

***How To
Give Away
Your Faith***

HANDOUT #5

367. This is not a game God is playing; rather, it shows that human beings truly have a free will as is illustrated in Genesis 4:4, where Abel chose to follow God, while Cain chose to go his own way (4:5 cf. Luke 11:50; Acts 10:43).

3 So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. 4 Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; 5 but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. 6 Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 7 “If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it” (Genesis 4:3–7).

368. We have seen that for the Calvinist—the term *total depravity*—really means total inability — where the word “inability” by common definition refers to “*the quality or the state of not being able to do something*” (Webster’s Dict.)

369. This is why A.W. Pink writes in his book, that man is “utterly incapable of willing anything” (*The Sovereignty of God*; Wilder Publications, p. 113).

370. Yet, after the Fall, it is clear that man in his sinfulness has not lost all of his ability to respond, which is why God can command through His servant the Apostle Paul to people in the depths of depravity to repent (Acts 17:30-31):

30 “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent 31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

371. As we have seen, *the only reason to say that the word ‘all’* in Acts 17:30 means something else is because *the Calvinist needs to change* the definition of basic words to order to provide a solution to their double talk—AW Pink writes:

“That God command us ‘all men’ to repent, is about the enforcing of his righteous claims as the moral Governor of the universe” (*The Sovereignty of God*; p. 160).

372. However — the simple reading of Act 17:30 would indicate — that God gives “all people everywhere” through whatever means He chooses the capability to repent or to believe—such that in his fallen state—freewill still exists.

373. By contrast, those of the Reformed & Calvinistic persuasion, argue that faith itself is a gift from God, not something a sinner produces independently.

374. In their view, people are spiritually unable to come to God on their own, such that God must first work in their hearts & gift them the ability to believe.

375. As a result, *even a person's faith in Jesus* is seen as part of God's saving ____.
376. The reason we have returned to the Reformed view of "**total depravity**" is ____ emphasize that, *according to their teaching*, a person must first be regenerated by God before he is able to exercise faith which they see as a gift from God.
377. So, just to be clear on terminology, when we speak of "**regeneration**," we ____ referring to the work of God in which He gives new spiritual life to the person who is spiritually dead through faith in Jesus as described in Titus 3:5–6:

5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

378. Our first birth is physical and natural, placing us into the fallen human ____ affected by sin—while our second birth is spiritual and supernatural placing us into God's redeemed family making us "**children of God**" (John 1:12).
379. Through our physical birth we inherit a sinful nature (Eph. 2:3), but through the ____ birth we "**become partakers of God's divine nature**" (2 Peter 1:4).
380. It is through "**regeneration**" that we are born again & receive eternal life (1 John 5:12) making us "**a new creature in Christ**" (2 Corinthians 5:17), such that God can begin a new ____ in us making more like Christ.

28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8:28–29).

6 For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6).

381. Today, most within the Reformed tradition teach that "**regeneration**" comes before faith — that is to say — a person must first be "**born again**" ____ he or she is able — to believe in Christ as — their personal Savior.
382. From the Reformed perspective, faith is not viewed as the cause of the new birth but that — the new birth — is what enables a person to have ____.
383. Traditionalists agree that no one can come to faith without God working first in his heart by drawing him, opening his understanding & enabling him ____ respond (John 6:44, 65; Matthew 11:27; 16:16-17; Acts 16:14).

384. However, traditional biblical theology also teaches that while God _____ on everyone, faith is not a gift but a choice that one exercise for salvation.
385. If you remember we studied recently from Mark's Gospel a man who _____ to the synagogue in Capernaum who had a — **“withered hand”** — and yet Jesus commanded the man, **“Stretch out your hand”** (Mark 3:1-5).
386. Humanly speaking, the man was unable because his _____ was withered.
387. Yet, Christ gave the command—and the man responded in faith and then God gave him the ability — to do what he could not do — on his _____.
388. In the same way, sinners are commanded to repent or to believe in _____.
389. No one will be able to stand before God someday & be able to say, **“I could not believe because I was unable”** because God commands **“all people”** to **“repent”** (Acts 17:30)—and _____ of us is responsible to respond to Him.

30 “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring (commanding/ESV; KJV; ASV) to men that all people everywhere should repent,

390. God is not **“declaring”** or **“commanding”** a person do what is impossible, which is why — if one refuses — he is responsible for his _____ rebellion.

8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

36 “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36).

391. We will soon see that the Calvinist contends that requiring someone to choose in their heart to believe in Christ—turns faith into a work and diminishes God's glory — such that man gets — **“the credit”** — for his _____.
392. Most who identify as Reformed—unless they are using the label inaccurately, teach that a person must first be regenerated before he _____ believe in Jesus.
393. In other words, their view is that regeneration precedes faith—first a person is regenerated or born again—and then he is _____ to believe.
394. But passages such as John chapter 20 teach that the lost person must first believe—and then at the moment of believing—he receives _____.

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

395. The Apostle John does not say that having “life” you can believe, but that in “believing you may have life in His name” which ____ the same order found in the epistles as in Ephesians 1:13-14:

13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory.

396. When Jesus explained to Nicodemus how to be born again, He pointed to the historical event recorded in Numbers 21, where the dying Israelites looked upon the bronze serpent & lived, a picture of our salvation through ____.

14 “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; 15 so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. 16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:14–16).

397. They did not first receive life and then look, but rather they looked and lived, and so God calls helpless sinners to look to Jesus in faith so they can ____.

398. The assumption throughout the New Testament is that ____ follows faith.

399. Scripture teaches that people refuse to believe in Jesus, not because they are unable, but because are unwilling & their unwillingness is not due to a ____ of life, but because they refuse to come to Jesus & receive life through faith.

400. *Many today, identifying as “Reformed” or “Calvinistic,” because of an altered and warped understanding from the traditional doctrine of total depravity, ____ compelled to teach that regeneration precedes faith in Christ.*

401. Here is a sampling of leading Reformed theologians ____ think that a person must be “born again” or “regenerated” before they are able to truly believe.

*“The Calvinist maintains that faith is wholly from God, being one of the effects of regeneration” (W. G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. II, p. 472).*

*“This faith is not first of all an activity of man, but a potentiality wrought by God in the heart of the sinner. The seed of faith is implanted in man in regeneration” (L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, p. 503).*

*“A man must be born again before he can savingly believe in Christ” (A. W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God* Baker, reprint edition, p. 73).*

*“Faith is born of regeneration; regeneration is not born of faith” (J. I. Packer *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, InterVarsity Press, 1961, p. 73).*

“A man is not saved because he believes in Christ; he believes in Christ because he is saved” (L. Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* p. 73).

“The new birth precedes and enables faith. We do not first believe in order to be born again; we are born again in order that we may believe”
(John Piper, *Finally Alive: What Happens When We Are Born* p. 31).

“Regeneration comes before saving faith” (Wayne Grudem;
Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994, p. 702).

“Regeneration logically precedes conversion and faith” (Joel Beeke,
Reformed Systematic Theology, Volume 3, Crossway, 2021, p. 553).

“When God regenerates a human soul, when he makes us spiritually alive, we make choices. We believe. We have faith. We cling to Christ”
(R.C. Sproul, *Chosen by God*, Tyndale House p. 118).

“Regeneration must occur first before there can be any positive response of faith”
(R.C. Sproul, *What Is Reformed Theology?*, Baker Books, p. 186).

402. R. C. Sproul believes that *regeneration precedes faith* but I discovered in spite of his doctrine, _____ once wrote the following: **“Once Luther grasped the teaching of Paul in Romans, he was reborn”** (*The Holiness of God*, p. 144).
403. This pastor and brother in Christ must have written these words in _____, because to be consistent with his theology he should have said it this way: *“Once Luther was reborn, he grasped the teaching of Paul in Romans.”*
404. While those holding to this theology would not agree with me, I think their teaching is illogical because if **“regeneration”** precedes faith — then _____ would appear unnecessary — since the person — would already be saved.
405. After all, _____ someone is regenerated, he is already born of God and he has become a member of God’s family, and possesses the gift of eternal life.
406. And since you cannot lose something that is eternal (John 6:47), in the truest sense if one has become a child of God & he already—possesses eternal life, then he is already saved & again there is really _____ need to exercise faith.
407. So, for them, if anyone is going to believe in Christ—God must first _____ in and He must first change that person’s heart—by first giving them the new birth & then & only then will that the individual be able to believe.
408. Reformed theologians believe that faith does not originate with the sinner or arise from something available to all, but is instead a **“gift”** that God _____ first give—and He gives it only to those whom—He has elected or chosen.

409. That is why many Calvinists interpret the Bible's statement that salvation "**the gift of God**" (Rom. 6:23) includes even the _____ required to believe.
410. They would teach that God—first grants spiritual life to those He has chosen, and only then—without any resistance—will one respond with faith in _____.
411. Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892) was a famous English Baptist pastor often called the "**Prince of Preachers**" — recognized the folly of saying that the sinner must first be regenerated before he _____ believe when he taught:

"If I am to preach the faith in Christ to a man who is regenerated, then the man, being regenerated, is saved already, and it is an unnecessary and a ridiculous thing for me to preach Christ to him, and bid him to believe in order to be saved when he is saved already, being regenerate. Am I only to preach faith to those who have it? Absurd, indeed! Is not this waiting till the man is cured, and then bringing him the medicine? This is preaching Christ to the righteous and not to sinners."
 ("The Warrant of Faith" *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Volume 9).

412. A Calvinist teaches that if anyone is going to believe in Christ—God must first change that person's heart — by first giving them the new birth, and then and only then will that the individual be _____ to believe.
413. Again, non-Calvinists view this differently in that while they also believe that people are sinful and unable to save themselves, they maintain that God, in some measure, works in us all so that _____ can freely chose or reject Jesus.

7 "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. 8 "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; 10 and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; 11 and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged (Jn. 16:7–11).

414. In Traditionalist view — God graciously reaches out to all people and enables them to believe without forcing them to do so such that faith is understood as a genuine human response rather than something irresistibly caused by _____.
415. A person can freely either accept—or reject God's _____ of salvation, that is to say—they can resist the convicting work—of the Holy Spirit.

51 "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did (Acts 7:51).

416. A major point of contention for Traditionalists vs. Calvinists is precisely _____ one understands the nature of "**faith**" found in Ephesians 2:8-9.