

Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible 054

2 Timothy 2:13

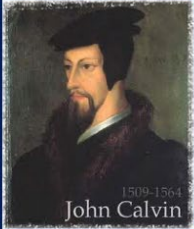
December 21, 2025

Dr. Andy Woods

Locate 2 Timothy 2:13.

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

We are going to try to finish the Calvinism study today.

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

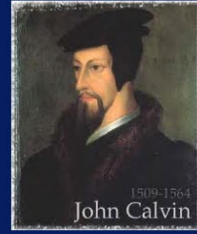


T Total Depravity
U Unconditional Election
L Limited Atonement
I Irresistible Grace
P Perseverance of the Saints

If you do not know what TULIP is at this point, I quit. I do not know what else to say about it. The "P" in TULIP is the Perseverance of the Saints. We are analyzing that to see if it is biblical in our study, "Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible."

E. Perseverance of the Saints

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



What the Calvinists do not mean by Perseverance of the Saints is eternal security. If they meant eternal security, that we are being preserved by God, no problem. But what they mean when they say it is,

"'P' stands for the '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

We have spent a lot of time talking about that. Calvinists do teach this. John Calvin himself said,

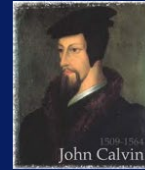
"[T]hose who do not persevere unto the end belong not to the calling of God."²

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.

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



We have gone through "a," through "g," problems with that line of thinking, and we have been spending a lot of time on "h": we believe that line of thinking destroys something that God wants you to know that you possess the moment you trust in the work of His Son—not just eternal security, which is a wonderful doctrine, but that you actually possess eternal security.

A lot of people believe in eternal security, but they do not know if they have it. You can get that whole issue fixed just through proper theology. 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).

So this is something that you can only come to a conclusion on based on the written Word of God. That is how you get settled on this assurance of salvation. It is not based on whether you had a dream last night that Jesus showed up in your dream or all these kinds of subjective things. What it is based on is what the Scripture, God's written Word, says.

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



Are there examples of how the Perseverance of the Saints destroys the assurance of salvation? There are many examples we have given. One of them is found in the Westminster Confession, where it says,

"This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith..."³

So assurance of salvation does not come, according to this Calvinistic confession, the moment you trust Christ as Savior. "Okay, well, when does it come?"

"...but that a true believer..."⁴

In Calvinism we do not know if you are a true believer or not unless you persevere. That is why they keep using this expression "true believer."

"...but that a true believer will wait long, and conflict with many difficulties before he be a partaker of it."⁵

So you really cannot know if you are saved until you go through a long period of time with perpetual conflicts, because only then can it be determined that your faith is of God, given as a gift. This is what Calvinists say. You might have the wrong kind of faith.

So in the Calvinistic system, they do not teach the assurance of salvation, whereas what we are saying is that you can know, the moment you take Christ as your Savior by way of faith, that you are saved. That is your birthright. There is this whole epidemic today within Christianity of people really not knowing if they are Christians or not, and their energy is devoted to trying to figure that out, when it could be devoted to something productive.

Part of the problem is Calvinism's two kinds of faith. As one Calvinist writes,

"Not all faith is saving faith..."⁶

If you read that, you will spend your whole life wondering, "Do I have the right kind of faith or not?" That is where people are at under this false teaching.

As we have talked about, faith is not something complicated. It is just something to be persuaded of—the truth of Jesus Christ—and then you exert trust, or reliance, in what Jesus has done for you. It is not just head knowledge, but it is trust. And once you have that and have done that, then God grants you the immediate assurance of salvation right then and there. It is not something you have to wait a long time to get. It is yours by birthright.

God, of course, has, as we have talked about, organized everything on the basis of faith, because faith is the one thing a lost sinner can do before God that is not a work.

³ Westminster Confession Chapter XVIII, Article III – Of the Assurance of Grace and Salvation.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ 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.

Jesus does not accept people on the basis of their good works. Isaiah 64:6 says that our righteous works—not even our wicked works, our righteous works—are as filthy rags to God.

So if that is true, and we are not accepted by God on the basis of works, what is the one response we can have which, in the mind of God, is not a work? Well, it is faith. Romans 4:5 says,

"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).

This is how God personally saves anybody, whether it is in the Church Age, or Abram (whose name later became Abraham) looking forward by way of faith to a coming Messiah. That is why Genesis 15:6 is quoted in Romans 4:5.

How much faith is needed? Well, Jesus answered that question when he talked to Nicodemus in what I call the "Nick at Night" discourse. Jesus said,

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life" (John 3:14-15).

That is an analogy that Jesus drew from the Israelites in the Transjordan being bitten by serpents. The serpents were an act of judgment by God against them for grumbling against Him and His established leadership at the time. God brought discipline on His people through these snakes that were biting His people and poisoning them, and they were dying.

So they came to Moses for help. "What do we do?" And Moses went to God, and God said, "Here is the way out. Take a snake, put it on a pole, and make it raised up where everybody can see it." This idea that you have to drag yourself in front of the snake, as some have taught—that is not what the Bible says. The serpent is something in plain view, and all you do is look at it, and if you look at it, then you are spared from the poisonous snake bite.

In the same way, all of us have been bitten by a snake, Satan. Our snakebite is original sin. We are all dying. If you do not believe you are dying, just look at a picture of yourself twenty years ago, and you will get it. Things are not getting better. Water flows downhill. Original sin has the whole human race in a poisoned state, and we are headed off to a Christless eternity.

What is the way out? It is an analogy. Just as the serpent was lifted up, the Son of Man is going to be lifted up on the cross (John 3:14-15). If you look at the Son of Man by way of faith, and you give Him a singular look of faith, you are saved, and the penalty of original sin is removed from you. You may physically die, if we are not the Rapture generation, but to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8).

Robert Gromacki writes,

"How many times did the people have to look at the serpent to be healed? Just once. One look prompted by faith was enough. So it is with Calvary. How many times must one look at Christ in faith to be saved? Just once. The faith that heals or saves is an act, a completed event, not an attitude."⁷

That is all that God requires. People, when they listen to me explain it, get mad at me. They say, "Well, that is just way too easy." And my response is, "Do not get mad at me. I did not write this. I am just reading it."

There is this perpetual quest in people—and I think it is related to our propensity for pride: we want to brag about something—people are always trying to add some alternative condition in addition to faith. There is the ABC method: admit, believe, confess—admit, believe, call. That is good marketing, but it is just not good theology, because God gives one condition. There is nothing about confessing or calling. There is nothing about raising a hand, walking an aisle, giving money, doing the New Year's resolutions.

I have always wondered, "What if you did the ABC method the opposite way? Could you be saved that way? Could you go 'CBA'? What if I confess first, believe second, admit third?" It gets kind of silly, and people get into this kind of thing because it is rooted in something within us: we want to take credit for something. Yet God has set it up so that nobody gets credit other than Him. He allows us to be justified before Him by doing a single thing, which is to believe, which in the mind of God is not a work (Romans 4:5).

Salvation is very, very simple. But people come along (this is where we were last time) and they say, "Well, you know what, pastor? It does not just say 'believe.' It says 'believing.' So the moment you stop believing is the moment you really never had the true faith to begin with, because believing is an eternal process that just goes on and on and on."

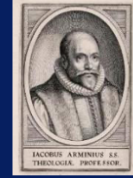
You will hear Calvinists say, "If you really had the faith that comes from above, something infused into you by God, you would always keep believing, and if you stopped believing, then you did not have the real kind of faith. You had the fake faith. And the reason you had the fake faith is that you were never one of the elect." That is basically what they are trying to say.

The first time you hear that, it is a persuasive argument, until you understand that the present tense "believing" is being totally abused here. We are dealing with the present participle "believing." That is an abuse of the present tense, because the present tense does not always require continual behavior in Scripture.

⁷ Robert Gromacki, *Salvation Is Forever* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1989), 88.

John 20:30-31?

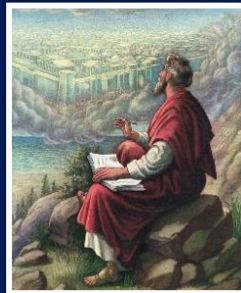
1. Present tense participle "believing" – John 3:16, 18; 5:24
2. Abuse of the present tense
3. Present tense does not always require continual behavior
4. Mark 6:14
 - a. John "the one continually baptizing?"
 - b. John already dead!
 - c. Not describing continual baptizing
 - d. Just describing him
5. How many times do you have to **MURDER** before you are a **MURDERER**?
Once! Same with a FISHERMAN & BELIEVER



Last time I was with you, I took you through all of these passages in John's Gospel, and then a few in the Synoptics and one in Galatians, just as examples that the present tense does not always mean something that goes on forever and ever and ever.

Present Tense Participle Does Not Always Mean Forever

- John 4:13
- John 4:26
- John 4:36
- John 5:3
- John 5:24
- John 6:14
- John 11:26-27
- Mark 6:14
- Mark 14:20
- Luke 16:18
- Gal. 3:13



Bob Wilkin, "The One Who Believes: Is Continuous Faith Required to be Born Again?,"
online: <http://www.faithalone.org/magazine/y2006/06/f1.html>, accessed 06 May 2015.

The most clear example is this one right here, Mark 6:14, which is talking about John the Baptist, "the baptizing one," it literally says. Here is what Mark 6:14 says:

"And King Herod heard of it, for His name had become well known; and people were saying, 'John the Baptist...'" (Mark 6:14).

"Baptizo" (βαπτίζω) in Greek, translated "the Baptist," is an articular present tense participle, just like "believing." So this literally would read "John the baptizing one," present tense.

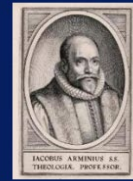
"And King Herod heard of it, for His name had become well known; and people were saying, 'John the Baptist [the baptizing one] has risen from the dead,...'" (Mark 6:14).

Whoops! He is dead. His head was cut off. So who was he baptizing when he was dead? Nobody. Can I get an amen on that? I just want to make sure you guys are awake here. The present tense is used to describe his work as the baptizing one, though he was not baptizing anyone when this was said.

So, obviously, the present tense does not mean forever and ever and ever. It is just another linguistic tool to describe the life of John the Baptist. So if that is true, then that is how to handle "believing" in John 20:30-31. It is not saying that your faith has to go on forever.

John 20:30-31?

6. Does not preclude ongoing faith but does not require it
7. Other verb forms also used to describe belief (John 8:30-31)
8. It is possible for a Christian to struggle with faith
 - a. 2 Tim. 2:13 – “faithless” = unbelieving
 - b. Jas. 1:5-8
 - c. Peter’s sinking and three-fold denial
 - d. Luke 22:31-32
 - e. Is unbelief the unpardonable sin?



Now, should your faith go on forever? Of course. Does the Bible preclude your faith going on forever? No. But it does not require it for justification. It does require it for sanctification and discipleship. But we are not dealing with that. We are dealing with justification.

If there is somehow a lapse in your faith, for instance, you reach a point in your life when you just do not believe for a season, or maybe for the rest of your life, are you still saved? I would venture to say—and this is where what I am saying here would be considered an anathema by both the Calvinistic and Arminian systems—I would say that you are still saved, because you satisfied the condition of a singular look of faith.

Ongoing faith is wonderful. Let's pursue it. The Bible does not preclude it. But at the same time, the Bible does not require it for justification. Now, if I were making the rules up, I would have everything set up differently. I would say something like, "Well, you had better believe, and you had better keep believing, and the moment you stop believing is the moment God rips the carpet out from under you." But I am not really here to give my own rules, okay? I am here to talk about God's rules. This, to the best of my understanding, is what God is revealing.

If the present tense was such a big deal of continuing faith forever, then why is believing described with all kinds of different verb forms in John 8:30-31 as an example? There are all kinds of verb forms there. We looked at that passage last time, and the present

tense is not even used. So if the present tense is that critical, why is it not thrown into every passage about believing? Yet it is not.

So what am I trying to get at? I am trying to get at number eight: is it possible for a Christian, someone who really, authentically trusted in Christ for salvation—is it possible for them to struggle with faith? My answer is "Yes," because you did not get into this program on the basis of your inability or ability to struggle. What got you into the door was a singular look of faith by grace.

This is why I had you open up to 2 Timothy 2:13, which is a very interesting verse. Almost nobody quotes this verse in this discussion, but look at what Paul writes to Timothy. This is the trustworthy saying (2 Timothy 2:11). Paul is trying to get Timothy to endure, which is great, because Timothy is a pastor, and Paul wants Timothy to be fully rewarded at the Bema Seat Judgment.

In that process, Paul gives Timothy this trustworthy statement. Paul says,

"If we..." (2 Timothy 2:13).

Do you think Paul's faith was real? Obviously it was real. He was an apostle. Paul says,

"If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He [God] cannot deny Himself" (2 Timothy 2:13).

Now, when you look at this word "faithless" in Greek ("apisteō" [ἀπιστέω]), it is what we call an alpha privative.

An alpha functions like the first letter of the English language, "a." You put an "a" in something at the beginning of a word to negate it. An atheist is a non-theist, someone who does not believe in God. An Amillennialist is somebody who does not believe in a future Millennial Kingdom.

An agnostic is someone without knowledge. "Gnosis" (γνώσις) means "knowledge"; "agnostic" means "without knowledge." In other words, an agnostic is basically an ignoramus. That is literally what the word means. I think that is kind of funny, because I have some folks in my extended family who say—they are so proud of themselves—"I am an agnostic." I am like, "Oh, so you are an ignoramus." "What?" I do not think it is any great honor to be called an agnostic. It just means that you do not have knowledge. The alpha privative negates knowledge in the word "agnostic."

That is how "faithless" ("apisteo" [ἀπιστέω]) reads in Greek. It is "believe," the verb "pisteuo" (πιστεύω), and an alpha prefix. Alpha is the first letter in the Greek language, and it is in front of the word "believe" ("pisteuo" [πιστεύω]) in 2 Timothy 2:13. The resulting verb "apisteo" (ἀπιστέω) literally means "no faith," "not having faith."

Paul says,

"If we are faithless..." (2 Timothy 2:13).

"...we..." (2 Timothy 2:13) is Timothy and Paul. "I am an apostle. You are a pastor. I made you a pastor. I appointed you a pastor. Do you know, Timothy, we could get to the point where we do not have faith anymore." That is what Paul's saying. Paul is exhorting Timothy this way because Paul does not want Timothy to go that direction.

You are not going to be a very good pastor if you do not have faith. You are not going to be fully rewarded at the Bema Seat Judgment if you do not have faith. But Paul is saying that it is a possibility to not have faith.

"So let's just say, Timothy, that you and I get to a point where we just do not believe anymore. Does that mean God just ripped the carpet out from under us?" Paul says, "No, because *'He [God] remains faithful,' even 'if we are faithless,' for He cannot deny Himself*" (2 Timothy 2:13)."

So can a Christian actually get to the point where they stop believing what they once believed and still be saved? I am saying that the answer to that is "Yes," based on this verse right here (2 Timothy 2:13).

"Yeah, but what about 'believing' in John 20:30-31?" Well, as I tried to explain, that is an abuse of the present tense, which is also used of John the Baptist baptizing after he was not baptizing anyone because his head had been cut off.

Now, I realize that what you are hearing right now—you may have never heard anything like this before in your life. You may be looking at your watch and saying, "How fast can I get out of this heretical church?" You will never hear this from any Arminian because they want to say that you lost your salvation, and you will never hear this from any Calvinists because they are going to say that you did not have the real kind of faith to begin with.

Yet the Bible is saying something different from Calvinism and Arminianism. One of the hardest things to wrap our minds around is this idea of grace, complete and total unmerited favor that I have with God.

God's grace does not depend on any single work I have done or will do, or have not done or will not do, including getting to a point in my life twenty years, let's say, after I trusted Christ, saying, "You know, I just do not believe it anymore." Even that person is protected by the grace of God. That is what this verse (2 Timothy 2:13), as far as I understand, is saying.

So can a Christian struggle with faith? Absolutely. That is what James 1:5-8, written to believers, is dealing with. What Calvinists are saying is, "Well, you had better not have any doubts. If you have doubts, you may not have had the real kind of faith." James 1:5-8 is talking about Christians having doubts about the whole thing. When you have a doubt about something, you are not believing it.

So can a Christian struggle with doubts and a lack of faith? James apparently says "Yes," and tells us not to be that way. But he would not be telling us not to be that way if it were not a possibility to be that way. See that? In other words, if the doubting, the lack of faith, is not even possible, why warn people about it? Believe me: I am not saying it is

a good place to be. I am just saying that it is an unfortunate possibility that we are warned against.

What does James 1:5-8 say?

"But if any of you lacks wisdom..." (James 1:5).

I am in that category frequently. "Lord, that's me! I lack wisdom." Notice that there is a way out.

"...let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5).

So you are in a tough situation. This is the context here: going through trials. That is what James 1:2-4 is talking about. You want to know how to handle it. You want to know what the mind of God is as you go through it. James says, "Ask God, and He is going to help you with it."

"But he must ask in faith..." (James 1:6).

"Do not ask with a bunch of doubts." This shows me that a Christian can doubt.

"But he must ask in faith without any doubting,..." (James 1:6).

Why even say that if a Christian cannot doubt? Well, I think we understand, do we not? We have done a series on James. James was written to believers. If you do not think James is written to believers, just look at James 4:5, where James says,

"Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: 'He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us'?" (James 4:5).

James, who was the Lord's half-brother, had the Holy Spirit inside him. And James says in the same way to his audience, "The Holy Spirit is inside you" (James 4:5). So this is not somebody who has never been regenerated having these doubts. These are authentically born-again people asking God for something and really not believing He could pull it off.

"But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord," (James 1:6-7).

Have you ever been like that? You ask God for something and you say, "Ah, He will never answer."

"For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (James 1:7-8).

So if I am not going to trust God with this, my whole life is characterized by instability. So can a Christian struggle with faith on a number of subjects and even move into doubt? Apparently that can happen. Can the doubts in the life of the Christian get so strong that you become faithless?

Now, being faithless does not just mean not being faithful anymore. People try to explain this verse that way. It is an alpha privative: "apisteo" (ἀπιστέω), "without faith." Can a Christian reach that point and still go to heaven? In my opinion, the answer is "Yes," just like a Christian can struggle with sin and still go to heaven. Do you believe a Christian can struggle with sin? Do you guys ever sin as Christians? Those of you not saying yes are committing a sin right now. It is called lying.

Of course Christians struggle with sin. We still have an old nature. We struggle with sin all the time. But when I go into sin, unfortunately—not because I have to, as I used to under Satan's domain—I do it now because I want to. I can go into sin and still be a Christian. It is the same way with this issue of a lack of faith. You can move in a direction of not believing and still be God's child. Your Bible is filled with examples like this.

Peter is my favorite example. He is the apostle with the foot-shaped mouth, as we call him. That is why we love him so much. He reminds us of ourselves. And yet, in the Book of Acts, God used Peter. "God, you can take a guy like this and use him?" God says, "Yeah." "Okay, Lord, I can sign up for the job, because I am just like this."

But Peter, as he walked on water, took his eyes off Jesus. "Jesus, I want to walk out on the water." Jesus says, "Come." And everything is hunky dory as long as Peter is looking at Jesus. But the text specifically says that Peter's eyes got off Jesus and went to the wind and the waves. The moment his eyes were off Jesus was the moment he started to sink. That is when Jesus rebukes Peter with statements such as "O ye of little faith" (Matthew 14:31).

Peter went into some form of doubting, and there was never any question that he was still one of the apostles. Peter, as you know, denied the Lord three times. As you look at the denials in the Passion Week accounts, I think Matthew describes one of those who questioned Peter as a slave girl—a girl—a little girl. Peter stood down to a little girl, and this is a guy who was going to be crucified upside down to glorify Christ.

Are you kidding me? You cannot even stand up for Jesus when a little girl asks you a question—"Hey, you were one of them. You were with Him." "No, no, no. Not me." A big macho fisherman cannot even persevere in front of a little girl. That makes a statement. Peter's whole life is characterized by these denials.

Can a Christian deny Christ and still go to heaven? I have heard people say, "Hey, if they come in here with guns and they say, 'Deny Christ or we are going to shoot you,' as happens in other parts of the world, and you deny Christ, you are proving you were not a Christian.

Reading the news, it looks like that is happening more and more in this country—if you follow what happened at Brown University and all of these terrible things that are going on. If they come in here with guns and they point a gun at you and they say, "Deny Christ or I am going to shoot you,"—I have heard a lot of people say, "If you deny Christ in that circumstance, you are proving you are not a Christian."

I say to that, "Nonsense," because my Bible is filled with examples of people denying Christ. Is it a good place to be? No. If you stand up for the Lord publicly, He is going to reward you for it at the Bema Seat Judgment of Christ. If you do not stand up for Him publicly, you just forfeited a reward, but you did not forfeit salvation. If you believe you forfeited salvation, you would have to conclude that if Peter were to die before his restoration, he went to hell.

Peter denied the Lord three times, and the Lord restored him three times in John 21 by saying, "Peter, do you love me?" The Lord said that to Peter not once, not twice, but three times. Why three times? Because Peter denied the Lord three times. Jesus took him through a three-fold restoration. Are you telling me that if Peter had a heart attack or whatever, and died before that restoration, he went to hell? I would never tell you that, because the Bible does not teach that.

So there is this possibility of a lack of faith. That is why in Luke 22:31-32 Jesus made this statement:

"Simon, Simon,..." (Luke 22:31).

Wait a minute. Jesus is calling Peter by his Hebrew name here. Jesus is not calling him "Petros" (Πέτρος), the name Jesus gave him in Matthew 16:18. Jesus is not calling him "Cephas" (Κηφᾶς), Peter's Aramaic name. Jesus is calling him his Hebrew name, Simon.

"Why are you doing that, Jesus?" "Well, because, Peter, you are acting like your old self. You are not living according to your new identity. So if you are going to act like your old self, I am just going to call you by your old name."

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat;" (Luke 22:31).

How would you like to be having a conversation with Jesus in which that subject comes up? Job, of course, did not understand this was happening, but we understand it because we read Job 1-2. The same thing happened with Job. There was a conversation between Satan and God, before the throne of God, about Job, a conversation that Job was not privy to. Job probably was glad he was not privy to it, because ignorance is bliss.

Here is a situation where God and Satan are having a conversation about Petros (Πέτρος), who is acting like Simon. Jesus lets Peter in on the conversation. I would be like, "Lord, just that is TMI. I do not want to know about that. I do not want to know about some conversation in the heavenlies between God and Satan about little old me. I want to be left alone, quite frankly."

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith..." (Luke 22:31-32).

Jesus says *"your faith"* (Luke 22:32), not "the faith that God gave you," because that doctrine is not true. "It is your faith. And the reason it is your faith is that it is the one thing you can do before a holy God that is non-meritorious (Romans 4:5)."

"but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:32).

So here is this conversation between God and Satan about Peter that Jesus is telling Peter about. "Peter, you are going to go through a time of testing." This might be a reference to the denials that he is going to be tempted with.

"It's coming. And here comes Satan. God is going to lower the hedge of protection around you like He did with Job, and Satan is going to have access to you for a season. But as you go through this trial, I have prayed for your faith that it would not fail."

That means to me that Peter's faith is his faith. And when it says, "I pray that your faith may not fail," that to me communicates that his faith could fail. If his faith could not fail, as we are told, then why pray for him?

I have had people come along and say, "That is true for all of us. Jesus prays for all of us that our faith will not fail." Well, that is really not what the Bible says. It does not say here that Jesus prays that all of our faith would not fail. He says he is praying for Peter's faith specifically, that it would not fail.

So you just look at that and you say, "You know what? That opens the door to a Christian's faith failing, or else why pray for his circumstance?" This was a really tough thing Peter was going to go through, and Jesus made a special prayer for him. That is just evidence that you can reach that alpha privative stage—"apisteo" (ἀπιστέω): "faithless," "without faith."

Paul, writing to Timothy (2 Timothy 2:13), says, "If we—meaning you, my son in the faith, and me, an apostle—become faithless, God is faithful, for He cannot deny Himself. In other words, if we ever get to that point—God forbid that we ever get to that point, and I do not want us to get to that point," Paul says, "but God forbid, if we ever got to that point where we just quit believing, or quit trusting, then you know what? God is not going to rip the carpet out from under us, because my faith is really not what sustains me. It is God's promise that sustains me."

I would just ask this question: If you can reach a point in your Christian life where you stop believing, and that cancels salvation according to Arminius—your salvation is taken away—or according to Calvin, you never had the true faith—if that doctrine is true, are you telling me that unbelief in the Christian is the one sin that cannot be forgiven? Is that what you are telling me?

"Can a Christian backslide and still go to heaven?" "Yeah." "Can a Christian go into gambling and still go to heaven?" "Yeah." "Can a Christian go into pornography and still go to heaven?" "Yeah." "Can a Christian become a spousal abuser and still go to heaven?" "Yeah." "Can a Christian stop believing and still go to heaven?" "No way."

Okay, so what you just told me is that unbelief in the Christian is the one sin that Jesus did not die for. That is what you are telling me. And I do not think that is true. I think the death of Christ covers every sin, even that one, as bad as it is. Titus 2:14 says,

"who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed," (Titus 2:14).

How many lawless deeds? Every single one of them. Wow.

"...to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds" (Titus 2:14).

"You mean to tell me that when I put my trust in Christ, it covers every sin I have ever committed in my life?" Absolutely. "Does it cover every sin I am going to commit from this point on as a Christian?" "Every" means "every," doesn't it? "Well, what if I use profanity? Does it cover that?" Covered. "What if I go into crazy gambling?" Covered. "What if I do this or that?" Covered.

"What if I stop believing?" Not covered, because "every" does not mean "every" in the Calvinistic way of thinking. *"Every lawless deed" (Titus 2:14)* does not include being unbelieving. But do you know what? I do not see an exception clause here. "Every" means "every." This is the kind of perspective you are not getting when people tell you you have to overcome in faith or you are not really a child of God.

You are either going to accept this doctrine of grace or you are not. This is grace that we are talking about here. We sing about it; we quote Bible verses; but do we really believe it? Do we really believe that we are going to be kept by God regardless of anything we do or do not do? That is a tough one, but I think the answer is "Yes."

Therefore, I reject this whole idea of two kinds of faith. You either looked at the snake by way of faith or you did not (Numbers 21:4-9). You are saved or you are not saved. It has nothing to do with what happens on the post-salvation end of things. It has nothing to do with it.

Now, what happens on the post-salvation end of it has a lot to do with rewards, discipleship, usability, fruitfulness. All of that comes into play there, but it has nothing to do with whether you are not a Christian.

"If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself" (2 Timothy 2:13).

Look at this. We finished Calvinism. We went all the way through TULIP.

Neo-Calvinism vs. The Bible

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



So I just have a word of conclusion here as we wrap up this series. The conclusion is going to go eight weeks—no, I am just kidding. What is the conclusion in this whole thing?

We have looked at why we are critiquing this, where this stuff came from, whether Calvin is really the guy to be telling us about spirituality when you look at his personal life, and then most of our time was spent there on Roman numeral IV, comparing the the theology with the Scripture. What is the conclusion in the whole thing?

Well, the conclusion of the whole thing is Colossians 2:8, where Paul writes,

"See to it that no one takes you captive..." (Colossians 2:8).

You know, there are a lot of people in theological prison because they got taken captive by something.

"See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy [Calvinism is a philosophy] and empty deception..." (Colossians 2:8).

It promises the world and delivers nothing. It is like Jude, talking about false teachers—clouds without rain. And boy, we understand that in Texas—clouds without rain. In the middle of the summer, you see a dark cloud coming and you are so relieved. "Oh, we are going to get some relief. We are going to get some rain." And then it goes right on by. And we are just as miserable afterwards as before. It is just that we got our hopes up.

That is what these human philosophies do. They take you captive and they give you empty deception. They promise everything, but they deliver nothing, because they come *"according to the tradition of men"* (Colossians 2:8). These are man-made doctrines. And once you move into a man-made doctrine, you are operating according to the principles of the world, the satanically energized world system.

The systems of the world are *"elementary"* (Colossians 2:8). When you follow them, you are leaving the richness of Christ and going back to some man-made teaching. You

might as well go back to kindergarten. "You already know how to write sentences and paragraphs. You had better go back and learn your alphabet." That is the primitive thought pattern you are pushed into when you leave the richness of Christ and substitute it for a man-made system.

"...according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ" (Colossians 2:8).

Christ and His principles are where you are going to find truth, not in some man-made system.

So what then is this Neo-Calvinism? It is an elementary man-made system, starting from outside the Bible and thrust into the Bible, and countless believers walk according to its dictates and edicts, sometimes consciously, a lot of times subconsciously, because it is all they hear.

Bob Kirkland, in his book "Calvinism: None Dare Call It Heresy," says,

"Calvinism is an imposed philosophy upon Scripture."⁸

Calvin was a lawyer. That is part of the problem. He was really good at logic—major premise, minor premise, conclusion. Logic is wonderful unless your initial premise is wrong. If your initial premise is wrong, it throws off the whole logical syllogism. It reasons from something that does not have a good foundation.

Kirkland says that is what John Calvin did at the age of twenty-six. How many twenty-six-year-olds do you want to be following around in terms of their theology?

If, while I am dead and gone, you guys discover that some tape emerges—if they even have tape players anymore—if someone ever finds some tape that I did when I was age twenty-six, and makes a religion out of it, I hope you guys will put a stop to that, because that is just insane. That is what people have done with Calvin and Calvinism, as smart as the guy was.

Bob Kirkland says,

"Likewise, John Calvin...latched onto little more than a single word (predestinate) and ran with it. Then, rather than carefully looking to the whole of Scripture to verify his precepts and conclusions, he looked to the writings of Augustine to verify his thinking. The result is that, as with Catholicism, we now have 'another gospel' that is not solely based on Scripture but on the confused thinking and misconstrued assumptions of a mere man. With Calvin, rather than changing his views to fit Scripture, he changed the meaning of words in Scripture to fit his now distorted view of God and salvation."⁹

⁸ Bob Kirkland, *Calvinism: None Dare Call It Heresy; Spotlight on the Life and Teachings of John Calvin* (Eureka, MT: Lighthouse Trails, 2018), 97.

⁹ Ibid.

I think that is what has happened, and I think that is what Paul warns us about right there in Colossians 2:8: philosophies originating in the minds of men and being thrust on the Bible. That is what I have tried to demonstrate.

So what kind of Calvinist am I? I used to be a five-point Calvinist. Then I moved into four-point Calvinism. Then I moved into three-and-a-half point Calvinism. Today, I am not a Calvinist at all. I am a biblicist.

I do not identify with any Arminian system or Calvinistic system because I see that both have problems. That is how you should be. You should be a biblicist. You would not be a three-point Calvinist any more than you would be a three-point Roman Catholic, right? You are either all in with God or you are not.