

God's Sovereignty and Your Salvation, Part 6

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If you have your Bibles, you can turn to Luke 10, which is where we're going to begin, but we're not going to really spend much time there as we're continuing on in our series on the sovereignty of God in salvation. [Luke 10:21–24] is our launch text, which shows us that God is sovereign in salvation, and then we'll be all over the place this morning, so have your Bibles out and ready to flip from place to place.

Robert Morgan, in his historical devotional *On This Day*, relates this historical account:

The English ship *Bounty*, commanded by Lieutenant William Bligh, journeyed to the South Pacific in 1787 to collect plants of the breadfruit tree. Sailors signed on gladly, considering the voyage a trip to paradise. Having no second-in-command, Captain Bligh appointed his young friend Fletcher Christian to the post. The *Bounty* stayed in Tahiti six months, and the sailors, led by happy-go-lucky Fletcher Christian, enjoyed paradise to the full.

When time came for departure, some of the men wanted to stay behind with their island girls. Three men, trying to desert,

were flogged. The mood on ship darkened, and on April 28, 1789, Fletcher Christian staged the most famous mutiny in history. Bligh and his supporters were set adrift in an overloaded lifeboat (which they miraculously navigated 3,700 miles to Timor).

The mutineers aboard the *Bounty* began quarreling about what to do next. Christian returned to Tahiti where he left some of the mutineers, kidnapped some women, took some slaves, and traveled 1,000 miles to uninhabited Pitcairn Island. There the little group quickly unraveled. They distilled whiskey from a native plant. Drunkenness and fighting marked their colony. Disease and murder eventually took the lives of all the men except for one, Alexander Smith, who found himself the only man on the island, surrounded by an assortment of women and children.

Then an amazing change occurred. Smith found the *Bounty's* neglected Bible. As he read it, he took its message to heart, then began instructing the little community. He taught the colonists the Scriptures and helped them obey its instructions. The message of Christ so transformed their lives that 20 years later, in 1808, when the *Topaz* landed on the island, it found a happy society of Christians, living in prosperity and peace, free from crime, disease, murder—and mutiny.

Stories like that are pretty common in history. It happens to individuals, families, communities, and it has even happened to entire nations, where before we were sinners, we were in rebellion against God, were committing mutiny against our Creator, and then, at a point after that, the Bible intercedes, we hear the gospel message, and then no longer are we like we were. This story is just one [among] countless others. God changes people through the Book of books.

Open your Bible, that Book of books, to Luke 10, if you haven't already, and follow along as I read verses 21–24. Luke writes: “At that very time He,” that is, Jesus:

rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, “I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” Turning to the disciples, He said privately, “Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see, for I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see them, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear them.”

This text follows on the heels of the seventy disciples returning from their little evangelistic tour that Jesus sent them [on] to the cities where He was going to preach. He gave them power to cast out demons, to heal the sick, and to preach the gospel. They did that, and they came back rejoicing that even the demons were subject to them [see Luke 10:17]. Jesus says, “Don't rejoice in that, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven” [see 10:20] Then Jesus, modeling what He is telling them to do, begins to rejoice over seven things. He says that He rejoices that: [1]) God is well-pleased to hide the truth from some so they will not be saved; [2]) that God is well-pleased to reveal the truth to others so they will be saved; [3]) that God has handed all things over to the Son, specifically who [will] and who will not be saved; 4) that only the Father knows the Son; 5) that only the Son knows the Father; 6) Jesus chooses who can know the Father in a saving way; and 7) Jesus reminds [the disciples] that kings and prophets of the past wished to see and hear the things that [the disciples] had seen and heard.

In this section, among these seven things, there is this glaring truth, and that truth is that God is sovereign in salvation. He is the one who lets people understand or does not let them understand, [who] reveals the truth or does not reveal the truth. Jesus is the one who lets people know the Father or not. God [has] a say—He [has] *the* say on who gets saved. That is what we are slowing [down] in this series to examine in more detail. Since this whole text is about the salvation of men, we started talking about men. We talked about the creation of man, his composite nature—that he is both physical and spiritual. We also talked about how he was made in the image of God, and what that means [in regard to] his characteristics and his function. We talked about man and his fall. That is, the Fall of man, and how men are sinners, and how all men deserve to be judged because of their sin. We talked about how men are totally depraved, which means that in every part of their being they are corrupt. That is, in every part of their being sin has affected them—the curse has affected them.

We discovered that man is waterlogged in sin. He is spiritually dead. Sin has affected man through and through so he doesn't want to come to Christ. He will not believe the truth, he loves darkness rather than Light, for his deeds are evil [see John 3:19–20]. His heart is desperately sick and deceitful above all else [see Jeremiah 17:9]. His reasoning is twisted, his conscience is defiled [see Titus 1:15], his speculations are futile [see Romans 1:21], and every intent of the thoughts of his heart are only evil continuously [see Genesis 6:5]. The Scriptures make it clear that the unbeliever cannot understand the things of God because he doesn't have the Holy Spirit within him [see 1 Corinthians 2:14], and that none seek after God, not even one [see Romans 3:11]. All these things are inside of man, working against him.

Not only that, we talked about the external things—those things outside of men—that are working against them. We have Satan, and demons, and evil men, and we have the world, [which is] also blockading people from coming to Christ. The question we asked is: How, then, can *anyone* ever get saved? It is impossible for [people] to come to Christ in their spiritually

dead, God-hating state. They just won't do it. We saw that the Scriptures taught that.

[The answer], then, [to the question of] how anyone ever comes to salvation is: It takes a miracle of God. A miracle is when God sets aside natural processes in order to do something beyond natural, or supernatural. When someone comes to Christ, it's not natural, it's not normal, it's "supra," or beyond, natural. When we started to answer the question: In light of man's cursed, corrupt, depraved state, how does anyone come to salvation? we started at the very beginning and we talked about predestination [and] terms that relate to predestination. Then we also talked about how predestination is taught. We looked at all the key Scriptures, and answered some of the common questions people have about that. If you weren't here up to this point, you need to listen to those messages because I can't review them, though it would be fun, but it would take hours.¹

This morning, I want to address two other categories of truth that relate to the sovereignty of God in salvation and teach us that God is, in fact, the one who saves people, and that He is sovereign over who gets saved. The first point I want to focus your attention on is this: You have the gospel bomb, so use it. Though the Scriptures teach that God is the only one who can save anybody, that salvation is of the Lord, God has also decreed that men be saved through the gospel. The gospel [is] that simple message that God became a man, was born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, lived to die, willingly gave Himself up, was crucified for the sins of men, was buried, and rose again on the third day. That simple little message is infused with power. It is the bomb.

Paul, in Romans 10:14–17 explains the means God has sanctioned [for the bringing of] sinners to repentance, and he says this:

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<http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2007/20070422>

<http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2007/20070513>

<http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2007/20070520>

<http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2007/20070617>

<http://www.calvarybiblechurch.org/Sermons.aspx/audio/sermon/2007/20070624>

How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!" However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?" So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

[Do] you want somebody to come to faith? They have to hear the gospel. They have to have the bomb dropped on them. Saving faith is always the byproduct of the gospel being heard and understood. This is why John the Baptist, Jesus, the apostles, [and] faithful men and women of God have always told other people about the gospel: it's the thing that saves people—it's the *only* thing that saves people. *Nothing* else will save anybody. What does [this] tell us? Listen, the gospel is the salvation bomb and it is the only thing that can knock down all [of] those external and internal barriers that keep men and women from coming to Christ. It's the only thing that will get through.

Sometimes we can get self-centered. When we think of sharing the gospel with somebody, we are fearful that we're not smart enough, we're not gifted enough, we're not godly enough, we're not trained enough, or prayed up enough, or something enough. We're [feel we're] just inadequate in and of ourselves to lead somebody to Christ. It's true, *we* are inadequate, but God doesn't save people because you're smart, and He doesn't save people because you're godly, and He doesn't save people because you're all prayed up. He saves people because He has infused this simple little message with power.

I have known of people who were unbelievers, [who] knew they were unbelievers, [who] shared the gospel with somebody, and [that person] came to Christ. [Then], later on [the unbeliever who shared the gospel]

came to Christ. I've known of people who have professed to be Christians, [who] thought they were Christians, [who] shared the gospel with people, [and] those people came to Christ. Later on, [those professing Christians] went apostate and are still not walking with the Lord. I know people who [didn't] even [have anyone] there [to share the gospel with them]. There was just a Gideon Bible, and [that person] read it, and he came to Christ. There is power [in the message]. You don't even need a person; you just need the power infused in that Word. That Word gets into people's hearts and it just breaks them.

You [may] look at [a person], and [think], "Oh, that person could never come to Christ. He's scary. He's big, he's mean, he's nasty, he hates God. Every time I even mention anything about God, [he says], 'Don't tell me about that religion junk!'" That is the very person God is going to save. [His protestations are] just the throes of death—God arm-wrestling his heart, and making him submit to the Savior.

Turn to 2 Corinthians 10. [In this letter], Paul is defending himself against false teachers, false apostles, who have infiltrated the church at Corinth. He says this [in] 2 Corinthians 10:3: "For though we walk in the flesh," he's talking about our physical bodies—though we're walking around in these physical bodies, in the flesh—"we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh," which means you don't have them in and of yourselves, somebody has to give them to you. If they're not of you, and of your flesh, they're spiritual—God has to give them to you. They're not of the flesh, "but divinely powerful." Just think about that: "divinely powerful." How powerful is God, anyway? I remember when *Star Wars* came out, and I saw that lightsaber, I thought, "Oh, cool! That was so cool! Man, that thing's powerful! It just cut someone's arm off! It could go through steel! That's power." Well, here we're talking about the *power of God*, a weapon that contains in it the power of God. People, that is powerful.

[Paul] says, "For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses." What kinds of fortresses?

He tells us. Look at verse 5: “We are destroying,” here’s the first fortress—we are destroying with our spiritual weapons that contain the power of God: “speculations,” that is, false speculations, “and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God,” that is, lies, deceptions, error, “and we are taking every thought captive to obedience of Christ.” The fortresses we can destroy with the spiritual weapons that contain the power of God are all [of] the internal and external barriers [that] keep people from coming to Christ. Prayer, the gospel, the Word of God, [and] faith contain the power of God Almighty. These spiritual weapons are able to destroy all the mental fortresses, all the lies, all the deceptions that people cling to so they will not come to Christ. [These weapons] just obliterate them and blow them out of the way.

I just love it when hardened sinners come to Christ. I mean, their testimonies are so great, aren’t they, when they give these testimonies of how God just broke them? There’s just nothing [greater] than to see some huge biker up there weeping, tattoos everywhere, scary, dressed in leather with a big chain on his wallet. You’re thinking, “Man, what happened to that guy?” Someone dropped the bomb on the guy. His heart is totally broken, totally wasted. He’s totally humbled. He sees his sin, he sees the danger he’s in, he sees Christ, he sees what Christ did for him, he instantly falls in love with Jesus, and he receives Christ as his Savior, and he’s willing to turn from his sins, and follow Christ. He’s been bombed by the gospel.

Turn over to Romans 1:16, [which is] kind of the theme verse of the book of Romans. You can see [Paul’s] faith being put into action when he says: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel.” Why aren’t you ashamed, Paul? “For it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” Is there any doubt in Paul’s mind that the gospel has power? None. It is *the*, the only, definite article—that little “the” there—*the* power of God for all who believe. Whether you’re a Jew [or] you’re [a] Greek, the only way you come to Christ is through the power of God contained in the gospel of God. The question is: Do you believe the gospel can destroy the fortresses of an incurably wicked heart, a darkened

understanding, a defiled conscience that refuses to come to Christ? Do you believe the gospel can quicken a sinner from the dead and turn him from a lover of darkness to a lover of light and transform him into the image of Christ? [Do you believe] this simple, easy message can push away Satan, push away demons, push away evil men, push away the love of the world so that the truth can get in? Do you believe that? Paul did. The Scriptures do. That's what they teach—the gospel *is* the power of God.

In 1 Corinthians 1 [and 2]—turn over there (sorry, if you have a new Bible, you're going to break it in this morning)—Paul talks about his methodology for reaching the Corinthians. This is such a great section because he not only explains what he did and how he did it, but [also] why he did it. He says, in 1 Corinthians 1:18: “For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing,” on their way to hell, “but to us who are being saved,” on our way to heaven, “it is the power of God.” Did you see that? The power of God. Look down at [1 Corinthians 1:]24: “But to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks,” notice they're called, predestined first, “Christ *the power of God* and the wisdom of God” [emphasis added]. *The power of God.*

Turn over to [1 Corinthians 2:]3[-5]. Notice what Paul says:

I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

That is, the power of God flowing through this little, simple message that Christ died, was buried, and rose again. That is exactly what Paul says [toward] the end of the book in chapter 15, when he's talking about the resurrection. He says, “You Corinthians, you know what I made known to you of first importance, that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised again” [see 15:3–4] He says,

“That is the message that you heard from me. That is the message you received from me. That is the message you stand on by which you are saved.” The bomb. That simple, little message is the bomb. It’s the only thing that can do it. It can get right into a person’s head and heart and destroy him.

Why don’t people drop the bomb more? Why are we so careful about bomb dropping? Just recently I was at a little memorial service for my mom. [She] died a while back, but we decided to have the service this summer—last weekend. We [were at] my brother’s house, and all these relatives, and my brothers and sisters [were] there. There were a lot of us there. They [asked], “Could you emcee?” I want you to know, as soon as they said “emcee,” I could just hear that [gospel bomb] whistling through the air. I mean, it [was] coming. You want me to emcee? You get the bomb—every time. I don’t care if you’re mad. I have some sisters who *do not* like the gospel. They do not want to submit to God, they do not want to repent of their sins, they don’t want God telling them what to do.

So, what did I do? Did I go, “Oh, I’m really sorry, I don’t want to offend you. I know you’re my sister and I’m trying to be at peace. . .” No, bombs away! Out it comes. I did a little micro-exposition of John 3 and dropped the bomb.

Why is it that people don’t like to drop the bomb? [There are] three primary reasons. [First], they don’t believe the gospel has power in it. They don’t believe the gospel really can change a person’s life. They just think it’s a fluke of nature that certain people get really fanatic and religious, and become holy and walk away from their former manner of life and never go back. They don’t believe it, and so they don’t do it, and all I can say to that is that the Bible says that the power is contained in the gospel and that every Christian is living proof—every true believer who has been transformed by the grace of God is living proof—that the gospel has power in it to transform a person’s life and break down those barriers inside and out [that] keep us from coming to salvation.

[Second], sometimes we just want to do it our way. We look at the Scriptures, and say, “Yeah, it’s true that Paul preached the gospel, and the

apostles did that, but times have changed. We live in a modern era, you know? We live among intellectuals—people who are smart. We can't just do things like we did before. Things are different now." We could share the gospel, but we kind of dance all around it and we never let it out of the hatch. Instead, we talk about reading our Bibles, we talk about going to church, and the good deeds that we do—our service to the Lord. We try to prove that God exists or the Bible is His Word. We argue about the fallacies of evolution. Maybe [we] present some rational arguments to convince unbelievers that they should become Christians, but they never do, ever do, ever, ever, ever, ever do unless the bomb is dropped. They never come; they never get saved. We spend five hours talking to some intellectual and we walk away, and you know what? The bomb is still in the bomb bay because we didn't open up our mouths and let it out. That person will never get saved until someone drops that message on him—ever.

Other times, we're afraid of collateral damage. When you're ready to share the gospel with family members—especially people who know you and maybe knew you before you were saved—you can be fearful of men, fearful of persecution, fearful of rejection, fearful of being mocked, or whatever, of causing division in your family, division among your friends, getting fired, whatever it is. You're scared, so scared that you decide to not say anything.

You know, in World War II, when those two atom bombs—"Little Boy" and "Fat Man"—were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, those were really inefficient atom bombs. The [men who created the bombs] didn't really know what they were doing—it was a new technology. [But] man, they did some major damage, and the whole world trembled. The whole world is fearful because now the atomic weapons we have are really efficient—they're way more powerful. Anybody who's sane is concerned about an all-out nuclear war because of all the collateral damage, so everybody is holding back. No one has launched a nuclear missile since that time against another country in war. [That's] a good thing.

When it comes to the gospel, [however], it's not a good thing. Out of fear for what might happen to you, what might happen as a consequence, what might happen to somebody else, you don't drop the bomb on somebody, and just go, "I'll just let them roast in hell for eternity because I love them." Think about it. Come on. That's not a loving thing to do. If you want people to come to Christ, there's only one thing that works: the gospel, because the gospel contains the power of God. [It is that] little message that Jesus—God incarnate—was born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, died a substitutionary death on the cross, was buried, and rose again on the third day, [and] that if you believe in that, and trust in that completely, God will save you. That little message is the bomb, and you've got to drop it or no one comes to Christ—ever.

Second, God is sovereign not only because He is the one who puts power in the bomb, [but also] because He works to save those He has chosen. I just want to give you six different proofs, or categories, [that] argue for God's sovereignty in salvation. The first is: God saves us by grace and mercy, not by our good deeds, or anything else we do. Grace and mercy are similar. Grace is when you receive something you don't deserve. You're a disobedient little rebel, and your parent goes, "Oh, since you've been disobedient, I'm going to give you this big present."

"What?"

"You're a rebel and I'm going to give you this present."

"Yeah, but I don't deserve it. Why are you doing this?"

See, that would be a gracious thing to do, and that's what God does to us. We are little rebels—big rebels—and we rebel against God, but God graciously gives us eternal life when we place our faith in Jesus. It's not that we deserve it, it's not that we have earned it, so grace is receiving a gift you do not deserve.

Mercy, on the other hand, is not receiving what you do deserve. You do deserve the wrath of God, you do deserve to go to hell, you do deserve to be judged, but mercy holds back the judgment of God, holds back the wrath of God so that [grace] can come in and save you. Both of those things—[grace

and mercy]—are undeserved [and] unearned. You don't deserve them, and so God doesn't need to even extend them to you. Many in their fallen state, [however], want to have a part in their salvation—they want to be saved by grace and kept by works, or saved by grace plus works. You hear them say, “Oh, *I* sought God on my own. *I* found Christ. *I* believed.” People [who] say things like this may profess to believe in salvation by grace, but in many cases, they really are trusting in what they did.

Turn to Romans 3:20. Here, Paul has just finished this big section saying that all men are sinners, and he says in Romans 3:20: “Because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.” You can't do good works, you can't obey any law—God's law or anybody else's law—that's going to make you just or right in God's sight. Look down at [Romans 3:]28: “For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.” You can't do any good works. There is no law to obey that is going to get you saved.

Turn over to Galatians 2. The whole problem with the Galatians was [that they] thought that they could add some works into salvation, maybe put a little Jewish law in there and make people be circumcised, or whatever. Paul says in Galatians 2:16:

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.

He says it about four times there. What about not necessarily law things, but just being good? Later on, in [Galatians] 5:4, if you look there, [Paul is] talking about those who thought, “I'm going to be circumcised.” [In Galatians 5:4, Paul says] it doesn't matter what you add: “You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” [If] you add works to grace, you're doomed because

you've just nullified grace. You're really trusting in yourself. That's what he says.

Turn over to Ephesians 2:8–9. These are familiar verses to many people. Many people have them memorized, and for good reason. Paul has talked about how we're spiritually dead in the first few verses of the chapter, and how God, by His love, grace, and mercy saved us, and he says this as kind of a summary statement in [Ephesians 2:]8–9: “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.” The main verb here is “have been saved.” The verb is passive. If you say, “Well, so what does that mean?” It means this: God saves you, you don't save you. If you threw a ball and hit me, I would be passive and you would be active. You would be doing something to me; I would be receiving the action. Here, [it says], “you have been saved.” You received the action of God saving you. That's what [Paul is] saying.

Then you have all these little phrases that modify [the action of saving]: “by grace”—unearned, undeserved favor. We just talked about that. “Through faith; and that not of yourselves,” “gift of God”—you don't earn a gift—“and not a result of works.” Just in case you thought that maybe there was a little bit of you in the mix, don't even think about it. [There are] five different ways he says it here. How much more do you need? In Romans 11:[6], Paul, speaking of salvation by grace, says: “But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.” If you add works to grace, grace is no longer grace. It's just all works. [If] you add human effort—good works, Bible reading, church attendance, [saved] parents, whatever it is—you're trusting in your works [and] you're not going to heaven. There is only one way to get saved, and it is by God's grace and mercy, which are undeserved and unearned. Salvation is a sovereign act of God because He is the one who dispenses the grace to save those He does.

[The] second [proof is]: God draws sinners to Christ. That's another reason we know God is sovereign. Turn to John 6. God draws sinners to Christ, not the other way around, [despite what] all these people out there

trying to find seekers [think]. God is seeking men; men aren't seeking God. Turn to John 6:37. We're just going to look at a few key verses here. [Jesus has] just arrived in Capernaum, [and] crowds have gathered because they're following Him. There are a lot of religious leaders [in the crowd], and He's in this dialogue with them, and He says in verse 37: "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." How many come that are given to Jesus? All of them. How many are cast out? None. The Father says, "Here's one for you," Jesus takes him, and never loses him.

Look down at [John 6:]39: "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day." Here Jesus emphasizes the security of all believers. When God gives somebody to Jesus to save, and Jesus saves him, He will not lose him, but will raise him up on the last day. It's definitive.

Look at [John 6:]44: "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day." Do you see God's sovereignty in this verse? You'd have to be blind or asleep right now not to see it. No one can come to Christ—no one—"unless the Father who sent Me draws him." The word "draw" here is used in different Greek writings of somebody pulling a mule against its will, of dragging in a loaded net of fish, of compelling somebody [to go] or dragging somebody into court. It's compelling. This is where the whole concept of irresistible grace comes from, which we'll talk about in a minute. When God invades a person's life, His grace so overcomes him that he is drawn to Jesus and he comes. But if you're trusting in your works, like many did back then, you may be offended by this text and these words, just like they were back then, because you're thinking, "I know that I came to Christ because I..." [If] you fill in the blank there, you're not going to heaven. [If] you think you're going to get to heaven because of what you did, you're not going there. You've nullified grace.

Now, you could say, "[I know that I came to Christ] because I placed my faith in Christ." The problem is, as we shall see, [that] God gives you

the faith, and not only that, you believe only in response to the grace of God. We've already determined this, and that's what we've spent so much time to show: no one comes to Christ on his own, right? There are none who seek after God, not even one [see Romans 3:11]. They will not come to the Light lest their deeds should be exposed [see John 3:19–20]. They will not come to Christ for salvation. We looked up text after text to prove that. So if you do believe, know that you believe because of God's grace in your life. The legalistic Jews in the crowds were infuriated by what Jesus was teaching, just like many today, so Jesus summarizes what He means in [John 6:]65. Look there. Jesus repeats Himself, and He says: "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father." No one can come unless it has been granted. A "grant" is "divine favor or blessing bestowed on somebody who doesn't deserve it." There is no other conclusion that can be reached except that God is absolutely sovereign in salvation.

[The] third [proof is]: God reveals the truth to sinners through the Holy Spirit. Turn back to 1 Corinthians 2. I know we were just here, but we're going back again, and we're going to be there in the future, I'm sure. [In] 1 Corinthians 2, Paul says in verse 12: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God." In other words, he's talking about the Holy Spirit given to believers so that they can understand the truth. If you don't have the Holy Spirit in you, and you're spiritually dead, yes, you can read the pages of the Bible, but you can't know, in a saving way, in an experiential way, in a life-transforming way, the truth of the gospel unless the Holy Spirit intercedes.

He explains that, if you look down at [1 Corinthians 2:]14. Contrasting what we just read about believers knowing the things freely given to them by God, he says: "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God," that is, spiritual truth, spiritual wisdom, spiritual knowledge, "for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." You have to understand the gospel in order to be

saved, right? The only one who can help you understand the gospel is the Holy Spirit, right? Which means that God is sovereign in salvation—the Holy Spirit [has] the key. If He doesn't reveal, you don't come—you can't know. That's exactly what [Jesus is] talking about [in Luke 10:21–24]: “I praise You, O Father, because you have hidden these things and revealed these things.” This makes God, the Holy Spirit, sovereign over who gets saved and who doesn't get saved.

When I go to Russia, I have to have a translator because most of the people there don't speak English. Believe me, if I didn't have a translator, it would be extremely boring [for them]. They'd be sitting there, [saying], “I wonder what he's saying. That's interesting mumbling.” They would understand “Amen”—that's the same [in both languages], and if I used the word “chai” they know that one. But you know what? It would just be worthless; it would be meaningless. So, you need the translator, you need the interpreter, and that is how unbelievers are: They need the Holy Spirit to invade their lives, to translate, to illuminate, to interpret so they can understand the Word of God.

We looked at Acts 16:14, where Paul is preaching and he talks about “Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord,” did what? “opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.” God actually opened her heart so she got a clue. Jesus, in the section where He unloads a whole bunch of parables on His disciples, says, in Matthew 13:11: “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.” God is sovereign. Again, that [word] “grant” means “to give a special privilege or blessing.” The word “know” is “to have an intimate knowledge of something.” A “mystery” is “a secret or riddle of God that only God, through divine agency of the Holy Spirit, can reveal.” Jesus is saying, “To you it has been given a special privilege and blessing to have an experiential understanding of the things of God. But to them, it hasn't been granted,” which means that God is sovereign in salvation because He

is the one who flips the switch. This is exactly what we see in our text [as] the first thing that Jesus praises the Father for in Luke 10:21–22.

[The fourth proof is]: God grants sinners saving faith. We talked about this. In Ephesians 2:8, Paul says: “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.” There is some discussion about what that phrase “not of yourselves” means. Is “not of yourselves” talking about your salvation, since that’s the main verb, or does it talk about the nearest antecedent, which is faith, or does it talk about everything that [precedes] it—grace, salvation, and faith? The nearest antecedent—the closest thing mentioned—is faith, but since all of those phrases end up connecting to your salvation, you could say it does relate to salvation, but salvation is by faith, and so, either way, faith is not of yourself. Or you could take [it to mean] that all three are not of yourself, which is true.

You say, “Well, Jack, how do you know that?” [It is] because even if this verse wasn’t here, I know of other Scriptures [that say this]. For instance, in Acts 14:27, Luke is telling us about Paul’s missionary journey, and he recounts what happened [with the believers at Antioch]. It says: “They began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.” But you say, “Well, Jack, that’s not very specific. I know God ‘opened the door of faith,’ but *they* had the faith, right?” [Look at] Philippians 1:29, if that one doesn’t work [for you, where] Paul says to the Philippians: “For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake,” [it’s the] same word—granted. By divine blessing and favor, God is going to grant you something for Christ’s sake, “not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.” God grants you the ability to believe in Christ. That’s what it says.

Some [people] think to themselves, “Well, yes, a person is saved by grace through faith, but I had to believe in order to be saved. It was me myself who believed, and not God. I did it myself, on my own.” I’m telling you, this is dangerous ground to tread on if what you’re saying is [that] you came to Jesus apart from the grace of God giving you the faith to believe.

Yes, you believed, if you know Christ, and you were saved by faith, but the reason you were able to have that faith is because of the grace of God, which was working before you believed.

Let's just say you're purchasing your first house. You're driving around in a neighborhood with your realtor—a certain neighborhood you want to live in. He pulls up in front of a house that is a disaster. It's got a saggy roof, broken windows, dead landscaping, [and is] overgrown with weeds. He says, "Let's look at this house."

You're thinking, "Uh uh."

He says, "Come on. I want to show you this house."

You're thinking, "Oh, great." So you get out of the car, and as soon as you get out, you [sniff], and ask, "What's that smell?"

"That's the house." You walk over shards of glass on the broken concrete walkway, [and when] he gets up to the lockbox to take it off the door-knob, the doorknob just falls off because the whole door is just rotted and termite infested, so he just pushes it in. Inside the house, it is nasty. You're walking around and there's grease, and grime, and dirt, and filth, and mold growing over all the bathrooms.

All you can think is, "No way! There is no way I'm going to buy this house. I am not going to live here. What are we doing here, anyway?" As you're [standing] there, you're thinking, "I don't even know why I'm here. I mean, what's wrong with this realtor?"

The realtor says, "You know, this house is a good deal."

You say, "Listen, I would never buy this house. I would *never* live here."

This is how it is for unbelievers. When you talk to them about Christ, repenting of their sins, turning away from [sin], they're thinking to themselves, "I would never do that. I would *never* give up my sin. I would never become a religious fanatic. I would never become a Bible thumper. I would never believe those stupid things they believe and have God telling me what to do in every area of my life. I would not live there."

Then the realtor, right before you leave, [says], "[There's] one other thing I have to show you here," and he pulls a little piece of paper out of his

pocket, and he unfolds it, and he says, "The previous owner of this house wanted me to show you this house. He wanted me to tell you what was in this letter."

You say, "Well, what is it?"

"Before he died, he wrote me this letter, told me to show you the house, and said that if you were willing to purchase this house at a fair market value, he [would] give you his entire inheritance, as long as you continue to live at this address."

Now you're a little curious. "So, was the guy a millionaire?"

"No, no," the realtor says, "he was a billionaire."

Now the house is looking pretty good. As a matter of fact, [buying it is] the only smart thing to do. It's compelling. It's irresistible. You [have] to buy this house. You could knock it down and build a new one. What made the difference? At first, you didn't know all the truth, you didn't understand all the facts, and so, to you, what moments earlier was repulsive has now become compelling and obviously the only smart choice.

That is how it is with God's grace. Before you come to Christ, it's just like, "No way am I going to have this dead carpenter reigning in my life!"

"Well, he's not dead."

"Oh, sure."

Then, when God's Spirit invades your life, and He shows you the truth, and you see your sin, and you see Christ, and His sacrifice, and His love for you, it becomes compelling and [you say], "OK, I'll take it!" It's the only smart choice. I mean, who wants to go to hell? Who wants to perish? God's grace invades you and you are broken, you are humbled, you repent, and you believe of your own will because of the grace of God.

[The fifth proof is]: God grants sinners repentance. Repentance is the flipside of faith. To repent is to stop trusting [in yourself] and living for sin; faith is to start trusting [in Christ] and living for [Him]. You have to let go of one to grab the other. You have to turn from sin to turn to Christ. That is why all of the apostles, and Jesus, and John the Baptist went out preaching repentance and the forgiveness of sins. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven

is at hand” [Matthew 3:2; 4:17]. Unless you repent, you cannot enter the kingdom of God. “God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent,” Paul says in Acts 17[:30].

Some people say, “Well, repentance, obviously, is an act that we do. I mean, we repent.” Listen to this. [In] Acts 5:31, Peter is preaching, [and he says]: “He,” that is, Jesus, “is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” Who grants it? God does. In Acts 11:18, Peter [was] sharing with the believers in Jerusalem about the salvation of, if you could imagine, Gentiles—incredible—and Luke writes, “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.’”

Paul, in Romans 2:4, tells us that “the kindness of God leads you to repentance.” In 2 Timothy 2:25, Paul tells Timothy to be gentle when he’s “correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth.” What does all this mean? God gives repentance. God grants repentance, so repentance is of whom? God. That is why God is sovereign in salvation: because He grants repentance.

[The sixth and final proof is]: God regenerates sinners by His grace. Regeneration describes the transformation of an unbeliever into a believer. It is [a] supernatural work. People argue about what is called (I hate to throw this term out at you) the “ordo solutis.” Have you ever heard of that term? [It means] “the order of salvation.” Does God regenerate us, and then we believe, and then we’re saved? Or, does God make it so we believe and are regenerated simultaneously? Or, do we believe, and then immediately after that are regenerated? Who cares? It just happens, OK? The Scriptures say it happens. All right, it happens.

[In] John 1:12–13, John says: “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born,” that’s the key phrase there, “not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” [The children of God

are those] who were born again, regenerated, made new. Remember Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus in John 3? [He said], "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" [3:5]. The whole birth there, the spiritual birth concept, is talking about regeneration—the transformation. Titus 3:5 [says]: "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." What does this tell us? God is sovereign in salvation. He is the one who causes people to be born again.

What have we learned here? [First], the only thing that can break down the internal and external barriers [that] keep people from coming to Christ is the gospel bomb, and God says, "Carpet bomb the world." Second, we learned that God is sovereign in salvation because: 1) It is God who saves us by His grace, not by our works; [2)] it is God the Father who draws sinners to Christ; [3)] it is God the Holy Spirit who reveals truth to sinners so that they can understand the gospel and be saved; 4) it is God who grants sinners saving faith; 5) it is God who grants sinners repentance; and 6) it is God who regenerates a sinner and causes him to be born again. That is why we teach at Calvary Bible Church that God is sovereign in salvation because that's what the Word of God teaches. That's not all it teaches, [but] you'll have to come back for more later.

Here we are. We're going to head out. If you don't know Jesus Christ as your Savior, this is God's message to you: Jesus died on the cross, bore the sins of the world, was buried, and rose again on the third day. If you are willing to turn from your sins, repent of your sins, and receive Jesus Christ as your Savior, God will save you. For those of you who know Christ, when you leave here, and you know that [unbelieving] aunt, uncle, mom, brother, sister, neighbor, coworker, and you just wish they'd come to the Lord, drop the bomb. If they won't surrender, drop another one! It took two for Japan. Come on! Some of you guys took fifty bombs. The bomb is the only thing that works. Don't go arguing about a bunch of sub-issues, don't go dancing around the gospel, just drop the bomb.

[You could say], “OK, I won’t talk about the gospel—that Jesus died on the cross for sins, was buried, and rose again on the third day. I refuse to talk about your needing to place your faith in Him in order to have eternal life. I mean, if you don’t want to repent and you don’t want to receive Christ as your Savior, then we won’t talk about it.” You just hit him. Get it out there somewhere, but get it out there. Let’s pray.

Father, we thank You so much for Your Word because it does make it very clear that You are sovereign in salvation, You are the God who saves sinners because they are helpless to save themselves. We have seen that beyond a shadow of a doubt this morning. Father, if there is anybody here who has never repented of his or her sins, who has never placed his or her faith in Jesus Christ, may Your grace right now invade his or her life, may he or she cry out to you in his or her pew where he or she sits, and ask you to deliver him or her, that he or she might forevermore be in heaven, be with Jesus, and have the free gift of eternal life granted to him or her. For the rest of us, help us to open the hatches and drop the bomb of the gospel on all those who need salvation, and may we not fear men, may we not doubt the power of Your Word, and, Father, may we not fear collateral damage because the salvation of souls is at stake. We pray this in Christ’s name, Amen.

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