
Mission 119 Ministries

**DECONSTRUCTING CALVINISM
EPISODE 9: WHAT CORPSE?**

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SERIES GOALS

- **Short, focused lessons**
 - **Explain Calvinism**
 - **Address claims of Calvinism**
 - **Exegetically**
 - **Historical**
 - **Philosophically**
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ARGUMENTS

- **Even the thinnest of arguments are always shrouded in a veneer of evidentiary support**
 - **Avoid dealing with all of the data / evidence**
 - **If the opponent concentrates forces on a particular piece of evidence, instead of defending that evidence, switch battlefields to another “proof text”**
 - **Create a framework for your argument that makes your position obvious**
 - **An argument about what the Bible means must rest on Biblical premises.**
 - **A truth proposition must not only be internally consistent, but it cannot create inconsistencies with the other data / evidence.**
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THE CORPSE METAPHOR

- **This may be the most common refrain of the Calvinist, especially if you start drilling down on the contexts of the “proof texts” and show they don’t say TULIP.**
 - **Eph. 2:1** And you were dead in your trespasses and sins
 - **The verse says you were “dead”, you were a corpse, and what can a corpse do?**
 - **A corpse can do nothing, a corpse cannot comprehend or respond to the gospel message**
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PAUL DID NOT SAY CORPSE

- **As a preliminary matter, Paul COULD have said CORPSE but under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit did not**
 - **The Greek term πῶμα means a dead body or corpse**
 - **Revelation 11:8:** Their dead bodies will lie in the main street...
 - **The word νεκρός used in Eph. 2:1 has a range of meanings that include being physically dead but much more, and these have been largely carried over into English usage [dead party, dead to me].**
 - **Since Paul obviously did not mean they were physically dead, what does “dead” mean in Eph. 2:1?**
 - **Good exegesis does not invent “spiritual” definitions to fit a theological commitment.**
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NT AND NEKROS

- **Romans 7:8** And sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind. For apart from the law sin is dead.
 - **Romans 8:10** Now if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit gives life because of righteousness.
 - **Hebrews 6:1** Therefore, let us leave the elementary teaching about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, faith in God...
 - **Rev. 3:1** "Write to the angel of the church in Sardis: Thus says the one who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars: I know your works; you have a reputation for being alive, but you are dead.
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NT AND NEKROŌ

- **Col. 3:5** Therefore, put to death what belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry.
 - **Hebrews 11:12** Therefore, from one man—in fact, from one as good as dead—came offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky and as innumerable as the grains of sand along the seashore.
 - **Romans 4:19** He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body to be already dead [nekroō] (since he was about a hundred years old) and also the deadness [nekrosis] of Sarah's womb.
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WHAT DEATH IS THIS?

- **Col. 2:13-14** And when you were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he made you alive with him and forgave us all our trespasses. **14** He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it away by nailing it to the cross.
 - **This parallels the Ephesians 2 passage**
 - **Death is changed to life through forgiveness (not resuscitation)**
 - **Here, death is separation from God, and that is why the fix is forgiveness of sins.**
 - **This says NOTHING about capacity to believe.**
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WHAT DEATH IS THIS?

- **Eph. 2:1** And you were dead in your trespasses and sins...**12** At that time you were without Christ, excluded from the citizenship of Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world. **13** But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.
 - **Again, death is changed to life through forgiveness (not resuscitation)**
 - **Again, death is separation from God, and that is why the fix comes through the blood.**
 - **This says NOTHING about capacity to believe.**
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THE OTHER DATA...

- **Romans 1:24** Therefore God delivered them over in the desires of their hearts to sexual impurity, so that their bodies were degraded among themselves... **26** For this reason God delivered them over to disgraceful passions... **28** And because they did not think it worthwhile to acknowledge God, God delivered them over to a corrupt mind so that they do what is not right.
 - **This progression belies the corpse metaphor.**
 - **Can you kill a corpse? Can you make a corpse even less responsive or less capable?**
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THE OTHER DATA...

- **Romans 2:14** So, when Gentiles, who do not by nature have the law, do what the law demands, they are a law to themselves even though they do not have the law. **15** They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts. Their consciences confirm this. Their competing thoughts either accuse or even excuse them...
 - **Here Paul deals with the unsaved Gentile and says that person is without excuse.**
 - **Even though the Gentile did not have the law, some aspect of God's moral law is in their hearts and exercised through the conscience.**
 - **Does a corpse have a conscience? Law in the heart?**
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THE OTHER DATA...

- **Romans 9:17** For the Scripture tells Pharaoh, **I raised you up for this reason so that I may display my power in you and that my name may be proclaimed in the whole earth. 18** So then, he has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy and he hardens whom he wants to harden.
 - **Pharaoh is a corpse...so why did God need to harden him?**
 - **Remember the Pharaoh in Gen. 41:8** When morning came, [in his spirit, Heb. ruah] he was troubled, so he summoned all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him.
 - **He was also a corpse but was troubled in his spirit (cf. Dan. 2:1)**
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WHAT CAN A CORPSE DO?

- **Luke 16:19** “There was a rich man who would dress in purple and fine linen, feasting lavishly every day. **20** But a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, was lying at his gate. **21** He longed to be filled with what fell from the rich man’s table, but instead the dogs would come and lick his sores. **22** One day the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. **23** And being in torment in Hades, he looked up and saw Abraham a long way off, with Lazarus at his side. **24** ‘Father Abraham!’ he called out, ‘Have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this flame!’
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WHAT CAN A CORPSE DO?

- **Luke 16:25** “ ‘Son,’ Abraham said, ‘remember that during your life you received your good things, just as Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here, while you are in agony. **26** Besides all this, a great chasm has been fixed between us and you, so that those who want to pass over from here to you cannot; neither can those from there cross over to us.’ **27** “ ‘Father,’ he said, ‘then I beg you to send him to my father’s house—**28** because I have five brothers—to warn them, so that they won’t also come to this place of torment.’ **29** “But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.’ **30** “ ‘No, father Abraham,’ he said. ‘But if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’”
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WHAT CAN A CORPSE DO?

- **Luke 16:3** “But he told him, ‘If they don’t listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.’ ”
- The corpse now believes but it is too late, so he has a spiritual conversation with Abraham asking for help for this brothers so they do not also end up in torment.



FINAL REMARKS

- I am not arguing that a lost person has the capacity to fully comprehend the Bible (passages like 1 Cor. 3:1-3 make clear the many believers cannot do that)
 - What I am saying is that the corpse metaphor a fiction found nowhere in Scripture
 - And that retreating to a metaphor not supported by the Text is a tacit admission of a lack of confidence that the Text supports the TULIP, otherwise the metaphor is unnecessary
 - The Bible repeatedly refutes the metaphor even in Paul's own writings
 - No body can save themselves. But "whosoever" can respond to the truth of the Gospel and receive God's free gift of eternal life and forgiveness of sins so that they are now alive in Christ.
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