

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

HANDOUT #5

488. So while “**believe in me**” is New Testament language, the Old Testament absolutely contains real invitations to come, to turn, to seek, and to live, directed even beyond the people of Israel inviting all people to come.
489. As we come to the New Testament — we encounter numerous passages that either explicitly state or directly imply a universal gospel invitation in which all people are called to come to Christ for forgiveness and salvation.
490. For example, on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, “**If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink**” (John 7:37).
491. Notice that the invitation is open to — “**anyone**” — who recognizes his need, as expressed in numerous other passages throughout the New Testament.

**28 “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden,
and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28).**

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 3:16).

3 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:3–4).

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men (Titus 2:11),

492. Because the invitation is open to all people—we are to share the gospel to every person—because anyone can be saved (Mark 16:15; Acts 17:30).

493. If people had absolutely no ability to respond to God’s drawing and convicting work — then these invitations would make little sense.

494. God does not continually call people to come if they were incapable of responding which is why Jesus also rebuked some people by saying:

“You are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life” (John 5:40).

495. He did not say they were unable to come—He said they were “**unwilling**” for their problem — was not a lack of ability — but a refusal to believe.

496. Together—both the Old & New Testaments—form the strongest basis for the idea that the gospel invitation is genuinely extended to all without distinction.

497. So in answer to the first of these three critical questions, for the non-Calvinist spiritual deadness does not mean a person is incapable of believing when the Spirit confronts the lost sinner with the truth of the gospel.

498. By contrast, the doctrine of “**Irresistible Grace**” is based on the belief _____ because of sin, people are spiritually unable to come to God on their own.
499. According to traditional Reformed theology, sinners are spiritually ____ and cannot place their faith in Jesus unless God first gives them new spiritual life.
500. When God decides to save a person, He works __ that person’s heart in such a powerful & effective way that they will certainly respond to Christ in faith.
501. Lest we misrepresent Reformed theology, they do not believe God _____ people against their will—but rather they believe—the Lord changes a person’s heart so that one willingly and gladly trusts in Jesus Christ.
502. In simple terms, “**Irresistible Grace**” explains _____ the gift of faith is given.
503. John Calvin’s & his followers teach that God’s grace does not merely make salvation possible; it guarantees the response of faith in the person He ____.
504. According to Calvin, God’s saving call does ____ merely make faith possible, but this — “**Irresistible Grace**” — actually brings only those chosen to faith.
505. They would say — that the outward call of the gospel — can be resisted, but the inward call of the Holy Spirit — which can only happen if ____ has chosen to gift you with faith, will bring the elect willingly to Jesus.
506. This position is taught throughout the writings ____ John Calvin:

“The Lord, by his effectual calling, brings those whom he has elected to salvation.”
(The Institutes 3.24.1 — The Effectual Call of the Elect)

“Faith is a singular gift of God, both because the mind of man is purged so as to be able to taste the truth of God, and because the heart is established therein.”
(The Institutes 2.3.10 — Faith Is Produced by the Spirit)

“Those only believe whom God enlightens by His Spirit, and election is the mother of faith. That the election of God might stand, those who were once blind are illuminated unto faith. By that faith they receive the righteousness of Christ.”
(Institutes 3.22.10 — Election Produces Faith)

507. When Calvin said that “**election is the mother of faith,**” here in the *Institutes* and throughout his writings he taught that God’s choice of those persons He sovereignly has elected, became the _____ of their ability to exercise faith.
508. So for Calvin, faith does not lead to election but rather election ____ to faith.

509. Please understand, he is not saying God’s grace *merely helps a person believe*, but that faith itself is a “**gift**” that God gives to the person He intends to ____.
510. This is very different from traditional evangelical theology because according to Calvin & today’s Reformed theology, grace does more than assist someone in believing, but God actually _____ the faith by which the person believes.
511. Those who teach that faith is a gift given ____ for “**the elect**” are commonly identified as Calvinists or Reformed— and are found — among certain Presbyterians (**PCA/OPC**), Reformed Baptists (e.g., **ARBCA**), as well as some non-denominational and Sovereign Grace churches.
512. Those who believe that faith can be exercised by all are commonly identified ____ Arminians, Wesleyans, Provisionists, Southern Baptists, Traditionalists, Evangelical Free (**EFCA**), Independent Baptists & most Bible churches.
513. Again, for those who call themselves “Reformed” — (*which I think is a stolen word*) — faith is not something — a sinner produces with God’s help—but rather faith itself is something God _____ to the sinner.
514. A non-Calvinist—based on his reading of Ephesians 2:8, usually approaches ____ faith operates very differently.
515. While agreeing that salvation is entirely by grace and that no one could be saved apart from God’s initiative, the non-Calvinist does not believe grace is irresistible—or that God _____ the act of faith itself.
516. Instead, God graciously enables people to respond to the gospel, but He does not _____ or determine their response of faith.
517. For the Traditionalist, faith is therefore understood as the sinner’s genuine trust in Christ — not as something — “**irresistibly**” — implanted by ____.
518. When John MacArthur—emphasizes the “**total inability**” of people ____ respond apart from God giving individuals the gift of faith, he writes
- “Because we were dead to God, we were dead to truth, righteousness, peace, happiness, and every other good thing, no more capable to respond to God than a cadaver . . . unregenerate sinners are spiritual zombies, death-walkers, unable, even understand the gravity of their situation they are lifeless.”*
 (The Gospel According To The Apostles, Word, 1993, p. 64-65)
519. *So the disagreement* is not usually over whether grace is needed—both camps agree it is totally necessary, *the disagreement is over what grace actually* ____.

520. In their system, faith is *not ultimately the sinner's independent* response, but it is part of God's saving work which is why Calvinists often say faith is a ____.
521. Yet we have seen many examples in the Bible, where we find individuals who ____ capable of exercising faith in response to God's work of grace in them.
522. *For example*, God heard the prayers of Cornelius a Gentile unbeliever & God sent the Apostle Peter to give ____ the message of salvation (Acts 10:30-32).
523. From what is recorded in Acts we know that Cornelius was a "**God-fearing**" Gentile & not a "**proselyte**" but he was living up to ____ he knew about God.
524. The distinction is important in the New Testament because not all Gentiles who were attracted to Judaism—had fully converted to it ____ becoming a "**proselyte**" — meaning they had formally — converted to Judaism.
525. When a "**God-fearer**" became a "**proselyte**," he formally embraced Judaism by committing to obey the Mosaic Law, undergoing circumcision (*if male*), and ____ participating in the life of the Jewish community.
526. A "**proselyte**" was essentially regarded as a Jew religiously, even though ____ ethnically (Matthew 23:15; Esther 8:17).
527. There are many examples of Gentiles converting to Judaism, like Nicolaus in Acts 6:5 — who ____ specifically called — "**a proselyte from Antioch.**"
528. By contrast, a "**God-fearer**" was a Gentile who worshiped the God of Israel, attended synagogue services, but had not become a ____ convert to Judaism.
529. As such it meant that they rejected pagan idolatry, respected the Scriptures, practiced prayer and almsgiving but had not undergone circumcision and had not obligated themselves to ____ the entire Mosaic Law.
530. Unlike a **proselyte**—a **God-fearer** kept his Gentile identity while worshiping Israel's God & so Luke, in the Book of Acts often describes such individuals as "**those who fear God**" (13:16, 26) or "**God-fearing Greeks**" (17:4).
531. "**God-fearing Greeks**" were often the ____ Gentiles to respond to the gospel because they already believed in the Tanakh & were awaiting the Messiah.
532. I emphasize this—because Cornelius was ____ one of the "**God-fearing proselytes**" as found in Acts 10:43, but he was simply a "**God-fearer.**"
533. Without formally being circumcised as to be a "**proselyte**," Acts 10:2 ____ he was "**a devout man and one who feared God with all his household.**"

534. Yet nowhere does the text suggest or even hint that somehow he had already been given what Reformed theology calls the “**gift of faith**” but instead Acts reveals he _____ needed to hear the gospel in order to believe & to be **saved**.

535. There is not a single example anywhere in the New Testament where **God** gives someone the so-called — “**gift of faith**” — that they might believe for even Cornelius simply heard the message of salvation and _____ believed.

536. Luke records for us the details of his conversion in Acts chapter _____:

43 “Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.” 44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. 45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. 46 For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered, 47 “Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?” 48 And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days (Acts 10:43–48).

537. Peter is clear that Corneilius being regenerated did not precede his hearing the gospel but came after he heard the gospel and exercised _____ in Jesus.

538. And lest someone think this is an overstatement—the Apostle Peter repeats the testimony of Cornelius to the Jerusalem Church indicating clearly _____ he had not already been regenerated or saved before he came to believe:

11 “And behold, at that moment three men appeared at the house in which we were staying, having been sent to me from Caesarea. 12 “The Spirit told me to go with them without misgivings. These six brethren also went with me and we entered the man’s house. 13 “And he reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house, and saying, ‘Send to Joppa and have Simon, who is also called Peter, brought here; 14 and he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household.’ 15 “And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning. 16 “And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ 17 “Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God’s way?” 18 When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, “Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.” (11:11–18).

539. Unlike Reformed theology, which teaches that regeneration precedes faith so that a person can exercise what it calls “**the gift of faith**,” Peter was sent _____ this man to proclaim Jesus, “**by which you will be saved**” (*future tense*).

540. What is very clear from this and every example in Scripture is that “**the Holy Spirit fell upon them**” not before but _____ they believed (cf. Eph. 1:13-14).
541. R.C. Sproul (1939–2017) —was an influential Reformed pastor, theologian, and founder of Ligonier Ministries, who was instrumental in popularizing Reformed Theology—through his preaching, teaching & many _____.
542. Addressing a large Reformed audience—he explained that “**faith**” is a “**gift**” granted only to those whom God ____ regenerates, independent of any prior response by the individual — during the Q&A session — Sproul remarked:

Is faith a gift or a response? If it is a gift why are we responsible for exercising it? Yes . . . it is a response that we have to make a necessary condition for our justification. And yet we were told in the New Testament that the response that we make is because that it is a gift that has been given to us sovereignly by the Holy Spirit who when we were dead sin & trespasses quickened us together with Christ. The defining doctrinal statement about Reformed Theology that separates us from all other schools of thought is this — regeneration precedes faith. That in order to exercise faith, in order to respond, according to the way we were called to respond in order to be saved. We have to first be born again of the Holy Spirit. The vast majority of professing Evangelicals reverse the order of that and they believe that if you want to be justified, and if you want to be saved, you first have to have faith and then you're born again. But spiritually dead people can't exercise faith. Jesus tells us that in John six. You know that, we're not able, we're not capable in our fallenness, in our death and spiritual death to quicken ourselves. It's only after the Spirit of God changes the disposition of our souls in our hearts that we hear and respond to Christ. So the necessary condition for faith is rebirth not the other way around.

543. Whether you believe “**faith**” is a “**gift**” that—God gives ____ to certain people, or whether you believe—everyone has the ability to place their “**faith**” in **Jesus** when aided by God—largely depends on how you answer some key questions.
544. First, are the lost so “**dead**” that they are “**unable to respond**” to the gospel unless God gives them a special gift beyond the Spirit’s convicting _____?
545. Second, one must ask & answer is faith itself a “**work**” that we _____?
546. And third, do any passages of Scripture actually teach that “**faith**” is a “**gift**” given only to certain individuals that _____ chooses?
547. At the heart of the debate are the questions: “**Does God give faith to sinners so that they are able to believe?**” (the Calvinist view) —or—“**Does God give all people the potential ability to place their faith in the gospel in order to receive the gift of eternal life (the non-Calvinist view)?**”

548. And in answering these—we must also ask—if faith is something a person exercises, does that make faith a meritorious _____ that earns salvation?
549. Calvinists believe God’s grace “**irresistibly**” brings a person to faith & so God guarantees the response — while non-Calvinists believe God’s grace enables all to believe — while still allowing each person — the freedom to _____.
550. For this reason — we need to study from the Bible the question of whether “**faith**” is a “**gift**” from God given to a few or an ability activated for ____.
551. Ephesians 2:8 — is typically the most often cited verse — in support of ____ Reformed position that argues that “**faith**” is a “**gift**” given to a chosen few.
552. However, many Bible scholars believe that Paul is ____ saying faith is the gift, rather, he is saying that “**salvation**” by grace through faith is the gift of God.
- 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.**
553. I would like to step through these ____ verses from both the Reformed point of view and the Traditionalist point of view—because the crux of the argument is understanding which position *supported by* the context & the Greek grammar.
554. Most Reformed teachers understand “**the gift of God**” in Ephesians 2:8, as referring to “**faith**” — while the _____ to the entire salvation process.
555. I hope to demonstrate that the word “**that**” in the phrase “**and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God**” points back to the _____ salvation experience — and not specifically — to “**faith.**”
556. I hope to demonstrate how not only the context supports this interpretation, but standing alone — Ephesians 2:8–9 — the Apostle Paul emphasizes that salvation is God’s gift and cannot be earned by human _____.
557. Paul’s focus here is not on explaining the _____ of faith—but on showing that salvation is entirely the result of God’s grace and not human effort.
558. If you knew nothing about Greek grammar, the plain reading of dozens of Bible passages—would naturally _____ you—to this conclusion.
559. You do not need a knowledge of Greek to reach this conclusion, since the plain sense of Scripture leads naturally to it, *though at times knowledge* of the Greek can provide additional support — for truths already evident in the _____.
560. Here Greek grammar strengthens the non-Reformed view, confirming _____ Ephesians 2:8 refers to salvation as “**the gift of God,**” & not “**faith**” itself.