

Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible 051

Romans 4:5

November 30, 2025

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Let's take our Bibles and open them to Romans 4:5.

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




1509-1564
John Calvin

Here we are, continuing our study "Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible." We are looking at the mnemonic device TULIP and comparing it with Scripture. We are at the "P," the Perseverance of the Saints. Perseverance of the Saints is not the same thing as the preservation of the saints, as we have talked about.

V. Running TULIP Through the Grid of Scripture

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



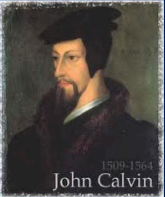
T Total Depravity
U Unconditional Election
L Limited Atonement
I Irresistible Grace
P Perseverance of the Saints

"P" stands for 'Perseverance of the Saints.' This is what Calvinists say gives them the assurance of eternal security, but in actuality 'the emphasis is upon the believer's faithfulness in persevering—not upon God's keeping

power...uncertainty as to one's ultimate salvation is, in fact, built into the very fabric of Calvinism itself."¹

E. Perseverance of the Saints

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



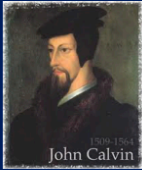
1509-1564
John Calvin

I have given you some quotes showing that Calvinists do teach this. John Calvin himself said,

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

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**



1509-1564
John Calvin

As we are critiquing "P" in the Calvinist pneumatic device, we have gone through all of these subpoints and we are at "h," which is our last subpoint in the series: the problem with the "P" (Perseverance of the Saints) is that it destroys the assurance of salvation. There is no possible way that you can believe what the Calvinists teach and know with

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

² 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 hundred percent certainty that you are going to heaven when you die, because you really do not know if you are persevering enough.

So the last time I was with you, we laid out the biblical case for the assurance of salvation. First John 5:13 says,

"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13).

Does that look like there is any uncertainty there? It does not say anything about monitoring the rest of your life to see if you are in or not. It is just an immediate assurance that comes from God by way of an objective promise the moment you place your faith in Christ for salvation. And that is where your assurance of salvation comes from.

But we are living in a world, particularly the evangelical world, Christendom, that is dominated by Calvinism or Arminianism. Calvinism teaches that you have to persevere to the end to prove you were saved to begin with. Arminianism says that you have to persevere to the end, or God can yank your salvation away from you. So whichever way you go with this—and these are the two systems that have the dominant market share—the end result of it is that you have an epidemic of people in the church world today that really do not know if they are going to heaven or not.

A lot of them are pretty sure, kind of sure, kind of like the weather report: maybe it is going to rain, maybe it is not, but I am pretty sure I am going to make it. That is no assurance at all. That is not what 1 John 5:13 says. It says,

"These things I have written to you..." (1 John 5:13).

Notice that the only way you are going to ever tap into this promise is if you get it from the written Word of God. Feelings cannot give you this assurance because feelings are very subjective.

"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know [there is no ambiguity there, is there?] that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13).

Most of the church world, because of their steady diet of either Calvinism or Arminianism, depending on who they listen to and what churches they attend, do not have assurance. So when you get into this subject of assurance and people say, "How do I know I am really saved?" Typically the answer goes back to something subjective within you. "Do you hate sin? Do you love the brethren? Do you attend church regularly? Are you a person of prayer?"

Those are what Lewis Sperry Chafer called "secondary evidences."³ I am not discounting those things, but they are not the primary evidence of your assurance. The

³ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Salvation: A Clear Doctrinal Analysis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 60.

primary evidence of your assurance comes from what God has objectively said in His Word, and God cannot lie. Lewis Sperry Chafer writes,

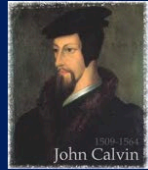
"There is a normal Christian experience. There are new and blessed emotions and desires. Old things do pass away; and behold all things do become new; but all such experiences are but secondary experiences, as to the fact of salvation, in that they grow out of that positive repose of faith which is the primary evidence."⁴

The primary evidence that you are heaven-bound is what God said in His Word. Now the feelings can act as secondary evidences, but you do not fly an airplane based on secondary evidences. You can have feelings one day and the next day they could disappear. You fly an airplane not based on feelings. You fly it based on what the compass which cannot lie to you, says.

The basic problem with Calvinism and Arminianism is that they never teach this. It is all introspective. So this is why there is this huge epidemic of people within the church world who really do not know if they are Christians or not.

h) Destroys the Assurance of Salvation

- 1) The Biblical View of the Assurance of Salvation**
- 2) Examples of How the "Perseverance of the Saints" Destroys the Assurance of Salvation
- 3) Calvinism's "Two Kinds of Faith" Doctrine damages the Assurance of Salvation



A small portrait of John Calvin, a French theologian, is positioned to the right of the list. The portrait shows him from the chest up, wearing a dark cap and a white clerical collar. Below the portrait, the text "1509-1564 John Calvin" is visible.

So we have some examples of how the Perseverance of the Saints concept destroys the assurance of salvation. I have given some of these quotes to you already. Here is the Westminster Confession. It says,

"This infallible assurance..."⁵

Here it is talking about the assurance of salvation. This is a very Calvinistic-influenced doctrine.

"This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith..."⁶

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Westminster Confession Chapter XVII, Article III – Of the Assurance of Grace and Salvation.

⁶ Ibid.

What they are saying is that assurance of salvation does not come to you the moment you trust Christ as your Savior. And I am saying that is what the Bible says: assurance of salvation is immediately yours, at your fingertips, if you want it, the moment you trust Christ.

"This infallible assurance doth not so much belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer will wait long, and conflict with many difficulties before he be a partaker of it."⁷

What they are saying is, "Yeah, you are saved. You trusted Jesus for salvation. Congratulations. But we really do not know if you are one of the elect yet, and you do not know if you are one of the elect yet, unless you persevere. And maybe after a long period of time, if you go through a great conflict and many difficulties—that is three things you have to go through: a long time, great conflict, and many difficulties—then you can have assurance of salvation."

What we are saying is that is not a biblical teaching. The biblical teaching is that you know that you are saved because of God's objective Word. So what you discover as you get into Calvinism is that the Calvinists themselves do not even know if they are saved, which is so tragic. It is kind of like what Paul predicted in the last days. People will be deceivers, deceiving and being deceived (2 Timothy 3:13). They perpetuate all of this insecurity and uncertainty as false teachers, and they themselves are deceived by their own doctrine.

John Piper writes,

"What causes me to be anxious is the possibility that I may not be a Christian—..."⁸

I do not know about you, but I do not give that any thought whatsoever. I do not sit around saying, "I wonder if I am a Christian," because I believe the primary evidence. But Piper does not believe the primary evidence. He believes the secondary evidence. Some days he feels like a Christian. Some days he does not.

By the way, do you want to know where counseling issues come from? Why are people so filled with anxiety and fear, and always want to come in for counseling? "I have to talk to a pastor. I have to have a word from the Lord." Why is there this epidemic of people that need this? And if you do not think people want this, all you have to do is hang around in our office for a while or watch the emails that come in. People want to hear something from a pastor, telling them that they are saved.

Why all this counseling? Why all this anxiety? I am not against counseling if people need that. But the counseling load could be cut ninety-five percent with good theology. The truth of the matter is that the pulpit is able to correct ninety-five percent of

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ John Piper's Interview on Family Life Radio April 14, 2020, <https://www.familylife.com/podcast/familylife-today/strategies-for-standing-firm-through-coronavirus/>.

counseling issues in a church just by putting people under proper doctrine, because if they are under proper doctrine, all of this anxiety that they have would not exist.

So look at this anxiety that John Piper, who spent his career in life promoting this Perseverance of the Saints, experiences. Look at what he himself says concerning his own uncertainty of salvation. (This is from a podcast interview that he did April 14, 2020, a Family Life podcast. You can go listen to it yourself.) He says,

"What causes me to be anxious is the possibility that I may not be a Christian—that I might be fake / that everything I've ever done might be a farce—those are horrible, horrible thoughts; right?"⁹

And I say, "Right, and you do not even have to go down this road if you understood what the Bible actually says." So as you get into the literature, this is rather common in Calvinistic circles. I have already shared with you the research of R. T. Kendall, who in his doctoral dissertation at Oxford University did an exhaustive study of the Puritans, very Calvinistic people that God worked through to found America.

Kendall noticed from the Puritans' writings—and they were voluminous writers—that almost to a man they went to their graves, fearful of whether they were going to heaven or not, because they were very Calvinistic, and they bought into the Perseverance of the Saints. They did not know if the good they did outweighed the bad, thereby proving their one of the elect.

Kendall writes,

"Interestingly, it has been recorded that 'nearly all of the Puritan "divines" [men who were Calvinistic and taught the Perseverance of the Saints] went through great dread and despair on their deathbeds...'"¹⁰

That is the last place where you need to be in despair, because you already have enough problems on your deathbed. The last thing you need to be worried about is "Am I going to heaven or not?"

"...as they realized their lives did not give perfect evidence that they were elect."¹¹

Well, the problem is that they are looking at the secondary evidence and not the primary evidence. The primary evidence is the objective truth of God's Word. Now, if you want to go to your deathbed this way, I guess you can, but you are living way beneath your privileges. If you want to spend your life in fear about whether you are a Christian or not, you have permission to live like that if you want. But the truth of the matter is that you are living way below what Jesus came into the world to fix.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 2.

¹¹ Ibid.

You will find Perseverance of the Saints in Roman Catholic teaching. This is a quote of Cardinal John O'Connor of New York back in 1990. He says,

"Church teaching..."¹²

There is the problem right there. See, we should not really care about church teaching. What we should care about is Bible teaching.

"Church teaching is that I don't know, at any given moment, what my eternal future will be...I can hope, pray, do my very best—..."¹³

See all the "I"'s here? "I," "I," "my," "I." Did I miss any? As long as you are looking at yourself, you are going to have all kinds of doubts. I cannot think of a more depressing subject than looking at yourself all day long. Get your eyes off yourself and get them onto the promises of God.

"Church teaching is that I don't know, at any given moment, what my eternal future will be..."¹⁴

Now, he is in a world of hurt with his doctrine, because Roman Catholicism basically teaches that it is a combination of faith plus works that gets you justified. So it is like God bought lunch, now you had better leave the tip. And how do you leave a tip? Well, you have to pay, pray, and obey. And you never really know if you have paid, prayed, and obeyed enough. So you are in a state of anxiety, and you always need counseling because your doctrine is off.

"Church teaching is that I don't know, at any given moment, what my eternal future will be...I can hope,..."¹⁵

The Bible uses the word "hope," but not the way he is using it. The word "hope" in the Bible is one hundred percent certitude. It is not like, "Gee, I hope gas prices stay down." There is no contingency in biblical hope.

"...I can hope, pray, do my very best—but I still don't know. Pope John II doesn't absolutely know that he will go to heaven, nor does mother Theresa of Calcutta,..."¹⁶

Think if you were a Catholic and this guy is standing up and he is saying, "We are not sure if Mother Theresa is going to make it." What does that do for the rest of the Catholics?

¹² Cardinal John O'Connor of NY, quoted in Samuel Howe Verhovek, "Cardinal Defends a Jailed Bishop Who Warned Cuomo on Abortion," *New York Times*, February 1, 1990.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

"...unless either has a special divine revelation."¹⁷

Well, I would suggest this to Cardinal John O'Connor. You do have a special divine revelation. It is called 1 John 5:13. You are either going to believe that or you are not.

One of the very sad things about Roman Catholicism is the discouragement that they place on Bible study and Bible teaching. It is all about church teaching. But God, when He came into the world, did not give us a bunch of church teaching. He gave us His written Word, which is objectively true, and God cannot lie.

So this is how Catholicism thinks. And is it any wonder that this kind of thinking would show up in Calvinism? Calvin admits that he got his doctrine from Augustine, going back over a thousand years from the time of John Calvin, and Augustine is known as "the Catholic's Catholic." Calvin would later write, over a thousand years after the time of Augustine,

"Augustine is so wholly with me, that if I wished to write a confession of my faith, I could do so with all fullness and satisfaction to myself out of his writings."¹⁸

So Calvin is saying, "When Augustine talks, I talk." And this is how a guy at the age of twenty-six came up with this theological masterpiece (so-called), Calvin's "Institutes." He admits here in this quote that he basically grabbed the whole thing from Augustine. In fact, as you are reading Calvin, he keeps saying "Saint Augustine." He calls him a saint. "Saint Augustine says this. Father Augustine says that."

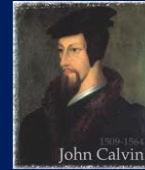
Since Calvin is borrowing so heavily from Augustine, and Augustine, who influenced Roman Catholicism, taught the Perseverance of the Saints doctrine, it is not any big shock that the same doctrine would come out of Calvinistic teaching, Calvinistic writing, and Calvinistic preaching. As Solomon said, there is really nothing new under the sun. This is just a carte blanche regurgitation of what Augustine, the Catholic's Catholic, taught back in the fourth century A.D.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ John Calvin, "A Treatise on the Eternal Predestination of God," in *John Calvin, Calvin's Calvinism*, trans. Henry Cole (Grandville, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1987), 38.

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So you can clearly see from these quotes (and the last time I was with you, I showed you a lot more) that if you believe what the Calvinists are saying, you will never have the assurance of salvation.

I want to move into this here. We dealt with this a little bit last time. I just introduced it. The thing that annihilates the assurance of salvation is the doctrine that Calvinists have which teaches that there are two kinds of faith. There is the faith that saves and the faith that does not save.

Remember from earlier in our series, the Calvinists think that faith is a gift given to some. It has nothing to do with you and your heart to believe. It has to do with God infusing the gift of faith to the elect. So there is the faith that saves and the faith that does not save. There is the faith that comes from God and the faith that comes from you.

The first kind of faith Calvinists call "true faith." It will always manifest itself in sorrow over sin, contrition, or something like that—good works. But if it is just your faith, then they have a word for it. They call it "spurious faith," or "illusory faith."

Well, then who has the faith that comes from God and who has the fake faith? The Calvinists' answer is, "Time will tell." If you really are one of the elect and the gift of faith has been infused into you, granted from above, then you are always going to be at Wednesday night Bible study. You are always going to be involved in the service projects of the church. You are always going to come early and stay late. And if you are not, we are going to keep our eye on you. Maybe you are not one of the elect.

"Hey, sister so-and-so missed choir practice Thursday evening. I don't know, maybe she is one of those fake Christians." I have been in environments where this leads to severe judgmentalism. I was in a church in the Dallas area where this guy who had been wrapped up in this teaching (he was a John Piper guy, an R. C. Sproul guy) would just categorically tell me, "There are people in this church who really are not Christians."

It is rather interesting how he was always looking at other people's Christianity. I felt like saying, "Well, how do you know you are not a fake Christian?" So it leads to this fruit-inspecting mentality, not so much in yourself, but in other people.

It does also lead to fruit inspecting in yourself, because if you are consistent, then you apply your rules to yourself—maybe you do not have the real faith. So that is why Piper talks about this anxiety. Sproul talks about it too: this anxiety that he has—maybe he is not really one of the elect.

So do the Calvinists teach this two-faiths doctrine? They teach it all the time. Here is a quote from Calvinist William Hendriksen, in his commentary on John's Gospel. He is commenting on people in John 2 who believed in Jesus, but Jesus did not entrust Himself to them. We have dealt with that passage in the past, so I will not belabor that. But notice what he says:

"Many trusted in his name; i.e., because of the manner in which his power was displayed they accepted him as a great prophet and perhaps as even the Messiah. This, however, is not the same as saying that they surrendered their hearts to him."¹⁹

He just added a condition to justification right there: justification is not just faith alone, it is faith plus surrender. The Calvinists say that is the only way to know that you have been infused with faith from above, because it will always bear fruit.

"This, however, is not the same as saying that they surrendered their hearts to him. Not all faith is saving faith..."²⁰

And I cannot tell you the number of people who believe that is true. And if not all faith is saving faith—if that is what you believe—your whole life now as a Christian has been neutralized. Rather than spending all the energy it takes to figure out, "Do I have the right kind of faith or not?" you could have channeled that energy somewhere else.

You could have channeled that energy into your gifting, into service. You could have just been sold out for Jesus, serving the Lord one hundred percent the rest of your life, and not wasting mental energy figuring out if you are one of the elect. This is why Satan is working the way he is through these false doctrines. He knows that if he can get enough people to believe this propaganda, then the energy that could have been invested into something productive has been wasted.

Hendriksen says,

"This, however, is not the same as saying that they surrendered their hearts to him. Not all faith is saving faith..."²¹

¹⁹ William Hendriksen, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 3d ed. (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1964), p. 127. (1978). *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 135. (1978). *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 135.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

So if not all faith is saving faith, what is my sentence as a Christian? I have to spend my whole life wondering if I have the right kind of faith. Do I have the faith that is infused from above, or do I just have spurious faith?

You go to a Calvinist and you ask them, "What is the answer to the question?" And their answer is, "Time will tell." If you have received faith as a gift, it will persevere. If you have not received faith as a gift, it will disappear.

John MacArthur writes,

"As a divine gift, faith..."²²

There is a problem right there, because the gift is salvation. The gift is eternal life. Faith is not the gift. Faith is the means by which the gift is acquired. It is the means by which the gift of salvation is transferred to your account. MacArthur is confusing the gift with the means by which it is gained. We dealt with that a lot earlier in the series, showing you that there is no exegetical support for that belief that he is promoting here.

Yet it just rolls right off his pen, as if what he is saying here is not controversial. And he is a best-selling author, so who would dare question him? But you should question him. You should question everything anybody wants to teach you, particularly at a spiritual, eternal level, including yours truly. That is what the Bereans did with Paul. I will make reference to that in our sermon that is coming later.

"As a divine gift, faith is neither transient nor impotent. It has an abiding quality that guarantees its endurance to the end."²³

How do I know that I have the right kind of faith, and that it is not a spurious faith or an illusory faith? The answer is, "Time will tell, because if it is the right kind of faith, it will always endure."

Here MacArthur goes again. I feel like Ronald Reagan about Jimmy Carter—"There you go again." MacArthur says in the same book,

"...The faith God gives can never evaporate."²⁴

Really? So a Christian cannot have doubts. I will show you in the Bible that Christians do have doubts. Christians have to battle doubt every single day of their lives. But in the Calvinistic mindset, if I have a doubt about something, boy, maybe I do not have the right kind of faith. Maybe it is the illusory faith, the spurious faith, the not real faith, because it is not abiding. And maybe I have never been given the gift of faith. And if I have never been given the gift of faith, maybe that means I am not one of the elect.

²² John F. MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus: What Does Jesus Mean When He Says, "Follow Me"?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 173.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, p. 173.

Here is John MacArthur again in his book called "Saved Without a Doubt." I cannot think of a more mistitled book in the history of the church than this. When you read this stuff, all you are going to be filled with is doubt. MacArthur says,

"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."²⁵

Why does he say "saving faith"? Because there are two kinds of faith.

"How many people do you know who came to church for a while, had a little trouble in their lives, and left? 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."²⁶

How do I know that I have the right kind of faith that comes from God? Because it is always going to endure.

James White, in his book "The Potter's Freedom," says the same thing. And it is really interesting that when John MacArthur has his Shepherds Conferences (I guess they are still having them even though he passed away recently) what you will notice on the platform is people like James White, Steve Lawson, and the guy from Houston that passed away recently, Voddie Baucham.

These guys are all over the map eschatologically. Baucham was an anti-Israel post-Millennialist. James White is an Amillennialist. Steven Lawson is okay on eschatology. But all these guys are there together on the same platform. And I say to myself, "Is this not very interesting? Here is a pre-Mil, pre-Trib, Amil, post-Trib, pro-Zionist, anti-Israel group all on the same stage."

Why is that? Because "blessed is the tie that binds," as the song goes. What is the common strand in all these guys? Their adherence to the Calvinistic system. So the most important thing in the MacArthur ministry, evidenced by whom he platforms, is Calvinism. Everything else is up in the air.

I like to bring this up because a lot of people get on my case and try to defend MacArthur, saying, "Yeah, but he is still a dispensationalist like you. He is still pre-Millennial like you. He is still pre-Tribulational like you." And he probably is. But he sure platforms a lot of guys who do not share that perspective, which shows me that his eschatological perspective is not what drives his ministry. It is the Calvinistic perspective.

James White says,

"Why do some stumble and fall while others persevere?"²⁷

²⁵ John MacArthur, *Saved Without A Doubt*, p. 177.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ James R. White, *The Potter's Freedom* (Amityville, NY: Calvary Press Publishing, 2000), 293.

If I was going to answer that—"Why do some stumble and fall while others persevere?"²⁸—I would probably say, "They are not taught right. They are not really taught the principles of discipleship. It is more of a growth issue than a birth issue." But James White would say "No, the issue is that some have the real faith and some have the fake faith. Some have the faith that comes from God. Some have the illusory, spurious faith."

"Why do some stumble and fall while others persevere? Is it that some are better, stronger, than others? No. The reason lies in the difference between having saving faith and a faith that is not divine in origin or nature."²⁹

Aha! So we have two kinds of faith here. There is the divine faith, and there is the man-made faith.

"The reason lies in the difference between having saving faith and a faith that is not divine in origin or nature. Many are those who make professions not based on regeneration, and the 'faith' that is theirs will not last..."³⁰

How do I know that I have the right kind of faith? "Time will tell." That is the Calvinists' answer.

"These are those who have false, human faith that does not last. But those with true faith [meaning that it comes from God and not yourself] produce fruit and remain."³¹

So you get into the Calvinists' literature and their writings and they say this around the clock. They say this in their sermons. They say this in their broadcasts. They say this in their books. And this is all most of the Christian world hears, so they believe this is true. So the Christian world is left with question marks—Do I have the right kind of faith or not?

So it is the two kind of faiths concept that the Calvinists promulgate 24/7, which has stolen something that God wants every child of God to have: not just the doctrine of eternal security, which Calvinists believe in, but that you know that you possess it from the instant you take Christ as your Savior by way of faith. The Calvinists have taken that away from you.

A lot of people think that Steven Lawson was the guy that was going to replace John MacArthur. He was being sort of groomed for that. And that is why, with his moral failing, the John MacArthur ministry does not have a pastor yet, because Lawson was their go-to guy. So now they are left scrambling because this guy had a fall. And if he

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

had a fall, maybe the guy that was handpicked to replace John MacArthur was not one of the elect.

Rather than come around this guy and, whatever issue he had, give him encouragement, give him counsel, give him exhortation, give him correction, and give him rebuke, in the hope of restoring him, which is the Christian way of doing things, we are going to isolate the guy, and throw rocks at the guy till he is dead, because he had a moral spill. Maybe he had a moral spill because he had the wrong kind of faith. Maybe he had the faith that came from him and not from God. This is horrific what they are doing with this stuff.

But here is Steven Lawson speaking very boldly before his fall. And when I talk about people falling, I do not do it with any sense of glee or anything like that. You have to hear my heart on this. My heart is "There go I but for the grace of God."

Lawson boldly says,

"A believer will never become an unbeliever, because faith is a gift from God."³²

Here is a quote from John Piper. Look at this quote. This is so unbelievable to me. I had to actually be sure he said it. This is from John Piper's "Desiring God," 1986 version. This quote also appeared in the 1996 reprinting of "Desiring God," but it was rephrased in the 2003 and 2011 versions.

Why do they rephrase stuff? Because they get blowback. "That is just too bold. Let's change this." And when they rephrase it, they do not come out in 2003 and 2011 and say, "You know what? We repent that what we said was wrong." They do not do that. When they come out with a subsequent edition, they just massage the language a little bit so that it is a little bit more marketable.

I would think that if you say something that is as completely and totally outrageous as this quote is, that calls for some kind of public repentance, and maybe—I do not know how it works in the publishing world like I should—some kind of recall of all the books on the shelves and some kind of service announcement that "Boy, we sure messed up, you know?"

Theodore Epp taught the gap theory: that there are a missing million years or billion years between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2. He basically got convicted of the fact that the whole thing was a sham. So Theodore Epp got his whole staff together and did a public repentance of ever teaching the gap theory. That I respect.

What I do not respect is people just brushing something under the rug and pretending as though they never said it and just massaging the language a little bit so that nobody's

³² Steven Lawson, at Ligonier Conference 2016, from image posted by Linda Schaefer on John MacArthur: Grace to You Ministry Appreciation Page, June 27, 2022 (<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/18UskTbfSx/>) and June 19, 2023 (<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1DubMrzbdP/>).

attention is called to it—"It depends what the meaning of the word is," and all this kind of nonsense. Some of these guys really should quit the pastorate and run for office. They would be way more effective there, in my opinion.

But anyway, look at what Piper says here. He says,

"Saving faith is no simple thing."³³

Is that what Jesus said? Did He say that saving faith is no simple thing?

Piper says,

"It has many dimensions. 'Believe on the Lord Jesus' [Acts 16:31] is a massive command."³⁴

"...!...*what must I do to be saved?*...'Believe in the Lord Jesus,...'" (Acts 16:30-31).

How many conditions do you see there to be made right with God? I am talking about justification right now. I am not dealing with growth, discipleship. How many conditions do you see there? There is one. Watch the magic that Piper works here.

"'Believe on the Lord Jesus' is a massive command. It contains a hundred other things."³⁵

Only someone involved in sophistry could change one condition and convert it into one hundred conditions.

"Unless we see this, the array of conditions for salvation in the New Testament will be utterly perplexing."³⁶

John, it is not perplexing at all if you keep justification and discipleship separate. Now, if you do not want to do that, and you do not want to talk about the three phases of salvation, and you want to just do this "ram, jam, and cram" method and merge everything together, then yeah, it is perplexing.

But Piper just took something that is so simple and so easy, and he turned it into an insane maze of Pharisaism with the stroke of a pen. Then he came out later on and rewrote it to tone it down a little bit without saying, "I messed it up. I am sorry. I was wrong."

When someone admits that they are wrong about something, I go and buy their book because it shows me that they are humble. But people do not do that. They write

³³ John Piper, *Desiring God* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1986), 65. This quote also appeared verbatim in the 1996 reprinting of *Desiring God*, but it was rephrased in the 2003 and 2011 editions.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

something, and then they spend the rest of their career defending what they wrote, even though what they wrote is crazy. That is the world that we are living in.

I just say to the Lord, "Lord, I never want to get like that." If you are wrong about something, particularly something big like salvation, then just say that you were wrong. People will accept that. Ethics professors tell you that it is not the first infraction that gets you. It is the cover up. That is where most people get caught. Just ask Richard Nixon about that sometime.

It is not so much the initial infraction, but it is trying to cover up what you did. That is where you get busted. And so if you mess something up, the best advice that you could be given is "Just 'fess up, do what you can to correct it, and move on." The problem is this constant subterfuge and deliberate ambiguity. So that is why with John Piper, I just have no respect at all for that.

Here is a quote about R. C. Sproul. When he was alive, he had a ministry called Ligonier Ministries. This is a quote about his national conference. They met every year in Orlando, Florida. It was very common to get 5,000 people in attendance. This is what Bob Wilkin, a free grace guy there to hear this, wrote about it.

This has to do with Dr. James Boice, whom I happen to have a high opinion of. I have James Boice books on my bookshelves. Maybe I disagreed with a few things he was saying about soteriology, but there was no doubt in my mind he was a believer. He made great contributions to the Christian faith.

This is what comes out of the mouth of R. C. Sproul in front of 5,000 people, as James Boice is dying. This statement was made back in 2000, I think. Wilkin, who was there, narrates this.

"During the first message presented at Ligonier's Conference in Orlando last June, Dr. R. C. Sproul indicated that Dr. James Boice, a scheduled speaker at the conference, was dying in faith that very night. Then at the end of the message he asked all 5,000 of us [Wilkin being an eyewitness] present to pray that Jim dies in faith."³⁷

"He is dying. Let's pray that as he leaves this world, he is a believer."

Wilkin writes,

"This struck me as sad. Here was [James Boice] a great pastor, theologian, teacher, and author. Yet Sproul was not sure that he was regenerate. (In Reformed thought, if a person fails to die in faith, he proved he was never saved in the first place.)"³⁸

³⁷ Bob Wilkin, "Ligonier National Conference" (The Grace Report, July 2000);

http://www.gracebiblestudies.org/Resources/Web/www.duluthbible.org/g_f_j/EternalSecurity12.htm.

³⁸ Ibid.

Look, you have dealt with people on their deathbed, no doubt. My dad was the latest I witnessed on his deathbed. They are in and out of lucidity constantly. You talk to my dad as he was dying, some of the things he said were very lucid. Others were totally off the wall, things like, "At the end of the bed, there are cattle," and weird stuff.

So am I going to say to myself, "Well, Dad, collect your thoughts quickly. Get orthodox fast, because you know you are dying, and you had better die in the faith. Because if you die saying there are cattle at the end of the bed, maybe your faith was spurious. Maybe it was not real."?

The way to test theology is by the Bible, obviously. But you also test it by whether it works in the real world. This kind of thing may sound great at a conference, but it has no workability in the real world because you have the reality of dementia and Alzheimer's and things like that. So when someone moves into that, according to this theology, do you sit around and second guess whether they are one of the elect? That does not make any sense at all.

"Yet Sproul was not sure that he was regenerate. (In Reformed thought, if a person fails to die in faith, he proved he was never saved in the first place.)"³⁹

Because after all, John MacArthur, in his book, said that the faith that is not real evaporates.

So you are dealing with a guy who bore massive fruit for Christianity (James Boice), and here is Sproul and his crowd second guessing his salvation as he is dying. Then Wilkin writes,

"I was reminded of R. T. Kendall's remark that nearly to a man..."⁴⁰

It was almost every single one of them. Kendall kept reading Puritan works and he kept seeing this pattern. As these people got to the end of their life, they were not sure if they were saved.

"I was reminded of R. T. Kendall's remark that nearly to a man the Puritan divines [men who were Calvinistic and taught perseverance] died doubting whether they were saved and fearing they were going to hell."⁴¹

So that is the concern that R. C. Sproul, in front of 5,000 people, had for James Boice at the end of Boice's life.

Wilkin writes,

"Dr. Boice died that very night, June 15th."⁴²

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

"Boy, did he die in the faith or not?" "Well, we do not know." If he died in the faith, that means his faith endured. That means he had the real faith, which is a gift from God because he was one of the elect. But if his faith lapsed, maybe it was the spurious faith, the illusory faith.

So my point is, how in the world can you have any assurance of salvation if you believe this two-faith doctrine? So, enough of that.

What does the Bible say? Are there two kinds of faith? The Bible knows no such teaching. You either believe or you do not. "Well, pastor, be careful now. You are promoting easy believism." Can someone show me the expression "easy believism" in the Bible? I do not find it in the Bible.

The plane is taking off. You are in the line to get on the plane so it can take off. I have gotten on planes very confident that the people running the plane knew what they were doing. But there are other times I have gotten on planes and I looked there at the cockpit and the pilots look like high school kids, and I am nervous. But the truth of the matter is that either I got on the plane nervous or I got on the plane confident, but I still got on the plane. That is faith. You either believe or you do not.

Now, if you believe, but there is some anxiety and nervousness about the whole thing, that is not a birth issue, that is a growth issue. But the point is that you believed. That is the only thing the Bible requires of people.

Vine's defines "believe," the Greek verb "pisteuo" (πιστεύω) as follows:

"'pisteuō'...'to believe,' also 'to be persuaded of,' and hence, 'to place confidence in, to trust,'..."⁴³

The first 16 years of my life I could regurgitate for you a lot of data about Jesus. I could tell you where He was born. I could tell you how He died. I could probably even tell you about His resurrection from the dead. But it was up here in my head. I was not trusting Him for anything. It was like an encyclopedia—encyclopedia knowledge.

Knowledge is a wonderful thing, but eventually knowledge has to move into trust. The moment I trusted in Christ for my salvation and the safe-keeping of my soul, knowledge moved to trust, and just like that, I was saved. That is what God requires. That is what "pisteuo" (πιστεύω) means. That is what "pistis" (πίστις) means.

"'pisteuō'...'to believe,' also 'to be persuaded of,' and hence, 'to place confidence in, to trust,' [these are all synonyms] signifies, in this sense of the word, reliance upon, not mere credence [not just encyclopedia information]. It is most frequent in the writings of the apostle John, especially the Gospel."⁴⁴

⁴³ W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of the Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville: Nelson, 1996), 61.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Now, why is that? Why does John use the word "believe" ("pisteuo" [πιστεύω]) ninety-nine times in his Gospel? Well, it is not hard to figure out why. At the end of John's Gospel, this is what John says, in John 20:31:

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

Aha! John's Gospel is different from the others. The others are more written to help believers with growth issues. John's Gospel, by contrast, is written to people who do not have life and have not believed.

So why even bring this up? Because you are going to get hit with a question by somebody—family, someone you work with—"Hey, I notice you are a Christian. I am investigating Christianity. I have this big Bible here, with sixty-six books in it. Where should I start?" Where would you send them? Would you send them to Leviticus?

You should send them to John, because the whole point of John's Gospel is to reach the unsaved. It is to portray who Jesus is through His seven "I AM" statements, through His seven signs (actually nine signs, because number eight is His resurrection and number nine is the miraculous catch of fish at the end of the Book of John), and through His seven discourses.

You are supposed to read that and you say, "Wow, this Jesus is different." He is not just some kind of David Copperfield act. He is the Son of God. He is the Christ. And then John says, "Don't stop there. Take your knowledge and trust in it so that you too can have the gift of life." That is why John wrote his Gospel. Matthew did not write for that purpose. Mark did not. Luke did not.

I am not saying that people cannot get saved by reading other parts of the Bible. I am just saying that you have to at some point become sensitive as to why certain books of the Bible were written. John tells you that he wrote to evangelize. That is why John uses the word "believe" ("pisteuo" [πιστεύω]) ninety-nine times in his Gospel.

Concerning "pisteuo" (πιστεύω), Vine's writes,

"It is most frequent in the writings of the apostle John, especially the Gospel. He does not use the noun ["pistis" (πίστις)]...Of the writers of the Gospels...uses of the verb...John ninety-nine."⁴⁵

Of the writers of the Gospels, John uses the verb "pisteuo" (πιστεύω) ninety-nine times, and that would make perfect sense when you understand why John's Gospel was written. That (belief) is how a person gets saved. So nothing here about a hundred things you have to do and all of that kind of stuff.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Genesis 15:6 says that Abraham believed in the Lord, and He credited to him as righteousness. See how simple that is? John 3:16, which you know by heart, says,

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

"... 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' [asked the Philippian jailer] They said, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved...'" (Acts 16:30-31).

So this "sola fide," as we call it, "faith alone"—you will find it in all of these passages. God set it up this way on purpose. It is in Romans 4:5.

"But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness" (Romans 4:5).

God set up salvation deliberately so that human beings cannot work for salvation. And in the mind of God, there is one thing that is not a work that a lost person can do to be made right with Him: to believe. All of this gets lost in church teaching.