 5:10).*



This life will end in judgment for the unsaved and the saved. For us it ends in judgment post-Rapture in the Father's house, as the events of the Tribulation Period are occurring.

In that judgment, God is going to take not our selves, but our works, through a fire to ascertain their quality. The things that we invested of a carnal variety, trying to get popular or whatever, trying to get carnal things, those works will go into the fire. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 that the carnal works will go into the fire and be consumed.

By contrast, those things we did with pure motives, under God's power, not out of human scheming or manipulation, will go into the fire and they will be revealed as gold, silver, and costly stones, which are noncombustible, compared to the wood, hay, and stubble which are combustible.

And the only thing the fire is doing is determining their quality. Is this wood, hay, and stubble—carnality? Or is this gold, silver, and costly stones—non-carnality?

So, we are not going through the fire, but our works are going through a fire. And we know that only the precious stones are left by the fire, because a fire cannot destroy gold, silver, and costly stones. The fire can only refine the stones a little bit. It cannot destroy them. But boy, it sure can destroy wood, hay, and stubble.

<b>Scripture's Four Judgments</b>				
Name	Sheep and Goat	Judgment of the Jews	<a href="#">Bema Seat</a>	Great White Throne
Scripture	Matt 25:31-46	Ezek 20:33-44	<a href="#">1 Cor 3:10-15</a>	Rev 20:11-15
Place	Earth, Jerusalem	Earth, wilderness	<a href="#">Heaven</a>	Earth
Audience	Gentile Tribulation survivors	Jewish Tribulation survivors	<a href="#">Church Age believers</a>	All unsaved
When	After Tribulation	After Tribulation	<a href="#">After rapture</a>	After Millennium
Purpose	Saved Gentiles enter kingdom	Saved Jews enter kingdom	<a href="#">Reward believers</a>	Degree of punishment in hell
Evaluation	Treatment of Christ's brethren	Passing under shepherd's rod	<a href="#">Works taken through fire</a>	Not in the book; judged by books

So, there we are at the Bema Seat Judgment of Christ. Our lives—not us, but our works—are going through this fire, and whatever is left after the fire finishes its work, is apparently some kind of reward that we receive above and beyond salvation.

Now, that is your future as a Christian. It is different from the sheep and goat judgment, which is dealing with survivors of the Tribulation Period on the earth. Your future as a Christian is different from the judgment of the Jews, which is dealing with the survivors of the Tribulation Period on Earth.

It is different from the Great White Throne judgment, which is only for unbelievers. So what does Paul say?

*"If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss;..." (1 Corinthians 3:15).*

You are at the Bema Seat judgment of Christ, and there is this moment of regret because you are saying to yourself, "What could have been, had I left carnal Christianity."

Now, Calvinism would come along and say, "Well, such people are unsaved, because they did not persevere." But what does the Bible say?

*"If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire" (1 Corinthians 3:15).*

You are in heaven—praise God for that! But you can still smell the smoke on your garments (Jude 1:23). And I look at this and I say, "You know, Lord, I do not want to end up like that. I want to get to heaven. And I am glad I am automatically going.

"I do not want to end up like that. So help me. Take me out of the state of carnality that I have been living in way too long."

Now, I knew a Calvinist when I was in seminary. He was a very strong Calvinist. He wanted to talk to me about all these things. So we planned almost like an all-nighter when I came with all my books, and he came with all his books. And we sat there in two chairs across from each other.

And we talked about this for hours and hours and hours and hours. (I do not know if I would recommend you do stuff like that, but I did stuff like that in the days of my fiery youth. I cannot stay up very late anymore.)

But I remember when this whole Perseverance of the Saints thing came up. I showed him this verse, 1 Corinthians 3:15, and he looked at it as if he had never seen it before. I said, "Just read it yourself. Forget me. Forget I am even here. Forget about winning an argument. That does not matter. Just read it and you tell me what it says."

And he looked at it, and it was almost as if he had been blinded to that verse. And yet it is there. And if it is there, does it not disprove the doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints? Part of the problem is that the Neo-Calvinists do not have a Bema Seat Judgment in their belief system. And I have this quote that I want to read to you, but I am flat out of time, so we will do that next time. We will pick it up right here.