

Regeneration Follows Faith

Travis Echols

Before faith, we were not joined to Christ. Before faith, we were dead in sins, without spiritual life, unforgiven of sins, a child of the Devil, and without the Spirit of God. Upon believing, we were forgiven of sins, quickened from deadness in sins, given spiritual life, raised with Christ, spiritually baptized into Christ, born of God (i.e., made a child of God), and received the Holy Spirit. Prior to believing, we were dead in sins. Therefore "dead in sins" does not speak of inability to believe but lack of spiritual life and relational separation from God due to unforgiven sins. "Dead in sins" does not mean inertness or the inability to do anything, which is a characteristic of physical deadness. If this was true, spiritually dead people would have no *sinful* actions either, yet sinfulness is their problem. They could not be held accountable for anything, because dead people can do nothing for which they can be held accountable. God draws, calls, invites, persuades, beseeches, and convinces sinners prior to faith and regeneration. God must enable those who are dead in sins to believe. Spiritually dead people cannot please God without His enablement. But God does not give life to (i.e., regenerate) sinners prior to faith. Spiritual life is a result of faith, not the means of faith. Spiritually dead people are enabled to believe while dead in sins and receive life upon believing.

Short Study. While the temporal order is not the primary concern (for example, faith and salvation may occur simultaneously in time), the logical order of events is critical (as in Romans 8:30). For example, salvation does not come before faith. We are not saved in order to believe. We believe in order to be saved. One must first believe to be saved. This order is important. So is the order of faith and regeneration important.

Through faith/believing, we are risen with Christ (Col 2:12), our hearts are purified (Acts 15:9), we have access into His grace (Rom 4:16; 5:2; Eph 2:8), we have His imputed righteousness (Rom 4:4,5,11,24; 10:10; Phil 3:9), we have life through His name (John 20:31), we have eternal life (John 3:15, 16. 36; 5:24; 6:47), Christ indwells our hearts (Eph 3:17), we received the remission of sins (Acts 10:43), we received the Holy Spirit (John 7:39), we were saved (Acts 16:31; Rom 10:9-10; Eph 2:8), justified (Acts 13:39; Rom 3:28; 5:1; Gal 2:16), became His children (Jn 1:12; Gal 3:26), and were sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption (Eph 1:13; 4:30). And that's not an exhaustive list. When we believed, we received all these spiritual blessings and more—blessings that God had ordained for us before the foundation of the world.

1. We receive life by believing (Jn 20:31; 1Tim 1:16).

John 20:31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

1Ti 1:16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

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2. We were risen with Christ through faith (Col 2:12)

Col 2:12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

A person cannot be raised unless he is dead. Yet we are risen with Christ through faith. Therefore we were dead prior to faith.

3. We receive the Holy Spirit by believing (John 7:39; Eph 1:13)

John 7:39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Eph 1:13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

A person cannot have spiritual life without receiving the Holy Spirit. Yet receiving the Spirit is by faith (Gal 3:2; 26-28; Col 2:12; Rom 8:9; 1Cor 12:3,7; Jn 7:37; Acts 10:44-48 with Acts 11:1-14).

4. We become a child of God by faith (Jn 1:12; Gal 3:26)

John 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

Gal 3:26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

A person cannot have spiritual life while still a child of the Devil.

5. Our being quickened from deadness *in sins* is associated with our being saved from, and forgiven of, *our sins* (Eph 2:5; Col 2:13).

Eph 2:5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

Col 2:13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

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You cannot be quickened from deadness in sins while still unforgiven of sins. Quickening does not occur without faith.

It is NOT *dead in sins --> quickened from deadness (still unforgiven of sins)--> faith--> forgiveness of sins*

It is *dead in sins --> faith--> forgiveness of sins (i.e., quickening from deadness in sins)*

6. We were born again by the word of God (1Pet 1:23)

1Pet 1:23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides forever.

Yet the word does not profit us if not mixed with faith (Heb 4:2)

Heb 4:2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

1Thes 2:13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when you received the word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe.

Ro 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

We can therefore conclude that we are born again by faith in the word. We are not born again apart from faith. We are not born again to believe. We believe to be born again. John 3:16 is Jesus explaining to Nicodemus *how* to be born again.

Conclusions on regeneration and faith. If we receive life by believing, we do not have life before believing. That means we were dead before we believed, not regenerate. We don't receive life to believe. We believe to receive life. Therefore we believed when we were dead in sins, not when we were regenerate.

Since we receive forgiveness of sins by faith, we were still dead in sins (i.e., unforgiven of our sins) before being forgiven of our sins by faith. Again, we believed while still dead in sins.

We were also raised with Christ through faith. Only dead people need to be raised. We were dead before being raised. Again, we believed while still dead.

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We were born again by faith in the word (the word only profits those who believe it). Only those who are not yet God's children need to be born of God. We were made children of God by faith. Only those who are not yet God's children need to be made children of God. Again, we believed while still dead (unregenerate--not born of God, still children of the Devil).

We were quickened (made alive) from deadness in sins by faith. Since this quickening involves the forgiveness of sins and faith is required for forgiveness of sins, faith is required for quickening. A person cannot already be quickened from deadness in sins while still unforgiven of sins. Again, we believed while still dead.

My comments on pertinent excerpts from Wayne Grudem's article on Regeneration (my comments shaded)

https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/onsite/regeneration_grudem.html

If Wayne Grudem, and others like him, are right, then regeneration is something God does against our wills that causes us to willfully believe.

In the Calvinist mindset, if God does not cause us to necessarily believe in Christ, salvation would not be wholly of God. Many Calvinists think that we believe as a result of the new birth (i.e., regeneration); thus our faith, while voluntary, is necessarily and unilaterally determined by God--no contingencies (the elect must believe, the non-elect must not believe). If the new birth also required our voluntary consent, then God would have to do something to cause us to consent to our new birth, lest we boast in our consenting to be regenerated. A fuller account of my interpretation of *ordo salutis* (Latin for "the order of salvation") can be found at www.travisechols.com, particularly *Salvation, Faith, and Two Views of Salvation* accompanied by *The Will of God*.

A. Regeneration Is Totally a Work of God

In some of the elements of the application of redemption that we discuss in subsequent chapters, we play an active part (this is true, for example, of conversion, sanctification and perseverance).

Notice Grudem says that we play an active part in our conversion. In essence Grudem bites the bullet and admits we play an active role in our salvation. If regeneration follows faith, Grudem would have to acknowledge that we play an active role in our regeneration. In no wise should this active role be considered a work (Acts 16:31; Eph

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2:8-9, Rom 4:1-5; Titus 3:5; In James 2:24, James is speaking of a difference sense of justification than Paul [See *Salvation* at www.travisechols.com].

But in the work of regeneration we play no active role at all. It is instead totally a work of God. We see this, for example, when John talks about those to whom Christ gave power to become children of God—they “were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13). Here John specifies that children of God are those who are “born...of God” and our human will (“the will of man”) does not bring about this kind of birth.

In 1:11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

It would appear from this verse that the right of son-ship is conditioned upon receiving Christ (i.e., believing on his name). It wasn't worded “But as many as he gave power to become the sons of God received him.” Nor was it worded “But as many as received him, to them *had he given* the power to become the sons of God.” The more straightforward interpretation is also consistent with

Gal 3:26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

Verse 13 contrasts spiritual birth to physical birth. Spiritual birth is not of mankind as is our physical birth. We cannot become children of God by blood, or the will of the flesh, or by the will of man, but of God. If not for verses 11 and 12 and other scriptures, one might be tempted to interpret verse 13 to rule out the will of man as having any part in the new birth. However, if the new birth *is* us becoming children of God by faith, then interpreting these verses to mean man's will is in no way involved in regeneration/salvation would be extreme—for other scriptures show the will of man involved in saving faith. Even Calvinists acknowledge the will of man plays a role in saving faith. The disagreement is about how God moves the will of man (influence or causation, resistible or irresistible, two positions [accept or reject] or three positions [accept, reject, or quiescence], etc) and the scope of God's moving (all men or some).

And it would certainly be odd to think of being born of God logically or temporally prior to becoming a child of God. How could one be born of the Spirit of God and not be God's spiritual child?

For the Calvinist, this text is inconclusive at best, and proves them wrong at worst, especially in light of other pertinent scriptures such as Gal 3:26.

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B. The Exact Nature of Regeneration Is Mysterious to Us

Exactly what happens in regeneration is mysterious to us. We know that somehow we who were spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1) have been made alive to God and in a very real sense we have been “born again” (John 3:3, 7; Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:13). But we don’t understand how this happens or what exactly God does to us to give us this new spiritual life. Jesus says, “The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8).

Scripture views regeneration as something that affects us as whole persons. Of course, our “spirits are alive” to God after regeneration (Rom. 8:10), but that is simply because we as *whole persons* are affected by regeneration. It is not just that our spirits were dead before—we were dead to God in trespasses and sins (see Eph. 2:1). And it is not correct to say that the only thing that happens in regeneration is that our spirits are made alive (as some would teach),⁵ for *every part of us* is affected by regeneration: “If anyone is in Christ, *he is a new creation*; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come” (2 Cor. 5:17).

Because regeneration is a work of God within us in which he gives us new life it is right to conclude that it is an *instantaneous event*. It happens only once. At one moment we are spiritually dead, and then at the next moment we have new spiritual life from God. Nevertheless, we do not always know exactly when this instantaneous change occurs. Especially for children growing up in a Christian home, or for people who attend an evangelical church or Bible study over a period of time and grow gradually in their understanding of the gospel, there may not be a dramatic crisis with a radical change of behavior from “hardened sinner” to “holy saint,” but there will be an instantaneous change nonetheless, when God through the Holy Spirit, in an unseen, invisible way, awakens spiritual life within. The change will *become evident* over time in patterns of behavior and desires that are pleasing to God.

Putting regeneration before faith gets Grudem in trouble here when trying to harmonize his scriptural position with his observation of God’s work in human experience. He wants to say that regeneration is instantaneous, as I would; but he also wants to acknowledge that people can grow gradually in their understanding of the gospel, as I would. But this creates a problem for Grudem. Regeneration is either gradual or instantaneous; it can’t be both. Either you have a spiritually dead person growing in understanding (which contradicts the Calvinist understanding of deadness [also reference the story of Cornelius in Acts 10 and explained in Acts 11]), or you have a person who is spiritually born again who doesn’t even understand the gospel (i.e., he is

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growing toward understanding it). Can a born-again child of God be ignorant of the gospel?

This problem can easily be avoided by understanding the drawing, calling, convicting, persuading, leading, beseeching work of God can be gradual. However, upon trusting Jesus, instantaneously, we are regenerated. Grudem is confusing regeneration with drawing.

Notice how *by faith* we are raised with Christ (Col 2:12), our hearts are purified (Acts 15:9), we have access into His grace (Rom 4:16; 5:2; Eph 2:8), we have His imputed righteousness (Rom 4:4,5,11,24; 10:10; Phil 3:9), we have life through His name (John 20:31), we have eternal life (John 3:15, 16. 36; 5:24; 6:47), Christ indwells our hearts (Eph 3:17), we have forgiveness of sins (Acts 10:43), we receive the Holy Spirit (John 7:39), we are saved (Acts 16:31; Rom 10:9-10; Eph 2:8), we are justified (Acts 13:39; Rom 3:28; 5:1; Gal 2:16), we become His children (Jn 1:12; Gal 3:26), we are sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption (Eph 1:13; 4:30), and we receive the indwelling Holy Spirit (1Jn 5:10-13; Rom 8:9, 15-16; Gal 3:2; 26; 4:6; 1Cor 12:3,7; Jn 7:37; Acts 10:44-48 with Acts 11:1-14).

In other cases (in fact, probably most cases when adults become Christians) regeneration takes place at a clearly recognizable time at which the person realizes that previously he or she was separated from God and spiritually dead, but immediately afterward there was clearly new spiritual life within. The results can usually be seen at once—a heartfelt trusting in Christ for salvation, an assurance of sins forgiven, a desire to read the Bible and pray (and a sense that these are meaningful spiritual activities), a delight in worship, a desire for Christian fellowship, a sincere desire to be obedient to God’s Word in Scripture, and a desire to tell others about Christ. People may say something like this: “I don’t know exactly what happened, but before that moment I did not trust in Christ for salvation. I was still wondering and questioning in my mind. But after that moment I realized that I did trust in Christ and he was my Savior. Something happened in my heart.”⁶ Yet even in these cases we are not quite sure exactly what has happened in our hearts. It is just as Jesus said with respect to the wind—we hear its sound and we see the result, but we cannot actually see the wind itself. So it is with the working of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

C. In This Sense of “Regeneration,” It Comes Before Saving Faith

The fact that we are passive in regeneration is also evident when Scripture refers to it as being “born” or being “born again” (cf. James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:3; John 3:3–8). We did not choose to be made physically alive and we did not choose to be born—it is something that happened to us; similarly, these analogies in Scripture suggest that we are entirely passive in regeneration.

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This sovereign work of God in regeneration was also predicted in the prophecy of Ezekiel. Through him God promised a time in the future when he would give new spiritual life to his people:

A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.
(Ezek. 36:26–27)

Yet there are several passages that tell us that this secret, hidden work of God in our spirits does in fact come before we respond to God in saving faith (though often it may be only seconds before we respond). When talking about regeneration with Nicodemus, Jesus said, “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, *he cannot enter the kingdom of God*” (John 3:5). Now we enter the kingdom of God when we become Christians at conversion. But Jesus says that we have to be born “of the Spirit” before we can do that.⁷ Our inability to come to Christ on our own, without an initial work of God within us, is also emphasized when Jesus says, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” (John 6:44), and “No one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father” (John 6:65). This inward act of regeneration is described beautifully when Luke says of Lydia, “*The Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul*” (Acts 16:14). First the Lord opened her heart, then she was able to give heed to Paul’s preaching and to respond in faith.

By contrast, Paul tells us, “The man without the Spirit (literally, the “natural man”) does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14 NIV). He also says of people apart from Christ, “no one understands, No one seeks for God” (Rom. 3:11).

The solution to this spiritual deadness and inability to respond only comes when God gives us new life within.

⁷When Jesus talks about being “born of water” here, the most likely interpretation of this is that he is referring to *spiritual cleansing from sin* which Ezekiel prophesied when he said, “I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you” (Ezek. 36:25–26). Here the water symbolizes spiritual cleansing from sin, just as the new heart and new spirit speak of the new spiritual life that God will give. Ezekiel is prophesying that God will give an internal cleansing from the pollution of sin in the heart at the same time as he awakens new spiritual life within his people.

Notice here Grudem causally links our spiritual deadness with our spiritual inability to respond to God in faith. While spiritual deadness and spiritual inability are related (i.e.,

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they are both the result of our fallen, sinful state), they are not *causally* related the way Calvinists think. It's not that we are unable to respond *because* we are spiritually dead. If spiritual life follows faith as I've argued, spiritual deadness signifies a lack of spiritual life which is only *in Christ* (which involves forgiveness of sins and reconciliation)--and we are not in Christ *until* we believe in Christ. The *drawing* of God enables us to come to Christ and believe in him, for no one seeks God nor can anyone come to Christ *unaided by God*. Something like this qualifier must account for other scriptures that affirm unsaved people can seek for God (Acts 17:27; Heb 11:6). The drawing of God helps us to understand and believe the gospel. And upon believing, we are regenerated and translated from spiritual death to spiritual life.

Here it is clear to see where Grudem simply assumes that God's drawing equals God's regeneration. Yet in Grudem's footnote 7 on the new birth from John 3, he associates the new birth with cleansing from sins. Surely, Grudem would agree that God requires faith for us to be cleansed from our sins. And if to be born again of the spirit and water is to be cleansed from sins, then Grudem's pre-faith view of regeneration is wrong. Also Jesus' requirement of faith in verses 16-36 of John 3 can legitimately be understood to be an explanation of what it means to be born again. It is to be cleansed of sins and to receive eternal life through believing in the Son of God.

"But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even *when we were dead through our trespasses* made us alive together with Christ" (Eph. 2:4-5). Paul also says, "*When you were dead in your sins* and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, *God made you alive with Christ*" (Col. 2:13 NIV).⁸

The idea that regeneration comes before saving faith is not always understood by evangelicals today. Sometimes people will even say something like, "If you believe in Christ as your Savior, then (after you believe) you will be born again." But Scripture itself never says anything like that. This new birth is viewed by Scripture as something that God does within us in order to enable us to believe.

Nor does the Bible ever say anything about the new birth enabling us to believe. The work of the Holy Spirit that is necessary and influential in our believing prior to salvation is convicting, inviting, imploring, and leading--not forcefully imparting spiritual life to faithless sinners. Spiritual life is only possessed by those who are joined to Christ. And we are joined to Christ only through faith.

The reason that evangelicals often think that regeneration comes after saving faith is that they *see the results* (love for God and his Word, and turning from sin) *after* people come to faith, and they think that regeneration must therefore have come after saving faith. Yet here we must decide on the basis of what Scripture tells us, because

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regeneration itself is not something we see or know about directly: “The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8).

Seeing results is different from seeing regeneration. Nobody says otherwise. This seems to be a strawman. As in his systematic theology book, Grudem does not give much attention to the best arguments made against his Calvinistic views.

Because Christians often tend to focus on the *results* of regeneration, rather than the hidden spiritual act of God itself, some evangelical statements of faith have contained wording that suggests that regeneration comes after saving faith. So, for example, the statement of faith of the Evangelical Free Church of America (which has been adapted by a number of other evangelical organizations) says,

We believe that the true Church is composed of all such persons who *through saving faith* in Jesus Christ *have been regenerated* by the Holy Spirit and are united together in the body of Christ of which He is the Head. (paragraph 8)

Here the word “regeneration” apparently means the *outward evidence of regeneration* that is seen in a changed life, evidence that certainly does come after saving faith. Thus “being born again” is thought of not in terms of the initial impartation of new life, but in terms of the *total life change that results* from that impartation. If the term “regeneration” is understood in this way, then it would be true that regeneration comes after saving faith.

Regeneration can still be the inward work of the Spirit (apart from the outward evidence), but nonetheless conditioned upon faith. Once again, I think Grudem’s Calvinistic commitments cause him to attribute spiritual *inability* to spiritual *deadness* and to conflate the *drawing* of the Spirit with the *regeneration* of the Spirit. This prevents him from allowing faith to precede inward spiritual life, in spite of the abundant scriptural evidence for it.

Nevertheless, if we are to use language that closely conforms to the actual wording of Scripture, it would be better to restrict the word “regeneration” to the instantaneous, *initial* work of God in which he imparts spiritual life to us.

I know of no place in scripture where regeneration is said to be the *initial* work of the Spirit. Remember, in Calvinistic thought, faith is often viewed as part of the irresistible salvation package for the elect. On this view God must first irresistibly impart life to the sinner who will necessarily, irresistibly believe and be saved. This appears to me as an attempt to do an end run around man’s faith being a condition for salvation. It comes

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close to putting *salvation* prior to faith, which if you think about it, would make more sense if Calvinism is true. If Calvinism is true and the elect must believe and the non-elect must not believe, and God decides without man's choice involved, why on earth would he have made faith (something man does) a prerequisite for being saved? Why wouldn't we be saved in order to believe? Why wouldn't he have said, "By grace are you saved, not of faith or works. For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto faith and good works."?

You see, this is exactly what Grudem is saying about regeneration. "By grace are you regenerated (born again, receiving spiritual life), not of faith or works. For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto faith and good works."

The reason God didn't set it up this way is because he wanted to save *any person* who would freely receive the gift of eternal life by believing in his Son. The gospel of salvation is therefore a legitimate, bona-fide offer to all who hear it. We can truthfully preach the gospel to any person, proclaiming confidently to any person that God, who is love, so loved them that Jesus died for them and rose from the grave. Believing that message, which is the gospel (1Cor 15:1-8), not a hypothetical "if you believe", will result in their salvation. We can truthfully preach to any person the message they must believe to be saved. This is preaching the gospel, not merely making a comment about the gospel, which if believed by the sinner won't save them anyway (for a sinner could believe that "if they believed in the sacrificial death and resurrection of Christ, they would be saved", and that belief alone would avail them nothing). They must believe Jesus died for their sins and rose again--and that is the gospel we can boldly preach to every person.

Then we can emphasize that we do not see regeneration itself but only the results of it in our lives, and that faith in Christ for salvation is the first result that we see. In fact, we can never know that we have been regenerated until we come to faith in Christ, for that is the outward evidence of this hidden, inward work of God. Once we do come to saving faith in Christ, we know that we have been born again.

Regeneration is part of the unseen operation of the Spirit regardless of the order (i.e., before faith or after faith). Upon believing, there are many aspects of the unseen spiritual operation that become a reality (e.g., Spirit indwelling and sealing). Regeneration is another facet of the unseen work of God upon conversion. But this is irrelevant to the order.

By way of application, we should realize that the explanation of the gospel message in Scripture does not take the form of a command, "Be born again and you will be saved," but rather, "Believe in Jesus Christ and you will be saved."⁹ This is the consistent pattern

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in the preaching of the gospel throughout the book of Acts, and also in the descriptions of the gospel given in the Epistles.

The lack of the command form is just as easily explained by the fact that spiritual birth is the work of *the Spirit* that is conditional upon *our* believing in Jesus. Upon God's reproving work, our responsibility is to believe in the Son of God. As a result of our response of faith, God regenerates us, giving us eternal life (Jn 3:16). Thus the emphasized command to sinners in scripture is to believe.

I'll conclude with looking at another verse that is often used in defense of pre-faith regeneration:

So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. (Romans 8:8)

It is reasoned by Calvinists that unsaved people (i.e., those who are in the flesh) cannot have faith, since faith pleases God (Heb 11:6), and they cannot please God. Thus, they conclude, they must be regenerated by the Spirit in order to believe.

But this interpretation ends up saying too much, for the only other position than "*in the flesh*" is "*in the Spirit*." And the only way to be in the Spirit is to be in Christ. And the only way to be in Christ is by faith. Notice in the context below the identification of the indwelling Spirit is the indwelling Christ, characteristic of a believer who possesses life and righteousness in Christ.

Rom 8:6. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

7. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

10 And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

Many statements in scripture are general truths that have an implied condition or qualifier (as in "no man seeks God" or "'Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" or "And as it is appointed unto men once to die..."). If this verse is interpreted in hard absolute terms with no exceptions or implicit conditions, then

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unsaved people could never be *in the Spirit* and nobody would be saved, because they could never please God by faith.

Another option is that they are already *in the Spirit* when they initially believe, but scripture states that we receive the Spirit by faith. To be *in the Spirit* logically prior to believing and also become *in the Spirit* logically after believing is nonsensical.

Or they become *in the Spirit* before believing but not after, but this contradicts many scriptures that show faith as essential to receiving the Spirit--as discussed earlier in this paper.

The only other option I can think of is a limbo state that exists between *in the flesh* and *in the Spirit*, which is problematic from the immediate context as well as from the whole of scripture. No such doctrine is found in scripture.

To summarize the interpretation options:

So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. (Romans 8:8)

1. This statement is a truth with no exceptions and with no implied conditions
 - a. Nobody ever becomes *in the Spirit* because everyone is *in the flesh* and it is impossible for anyone *in the flesh* to please God by faith and be placed *in the Spirit*, or
 - b. A person has to be *in the Spirit* before believing (since our believing is pleasing to God). So, they are already *in the Spirit* when they initially believe and are placed *in the Spirit* upon believing, or
 - c. A person has to be *in the Spirit* before believing (since our believing is pleasing to God). So, they are already *in the Spirit* when they initially believe and are *not* placed *in the Spirit* upon believing, or
 - d. There is a spiritual/relational state between *in the flesh* and *in the Spirit* in which it is possible for the person to believe while *not in the flesh* nor *in the Spirit* and become *in the Spirit* by believing.

or

2. This is a general truth about people *in the flesh*. They are unable to please God, since they are alienated sinners. But there is an implied condition that if they respond to God's drawing by having faith in Jesus, they will be transferred from being *in the flesh* to being *in the Spirit*

For the reasons given in this paper, number 2 is the only interpretation that satisfies the immediate context of Romans 8 and harmonizes with the broader context of scripture.

Regeneration Follows Faith

Travis Echols

2018 Facebook Debate on Regeneration



[Donald Williams](#)

[December 15 at 9:13 AM](#) ·

In one sense there are no 'Five Points of Calvinism.' If you had asked Calvin for five points, you would have got a very interesting list no doubt, but not the Tulip. They are the five points of Arminius *against* Calvin. It's not that Calvin didn't hold them (rightly understood), but they look very different when you encounter them in the Institutes without the negative spin they picked up from being the five things Arminius disagreed with, and in the larger context of Calvin's real love--not determinism for its own sake, but the glory of God shown by His grace, in a salvation that is radically by grace alone. Later Calvinists made a horrible tactical blunder when they let the Arminians set the terms of engagement. Of course they have to defend at the five places where they were attacked. But if they want to win, they should work harder to get grace and glory back into the foreground where they belong. Only in that light can the 'Points' be discussed profitably.

[64Ken Samples and 63 others](#)

[86 Comments](#)[3 Shares](#)

Comments



[Laura Zechin](#) "...they should work harder to get grace and glory back into the foreground where they belong."



[Kevin Andrew Hansen](#) I agree



[Terry Hollifield](#) I want to make sure I'm understanding you correctly, [Donald Williams](#). Are you here affirming determinism to be the case but giving the caveat that it not be for its own sake but for the glory of God?

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[Michael A. Covington](#) Also, I think, the five points are often expressed in somewhat exaggerated form, to make them easier to disagree with.

-



[Peter Giesbrecht](#) I find it interesting that you use the phrase 'Calvin's real love' given how little Calvin mentioned love at all in his writings.



[Kevin Andrew Hansen](#) [Peter Giesbrecht](#) little. If you read on his life story and other writings other than the institutes it is present a lot. He was not your cold-hearted person people make him out to be.

-



[Peter Giesbrecht](#) [Kevin](#), feel free to enlighten me. How many times did Calvin write on God's love other than in the Institutes?

-



[Byron G. Curtis](#) [Peter Giesbrecht](#) — See below, on the main thread.



[Travis Echols](#) Whether Calvinism is true or not, I think it's going to be difficult for Calvinists to win the love debate--especially if Calvinists don't believe that Jesus died for the non-elect, and thus the gospel (good news) of Christ dying for our sins and rising from the dead does not apply to the non-elect, and that God fore-hated the non-elect (i.e., before they were born--Rom 9).



[Donald Williams](#) On the other hand, Arminians could be said to have a God whose love is so limited that instead of actually saving anybody He only made salvation available just in case any natural men (who according to Paul could not accept it anyway) were interested.

Neither Calvinism nor Arminianism as usually understood is adequate to the mystery of God's love.

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[Travis Echols](#) [Donald Williams](#) What I said is true of most Calvinists, I thought. Correct me if I have misrepresented Calvinist doctrine. What you're saying is not true of most Arminians. God saves people upon them believing. And the just-in-case form of Arminianism is a minority Open Theist view. This seems like a straw man.

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[Travis Echols](#) [Donald Williams](#) I'm truly curious: Have Calvinists thought much about the state of the sinner logically prior to trusting Christ. Does the sinner believe as a natural man or a spiritual man, as in the flesh or in the Spirit? According to the Calvinist view, does regeneration change his state logically prior to faith? And if so, how so, prior to being forgiven and joined to Christ through faith (faith which is subsequent to regeneration per Calvinism)?

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[John Forrestal](#) [Donald Williams](#) Re issues of free will and sovereignty.

As in physics. Sometimes a photon is interpreted as a particle, other times a wave, depending on how it is "looked" at. So it is not surprising we see the same paradoxes with the author of physics.

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[Donald Williams](#) [Travis Echols](#) the standard Calvinist explanation is that faith is a result of regeneration, not its cause. But as I said above, "Neither Calvinism nor Arminianism as usually understood is adequate to the mystery of God's love."

So in Arminianism, it seems that nobody is actually saved by the Cross, but rather it is their faith that actuates salvation? I do not see the difference between your formula and what you called a straw man.

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[Travis Echols](#) [Donald Williams](#) Regarding : "actually saved" The Bible clearly states we are chosen and given grace before the foundation of the world. But the Bible teaches that we are "saved" and receive the benefits of grace in time upon believing in Christ. I think both sides should agree to this. We are elect in accordance with divine foreknowledge, so it is not a just-in-case thing where God is wringing his hands wondering if anyone will

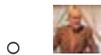
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receive Christ. We should all agree to that. The elect are those God has always known to be in Christ by His infinite essence. He doesn't look down the corridor of time to see what we do. He has always known those in Christ. Libertarian freedom is compatible with all I have said. Fatalism/determinism is not entailed by what I've affirmed. That is often a hidden assumption--as is the notion that God's foreknowledge also entails man's necessity. Fallaciously thinking that God's certainty entails man's necessity leads to fatalism/determinism or open theism. I acknowledge the inscrutability of God, but I never want to say I embrace two things that I think are contradictory. This is irrational and undermines my entire epistemological method that led up to that conclusion.



[Travis Echols](#) [Donald Williams](#) I understand that the Calvinist position is that faith is the result of regeneration. This view should lead to another question which I've never even heard addressed by Calvinists. Unfortunately, they won't take the time to understand the question. If the natural man "in the flesh" cannot please God by faith, then regeneration must change the sinner's state such that he is no longer a natural man in the flesh logically prior to faith. I thought you are either in Adam or in Christ (through faith), You are either in your sins or forgiven. You are either in the flesh or in the Spirit. What is the state of the regenerate logically prior faith? in the flesh (natural) or in the Spirit or in a state in between?



[Donald Williams](#) Logically prior, yes; but not temporally prior. They are simultaneous. So there is no time in which your regenerate man prior to faith exists. He is an artificial construct, not a real person.



[Donald Williams](#) Your rejection of both libertarian freedom and fatalism sounds pretty close to what I think is true.



[Byron G. Curtis](#) [Travis Echols](#) —"They *won't* take the time to understand the question"? —I think the question gets addressed.



[Jesse Broussard](#) Travis Echols: this seems to me like asking the state of a child in the birth canal. God grants repentance, then grants faith. He takes away the heart of stone

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and gives a heart of flesh.

Please clarify if I'm not understanding your question.

Blessings,

JB

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[Travis Echols](#) Interesting. The logical order is not important? I think it is. Faith and justification occur at the same time, but I wouldn't say the logical order is unimportant. I'm not justified in order to believe. Nor do I think I was regenerated in order to believe--because spiritual life is only in Christ--and I am only in Christ through faith. The natural man cannot come to Christ unaided by God; but this is drawing, warning, beseeching, persuading, not regeneration. Regeneration means new life, yet we are risen with him through faith in Christ, scripture says. Secondly, do you think regeneration and faith are always simultaneous in time, because that's not what I have heard. Doesn't God at times move in dead men's hearts weeks or months before they fully trust in Christ, giving them greater and greater conviction and understanding toward repentance/faith? If so, mustn't this be regeneration, since spiritually dead people can't be moved or influenced per Calvinism? You ask, how can a natural man believe. I say by God's drawing. You say spiritual life produces faith. I say how can one have spiritual life, while still in their sins not joined to Christ, not risen with Christ, still in Adam, still in the flesh. Calvinists would say you have to have spiritual life in order to be in Christ. This seems clearly unscriptural to me for a host of reasons. It's a confusion of drawing and regeneration.

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[Travis Echols](#) Jesse Broussard Do we have life in order to be joined to Christ through faith? Or is life only by being in Christ through faith? I say the latter. The explanatory or causal order is important.

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[Travis Echols](#) [Byron G. Curtis](#) Are you referring to Don's explanation about temporal simultaneity?

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[Byron G. Curtis](#) Yes. Regeneration ends the reign of sin and begins the reign of grace. Even faith "so small as a grain of mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds." It may take

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Travis Echols

time for us to awaken to its presence, or it may jolt us instantly with 22,000 volts. The Psalms assert a relationship of trust and confidence in God by the psalmist even from his infancy, perhaps even in utero. That's Psalm 71, the old man's psalm.

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Donald Williams Yes, the logical priority is important in the ordo salutis. It preserves the divine initiative and is consistent with sola gratia. But some of the questions we ask about how it relates to the temporal order are meaningless, IMO.

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Travis Echols **Byron G. Curtis** Are you saying the reign of sin can end before a person is in Christ? Or are you thinking a person can be in Christ prior to faith?

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Travis Echols **Donald Williams** To clarify, I hold to divine sovereignty and libertarian freedom and reject fatalism. I also don't think determinism is the only means by which God ordains all that comes to pass.

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Travis Echols **Donald Williams** I think the proper logical order is divine initiation, then faith, then life. Calvinists want to put life with initiation, which is problematic and reveals a prior erroneous doctrinal commitment.

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Byron G. Curtis **Travis Echols** — Am I saying that "the reign of sin ends before a person is in Christ?" No. Of course not.

The logical order must not be mistaken for the temporal order. Some "steps" (I hesitate to call them *steps*, lest they appear in rote, mechanical fashion) . . . Some *steps* are simultaneous. These are deeply personal, and fully engage our mind, our affections, and our will.

The Reformed Confessions imply this logical order: _____

Election in eternity

Effectual Calling

Regeneration

Conversion (= Faith and Repentance)

Justification

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Adoption
Sanctification
Perseverance
Glorification

In temporal order:

- a) The first, election, is beyond all time.
- b) The next five are all simultaneous, instantaneous acts, gifts given through the effectual call that regenerates. That gift redirects our long-concupiscent love to the love of God, and creates faith and repentance.
- c) The next two are processes; they begin at that same moment, and are lifelong: sanctification and perseverance.
- d) The last comes in two stages:
 - i) at the moment our death, the perfecting of our character; ii) at the return of Christ, the physical resurrection and transfiguration of the dead in Christ.
- e) Each of them presents a lovely aspect of our union with Christ.

The article linked here gives biblical warrant for this presentation, taken from John Murray's great book, *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied* (Eerdmans, 1955):

<https://www.monergism.com/order-application>

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[Travis Echols](#) [Byron G. Curtis](#) Thanks. This is helpful. I still fail to see how the logical order can be life in order to be joined to Christ through faith. Faith is a prerequisite to life in scripture. As for the temporal order, the five that are supposedly simultaneous in time seem to leave out the process of sinners being drawn by conviction and greater understanding through warning, beseeching, persuading, etc. This work of God precedes justification temporally. In such cases, is this not the work of God over time on "dead in sins" sinners that is temporally prior to faith/justification?

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[Byron G. Curtis](#) Travis—God is certainly free to work such things how, when, and where he pleases. The Holy Spirit, Jesus said, "convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." That's massive. But not all with the same intended effect.

People are sometimes cast down to despair over the depth of their sin, even made to feel helpless in its grip, before they are permitted to see the light of Christ. Sounds like John Bunyan and his allegorical Pilgrim who at last progressed.

On the other hand, sometimes what looks like searching is already finding—but the experiences are so new and the words to describe them so lacking that we know not what God has done. That was my experience.

Hence, not all the works of the Holy Spirit are the regenerative work of the effectual call. Stephen denounced that furious crowd in Acts 7 as "just like your fathers," "always resisting the Holy Spirit." Yet Saul of Tarsus stood among them. Thus, we Reformed folk say that some works of the Spirit are *meant* to be resistible. But the effectual call is irresistible. Always. That Damascus Road epiphany could not fail.

Jesus says, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last Day." John 6. That sentence teaches three great truths:

- 1) Our total inability to initiate the life of grace.
- 2) God the Father's total ability to grant that gift.
- 3) The total effectiveness of the gift, always resulting in the resurrection of the blessed.

▪



[Travis Echols](#) [Byron G. Curtis](#) So God must draw first. He initiates. But no sinner has spiritual life while still in their sins, unforgiven, still a child of the Devil, in Adam, in the flesh, not yet risen with Christ. Yet faith is the scriptural prerequisite to passing from death to life, being forgiven, being spiritually raised, becoming a child of God, and being indwelt with the Spirit. Faith precedes regeneration. The logical order is drawing, faith, regeneration. It seems to me that "pre-faith regeneration" is contrived to support a misunderstanding.

○



[Byron G. Curtis](#) No. Not at all.

"Pre-faith regeneration" is *contrived* (better, "received") so we can grasp the teaching of key biblical texts:

- 1) "Unless a person is born again, they cannot see the Kingdom of God."—Jesus Christ, John 3.

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See = "perceive," "understand," and thus, to "enter in," and "experience."

2) "The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit." —1 Corinthians 2:14.

—The unregenerate person "does not" and "can not" understand, much less receive, the things taught by the Holy Spirit.

Hence, a vastly important text:

3) Matthew 16:15 "But what about you?" Jesus asked. "Who do you say I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." 17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven."

The confession, "You are the Christ" is taught by the Holy Spirit.

4) Therefore, no one speaking without the Holy Spirit can say from the heart, "Jesus is Lord." 1 Corinthians 12:3. This, or the equivalent claim in different words in heart or voice, is the believer's first confession of faith.

5) Hence, Romans 10's conditions of salvation are only possible if regeneration precedes faith:

Romans 10:9 — "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved."



[Travis Echols](#) [Byron G. Curtis](#) I could address these one by one and many of these only indicate that the Spirit must first move in a man to have faith, which I agree. You have not yet explained how an unsaved, unforgiven sinner, not yet raised to life in Christ through faith can have spiritual life logically prior to faith. If he is already alive prior to faith, how does he receive life by faith? Do you believe the verses that say life comes through faith? Are you familiar with these verses? Maybe that is where I have failed. I'll provide some references.



[Travis Echols](#) The logical order is faith results in life.

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1. We receive life by believing (Jn 20:31; 1Tim 1:16).

John 20:31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

1Ti 1:16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

2. We were risen with Christ through faith (Col 2:12)

Col 2:12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

A person cannot be raised unless he is dead. Yet we are risen with Christ through faith. Therefore we were dead prior to faith.

3. We receive the Holy Spirit by believing (John 7:39; Eph 1:13)

John 7:39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Eph 1:13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

A person cannot have spiritual life without receiving the Holy Spirit. Yet receiving the Spirit is by faith (Gal 3:2; 26-28; Col 2:12; Rom 8:9; 1Cor 12:3,7; Jn 7:37; Acts 10:44-48 with Acts 11:1-14).

4. We become a child of God by faith (Jn 1:12; Gal 3:26)

John 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

Gal 3:26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

A person cannot have spiritual life while still a child of the Devil.

5. Our being quickened from deadness in sins is associated with our being saved from, and forgiven of, our sins (Eph 2:5; Col 2:13).

Eph 2:5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by

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grace ye are saved;)

Col 2:13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

You cannot be quickened from deadness in sins while still unforgiven of sins. Quickening does not occur without faith.

It is NOT dead in sins --> quickened from deadness (still unforgiven of sins)--> faith--> forgiveness of sins

It is dead in sins --> faith--> forgiveness of sins (i.e., quickening from deadness in sins)

6. We were born again by the word of God (1Pet 1:23)

1Pet 1:23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides forever.

Yet the word does not profit us if not mixed with faith (Heb 4:2)

Heb 4:2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

1Thes 2:13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when you received the word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe.

Ro 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

We can therefore conclude that we are born again by faith in the word. We are not born again apart from faith. We are not born again to believe. We believe to be born again. John 3:16 is Jesus explaining to Nicodemus how to be born again.

Conclusions on regeneration and faith: If we receive life by believing, we do not have life before believing. That means we were dead before we believed, not regenerate. We don't receive life to believe. We believe to receive life. Therefore we believed when we were dead in sins, not when we were regenerate.

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Regeneration Follows Faith

Travis Echols

[Byron G. Curtis](#) I've posted four texts, Travis, which deserve some reply. I'll be glad to address your question. But first, please, respond to what I've written (above).



[Travis Echols](#) You {1} "Unless a person is born again, they cannot see the Kingdom of God."—Jesus Christ, John 3. See = "perceive," "understand," and thus, to "enter in," and "experience."}

Me. One cannot enter the kingdom without being born again by faith (v.16-18) is equally plausible especially if it is in harmony with Peter who says we are begotten by the word. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation only to them who believe. The word must be mixed with faith. Doing biblical theology, not systematic, the Calvinist interpretation is possible, but not conclusive.

You. {2} "The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit." —1 Corinthians 2:14. —The unregenerate person "does not" and "cannot" understand, much less receive, the things taught by the Holy Spirit}.

Me. Again possible but not conclusive. Unaided by the Spirit, the carnal man cannot understand. Nor do we seek God without the Spirit. But the Spirit of God convicts to lead men to faith.

You. {Hence, a vastly important text:

{3} Matthew 16:15 "But what about you?" Jesus asked. "Who do you say I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." 17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven."}

Me. There is no mention of regeneration here. God convicts sinners of their sin and need of Christ.

You. {The confession, "You are the Christ" is taught by the Holy Spirit.

Me. Agreed, although this verse is particularly about Simon and may not even be prescriptive.

You. {4} Therefore, no one speaking without the Holy Spirit can say from the heart, "Jesus is Lord." 1 Corinthians 12:3. This, or the equivalent claim in different words in heart or voice, is the believer's first confession of faith.}

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Me. Yes, the *believer's* profession. But confession logically follows faith. This verse is a better verse for my case since we receive the Spirit by faith (Gal 3:2; 26-28; Col 2:12; Rom 8:9; 1Cor 12:3,7; Jn 7:37; Acts 10:44-48 with Acts 11:1-14).

You. {5) Hence, Romans 10's conditions of salvation are only possible if regeneration precedes faith:}

Me. Not if your premises fail and my verses contrary don't

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[Travis Echols](#) God uses the means of faith to spiritually bless us. Many of these refute the Calvinist view.

1. God purifies our hearts by faith (Acts 15:9)
2. God has manifested his righteousness which is by faith (Rom 3:21-22, 4:13; 9:30; 10:6)
3. God has set forth Christ to be a propitiation through faith (Rom 3:25)
4. A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law (Rom 3:28)
5. God justifies the circumcision and the uncircumcision by faith (Rom 3:30)
6. To him who works not, his faith is counted for righteousness (Rom 4:5, 11)
7. It is of faith that it might be by grace, the promise is sure to all the seed of Abraham (Rom 4:16)
8. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 5:1; Gal 2:16)
9. We have access by faith into God's grace (Rom 5:2)
10. We stand by faith (Rom 11:20)
11. By the hearing of faith, we received the Spirit (Gal 3:2)
12. Those of faith are the children of Abraham (Gal 3:7)
13. God justifies the heathen through faith (Gal 3:8)
14. They who are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham (Gal 3:9)
15. The just shall live by faith (Gal 3:11)
16. We Gentiles received the promise of the Spirit through faith, the blessing of Abraham (Gal 3:14)
17. The promise by faith of Jesus Christ is given to us who believe (Gal 3:22)
18. After faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster (Gal 3:25)
19. We are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:26)
20. By grace we are saved, through faith (Eph 2:8)
21. Christ dwells in our hearts by faith (Eph 3:17)
22. We have the righteousness which is of God by faith (Phil 3:9)
23. The holy scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus (2Tim 3:15)

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24. We are risen with Christ through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised him (Col 2:12)
25. The end of our faith is the salvation of our souls (1Pet 1:9)
26. By believing the word, we are saved (Luke 8:12)
27. John the Baptist bore witness of the light that all men might believe (John 1:7)
28. To them who believe on his name, God gave the power to become the sons of God (John 1:12)
29. They who believe on Jesus receive the Holy Spirit (John 7:39)
30. By believing that Jesus is the Christ, we will not die in our sins (John 8:24)
31. Jesus acknowledged His Father hearing Him, so those standing by may believe that God sent Him (Jn 11:42)
32. Jesus prayed that believers would be one, that the world may believe God sent Him (John 17:21)
33. The record of Jesus' death is true, that we might believe (John 19:35)
34. Scriptures were written that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:31)
35. Scriptures were written that believing we might have life through His name (John 20:31)
36. If we believe with all our hearts, we may be baptized (Acts 8:37)
37. By him, all who believe are justified from all things (Acts 13:39)
38. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved (Acts 16:31)
39. John the Baptist preached that they should believe on Jesus Christ (Acts 19:4)
40. The righteousness of God is unto and upon all them who believe (Rom 3:22)
41. Abraham is the father of all them who believe (Rom 4:11)
42. God imputes righteousness to us, if we believe on Him who raised up Jesus (Rom 4:24)
43. If we confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in our heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, and will be saved (Rom 10:9-10)
44. The promise of faith of Jesus Christ is given to us who believe (Gal 3:22)
45. Christ will be admired by us who believe when He comes to be glorified in His saints (2Thes 1:10)
46. We believe on Him to life everlasting (1Tim 1:16)
47. We believe to the saving of the soul (Heb 10:39)
48. Scriptures were written to those who believe that we may know that we have eternal life (1John 5:13)
49. Whoever believes in the Son of God, we will not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:15)
50. Whoever believes in the Son of God, we will not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16)
51. He who believes on the Son of God, we are not condemned (John 3:18)
52. He who believes on the Son has everlasting life (John 3:36; 6:47)
53. He who hears and believes on Him who sent Jesus, has everlasting life, and will not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life (John 5:24)

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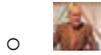
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54. He that believes on Jesus, we will never thirst (John 6:35)
55. Everyone who believes on Jesus, he will raise up at the last day (John 6:40)
56. He who believes on Jesus, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water (John 7:38)
57. He who believes in Jesus, though he were dead, yet shall he live (John 11:25)
58. Whoever lives and believes in Jesus, will never die (John 11:26)
59. Whoever believes on Jesus, should not abide in darkness (John 12:46)
60. He who believes on Jesus, greater works than Jesus' he will do (John 14:12)
61. Whoever believes in Jesus, will receive remission of sins (Acts 10:43)
62. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes (Rom 1:16)
63. God is just and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus (Rom 3:26)
64. To him who believes on Him, his faith is counted for righteousness (Rom 4:5)
65. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes (Rom 10:4)
66. With the heart, we believe unto righteousness (Rom 10:10)
67. He who believes on Jesus will not be confounded (1Pet 2:6)
68. Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God (1John 5:1)
69. He who overcomes the world is he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God (1John 5:5)
70. He who believes on the Son of God, has the witness in himself (1John 5:10)
71. Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness (Rom 4:3; Gal 3:6)
72. Scriptures were written that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:31)
73. Scriptures were written that believing we might have life through His name (John 20:31)
74. Many of the Samaritans of the city believed on Him for the saying of the woman (John 4:39)
75. Many more believed because of His own word (John 4:41)
76. And many of the people believed on Him (John 7:31)
77. As He spoke these words, many believed on Him (John 8:30)
78. And many believed on Him there (John 10:42)
79. Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him (John 11:45)
80. By reason of Lazarus, many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus (John 12:11)
81. Among the chief rulers, many believed on Him (John 12:42)
82. In Joppa many believed in the Lord (Acts 9:42)
83. God gave the gift of the Spirit to those who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 11:17)
84. A great multitude of the Jews and Greeks believed (Acts 14:1)
85. Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house (Acts 18:8)
86. Apollos helped them much who had believed through grace (Acts 18:27)
87. After we believed, we were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (Eph 1:13)

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88. God has from the beginning chosen us to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth (2Thes 2:13)



[Donald Williams](#) How most of these texts "refute the Calvinist view" is anything but self evident.



[Travis Echols](#) [Donald Williams](#) I said many, not most.



[Donald Williams](#) How many of them do it is not self evident.



[Byron G. Curtis](#) Select a few, Travis, to expound in defense of your thesis, which if I read you correctly, claims that the unregenerate person chooses faith, and faith results in regeneration.

But first things first—Do I have your thesis right?



[Travis Echols](#) I expounded the key texts before I responded to your four key texts and before I posted the list. I was showing by the list the pivotal role of faith in God's salvation. He couldn't have made it much clearer. But Calvinistic regeneration tries to do an end-run around faith being the condition of salvation and instead makes faith a part of the necessary salvation package that starts with new life.



[Travis Echols](#) The unregenerate person is enabled by God's drawing to believe. Belief is God's sovereign condition to receive the free gift of sonship, forgiveness, union with Christ, spiritual resurrection, life, the indwelling Holy Spirit, etc. Logically prior to faith we don't have these things or it wouldn't make sense that scripture says we receive them by faith. I think Calvinists should go back to the drawing board and critically challenge every philosophical and exegetical building block in the Calvinist model and discover a more consistent way to harmonize all the texts.

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[Donald Williams](#) These distinctions (e.g., between cause and conditions) might obtain if we were dealing with a finite being. When the One with Whom we are dealing is eternal, omniscient, and omnipotent, their meaningfulness becomes unclear and their usefulness uncertain. Neither Calvinism nor Arminianism succeeds completely in explaining these mysteries.



[Travis Echols](#) [Donald Williams](#) I agree. Most, if not all, God-talk is analogous-- but far from useless. God is inscrutable, so there is mystery. However, it seems to me that we must be careful not to chalk up apparent contradictions to "mystery" like Berkhoff does. I think we must always dance with the lady who brought us: reason. That is supposedly how we arrived at our seeming contradictory propositions in the first place. Back to the drawing board if the logical ends of our beliefs are at odds. We have likely made a misstep along the way.



[Keith Jah](#) [Peter Giesbrecht](#) most god talk is also tiresome and silly if its only in christ that god talk makes sense.



[Byron G. Curtis](#) [Travis Echols](#) — At this point, I'm not sure how useful this discussion is. I'll make a closing comment, and probably fade into silence on this thread. You state, correctly I believe, that "the unregenerate person is enabled by God's drawing to believe." Granted. That enabling is the work of regeneration. May God be with you very well.



[Travis Echols](#) [Byron G. Curtis](#) Thanks for the good civil debate. God bless.



[Byron G. Curtis](#) Thanks to you, too.



[Donald Williams](#) [Travis Echols](#) I agree about the necessity of following reason as far as it can take us and not pulling the mystery card prematurely. It seems we agree on the

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principle but differ on its application. I don't think it can take us quite as far as you do, apparently. Let's continue to listen to it and, even more, to Scripture with humility and grace. Fortunately, we are saved by grace, not by a perfect understanding of how it works!



[Travis Echols](#) [Donald Williams](#) Not to belabor it, but to clarify my view: I don't think reason alone can tell us what's real, but it can show us what is not real (e.g., a cannot equal not-a...). I say let's apply good reasoning to the scriptures; for without the undeniable first principles of logic, we can't make any sense of the scriptures, or anything else. While many realities may be beyond reason, they are not against reason.



[Donald Williams](#) Agreed.