

The Ability of Belief III

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 0 0] several years. It is just saturated with wonderful comforting truths. Romans chapter 8. And for our scripture reading, I would like you to follow along, if you will.

We will begin with verse 28, a very familiar passage, and read through the end of the chapter. Romans 8. I'm reading from the King James Version. I realize there are several different translations out there, so you follow along with whatever you have, if you will, please.

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called.

And whom he called, them he also justified. And whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?

[1 : 3 5] It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long. We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This passage just read, we have one more instance of the great interaction between God and his creatures. Throughout Scripture, from the time God first created Adam, we see God as being committed to what I would call a partnership with his creation.

[3 : 0 8] Make no mistake about it, God does not need people. But God is pleased to use people. God has no need that he cannot meet within his own person.

He never created anything out of a sense of need or a desire for fulfillment, which he could not realize apart from creating something.

God is completely satisfied within his own being. And that means all that he has created, he has created purely from a sense of personal desire, not personal need.

And in creating mankind, and is also apparently true regarding angelic beings, he imbued both with a volition.

A volition simply means you have the power to make choices. You have a will that you may exercise. If the will is not free, there is no way logically, at least no way that with my finite mind I can understand how man can be held accountable or responsible.

[4 : 31] It is the imparting of a volition that we all have that is the basis for God holding us accountable. If we did not have a free will, we would simply be able to shrug our shoulders and say, it's not my fault, I couldn't help it.

I had no choice but to do what I did. Yes, you did. You have a choice. You may exercise the wrong choice as well as the right choice, but the choice is yours to make.

This is part and parcel of God's great creative act. And as I mentioned, he apparently gave this ability to angels as well as to men because we know that in our humanity, man exercised the choice to disobey God and we have what is referred to as the fall.

And angelic beings, particularly beginning with Lucifer, also exercised that volition and he too experienced a fall. That is, a departure from God, a falling away from God, a separation from God, just as humanity has.

So, if you want to know why the world is in the mess that it is, it all goes back to the fall of man. That is the only logical and consistent explanation that fits present reality.

[6 : 02] The world is not the way it is because God somehow dropped the ball or that God doesn't know how to run a world. It is because God delegated to his creation from the beginning the power to make choices with inevitable consequences.

Consequences which invoke regret, sorrow, pain, separation, death.

But, there are also consequences that evoke great joy, gladness, celebration, enjoyment of life.

We are all imbued with this power. You may make any choice you wish to make, but you cannot choose the consequences that come from that choice.

so, for the past four messages we have been talking about the inability of unbelief and the ability of belief.

[7 : 23] And all of this is coupled with the dynamic of the human will, that is, the volition that we have. We saw from an earlier message in Romans chapter 8, prior to where we were reading, that those who are in the flesh, these are just unconverted human beings, unsaved people, they cannot please God.

They are not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then, Paul says, they that are in the flesh cannot please God. They can please each other, and they can please themselves, but they cannot please God, because their very mindset is corrupted.

And whatever they offer God, whether it's a big fat check that they put in the collection plate, or whatever, God is not impressed, and God is not pleased with them.

They might as well save their money, it does them no good that way. They that are in the flesh cannot please God. Outside of the provision that God has made in Christ, there is no pleasing Him.

However, when one hears the gospel, the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ, and embraces that gospel, receives Christ as their Savior, they are miraculously, instantaneously baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ, and they become one with Christ.

[8 : 55] They are now Christians. They are in union with Christ. They are believers. They are born again. They may or may not be church members. That is entirely beside the point. It has nothing to do with the new birth.

That is the dynamic of regeneration, and it is an act of God that regenerates the individual when you exercise faith.

Faith is nothing more than your confidence, your trust, your reliance, and the finished work of Jesus Christ, and who He is, what He did, and why it matters.

You put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, that is the response of the human heart. That is an act of the will.

You do that with your mind. It is not something that you work up emotionally, it is something that you do intellectually. How many times have I told you over the years that Christianity is a thinking faith?

[9 : 58] that does not mean it is only for intellectuals. It is for the simplest, it is for the youngest child who can simply understand that they are deficient and that they need a Savior.

And at a very early age, a child can be saved. So it is not a faith that is limited to the intellectuals, but it is a faith that requires intellectual assent.

It involves the activity of the mind. You utilize your will. In the same way that you decide to marry somebody, you walk down the aisle and you stand there before the altar and you are asked, will you or do you?

And the response is, I will or I do. That is the use of your will. It is the same way that you exercise faith in Jesus Christ.

Religion does not have any special use of the will or of the mind. Do you realize that when a person receives Christ as his Savior, he is exercising his will or his mind in the same way that someone embraces the tenets of communism?

[11 : 18] Wait a minute now, say that again. That's, yes, you heard me right. In other words, I'm saying there is no such thing as a special religious kind of belief.

Whereas our object may be religious oriented in the person of Christ, the avenue through which you get there, the way you believe in Christ is exactly the same way you believe in anything.

What makes the Christian faith so different, so unique, is not just belief, it is the object of your belief, in whom you place your trust.

Everybody believes, everybody believes, even an atheist believes, he believes there is no God, and he uses the same kind of intellect to believe that as the Christian uses to believe that there is a God and that Jesus Christ is the Savior.

So, religious faith is not different from all other kinds of faith. It is plain, simple, ordinary, everyday faith. Nothing mystical, nothing magical about it. It's the object, the one in whom you place your faith.

[12 : 35] That's what makes all the difference. And when you place your faith in Christ, you are wonderfully regenerated. The washing of regeneration, the renewing of the Holy Spirit, whereby you are made a new person in Christ on the inside.

Now, here's the problem. And it is a problem. The will, the volition, that you used with which to believe, is very much intact and in business before you were ever converted.

converted. It remains intact and in usage after you are converted. So that the will of an unregenerate person cannot be exercised in such a way as to please God in any way short of embracing Christ as your Savior.

But otherwise, it cannot please God. And yet, once you become a believer, the will that you had before you were saved is not changed.

As best as I can understand it, the will is not changed. The will remains in a state of neutrality before conversion and after conversion. There is responsibility that is exacted from the unconverted and there is responsibility exacted from the converted.

[14 : 12] Both have a will, a human will, a decider. And both know the difference in the vast majority of cases between right and wrong.

And when we do wrong, it is because we choose to do wrong. Not because we have to do wrong. It's just that sometimes we are confronted with temptations and situations that make us, that compel us to do wrong because we want to.

That is our decider at work. Sometimes it just does us in. But the buck stops here with me.

I can blame no one else. but the beauty of that is once I realize that I am the culprit, I am the heavy, I can do something about me.

But as long as the fault or the blame lies with someone else, I can't do anything about that. Then I'm powerless. But once I accept responsibility and take responsibility for my actions, I can deal with that because I know me and I can deal with me.

[15 : 44] And in fact, I'm the only one who can deal with me. You are the only one who can deal with you. It is a beautiful thing. There is nothing so liberating and refreshing as facing the music and taking responsibility for your own actions because then there is hope.

Then something can be done about it. And how do you do something? You use your will. It is the will that provides the basis for repentance, which is a change of mind.

And the only reason we change our mind about something is because of information so that when we hear the gospel, that's information, and we process the information, and we reach a decision. You reach that decision with your mind, and you make a decision with your will.

All of this is wonderfully intertwined in the way we are fearfully and wonderfully made. Only the human being has these capacities, made in the image and likeness of God.

Now, here's a question. And the question is, why isn't the will changed?

[16 : 58] Why isn't the will converted? Why isn't the will regenerated and made new like our inner man is?

Because if it were, then Christians, regenerated beings, would always will to do the right thing.

Christians may still do the wrong thing.

Yes, I'm talking about somebody who is really a regenerate, born-again believer. They still have a will, and they can still rebel against the authority of God.

They can still go their own way and do their own thing. they have no justification for doing so, but you can. You can do that. At regeneration, God does not invade you and overpower your will and make you always make the right choices.

[18 : 00] That's not the way it works. God still gives us the freedom and the choice of making moral decisions.

we still have the flesh with us. In our last session, we looked at Romans chapter 6 and we saw that the key is in recognizing the ability of the will to yield.

Yield yourselves, yield your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. And the context makes it very clear what the instruments of righteousness are.

The instruments of our body are our arms and legs and our eyes and our ears and our feet. The things that we subject ourselves to, the things we involve ourselves in, the things we watch with our eyes and hear with our ears, those are the instruments of our body.

You can take those instruments and do things with them that you know are wrong and you do it anyway. Why do you do it? Because you want to.

[19 : 10] You want to. Christians shouldn't want to do the wrong thing. No, of course not. Christians shouldn't, but Christians may. Why?

Because we still have the flesh with us. The flesh is the old Adamic nature that wants to please itself. And we all have this.

Someone says, do even preachers have this? my answer is, especially preachers have this. Preachers have just as big an ego as anybody else.

And sometimes gigantic. It is incredible what can be accomplished with the flesh. If God doesn't have anything to do with. Great mega churches have been built with the flesh.

Just pizzazz, organization, ability, money, charisma, God doesn't have anything to do with it. It can be accomplished with the flesh.

[20 : 12] I'm not saying that all mega churches are that way, but I'm sure that some are. And I'm sure that there are some churches no larger than Grace Bible Church that are that way too. The flesh is always wanting to dominate and take over.

The flesh is self-serving, self-pleasing, self-seeking, self-centered. That's the flesh. That's the human ego. And it is part of our fallenness.

And it gets downright nasty sometimes. It is even nastier when it comes forth from a Christian, from someone who professes to know the Lord. But we are all capable of this.

It's an ugly business of life, but it's a reality. Now, here's what we want to address. in talking about the inability of unbelief and the ability of belief, which means that, by contrast, when you are a believer, now that you are a Christian, you have provided for you numerous, I call them divine operating assets that God gives you as part of the package of your salvation.

It is partly what Paul referred to when he said, I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

[21 : 49] So we have the indwelling Holy Spirit, we have innumerable gifts and capacities that are given to us, that are given to all believers, all believers, because when Jesus Christ saved you, he didn't just give you salvation, that was just one aspect of what he gave you, he gave you a whole host of things, abilities that are beyond you, and every believer has these, I'm not talking about talents or gifts that way, I'm just talking about realities and truths that are peculiar to every single believer without exception, and we have these resources to draw upon to enable us to deal with the issues of the flesh, so that we do not have to give in and yield to those temptations.

We may do so, but we don't have to. There's a verse in 1 Corinthians 10 13 that says, yes, it does.

There has no temptation taken you, and that's not really a good translation, it ought to be there's no testing or trial that has taken you, but such as is common to man.

But God is faithful and will, with the temptation or the testing, provide a way of escape that you may be able to bear it. And that's one of the most mistranslated passages in all of scripture, because most Christians take that to mean that that when a Christian's life is under assail, under attack from whatever, adversities, reversals, heart aches, difficulties, losses, you name it, we look upon those things as trials and testings that come into our lives that are part and parcel of virtually every human life.

And the typical attack of that verse is that God knows all of the things you're going through and he knows what all you have on your plate, but don't worry because God will not put any more on you than what you were able to bear up under.

[24 : 21] God knows your breaking point and he will not put more on you than you can bear that would cause you to snap.

That's not what that verse means at all. In fact, God may allow more to be put upon you that you are unable to bear and you die.

What is that? That is going beyond the point of being able to bear something. That is succumbing.

It doesn't mean that at all. If you look at the context there in Romans and 1 Corinthians 10, what Paul is talking about is dealing with temptation. Dealing with the temptation to go astray.

Dealing with the temptation to do the wrong thing. And the text says that God knows what your testings or temptations are and he will never allow you to be tempted or tested beyond what you are able to bear.

[25 : 32] In other words, God will always make a way of escape so that you do not have to do the wrong thing. And that's sin.

You don't have to sin. God will make a way of escape. And the classic illustration that I have used, and I can't think of a better one, is when Joseph was confronted by Potiphar's wife and she attempted to seduce him.

Joseph did not have to go to bed with Potiphar's wife. The point is, he could have. She initiated this.

She invited him. He could have rationalized and said, well, what's a normal red-blooded stud like me supposed to do? I just, being a regular guy, I just did the natural thing.

And that's the way a lot of guys would rationalize, you know. I mean, an opportunity like that confronts you. You'd be stupid not to take advantage of it. After all, you're only human, right?

[26 : 48] But, God made a way of escape that Joseph didn't have to do that. And do you know what Joseph did? He exercised his will.

And he gave a direct command to two of his body parts. A left one and a right one. And he said, feet, move.

Get out of here. And his feet said, yes, sir. And he made tracks for the exit. That was his way of escape. Sometimes when you are confronted with a situation, and the temptation to yield is great, you just need to remember that you've got two good feet.

Use them. Get out of there. You don't have to be there. and it is your will that will implement those feet.

And the moment you say, I couldn't help it. The temptation was so great. I couldn't resist. Yes, you could. You didn't want to resist.

[28 : 09] Be honest with yourself. You didn't want to resist. resist. So you succumb. And then, and then, because we don't like to take responsibility, we pass the buck.

We find somebody else to blame or some excuse, and we rationalize it. Aren't we something? I tell you, human beings can be real stinkers. And yet, God made us with that capacity.

This business of the will is so intricate, and I, please, don't think that I am suggesting that I understand or know all about the human will. I don't even come close.

I know my own fairly well, and sometimes it really scares me. But I don't understand the intricacies of the human will, but I do know this, all throughout scripture, all throughout scripture, there are two things that are emphasized, well, more than two, but I'm thinking of these two in particular.

God is sovereign. God is in charge. God does what he pleases to do. When we say God is sovereign, we mean he has the absolute right and the absolute power to order the events of the universe that he has created after his own pleasure without having to answer to anybody.

[29 : 36] God owes no one anything. He is fully, completely in charge. And he has made man as a responsible being.

God is sovereign and we are responsible. We are accountable. Sometimes we have difficulty marrying those, but we know that it's true.

And if we are willing to take responsibility for ourself, for our actions, especially when it makes us look bad, we don't want to do it then because we don't want to look bad.

But it takes some kind of a man, some kind of a woman, to have the raw courage to stand up and say, you know what? This is all my fault.

It's my bad. I'm to blame. I'm accountable. will. That's a very, very big person.

[30 : 50] We don't have a whole lot of those running around anymore. The will. Fascinating, fascinating aspect of our being. And it's responsible for the trouble we get into and it's responsible for the pleasant things and the niceties that we get into.

How is this will, coming into play and to what degree is the will impaired prior to salvation?

We have taken the position that the will remains intact after salvation as it was before salvation. It does not appear to be touched.

By conversion. And that's a little perplexing because we know that very ordinarily when someone comes to faith in Christ, they have an interchange of attitude, an interchange of values, often an interchange of desires and interests, so that when Paul said, if anyone be in Christ, he's a new creation, this is what he's talking about, he becomes a new person.

But not everything about you becomes new, and that's what I'm suggesting, that the will, the will is the thing that you use to do right with, and it's the thing you use to do wrong with.

[32 : 29] It's your will. And God does not overpower you and make you do the right thing. He doesn't do that. He is not going to give you the power, the option of choice, and then yank it from you so you can't use it.

And I know there are people who blame God for different things. Why did you let me do that? As though when you're about to do something really stupid, God steps in and prevents it so you can't do it.

It doesn't work that way. I'm not suggesting that it's never happened, but I'm saying that as a rule, God does not commandeer our will and make us do the right thing.

He lets us do the right thing. He lets us do the wrong thing. And there are consequences that come from each of those. will. So as regards this will, if it operates the way I think it does, and I say if because I don't have a chapter and verse for this, but what I'm trying to do is put these things together and draw some conclusions, perhaps by process of elimination, that this must be the way it is because this is the way it works.

And I can reach no other conclusion other than the will remains in a position of neutrality before and after salvation.

[34 : 11] And I know that this involves the intricacies of the conscience. That's another thing. But it comes into play as to how we exercise our will because conscience has to do with the establishment of right and wrong moral principles in our mind and our adherence to them, our compliance with them.

And that too brings the will into play and the conscience and yet consciences are not flawless. They are programmable and our parents begin programming our conscience as early as not getting in the cookie jar and not touching a hot stove and all the no-nos that come with the two-year-old and all the rest.

That begins way back there programming the conscience. and the will mysteriously works with that. So does the will have the ability to believe?

I say it most emphatically certainly does. And this is where I have had to depart with the position that I have taught right here at this church many, many years ago.

Regret having taught it. because no preacher likes to look back on earlier teachings and say, you know what? I was all wrong back then and I told a bunch of people something that I no longer believe.

[35 : 38] I sure wish there were some way to get that back. But there isn't. And what it boils down to is this. Is the will operative, responsible, available?

Can the will respond when the gospel is heard? That invokes another question.

how dead is dead. We are described as dead in trespasses and sins.

And I have humorously used the word that some of the old southern preachers have used years ago talking about man in his spiritual deadness and in his unregenerate state as being not only dead but plum dead.

That's plum dead. That's his really dead. And the analogy that is often used by our Calvinist friends is a dead person can't believe anything.

[37 : 01] and they liken spiritual death to physical death. And if you take the town drunk who died from over indulging himself with liquor and now he's on display in the local funeral home and laid out in a casket there and everybody knows that this is a town drunk and they haven't seen him sober for years, you can take a bottle of his favorite liquor and put it on the casket right there in front of him and he will not rise up and take a drink because he's dead.

And that's the way we are spiritually. We do not have the ability to believe because dead people can't believe anything.

And I've used that argument. I've used that analogy and it seemed to me at the time to be rather ironclad. But subsequent years of teaching and the scriptures and reading the scriptures and studying the scriptures, I've just got to reverse myself.

Sorry about that, folks. But I no longer believe that and haven't for quite some time but never had a proper venue to express it. The difference has to do, I think, with this, is with the definition of dead.

What is death? Death is biblically defined, I believe, not as a cessation of existence and not as an inability to do or be anything, which we normally associate with death and a dead corpse, but what death really means, biblically, is separation.

[38 : 53] Remember that, if you will. More than anything else, death is separation. It's the tearing asunder of something. And if you're talking about physical death, it is the separation of the spirit or the soul from the body.

So that the body is left lifeless. The body is just a corpse. It's vacated. the real person that lived inside that body, that animated that body, left the premises and is gone.

That's called life. Life and death. And the spirit leaves the body and returns to God who gave it.

That's death. death. So when man hears the gospel, he does have the ability to respond to the gospel.

If he doesn't have the ability to respond to the gospel, then how is anybody saved? And our Calvinist friends say that before anyone believes on Christ, they are regenerated by God.

[40 : 26] That is, they are made a new person. They are given life. God infuses spiritual life into them.

They don't believe anything. They maybe have never heard the gospel. They have never dealt with the reality of their sin at all.

But God mysteriously pours his life into those individuals completely unbeknownst to them.

They are unaware that this has happened. He just makes them alive. Who are these people that he makes alive? they are called the elect.

They are chosen by God to receive spiritual life, everlasting life, and he makes them alive. And because he makes them alive, they are able now to respond to the gospel when they hear it.

[41 : 38] They couldn't respond before because they were dead. now they are made alive in Christ, so now when they hear the gospel, they can believe.

So in the Calvinist scheme of things, life, spiritual life, is imparted, thus enabling the person when they hear the gospel to believe, and if you are one of the elect, and if you have been made alive in Christ, you will believe.

No question about it. You will. You have to. You have no choice. Because the sovereignty of God in their view dictates that.

this brings us to what is commonly referred to as the tulip of Calvinism. And the tulip stands for total depravity and unconditional election and limited atonement and irresistible grace and the perseverance of the saints.

This is the tulip. T-U-L-I-P. It is referred to as the five main points of Calvinism. And the first total depravity means simply that man is so depraved he is incapacitated unable to believe anything spiritual.

[43 : 25] He is just locked down. He cannot believe. And unconditional election means that God has chosen some.

They are the elect. He has chosen them to salvation. And on what basis did God choose them?

Nobody knows. It has nothing to do with their character. It has nothing to do with their works whether good or bad. It has everything to do with God's sovereign choice.

The criteria that God uses for making his choice is not revealed in scripture at all. We are just told that God was pleased to choose certain ones.

What about those he did not choose? All he did not choose will experience eternal perdition. Those whom he has chosen are the elect and they are those who have eternal life.

[44 : 31] So their position then of course has to be linked to limited atonement which means that Christ did not die for the sins of the whole world.

He died only for the elect. Only for the ones he chose. And the reason he did not die for the sins of the whole world is because the whole world is not saved and everyone who ends up ultimately not saved are those for whom Christ died for nothing.

Because they still end up in hell even though Christ died for them. And their solution to that is Christ didn't die for everyone.

He died only for the elect. He did not die for the non elect. So the death that Christ died does not go to waste because everyone that he died for is elect and will be saved and will believe because Christ died for them.

Now there are numerous verses that fly in the face of that and the chiefest of which I think is John 3 16 God so loved the world what does the text say God so loved the world how do they read that that means God so loved the world of the elect but it doesn't say that it says God so loved the world well did he really love the world not talking about the physical globe but the people in it and 1st John 2 and he is the propitiation for our sins and not ours only but also for the sins of the whole world Christ died for everybody this does not make everybody saved but it does make everybody savable so that no matter who someone is or what they have done or how sorted their past they are not beyond the pale of

[46 : 44] God's grace they can be saved they need to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ but we come back to this problem but they can't believe because they are spiritually dead now if you are elect relax if you are one of the elect you will believe well how do you know whether you're one of the elect because if you're not one of the elect it doesn't make any difference what you believe if you're not elect you're not elect you see how convoluted this is now this goes all the way back this is rooted in St.

Augustine this is 4th century stuff and it has been perpetuated and elaborated on and expanded upon by John Calvin in the 1500s and this is why it is commonly referred to as Calvinism and Calvin got a great deal of his theology from Augustine and both of these men Calvin and Augustine both of them in my estimation are probably two of two of some of the most brilliant men who've ever lived from the standpoint of intellect these were not intellectual dummies these were very intelligent men and in my opinion they simply became enamored and carried away with the sovereignty of God and God being so in charge of everything that I think they short shrifted the responsibility of man that's that's a wise man opinion I think that's exactly what they did they they wanted to make God as sovereign as he is and they took that to the point of well an irresistible grace what does that mean irresistible grace means if you are one of the elect you will believe you don't have any choice you will believe because you are one of the elect and for the elect the grace of

God is irresistible that means you can't say no to God even if you want to say no you can't say no you have to say yes you have to believe you have to receive Christ as your savior because you're one of the elect which means you are pre-programmed to do that and then the perseverance of the saints is where we what we call generally the security of the believer because you are one of the elect you will persevere you will be saved ultimately in the end for years and years and years I was a four point Calvinist here here here and here I never had any problem buying total depravity unconditional election irresistible grace and the perseverance of the saints I never could get into limited atonement because the scriptures seem to be so clear regarding that that

Christ's death was for the entire world and it is said that in so many places implied in the Old Testament specifically stated in the New Testament I think it is irrefutable and unconditional and it is just automatic I don't see how anybody can twist or distort that Christ died for the sins of the whole world all of humanity so for years and years and years I was a four point Calvinist never did go with the limited tone and how did I get into this I'll tell you how I got into it and I'll tell you the first time I heard this about election about God choosing and people having no choice God just arbitrarily choosing by whatever criteria he uses to save some and to ignore the others was as a young student freshman or sophomore at Cedarville and we would sit around in Burnus Mix coffee shop and argue and fuss about these things and rewrite theology and just have some real verbal knock down drag outs about

Calvinism Arminianism and everything and I became infatuated with his truth fascinated by it largely because I greatly admired and still do Augustine his city of God and the confessions of Saint Augustine are just masterpieces it doesn't mean you agree with everything in them but they are just tremendous works of literature spiritual literature and John Calvin in my estimation is one of the greatest biblical exegetes that has ever lived his commentaries are just absolutely outstanding on most verses but some of the verses that we've been talking about I think he's all wet and then my idol of idols Charles Haddon Spurgeon arguably the greatest preacher of the last 400 years was a four point Calvinist and I so admired that man I mean you have to admire any preacher whose

[51 : 51] Sunday message is printed on the front page of the London Times newspaper Monday morning his message word for word can you imagine that this man was a towering intellect and I was deeply impressed and influenced by all of these men they were my heroes and I thought well if this is what they believe that's good enough for me and how many times have I told you don't do that how many times have I told you you ought not to believe anything because I do or because I say it's true it doesn't make it true I am not the authority all I ask you to do is give consideration to what I say weigh it evaluate test it I may be all wet I don't have any corner on the truth and I wish I could tell you everything that comes out of my mouth is pure gospel you can believe it the only one who can say that is the

Lord and I don't come close to that so all I preach I preach for your consideration I can be wrong I have been wrong and this morning I am I'm a two point Calvinist I believe in total depravity in that man is unable to rectify his condition before God there is no deed and no work that man can do that will please God and result in his salvation he is utterly totally lost but he can exercise his will he can respond this is the whole basis for preaching the gospel you preach the gospel and you give people something to respond to and when they respond to the gospel they are exercising faith they are saying if this is who

Jesus Christ is and this is what he did and he did it for me then I want to put my trust and my confidence in this savior as you do that with your will you trust Jesus Christ as your savior and when you do that is your response to what God did in Christ this is the whole dynamic of proclaiming the gospel it gives people good news that they can respond to and when you hear Christ died for your sins what is your response to that you mean he did that for me you mean God loves me like that that he gave his son to die in my place and pay for my sins wow really yes that's the good news that's the gospel you don't have to pay for your own sin you acknowledge your sin and you trust your substitute

Jesus Christ that's salvation that's the response of the human heart and when you do you are made a new creature in Christ and you are given eternal life as a gift you didn't buy it you didn't deserve it you can't pay for it all you can do is thank God for it let's pray father we have considered a great deal of material this morning and we realize that there may be uncertainty and confusion because very important concepts require some deep thinking and often creates confusion and we certainly don't want to be guilty of that we pray for an understanding of the clear gospel that

Christ died for our sin and that we need not die we have a savior substitute and our prayer is for anyone who may be here this morning young person or old to recognize their true condition before you that we desperately need a savior because we cannot save ourselves and you have graciously provided that savior in the person of Christ and that's the whole reason for his coming if someone here this morning sees and understands that for the first time we pray that they may be willing with their will to respond in a positive way by embracing the Lord Jesus as their savior substitute and putting their trust and their confidence for heaven in him this is our prayer we pray that anyone who makes that decision this morning may have the courage to tell someone else what they've done and be encouraged and enlightened by them we ask it in

[57 : 25] Christ's name and for his sake amen sorry I didn't leave any time for questions and answers that's not the first time that's ever happened is it but next week I can't because Eric will be here speaking but two weeks from today you will have had two weeks to meditate cogitate and straighten me out on this whole business so I want to invite you to write out any questions you may have you don't have to sign your name just write out any questions you may have and drop them in the offering box and I would be happy to address them I'll do the best I can with Scott