

Security of the Believer

A Review of the Calvinistic Doctrine of the Impossibility of Apostasy

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Introduction: Discerning the “real issues” in any controversial discussion is often easier said, than done. However, it is critical to a careful consideration of truth and fair representation of those with whom we differ. Especially is this true when we are addressing and interacting with *Calvinistic Theology*. Perhaps there have been times, in which, our brethren may have unwittingly created a vacuum, which provided an opportunity for error by simply failing to emphasize the confidence we have in Christ. I firmly believe we are to live with the assurance of our salvation, although it is conditioned on faith (I John 5:11-13; Philippians 1:21-23; Acts 8:35-39; 2 Corinthians 5:1-4, 7). However, as we progress we will see that assurance of salvation is actually not something a well-informed Calvinist may claim.

I. The Real Issue: *Can A Believer Become An Unbeliever?*

a. The issue is not:

- i. God’s power to save the believer.
- ii. God’s faithfulness to His promises.
- iii. God’s love for His children.
- iv. The security of the believer.
- v. About flawless performance.

b. The issue is:

- i. Can a child of God choose to leave Christ?
- ii. Can a Christian cast away the Lord’s promises?
- iii. Will God disinherit his unfaithful children?
- iv. Can a believer become an unbeliever?
- v. The condition of walking in/by faith.

c. Agreement:

- i. Unbelievers are lost.
- ii. Those who have never truly been converted are lost! (There is no need to discuss this point).
- iii. The faithful child of God is secure:
 1. The scriptures offer the assurance of God’s power through His grace and faith (John 4:13, 14; 6:35-40; 10:25-30; Romans 8:28-39; 2 Tim. 1:12; I Pet. 1:5; I John 5:11-13).
 2. We accept all passages, which assure God’s children of salvation, but which passage teaches the impossibility of apostasy?

d. Disagreement:

- i. Can a believer become an unbeliever?
 - ii. One who has been converted to Christ may through the exercise of his or her freewill apostatize and therefore abandon his faith.
- e. **Calvinism is Domino Theology: When one point fall, they all logically fall.**
- i. This theology is very tightly constructed and the points are inter-dependent.
 - ii. Observe the circular reasoning of Calvinism:
 - 1. False view of God's Sovereignty
 - 2. Total Inability
 - 3. Unconditional Election
 - 4. Limited Atonement
 - 5. Irresistible Grace
 - 6. Perseverance of the Saints
 - iii. No middle ground without losing theological consistency.
- f. **How do you know if you are saved?**
- i. Common defense: "If you apostatize you were never saved in the first place."
 - ii. Reply: "If this is true then you cannot know you are saved for certain."
 - iii. The doctrine of "once saved, always saved" is not a doctrine of comfort or assurance if one understands the underpinnings of this teaching to be unconditional election.
 - 1. Stephen Garrett, a Calvinistic Baptist, in expressing his view of Romans chapter 9 said, "...Brother, when you talk about God loving somebody and God hating somebody, are you not talking about eternal salvation? He hated Esau before He was born and He says it was not based on any evil that he did"¹
 - 2. Gene Cook, Jr., a well known defender of Calvinistic theology said, "'Non elect infants who die in their infancy will spend eternity in hell' – I would answer true to that question, you have to be elect in order to be saved. If this question is false, then we should perform abortion, because abortion is the greatest evangelistic act that has ever taken place since the time that Jesus walked the face of the earth, because everyone of those children are going straight to heaven according to Mr. Brown's theology"²
 - 3. "So when he (Bruce Reeves) stands over here and says, 'His' (Gene Cook, Jr.) 'God is a monster, his God is not fair, his God sends little babies to hell ... there is nothing they can do

¹ Garrett – Donahue Debate on Election, 2006.

² Brown-Cook Debate, February 16, 2000.

about it,' he (Bruce Reeves) is really arguing against the God of the Bible..."³

4. "You just got up and heard Mr. Reeves make the argument that my version of God is a God who puts one baby on the saved list and another baby not on the saved list and I'm going to show you from Romans chapter nine that that's what the Scripture says."⁴
5. "Both evil and good come from God...So what happens when you emphasize the will of man, then evil becomes only associated, there is no sense in which God decrees evil, there is no sense in which God wills evil and so evil is only from the heart of man and from the heart of Satan, ... but we recognize as reformed Christians that those are secondary causes, that the first cause of evil is God, Himself ... Man does not resist evil when he is fulfilling the decrees of God"⁵ [Is God Schizophrenic? "The Two Wills of God," Gene Cook, 8/12/05].
6. "The devil is God's devil. He does what God allows him to do, he does what God commands him to do, no more and no less."⁶ [Reeves-Cook Debate, Quote played from a sermon by Gene Cook, Reeves third affirmative, June 24, 2005].

g. Two approaches to the *Security of the Believer*.

i. Security despite unbelief and disobedience:

1. While he has been critical of the Reformed approach, Charles Stanley writes in his book, *The Eternal Security of the Believer*, "Faith is simply the way we say yes to God's free gift of eternal life. Faith and salvation are not one and the same anymore [sic] than a gift and the hand that receives it are the same. Salvation or justification or adoption—whatever you wish to call it—stand independently of faith. Consequently, God does not require a constant attitude of faith in order to be saved—only an act of faith ... One more illustration may be helpful. If I chose to have a tattoo put on my arm that would involve a one-time act on my part. Yet the tattoo would remain with me indefinitely. I don't have to maintain an attitude of fondness for tattoos to ensure that the tattoo remains on my arm. In fact I may change my mind the minute I receive it. But that does not change the fact that I have a tattoo on my arm. My request for the tattoo and the tattoo itself are two entirely different things. I received it by asking and paying for it. But asking for my money back and

³ Reeves – Cook Debate, Gene Cook's fourth affirmative speech, June 24, 2005.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Gene Cook, Jr. Is God Schizophrenic? The Two Wills of God, August 16, 2005.

⁶ Reeves – Cook Debate, Quote played from sermon by Gene Cook, Reeves third affirmative, June 21, 2005.

*changing my attitude will not undo what is done. Forgiveness/salvation is applied at the moment of faith. It is not the same thing as faith. And its permanence is not contingent upon the permanence of one's faith."*⁷ (Stanley, p 80)

2. Sam Morris wrote, *"We take the position that a Christian's sins do not damn his soul. The way a Christian lives, what he says, his character, his conduct, or his attitude toward other people has nothing whatever to do with the salvation of his soul. All the prayers a man can pray, all the Bibles he may read, all the churches he may belong to, all the services he may attend, all the sermons he may practice, and all the debts he may pay, all the ordinances he may observe, all the laws he may keep, all the benevolent acts he may perform, will not make his soul one bit safer. And all the sins he may commit from idolatry to murder, will not make his soul in any more danger."*⁸
- ii. Reformed View: Security through perseverance conditioned on the gift of faith, but not on their freewill:
1. "This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit of the intercession of Jesus Christ, the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them, and the nature of the covenant of grace: from all which ariseth also the certainty and and infallibility thereof" (The Westminster Confession of Faith, 17.1).
 2. The bottom line for Calvinism: If you are lost you cannot choose to be saved and if you are saved you cannot choose to be lost.
 3. Wayne Gruden writes, "The perseverance of the saints means that all those who are truly born again will be kept by God's power and will persevere as Christians until the end of their lives, and that only those who persevere until the end have been truly born again" (Systematic Theology, Wayne Gruden, 788).

⁷ Charles Stanley, *Eternal Security: Can You Be Sure?* Oliver Nelson Books, Nashville, 1990.

⁸ Jackson, Wayne. "Sam Morris on Rum and Eternal Ruin." *ChristianCourier.com*. Access date: October 1, 2016. <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/435-sam-morris-on-rum-and-eternal-ruin>

4. Wayne Gruden writes, “But here we see why the phrase *eternal security* can be quite misleading. In some evangelical churches, instead of teaching the full and balanced presentation of the perseverance of the saints, pastors have sometimes taught a watered down version, which in effect tells people that all who have once made a profession of faith and been baptized are ‘eternally secure.’ The result is that some people who are not genuinely converted at all may ‘come forward’ at the end of an evangelistic sermon to profess faith in Christ, and may be baptized shortly after that, but then they leave the fellowship of the church and live a life no different from the one they lived before they gained this ‘eternal security.’ In this way people are given false assurance and are being cruelly deceived into thinking they are going to heaven when in fact they are not” (ibid., 806).
5. However, Stephen Garrett, a declared Calvinist, in a debate with John Gentry in November 2009 was asked a question about homosexuality and the following was his response, ““His second question is ‘is an elect and regenerated Christian saved while committing a homosexual act?’ “Yes he is.” ((Steven Garrett - Garrett / Gentry debate - 6:54 of first affirmative speech Friday). I debated Mr. Garrett on the subjects of *Unconditional Election (2010)* and *the Impossibility of Apostasy (2012)* and played this quote and he continued to defend his statement.
6. This is the concept that “if you have it, you cannot lose it and if you lose it, you never had it.”
7. It might be more precise to describe the position of Calvinists as the *Impossibility of Apostasy*.⁹

II. The Warning Passages: Who Are They Addressing?

a. Corinthians: Delivered, But Can Perish (I Corinthians 10:1-13).

i. Who is Paul warning of falling?

1. “Brethren” (10:1) refers to those who had been “washed, sanctified and justified” (1:2; 6:11).
2. Paul speaks of those who were delivered from Egyptian bondage, but yet fell in the wilderness (Numbers 14; 2 Peter 2:20-22).

⁹ Wayne Gruden does grant that some who use the phrase *Eternal Security* make the mistake to which he refers (Systematic Theology, 806).

- ii. **What is the lesson: the impossibility or possibility of apostasy?**
 - 1. The apostle identifies this Old Testament story as “our example” (10:6), therefore, the Christians in Corinth must learn from the failure of Israel.
 - 2. What should be learned? **They fell, so can we!** If it were impossible to fall, what would be Paul’s point? (10:6, 11).
 - 3. Admonition - 33.424 νουθετέω; νουθεσίαβ, ας*f*: to advise someone concerning the dangerous consequences of some happening or action—‘to warn, warning.’ . . . νουθεσίαβ: έγράφη δὲ πρὸς νουθεσίαν ἡμῶν ‘it was written down as a warning for us’ (1 Cor 10:11) (Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.). New York: United Bible Societies.
- iii. **The Physical Figure/Spiritual Reality:**
 - 1. Egypt – The world
 - 2. Pharaoh – Satan
 - 3. Moses (deliverer) – Jesus (deliverer)
 - 4. Israel – The church
 - 5. Cloud and Sea – Baptism
 - 6. Wilderness – Christian life
 - 7. Canaan – Heaven
- iv. **The grace of God in providing a way of escape (10:12-13).**
 - 1. There is no temptation that is inescapable.
 - 2. God is faithful to provide a way of escape.
 - 3. In Christ, by His grace, we can endure the temptations of this life and experience victory.
 - 4. However we must not arrogantly think we cannot fall (10:12).

b. Galatians: Written To Saved People - Free in Christ, But Do Not Be Enslaved.

- i. Galatians are “free” and encouraged to stay where they are presently (5:1; 2:4).
- ii. They are in the faith and Spirit (5:5-10; cf. 3:2-5).
- iii. They are joined to Christ (5:4; 3:26-29).
- iv. How can it be argued that Paul is warning those who are not really saved? If he is warning those who are joined to Christ from being severed from Him, does that not prove the possibility of a child of God apostatizing?

c. Hebrews: A Believer Can Depart From The Living God.

- i. **Who was addressed?**

1. “Brethren” (3:1)
2. “Holy” (3:1)
3. Confessing (3:1)
4. “Partakers of a heavenly calling” (3:1)
5. Fellowship with God (3:12)
6. Confidence in faith and hope (3:14)
7. “Enlightened” (6:4; 10:32)
8. Received the knowledge of the truth (3:1; 10:26).
9. 3:12-13: “ ‘See to it, brothers’ introduces the author’s application of his text to his Christian readership. Neither here nor anywhere else in his letter did the writer betray the slightest suspicion that his audience might contain people who were not real Christians. Instead, they were regarded as “brothers” (as here) or as “holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling” (v. 1). The widespread view that he was concerned about mere professors of the faith as over against genuine believers is not found in the text (Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Heb 3:12, 13). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books).

ii. **The warnings addressed to “Brethren”**

1. Hebrews 3:1-4:16
 - a. “Beware” is a genuine caution (2:1; 4:1, 11; 6:11, 12; 10:23-25, 36-39; 12:1-3; Phil. 3:2).
 - b. This is a real, not hypothetical threat, i.e. believers can become unbelievers (i.e. disobedient).
 - c. *“Lest any of you”* (3:13) – who is being exhorted? The saved man who could be deceived by sin and lost, or the unsaved man who already is?
 - d. *“For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end”* (3:14): They started well in faith, if they held fast to that faith they would be participants with Christ (3:15-19; 10:34).
 - e. “While it is said: *“Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion”* (3:15-19): Apparently, those reading this letter could fall into unbelief.
 - f. The promise of rest remains if “holy brethren” are faithful (4:1).
 - g. “Let us fear” (4:1):

- i. Let us be diligent to enter that rest (4:11).
 - ii. Let us hold fast our confession (4:14).
 - iii. Let us draw near (10:22).
 - iv. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope (10:23)
 - v. Let us consider one another (10:24).
 - h. Those saved must be diligent to continue in obedience to Christ (4:11).
 - i. “Let us hold fast our confession” – Those to whom this admonition is given are told to hold to what they had (Hebrews 4:14).
2. Hebrews 10:19-39:
- a. “Brethren” (10:19) references the “*holy brethren*” who are “*partakers of the heavenly calling*” of 3:1.
 - b. Those who are warned are addressed as those who are also confident in Christ (10:19); Jesus is their High Priest (4:16, 21); encouraged to maintain their cleansed conscience (10:22) and who have the potential of receiving a great reward (10:35).
 - c. The “*Holiest*” refers to God’s presence (10:19; cf. 9:23, 24).
 - d. Jesus is their High Priest and they are in the “*house of God*” (10:21).
 - e. These are justified believers, who are to “*draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having...hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and ... bodies washed with pure water*” (10:22).
 - f. “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering” (10:23): why would Paul encourage these brethren to hold on to the faith they had – had if the only people that fall away never had saving faith in the first place.
 - g. “For if we sin willfully...” – “For” this entire paragraph (vv. 26-31) sustains a relationship to the preceding appeals, and especially to the admonitions of v. 25.
 - i. “Willful sin” is indicative of purposeful action to depart from Christ.
 - ii. The timing of the departure is specified: “...after we have received the knowledge of the truth.”

- iii. This knowledge is “saving knowledge” in which these brethren have participated.
- iv. The apostate will receive condemnation (10:27).
- h. To profane the sacrifice of Christ by which one was sanctified demands prior salvation (10:29; cf. 10:10, 14).
 - i. *“The words “sanctified him” refer to true Christians. Already the writer to the Hebrews has described them as “made holy (Gr. ‘sanctified’) through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (10:10) and as “made perfect forever” through this sanctifying work (v. 14). Some seek to evade this conclusion by suggesting that Christ is the One referred to here as “sanctified” or that the person only claims to be sanctified. But these efforts are foreign to the writer’s thought and are so forced that they carry their own refutation... “The author’s whole point lies in the seriousness of the act. To treat “the blood of the covenant” (which actually sanctifies believers) as though it were an “unholy” (koinon, “common”) thing and to renounce its efficacy, is to commit a sin so heinous as to dwarf the fatal infractions of the Old Covenant. To this, an apostate adds the offense of insulting the Spirit of grace who originally wooed him to faith in Christ.” The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.*
- i. A Christian can:
 - i. Turn his back on the means of his past justification (10:26).
 - ii. Trod under foot the Son of God (10:29).
 - iii. Count the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified an unholy thing (10:29).
 - iv. Resist the Holy Spirit’s invitation to grace (10:29).
- j. The apostate Christian will:
 - i. Experience the certain judgment of God (27, 30, 31).

- ii. Experience the same fiery indignation of God that will devour the adversaries (27).
 - iii. Experience worse punishment than those who rejected Moses (28, 29).
 - k. Living by faith is a choice! How can you retreat from a position you have never occupied? (10:32-39)
- d. **Second Peter: One Having Been Justified Can Again Be Entangled In Sin So As To Be Lost.**

- i. The recipients of this epistle are clearly regarded as saved people as Peter describes them as those who “have obtained like precious faith” in “our God and Savior Jesus Christ our Lord” with the apostle (2 Peter 1:1-2).
- ii. Those to whom Peter is writing have participated in the grace and peace of Christ through the “knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord” (1:2).
 1. *ἐπίγνωσις*, “Denotes “exact or full knowledge, discernment, recognition,” and is a strengthened form of No. 1, expressing a fuller or a full “knowledge,” a greater participation by the “knower” in the object “known,” thus more powerfully influencing him” Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words.
 2. “The word “knowledge” is not the simple word *gnosis* (γνῶσις), but the stronger word *epignosis* (ἐπιγνῶσις). Alford quotes Delitzsch as saying: “When *epignosis* (ἐπιγνῶσις) is used, there is the assumption of an actual direction of the spirit to a definite object and of a real grasping of the same . . .” Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English reader* (Heb. 10:26). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
 3. “So that we may speak of a false *gnosis* (γνῶσις), but not of a false *epignosis* (ἐπιγνῶσις). And the Writer, by the use of this word, gives us to understand that he means by it not only a shallow historical notion about the Truth, but a living believing knowledge of it, which has laid hold of a man and fused him into union with itself... This knowledge of the Lord Jesus possessed by the believer therefore, is not a mere intellectual knowledge of the facts concerning Him acquired by a study of the Gospels, for instance, but a heart experience of what and who He is gained by such a study plus a personal association with Him by means of the Word and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is a person with Person knowledge through intimate fellowship” (Wuest's Word

Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English reader
(Heb. 10:26). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans).

iii. "In the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord:

1. *"Grace and peace be multiplied . . ." (2 Pet. 1:2)*
2. *"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness . . ." (2 Pet. 1:3)*
3. *For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful . . ." (2 Pet. 1:8)*
4. *For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world . . ." (2 Pet. 2:20)*

iv. Peter is addressing those who:

1. Have experienced the new birth (1:3).
2. Divinely called through the gospel (1:3; 2 Thess. 2:13-14).
3. Possessors of the great and precious promises (1:4).
4. Participants in the divine nature (1:4).
5. Escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (1:4).
6. Can be either fruitful or unfruitful (1:5-10).
7. Justified and cleansed by the blood of Christ (1:9-10).
8. The faithful are secure (1:10-11).
9. Needed to be reminded to remain established in the faith (1:12-15).
10. Encourages his readers to be cautious of false teachers who had in the past been bought by the blood of Christ (2:1).
11. Have actually escaped (2:18-19).
12. Those who have escaped are warned of being "entangled again" in their former corruption (2:20-22).
 - a. Escaped "from corruption" (1:4); "bondage" (2:18-19); "through knowledge of Jesus" (2:20) and "from pollutions of the world" (2:20).
 - b. How could the latter end be worse than the beginning if they simply had never been saved?
 - c. The possibility of apostasy is a reality!
 - d. They were at one time clean both inside and outside and then reverted back to their lost condition.
13. Warned to not be led away by error, but instead grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ (3:17-18).

III. The Freedom of God Grace Leads Us To Transformation (Romans 6-8).

- a. **The heart of the gospel leads us to transformation (Romans 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:17-18).**
- b. **The Christian is not to live in sin (Romans 6:1, 2).**

- c. **The Christian has “died to sin” (6:3-8).**
 - i. “Baptized into His death” (6:3).
 - ii. “Walk in newness of life” (6:4).
 - iii. The old person has been “crucified with Christ...so that we no longer are to be slaves to sin” (6:6).
 - iv. He who has “died is freed from sin” (6:7).
- d. **Sin no longer has dominion over our lives (6:9-14).**
 - i. The believer is a servant of righteousness (6:15-23).
 - ii. Those who are “freed from sin are slaves of righteousness” (6:18), whereas those who are “slaves of sin are free in regard to righteousness” (6:20).
 - iii. You cannot simultaneously serve righteousness and unrighteousness. Paul continues the same line of reasoning in Romans 8:5-15.
- e. ***Who is being depicted in Romans 7 – the lost man outside of Jesus under the Law of Moses or the faithful Christian? (I firmly believe the grace of God frees us!) The main point of the text is the Mosaic Law:***
 - i. Delivered from the Law to be married to Christ (7:1-6).
 - 1. This man endorsed the Law, but sin hindered him from carrying out what he knew to be right. But he finds himself unable to live free from the dominion of sin once he has violated it.
 - 2. 7:6 teaches that we have been delivered from the Law, whereas, 7:24 depicts a man in slavery.
 - ii. Sin brought death through the Law, although the Law was holy (7:7-13).
 - 1. Prior to his knowledge of the Law Paul was “alive,” but when the Law convicted him of transgression he “died.”
 - 2. The purpose of the law is to reveal and expose sin (7:13; 3:20).
 - 3. However, the Law, which revealed sin, was impotent to break the power of sin or the frustration of the dominion of sin.
 - iii. Romans 7:14-25 is an inspired depiction of a man who is frustrated and helpless to justify himself, once having sinned against God’s Law outside of the grace of Jesus Christ.
 - 1. This is a rhetorical personification so as to depict the desperate condition of one outside of the sphere of God’s grace.
 - 2. The man of Romans 7 is not merely struggling with sin; he is dominated and defeated by sin. Is this the description of the faithful Christian in Romans 6 and 8?
 - 3. Douglas J. Moo writes, “*Most of the early church fathers thought that these verses described an unregenerate person. This was*

Augustine's early view, but partly as a result of his battle with Pelagius over the freedom of the will, he changed his opinion and decided that the person depicted in these verses was a Christian...the interpretation of vv. 14-25 in terms of 'normal' Christian experience was typical of Lutheran and Reformed theology right into the twentieth century and is still widespread" ¹⁰

iv. Why is this context describing the man outside of Christ:

1. "In the flesh" describes such a man (7:5).
2. The believer is released from the domination of sin (6; 8).
3. 8:2 expressed the truth that the believer is delivered from the law of sin and death.
4. The Christian is freed from the bondage of the law and the guilt of sin.

v. The person without the deliverance of God's salvation:

1. Dead (7:8-11)
2. Carnal, sold under sin (7:14; Is That Paul? Is that the faithful Christian of Romans 6 and 8?)
3. Guilt for violation of the Law (7:15-22)
4. Indwelling of sin (7:7, 17, 20).
5. Cannot get to a justified place not matter how much good is done?
6. Bondage, captivity (7:14, 25)
7. Wretched and miserable condition is not descriptive of the faithful Christian, but it is descriptive of one enslaved to sin.

vi. What is Paul talking about?

1. 7:15: What I want to accomplish (keeping the Law) I do not practice or produce (He had sinned).
2. 7:16: If I hate what I practice (violation of the Law) then I can know that the Law is good in its condemnation of such.
3. 7:17-21: His mind consented to the righteousness of the requirement of the Law, but the fact was the he had sinned and, thus, he did not always fulfill those requirements. He wanted to be pleasing to God, but could not remedy his spiritual condition in and of himself under the Law. Even when he attempted to serve God the realization of his guilt was with him.

¹⁰ Douglas J. Moo, The Epistle To The Romans, 444.

4. When Paul says, “nothing good dwells in me” he is not saying he is incapable of any good, he is saying that he cannot get to a right relationship with God because no matter how much good he does, the Law condemns him for his sin.
5. There is a climax in the text when Paul asks, “Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (7:24-25a)
6. Paul declares that he is free in Christ (8:1-4).

vii. **Summation of our Victory in Christ:**

1. 6:1,2 - NOT to Continue In Sin! –
2. 6:2-10 - Has Died To Sin & alive to God! –
3. 6:9-14 - Sin No Longer Has Dominion!
4. 6:15-23 – Body no longer to be a servant of sin but rather a servant of righteousness!
5. 8:1,2 - Free from the law of sin & death –
6. 8:1,2-8 - Walks according to the Law of the Spirit! – (thus led by the Spirit! – 8:14-17)
7. 8:9-13 - Has put to death the deeds of the body to live for God – (6:13; 1 Cor. 6:13)
8. 8:29,30 – Will be conformed to the image of Jesus!
9. It is important that we strive to maintain a balance between confident assurance and a false sense of security (8:1-2, 12, 13).

IV. What Threats & Concerns Does Calvinism Pose To the Lord’s Church?

- a. Challenge to be balanced in our teaching regarding grace, faith and assurance.
- b. Misconception regarding the difference between Classic Calvinism, Neo-Calvinism and Shades of Calvinism.
- c. Unbiblical perspective of grace and a thin view of faith presented in the proclamation of the gospel, which could lead to problematic thinking concerning justification.
 - i. If faith is defined as a “non-doing trust” and works are defined as “anything you do,” then one will be vulnerable in exchange with well informed Calvinist.
 - ii. Rewrapping error by parroting phrases by Calvinistic thinkers and denying the foundation of such phrases.
 - iii. While we must never misrepresent even those with whom we disagree, we must be attentive to the attempt on the part of some to

use ambiguity to mask the errors of Calvinism and the tendency of some to offer more critique of faithful brethren than the proponents of Calvinism.

- iv. We must also be sensitive to the fact that many times those who espouse error will affirm certain statements and then deny their affirmation of the error or its logical conclusions.
- d. The temptation may exist to allow our experience to shape our theology rather than committing ourselves to allow scripture to shape our teaching.
- e. Failing to see that theology proper can be influenced by soteriology. (Our attitude toward our salvation is directly related to our view of God).
- f. Potential for people to feel that they cannot be transformed by the grace of God.