

How To Give Away Your Faith

HANDOUT #5

582. In John 7:17, Jesus says — “**If anyone is willing to do His will, he shall know concerning the teaching,**” emphasizing that a person’s response to God’s truth involves the willingness of the heart.
583. Jesus highlights that unbelief is not merely an intellectual issue, but a moral response of either submitting to or resisting God’s will.
584. When Stephen describes—his unbelieving Jewish brothers—he states in Acts 7:51, “**You stiff-necked people . . . you always resist the Holy Spirit.**”
585. Stephen does not accuse them of being incapable of responding, but rather, they were actively resisting the work of the Spirit.
586. The Apostle Paul speaks of similar resistance of his own Jewish brethren in Romans 10:21 when he quotes Isaiah 65:2 saying, “**All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.**”
587. Once again, God’s posture is one of invitation & here Israel’s posture is that of stubborn refusal—which again shows that judgment that God brings on the lost does not come from an inability to respond but a refusal to respond.
588. When Jesus exhorts the people of His day to respond to “**the truth**” that they might find real “**freedom**” (John 8:32) — they only push back refusing to — admit their need — to which Jesus then responds:
- 43 “**Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word.** 44 “**You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.** 45 “**But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me** (John 8:43–45).
589. I chose these verses because — although Jesus uses the language of inability (“**you cannot hear**”), the context shows that their inability was not a natural limitation but a spiritual condition—as they closed their ears to His words.
590. They had aligned themselves with the devil — by rejecting the truth, showing that unbelief is not mere intellectual deficiency, but a willful rejection of Jesus.
591. The Greek verb is “**thelō**” which means “**to will,**” or “**to desire,**” or “**to be willing**” tells us— that people have the ability to respond.
592. God legitimately & justly places the failure of a person to respond to His Son, not on their inability but on their unwillingness which is why in John 5:40, Jesus does not say, “**You are unable to come,**” but “**You are unwilling.**”

593. The Roman centurion provides another compelling example that spiritual _____ (Eph. 2:1) does not render a person incapable of exercising faith.

594. In Matthew Jesus commended this Gentile officer for _____ remarkable faith:

5 And when Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, imploring Him,
6 and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, fearfully tormented."
7 Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." 8 But the centurion said, "Lord, I
am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my
servant will be healed. 9 "For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under
me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes,
and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it." 10 Now when Jesus heard this, He
marveled and said to those who were following, "Truly I say to you, I have
not found such great faith with anyone in Israel (Matthew 8:5–10).

595. Jesus was _____ being insincere when He 'marveled' at the man's 'faith' saying,
"Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel."

596. If the centurion's "faith" had been irresistibly—*given to him by God*—while he
himself possessed *no capacity whatsoever* to respond, *then Jesus' commendation*
of his faith & His rebuke of the unbelief found in Israel—would _____ its force.

597. It would make little sense for Jesus to emphasize the greatness
of the centurion's faith if that faith were merely a unilateral
gift that the man himself — had _____ ability — to exercise.

598. Wherever you travel in the world — regardless of the culture — you will
encounter people who demonstrate _____ degree of spiritual awareness.

599. Unless they have deliberately suppressed the truth as spelled out in Romans 1,
people everywhere possess an innate awareness of God and therefore worship
some deity— whether — the one true God or some _____ one.

600. This is precisely _____ Romans 1:18–32 holds humanity accountable
for rejecting the revelation of God in creation—for if we were all so
dead and unable—then God could not justly hold man accountable.

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and
unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that
which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.
20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power
and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what
has been made, so that they are without excuse (Romans 1:18-20).

601. Creation itself proclaims the existence and power of the _____ true God.

602. In addition—Romans 2 informs us—that God has given every person _____ conscience which further testifies to His moral law & our accountability.

13 for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. 14 For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, 15 in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, (2:13–15).

603. Certainly—many people have never seen a Bible—or heard the gospel from a missionary & yet because they possess general revelation, they still recognize the existence of the Creator who made them & that _____ merits a response.

604. Their worship may be misguided, but it demonstrates that they are not spiritually incapable of responding to the light _____ has given them.

605. A starving homeless _____ may be invited into a home and offered a meal.

606. The invitation can be accepted or rejected, but no one else can eat the food for him — because he alone — must decide — whether to receive _____.

607. Even so, unbelievers are not like lifeless corpses with _____ capacity to respond.

608. They have the witness of creation, the testimony of conscience, and, according to Jesus, the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit, _____ promised to convict, “the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment” (John 16:8).

609. While no one can be saved apart from God’s gracious initiative, every person remains responsible for his or her response to the _____ God has provided.

610. Contrary to neo-Calvinistic theology, no one is so “dead” in his or her “trespasses and sins” (Ephesian 2:1) —that all capacity to respond has been lost — unless God _____ chooses for that person — to respond.

611. The problem is never an issue of being unable _____ of being unwilling.

612. Once again, whether a person concludes that God gives faith as a gift depends largely on how he understands three _____ issues at the center of this debate.

613. First, are unbelievers spiritually _____ to respond to the gospel?

614. Second, is faith itself considered a _____?

615. Third, are there biblical texts *that explicitly teach* that faith ___ a gift from God?
616. In answering the 1st question related to the doctrine of “**irresistible grace**” — “Are the spiritually dead so incapable of responding to the gospel that they cannot believe unless God first gives them faith?—the answer is plainly, ____!
617. One’s answer to the second question—whether faith should be considered a work—is directly _____ to one’s understanding of total depravity.
618. In contemporary Reformed theology, the argument is that man is so spiritually dead in his sin that, that even under the convicting ministry of the Spirit in this present age (Jn 16:8-10), *he is incapable of making any positive response* to ____.
619. Consequently, God must first act by overcoming that spiritual inability, and granting the _____ what they consider to be “**the gift**” of “**faith**.”
620. Because this gift is given only to those whom God chose before the foundation of the world — every one of the elect will inevitably believe — which is _____ the neo-Calvinist will describe God’s saving grace as being “**irresistible**.”
621. They reason that ___ faith originates in any sense as a human response, then it would become a work for which a person could claim some measure of credit.
622. Therefore, to preserve salvation as being entirely by grace alone through faith alone—Reformed theology maintains that faith itself must be God’s gift to ___ elect rather than a genuine human response enabled by God’s gracious work.
623. Reformed theology further argues that if faith is not a gift from _____, but something a person must personally exercise, then faith becomes a human work — that contributes — to a person’s salvation.
624. This raises an important question: “Is _____ itself a work that earns or merits salvation, or is faith simply the means by which a person receives the salvation that God freely gives?”
625. The answer to this question hinges on the distinction between the basis of salvation — and the means — of receiving _____.
626. Scripture unequivocally teaches that the basis of salvation is God’s grace alone and _____ human effort (Ephesians 2:8–9).
627. The question is whether the act of believing should be classified as a _____.
628. Reformed theology generally contends that if faith originates in us rather than being given by God, then the believer _____ grounds for boasting.

629. Those ____ disagree respond that God *explicitly distinguishes* faith from works, which is why Romans 4:5 says, “**But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.**”
630. In this passage and in many others, Paul does not contrast one kind of work with another — but rather he contrasts — working _____ believing.
631. ____ one who ‘believes’ is specifically described as ‘**the one who does not work.**’
632. And so, faith is not presented *as a meritorious act that earns salvation* but as the God-appointed means by which the sinner receives the free gift of His grace.
633. Here are some other examples where works are contrasted _____ believing.

15 “We are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles;
16 nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified (Galatians 2:15–16).

27 Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. 28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law (Romans 3:27–28).

634. The Apostle Paul never treats faith as a work that _____ God’s favor.
635. Whenever he explains ____ a person is justified, he contrasts faith with works.
636. *In other words*, he presents believing as the opposite of trying to earn salvation, which _____ that faith — is not something we do — to deserve heaven.
637. Instead, faith is admitting that we cannot save ourselves & trusting completely in what Christ has already done for us—through His death ____ resurrection.
638. Faith is something that we personally exercise, and clearly in the Bible, it is not some meritorious act — that _____ God’s acceptance.
639. The Bible is _____ that it is not “**faith in faith**” that saves us but faith in Christ.
640. Rather, faith is simply the _____ hand that receives the free gift God offers.
641. It does not accomplish salvation, rather Christ accomplished that on the ____.
642. Faith merely receives what God _____ already provided.

643. Just as an empty hand contributes nothing to the value of a gift but simply accepts it — so faith contributes nothing to _____ salvation.
644. Just as a beggar’s receiving a gift — does not make him the source of the _____, even so a sinner’s act of believing *does not make him the author* of his salvation.
645. Faith is the God-appointed “**means**” by which “**we receive**” the salvation that Christ has already purchased for us—and so all the glory remains with God because _____ provides the gracious offer (*cf.* Gal 3:2-5, 9-10).
646. Probably the passage cited most often by Calvinistic theology to support the _____ that “**faith**” itself is a “**gift**” given only to the elect is Ephesians 2:8.
647. Therefore, this text must be carefully examined in any discussion of whether faith is God’s gift given to some—or _____ response—to God’s provision.
648. I have intentionally—kept this passage for last—because the argument surrounding it rests largely _____ a knowledge of basic Greek grammar.
649. However, the context of the passage itself teaches _____ same truth, as we have already seen — in many other passages of Scripture.
650. Therefore, even if you are not familiar with Greek grammar, the context alone — should make — the meaning _____.

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 (Eph. 2:8–9).

651. In particular, verse 8 is the verse most often cited in support of the Reformed view that God grants “**faith**” only to the elect before they are _____ to believe.
652. The debate over Ephesians 2:8 centers on one simple question: What does the Apostle Paul _____ when he says, “***it is the gift of God***”?
653. _____ he saying that “**faith**” is God’s “**gift**,” or is he saying that the entire salvation God provides “**by grace through faith**” is “**the gift of God**”?
654. At first glance — this may seem like a small difference — but it has significant theological implications—because if Paul is referring specifically to **faith**, then he is saying that a person cannot believe unless God first gives _____ the ability.
655. This is the position—commonly held by _____ modern neo-Calvinists, that the “**faith**” to believe is itself a “**gift**” or it becomes a merit of man.

656. If, however, Paul is referring to salvation as a whole, then the verse teaches that the entire work of salvation—from beginning to ____, is God’s gracious gift — which is simply received through faith.
657. Many Neo-Calvinists understand this verse to mean that “**faith**” itself is “**the gift of God**” — where their rationale goes ____ to Ephesians 2:1, where lost people are described as being “**dead in trespasses and sins.**”
658. They understand this spiritual death in Ephesians 2:1 to mean that an unbeliever is completely unable to respond to ____ in faith.
659. Therefore—before a person can believe—God must ____ make that person spiritually alive—a work commonly called “**regeneration,**” and then give him or her—the faith to trust Christ for salvation.
660. According to this view — when Paul writes, “**it is the gift of God,**” the word “**it**” refers specifically to the word “**faith**” in verse ____.
661. In other words — the ability to believe — does not arise as a response of the individual—but is itself a gift God gives only to those He has chosen to ____.
662. Since God’s grace is viewed as “**effectual**” or “**irresistible,**” every person to whom God gives this gift of faith will certainly believe ____ be saved.
663. This understanding ____ naturally within the Reformed view of depravity.
664. If fallen humanity is completely incapable of responding to God, then faith cannot originate ____ the individual but it must first be given by God.
665. The question, however, is whether this is actually what Paul intended to say in Ephesians 2:8, and does the grammar support this interpretation and, more importantly — does the context of the passage — support ____?
666. I hope to demonstrate that the Reformed view of Ephesians 2:8 is shaped by prior assumptions regarding total depravity and that the grammar of vs. 8, does not support the conclusion that faith itself is the ____ being described.
667. Traditionalists & non-Calvinists believe the Apostle Paul is not saying that “**faith**” itself is the ____ being mentioned here in Ephesians 2:8.
668. Instead, they believe Paul is saying that the entire salvation God provides by “**grace through faith**” is the “**gift**” as supported by the ____ grammar.

669. First, the Greek words for “**faith**” (**pistis**) and “**grace**” (**charis**) are both feminine words while the Greek word translated “**that**” (**touto**) in the phrase “**and that not of yourselves**” is a neuter _____.

8 For by grace (charis/feminine) you have been saved through faith (pistis/feminine); and that (touto/neuter) not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

670. If Paul were specifically pointing to faith or grace alone as the gift, we would normally expect him to use—a feminine word—that matches those _____.

671. Because Paul uses a neuter word, most Bible teachers who _____ Greek, believe he is referring to the whole idea that comes before it—the entire statement that we are **saved** by the whole **grace through faith** process.

672. In other words, “**the gift of God**” is _____ simply faith by itself, but the complete — “**gift of salvation**” — that God provides.

673. You will also notice that the italicized words — “**it is**” — are supplied by English translators to help the sentence make sense—but that _____ are not actually found in the Greek text—and so literally it reads:

**“For by grace you have been saved through faith,
and that not of yourselves; the gift of God.”**

674. The point is that Paul is emphasizing here as through countless other New Testament verses is that the source of salvation is from God, not from ____.

675. And certainly, the surrounding context supports this understanding because the Apostle Paul immediately explains that salvation _____, “**not as a result of works, so that no one may boast**” (Eph. 2:9).

676. Paul’s main point is that no person can take credit for salvation because we are _____ saved because of anything we have done, achieved, or earned.

677. Salvation from beginning to _____ is God’s gracious provision.

678. Therefore—while Ephesians 2:8 is often used to argue that “**faith**” itself is a “**gift**” given only to the elect — neither the grammar — nor the immediate context, nor the _____ of the New Testament can support this conclusion.

679. The verse clearly teaches that salvation is God’s gift, received through **faith**.

680. The question of whether faith itself is a gift must be determined from the broader teaching of Scripture—and _____ from this verse alone.