

Christ & His Bride

Lesson #6

Spiritual Deadness & Regeneration

March 12, 2025

Soteriology, the study of the doctrine of Salvation, discusses how Christ's Death Secures The Salvation Of Those Who Believe. It helps us to understand the doctrines of Redemption, Justification, Sanctification, Propitiation, & Substitutionary Atonement.

Traditional Southern Baptist soteriology is grounded in the conviction that every person can and must be saved by a Personal and Free decision to respond to the Gospel by trusting in Christ Jesus alone as Savior and Lord. Christ is willing and able to save any and every sinner.

Al Mohler has served as president of the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville for more than 30 years. Quote from Sept. 2024:

"Calvanism is strong and growing in the SBC. Most entity leaders in SBC are Calvinists.

There is a small minority who are openly opposed to the presence of Reformed Theology."

John Calvin: "God arranges all things by His sovereign counsel, in such a way that individuals are born, who are doomed from the womb to certain death, and are to glorify Him by their destruction."

Calvinist idea of Salvation: At its heart is the concept of predestination. They believe God chose men for regeneration "before the foundation of the world." God's selection of those who would be saved occurred prior to the creation of the world, not just at the beginning of time. There's nothing any individual person can do during their mortal life to alter their eternal fate. This is a key aspect of the doctrine of predestination within Calvinism.

Key Point: All statements where BEFORE the foundation of the world is used are given reference to Christ. [Eph. 1:4; I Peter 1:20] Jesus is eternally existent.

John 17:24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which thou hast given Me; for thou lovedst Me BEFORE the foundation of the world.

Before: #4253. Pro > in front of, prior to

Note: It does NOT say the ones given were before the foundation of the world.

I Pet. 1:19-20 You were redeemed...But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: For He was foreknown BEFORE the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you.

Foreknown #4267 proginóskó: to know beforehand; Peter made it clear that Christ's death was an appointment, not an accident; for it was ordained by God before the foundation of the world

Conclusion: BEFORE the foundation of the world, God loved the Son;

Christ as the Lamb was foreknown.

Key Verse For Calvinists To Explain Dead in Trespasses & Sins & Regeneration

Eph. 2:1 And you hath He quickened [made alive], who were dead in trespasses and sins; When Paul wrote to the Ephesians that they were 'dead in trespasses and sins,' he did not mean they were dead physically, but they were dead spiritually, separated from God. This verse directly connects the idea of being "dead in your trespasses and sins" to the state of humanity before salvation, highlighting the consequence of Adam's fall.

Judgment of Adam & Eve after the Fall

Gen. 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. [Man had a choice?]

- Adam did not die physically the day that he ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He did not die until more than nine hundred years later.
- He immediately died spiritually: the onset of spiritual death and separation from God.
- They were cut off from their fellowship with God and became subject to sin and its consequences, including physical death.

This separation from God is revealed in Genesis 3:8. When Adam and Eve heard the voice of the Lord, they "hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God."

The fellowship had been broken. They were spiritually dead.

The natural man, like Adam hiding in the garden, is isolated from God.

Key: The fall of Adam & Eve marked the moment when all humanity became

"dead in sin and trespasses." Humanity would be spiritually separated from God.

Imputed Sin: Adam's sin is "imputed" to all humanity. As the head of the human race, his actions are considered to have affected all his descendants, making them inherently sinful.

- Because of the fall of Adam, every person inherits a nature and environment inclined toward sin and that every person who is capable of moral action will sin.
- Each person's sin alone brings the wrath of a holy God, broken fellowship with Him, ever-worsening selfishness and destructiveness, death, and condemnation to an eternity in hell.
- We are born without a relationship with God and considered "dead in sin and trespasses."
- Humans, inherently sinful & unable to reach God on their own, need salvation through Jesus Christ.

Calvinism Theology: Adam's sin resulted in the incapacitation of any person's free will.

Calvinism theology: says dead in trespasses and sins is a state of corpse like inability to respond.

Mankind was totally and hereditarily depraved and thus was incapable of responding to God.

Calvin taught: A select few had been chosen and miraculously empowered by God to be able to respond to salvation and become Christians. Salvation wasn't about man's choice but about God's.

Truth: Adam wasn't eternally separated from God when he ate the forbidden fruit; in fact, it was God who sought him out and made provision for mankind's salvation.

Key: Salvation is about God's choosing in that He paid its price and set its terms.

It is also about man's choosing in that man can and must respond to receive it.

Belief: While no sinner is remotely capable of achieving salvation through his own effort,

We [traditional Baptists] deny that any sinner is saved apart from a free response to the Holy Spirit's drawing through the Gospel.

Eph. 2:1 And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins:

Question: Does it mean the inability of man to believe or respond to the Gospel? [Calvinists] There has been no small amount of debate over the idiomatic use of the word "DEAD" within the New Testament. What does that term mean in the manner it is used in the Scriptures? If it is taken too literally it would mean that the "DEAD" could have no response, positive or negative, to the inspired truth of God's gracious revelation.

➤ An actual corpse can do nothing except passively lie there.

No one takes the term quite that literally. We all affirm that the "DEAD" are at least able to respond negatively to the gracious truth of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 7:51 Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

John 5:40 but you are not willing to come to Me so that you may have life.

Question: But can the "DEAD" in trespasses and sin respond positively in light of God's life-giving truth?

The Regeneration Of The Sinner

Regeneration: a quickening, of bringing of spiritual life, being born again where before there was simply spiritual death.

Calvinist position: God decreed: Everyone born in this fallen condition would be morally unable to respond positively to God's own appeals and pleas for reconciliation from that fall.

This moral incapacity from birth is a part of God's divine plan from the beginning.

The dead cannot respond positively even in light of God's life-giving truth.

A dead corpse just lays there and cannot respond.

Calvinist: A person is regenerated prior to or apart from hearing and responding to the Gospel

R.C. Sproul Dead men do not cooperate with grace. Unless regeneration takes place, there is no possibility of faith. Faith is the fruit of regeneration, not the cause of it.

Rom. 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

Question: Are we reborn so as to believe or do we believe so as to be reborn?

Many Calvinists teach that regeneration precedes faith. In order to believe, you must be born again. You have to be given a new heart to confess that you have a corrupt heart.

This means that regeneration comes before faith in the order of salvation. They say that a person must be born again before he believes. They argue that new life comes before faith. God must bring the corpse back to life so he will certainly believe God's revealed truth.

Which comes first, new life or faith?

Ezek. 18:30-32 "Therefore, you Israelites, I will judge each of you according to your own ways, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall. Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, people of Israel? For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!"

*The order clearly laid out is as follows: Repent, Turn away...Rid yourselves...
...get a new heart and a new spirit."*

Life comes from repentance, not the other way around.

Dr. Flowers: Some argue that the Gospel is not sufficient to enable the lost to believe without the work of the Holy Spirit to regenerate a person first. I argue that the Gospel is always sufficient because the Gospel is a work of the Holy Spirit.

John 20:31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life through His name.

Clear order: these are written... [scriptures] "...that you may believe..."
"...by believing you may have life..."

Life clearly is a fruit of faith and repentance, not the other way around.

Belief: Any person who freely responds to the Gospel with repentance and faith is born again through the power of the Holy Spirit. He is a new creation in Christ and enters, at the moment he believes, into eternal life.

Calvinists teach the word of truth will certainly be rejected by the unregenerate.

Yet, the apostle Paul said the Word may be the means of new birth. Birth must precede the word if Calvinism is true, and that is not what the text clearly indicates.

The Philippian jailer inquired, "What must I do to be saved?" [Acts 16:30].

If Paul were a Calvinistic he should have replied, "You can do nothing to be saved. You were born corpse-like dead in your sin and a dead man can do nothing. If God makes you alive then you will be convinced to believe our gospel." But Paul does not hesitate: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved" [Acts 16:31]. Believe so as to have new life. Repent so as to live!

Truth: That is the gospel appeal sent for all to hear it and respond.

God graciously and freely regenerates those who believe.

"Dead" Doesn't Mean Innate Moral Inability To Respond To God

A. The Parable of the Prodigal Son

Luke 15:24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.

Dead? Yes, he was dead, not physically, but he was separated from the father.

To be separated from the Father means simply that—it means death.

Key: Spiritual Deadness is separation from God due to rebellion and/or lostness.

Spiritual deadness is not a "total inability to respond."

B. Jesus' words to the Church in Sardis: You are "dead." Called them to "wake up."

Rev. 3:1-3 'I know your deeds, that you have a reputation[name] that you are alive, but in reality you are dead. Wake up then, and strengthen what remains that was about to die, because I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Therefore, remember what you received and heard, and obey it, and repent. If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will never know at what hour I will come against you. [NET]

Question: Should I presume, as a Calvinist would, that Jesus' hearers cannot respond positively to His appeal to wake up and repent?

Jesus fully expects this church to heed His warning and respond in repentance despite the fact He said they were "dead."

- The point is to show how the analogy of being "dead" doesn't necessarily imply "corpse-like inability" to respond to God.
- The use of the word "dead" illustrates that those in the church are expected to wake up and repent. They are expected to respond.

Question: Can the Calvinist produce examples where the analogy of "deadness" explicitly demonstrates the concept of "total inability" to respond to God's life-giving Word?

Key Point: Spiritual deadness seems to be equated with "lostness" or "in rebellion." It is not "total inability to respond."

C. Jesus Raises Lazarus

Calvinist state: Deadness refers to man's innate ability to respond to God. The story of Lazarus is one of the most referenced proof texts cited by Calvinists in defense of this doctrine.

John 11:14-15 Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵ And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless, let us go unto him.

Question: Why would Jesus say this if the Calvinistic Doctrine of Irresistible Grace is true?

Irresistible Grace: Irresistible grace teaches that God's grace saves those He chooses to save, regardless of their will. God's saving grace overcomes people's resistance to faith in Christ. God's grace and salvation cannot be effectively resisted. When God determines to save a man, that man is saved! Neither that man himself nor the devil, nor the wicked world are able to prevent his salvation. Nothing can stand in the way of God's saving purpose.

John 11:25-27 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:²⁶ And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this? ²⁷ She saith unto Him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

Context: Promise of believers' future bodily resurrection. Jesus clearly taught the resurrection of the human body. He has declared once for all that death is real, that there is life after death, and that the body will one day be raised by the power of God

John 11:40-42 Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? ⁴¹ Then they took away the stone from the place where the

dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. ⁴² And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that They May Believe That Thou Hast Sent Me.

John 11:43-45 And when He thus had spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

Calvinist belief: We are dead like Lazarus in the grave, and cannot come to Christ UNTIL He calls us out by name.

Calvinist: The physically dead Lazarus could do nothing for himself. He was unresponsive to all stimuli, oblivious to all life around him, beyond all help or hope—except for the help of Christ who is “the Resurrection and the Life.” At Christ’s call, Lazarus was filled with life, and he responded accordingly. In the same way, we were spiritually dead, unable to save ourselves, powerless to perceive the life of God—until Jesus called us to Himself.

Consider: Calvinist compare Lazarus’ physical resurrection from the dead

to a lost person’s state of spiritual deadness. [like comparing apples with oranges]

Reminder: Spiritual deadness in trespasses and sin is not physical death.

Consider: Do they try to prove their doctrine by using an actual corpse who was a believer?

Reminder: Lazarus was physically dead. He died as a believer. Jesus calling his name was not a call to salvation. This is NOT about the salvation of Lazarus.

Context: Lazarus was a believer whom Jesus raised from the dead to demonstrate that all in Christ will be resurrected.

⁴⁴ And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go. ⁴⁵ Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him.

Key Point: Jesus expressed a desire for the witnesses to believe on Him based upon what they have seen. An outward sign has the ability to help individuals believe.

Key Point: Jesus seems to be focused on the faith of the eyewitnesses, not Lazarus.

Key Point: The responsibility is put onto each individual to believe so as to live.

Key Point: The focus of this text is on the believing response of the witnesses to Christ’s miracle and the believers eventual resurrection from the dead.

Key Point: Jesus describes the faith of the eyewitnesses as being a direct response to what they saw, not a supernatural inward work of regeneration, or an unconditional choice before time began. [Lazarus was already a believer.]

Consider: No where in this passage do we find the concept of spiritual deadness as being in reference to total inability to respond, yet the story of Lazarus is one of the most referenced proof texts cited by Calvinists in defense of this doctrine.

Calvinism: God effectually makes the spiritually dead “alive” in the same way He raised Lazarus.

Reminder: Lazarus was a believer.

This miracle most likely represents the believer’s resurrection from the dead.

Calvinism states regarding The Elect ones: It is a certainty they will believe.

Calvinism states regarding the reprobates: It is impossible for them to believe.

➤ These 2 statements are true regardless of what miracle either of them witnesses.

Aligns With Calvinist Belief: A person is regenerated prior to or apart from hearing and responding to the Gospel.

At the heart of the Calvinist beliefs is predestination:

Man is born completely unable to willingly respond to God Himself.

Dr. Flowers: The Scripture does not teach that spiritual deadness equals corpse-like inability to respond to God's powerful, life-giving Holy Spirit truth.

Consider: Dead corpses all have the same reaction. They just lay there and cannot respond.

However, spiritually dead people have all kinds of reactions to the Gospel.

I do not agree with an opposing theology that only a select few are capable of responding to the Gospel while the rest are predestined to an eternity in hell.

Viewing Scripture through the Lens of Key Foundational Truths

A. *God's Word declares that God loved the Whole World.*

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

B. *God's Salvation Through Jesus Christ Is For All Men.*

If God's original plan was to have fellowship with mankind, and the sin of one man [Adam] caused a need for a Savior [Jesus], why would God bring a redemption plan that by default, only allows some to have fellowship with Him? That makes no sense.

If He gave His only begotten son because He loves the world, then the ALL the world have the opportunity to have a relationship with Him. God wants all [whosoever] to be saved.

John 3:14-15 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

John 12:31-33 Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

This he said, signifying what death he should die.

Gal. 3:13-14 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us:

for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree:

That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ;

that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

C. *Christ's Sacrificial Death Was For The Sins Of The Whole World.*

I John 4:10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us,

and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

I John 2:2 And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only,

but also for the sins of the whole world.

Key: Propitiation = satisfy God's justice and wrath toward our sin.

I Tim. 4:10 For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, Who Is The Savior Of All Men, specially of those that believe.

Wiersbe: The title "Savior of all men" does not imply that everybody will be saved (universalism), or that God saves people in spite of themselves; for Paul added "specially of those that believe." It is faith that saves. [Eph. 2:8-10]. Since God "will have all men to be saved" [I Tim. 2:4], and since Christ "gave Himself a ransom for all" [I Tim. 2:6], then any lost sinner can trust Christ and be saved. Christ is "the Savior of all men," so nobody need despair.

Do Calvinists believe that Jesus died for everyone?

Since God's plans are not dependent upon man and certainly cannot be thwarted by man, Jesus must have died for the 'elect' or 'those whom He has predestined.'

To think that God died for those who would not be saved, according to Calvinist thinkers, would be an affront to God's efficacious will.

II Pet. 2:1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even Denying The Lord That Bought Them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

Calvinist: Christ died for believers, THE CHURCH. Therefore, He must not have died for all.

Luke 2:10 And the angel said unto them,

Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

Question: Is it "good news" to say that atonement has been limited to "the elect?"

Truth: No one perishes due to a lack of God's love or provision.

D. The Atonement of Jesus Christ

Belief: The penal substitution of Christ is the only available and effective sacrifice for the sins of every person.

Calvin Theology: This atonement results in salvation without a person's free response of repentance and faith. God imposes or withholds this atonement without respect to an act of the person's free will. Christ died only for the sins of those who will be saved.

E. God's Grace Is Available To All.

Ps. 145:9 The Lord is good to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works.

Titus 2:11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people, [NASB]

Rom. 11:32 For God has consigned all people to disobedience so that He may show mercy to them all.

John 12:32 And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

Belief: Grace is God's generous decision to provide salvation for any person by taking all of the initiative in providing atonement, in freely offering the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit, and in uniting the believer to Christ through the Holy Spirit by faith.

Calvinist Theology: Grace negates the necessity of a free response of faith or that it cannot be resisted.

F. God gives light to every man.

We know that not all will accept this invitation, but all will have the opportunity to accept it.

John 1:9 That was the true Light, which lights every man that cometh into the world.

I John 2:2 And He is the propitiation for our sins:

and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

Propitiation 2434. hilasmos = to cover, to atone; In the New Testament, it is used to describe the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which satisfies the righteous demands of God's justice and turns away His wrath from sinners. It emphasizes the reconciliation between God and humanity through Christ's sacrificial death.

Why won't all accept? For the same reason Adam and Eve sinned - because God gave us free will!

Consider: God does not mandate our obedience. He lovingly gave us the ability to choose.

He gave it to us kindly, with one string attached: Accountability!

Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, the judges, the kings, the prophets Jeremiah, Jonah, Daniel, & Amos all taught that mankind as a whole and as individuals make choices that determine their destination. This is summarized by Jesus in his plea to Jerusalem...

Matt. 23:37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

G. God desires for all to be saved. He desires that none perish.

I Timothy 2:3-6 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior;

⁴ Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

⁵ For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

⁶ Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

II Pet. 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness;

but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish,

but that all should come to repentance.

Belief: The Gospel is the good news that God has made a way of salvation through the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ for any person.

This belief aligns with God's desire for every person to be saved.