

CFBC Doctrines of Grace- Total Inability Part 2 Evangelism in a Realm of Total Inability

Background...Spurgeon on Total Inability (Excerpts from his sermon on John 6:44)

I shall endeavor this morning, First of all, to notice man's inability, wherein it consists. Secondly, the Father's drawings—what these are, and how they are exerted upon the soul. And then I shall conclude by noticing a sweet consolation which may be derived from this seemingly barren and terrible text.

I. First, then, MAN'S INABILITY. The text says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him." Wherein does this inability lie?

First, it does not lie in any physical defect. If in coming to Christ, moving the body or walking with the feet should be of any assistance, certainly man has all physical power to come to Christ in that sense...There is no lack of physical power in coming to Christ. All that can be wanted with regard to the bodily strength man most assuredly has, and any part of salvation which consists in that is totally and entirely in the power of man without any assistance from the Spirit of God.

Nor, again, does this inability lie in any mental lack. I can believe this Bible to be true just as easily as I can believe any other book to be true. So far as believing on Christ is an act of the mind, I am just as able to believe on Christ as I am able to believe on anybody else. Let his statement be but true, it is idle to tell me I cannot believe it. I can believe the statement that Christ makes as well as I can believe the statement of any other person.

There is no deficiency of faculty in the mind. It is as capable of appreciating as a mere mental act the guilt of sin, as it is of appreciating the guilt of assassination. It is just as possible for me to exercise the mental idea of seeking God, as it is to exercise the thought of ambition. I have all the mental strength and power that can possibly be needed, so far as mental power is needed in salvation at all. **Nay, there is not any man so ignorant that he can plead a lack of intellect as an excuse for rejecting the Gospel. The defect, then, does not lie either in the body, or, what we are bound to call, speaking theologically, the mind. It is not any lack or deficiency there, although it is the vitiation of the mind, the corruption or the ruin of it, which, after all, is the very essence of man's inability.**

Permit me to show you wherein this inability of man really does lie. It lies deep in his nature.

Through the fall, and through our own sin, the nature of man has become so debased, and depraved, and corrupt, that it is impossible for him to come to Christ without the assistance of God the Holy Spirit...

Now, the reason why man cannot come to Christ, is not because he cannot come, so far as his body or his mere power of mind is concerned, but because his nature is so corrupt that he has neither the will nor the power to come to Christ unless drawn by the Spirit.

...Coming to Christ is so obnoxious to human nature that, although, so far as physical and mental forces are concerned, (and these have but a very narrow sphere in salvation), men could come if they would; ***it is strictly correct to say that they cannot and will not unless the Father who has sent Christ does draw them. Let us enter a little more deeply into the subject, and try to show you wherein this inability of man consists in its more minute particulars.***

1. ***First, it lies in the obstinacy of the human will. "Oh!" says the Arminian, "men may be saved if they will." We reply, "My dear sir, we all believe that, but it is just the if they will that is the difficulty. We assert that no man will come to Christ unless he be drawn, nay, we do not assert it, but Christ Himself declares it—"You will not come unto me that you might have life," and as long as that, 'you will not come' stands on record in Holy Scripture, we shall not be brought to believe in any doctrine of the freedom of the human will."***

It is strange how people, when talking about free will, talk of things which they do not at all understand. "Now," says one, "I believe men can be saved if they will." My dear sir, that is not the question at all. The question is, are men ever found naturally willing to submit to the humbling terms of the Gospel of Christ? We declare, upon Scriptural authority, that the human will is so desperately set on mischief, so depraved, and so inclined to everything that is evil, and so disinclined to everything that is good, that without the powerful, supernatural, irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit, no human will will ever be constrained towards Christ. You reply, that men sometimes are willing, without the help of the Holy Spirit. I answer—did you ever meet with any person who was? Scores and hundreds, nay, thousands of Christians have I conversed with, of different opinions, young and old, but it has never been my lot to meet with one who could affirm that he came to Christ of himself, without being drawn.

The universal confession of all true believers is this—"I know that unless Jesus Christ had sought me when a stranger wandering from the fold of God, I would to this very hour have been wandering far from Him, at a distance from Him, and loving that distance well." With common consent, all believers affirm the truth, that men will not come to Christ till the Father who has sent Christ draws them.

2. Again, not only is the will obstinate, but the understanding is darkened. Of that we have abundant Scriptural proof. I am not now making mere assertions, but stating doctrines authoritatively taught in the Holy Scriptures and known in the conscience of every Christian man—that the understanding of man is so dark, that he cannot by any means understand the things of God until his understanding has been opened. Man is by nature blind within. The cross of Christ, so laden with glories, and glittering with attractions, never attracts him, because he is blind and cannot see its beauties... Or, to return to the verse which we so specially marked in our reading, “The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned,” and **inasmuch as he is a natural man, it is not in his power to discern the things of God.** “Well,” says one, “I think I have arrived at a very tolerable judgment in matters of theology. I think I understand almost every point.” True, that you may do in the letter of it, but in the spirit of it, in the true reception thereof into the soul, and in the actual understanding of it, it is impossible for you to have attained, unless you have been drawn by the Spirit. **For as long as that Scripture stands true, that carnal men cannot receive spiritual things, it must be true that you have not received them, unless you have been renewed and made a spiritual man in Christ Jesus. The will, then, and the understanding, are two great doors, both blocked up against our coming to Christ, and until these are opened by the sweet influences of the Divine Spirit, they must be forever closed to anything like coming to Christ.**

3. Again, the affections, which constitute a very great part of man, are depraved. Man, as he is, before he receives the grace of God, loves anything and everything but spiritual things. If you want proof of this, look around you. There needs no monument to the depravity of the human affections. Cast your eyes everywhere—there is not a street, nor a house, nay, nor a heart, which does not bear upon it sad evidence of this dreadful truth. Why is it that men are not found on the Sabbath day universally flocking to the house of God? Why are we not more constantly found reading our Bibles? How is it that prayer is a duty almost universally neglected? Why is it that Christ Jesus is so little beloved? Why are even His professed followers so cold in their affections to Him? Whence arise these things? Assuredly, dear brethren, we can trace them to no other source than this, the corruption and vitiation of the affections. **We love that which we ought to hate and we hate that which we ought to love. It is but human nature, fallen human nature, that man should love this present life better than the life to come.**

It is but the effect of the fall, that man should love sin better than righteousness, and the ways of this world better than the ways of God. And again, we repeat it, until these affections are renewed, and turned into a fresh channel by the gracious drawings of the Father, it is not possible for any man to love the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. **Yet once more—conscience, too, has been overpowered by the fall. I believe there is no more egregious mistake made by divines, than when they tell people that conscience is the vicegerent of God within the soul and that it is one of those powers which retains its ancient dignity, and stands erect amidst the fall of its compeers. My brethren, when man fell in the garden, manhood fell entirely. There was not one single pillar in the temple of manhood that stood erect. It is true, conscience was not destroyed. The pillar was not shattered, it fell, and it fell in one piece, and there it lies along, the mightiest remnant of God’s once perfect work in man. But, that conscience is fallen, I am sure. Look at men. Who among them is the possessor of a “good conscience toward God,” but the regenerated man?** Do you imagine that if men’s consciences always spoke loudly and clearly to them, they would live in the daily commission of acts, which are as opposed to the right as darkness to light? **No, beloved, conscience can tell me that I am a sinner, but conscience cannot make me feel that I am one. Conscience may tell me that such-and-such a thing is wrong, but how wrong it is, conscience itself does not know. Did any man’s conscience, unenlightened by the Spirit, ever tell him that his sins deserved damnation? Or if conscience did do that, did it ever lead any man to feel an abhorrence of sin as sin? In fact, did conscience ever bring a man to such a self-renunciation, that he did totally abhor himself and all his works and come to Christ? No, conscience, although it is not dead, is ruined, its power is impaired,** it has not that clearness of eye and that strength of hand, and that thunder of voice, which it had before the fall, but has ceased to a great degree, to exert its supremacy in the town of Mansoul. **Then, beloved, it becomes necessary for this very reason, because conscience is depraved, that the Holy Spirit should step in, to show us our need of a Savior, and draw us to the Lord Jesus Christ.** “Still,” says one, “as far as you have hitherto gone, it appears to me that you consider that the reason why men do not come to Christ is that they will not, rather than they cannot.” True, most true. I believe the greatest reason of man’s inability is the obstinacy of his will. That once overcome, I think the great stone is rolled away from the sepulcher, and the hardest part of the battle is already won.

But allow me to go a little further. My text does not say, “No man will come,” but it says, “No man can come.” Now, many interpreters believe that the “can” here, is but a strong expression conveying no more meaning than the word will. I feel assured that this is not correct. **There is in man, not only unwillingness to be saved, but there is a spiritual powerlessness to come to Christ...**

...Now, a sinner is said to be dead in trespasses and sins. Will you affirm that death implies nothing more than the absence of a will? Surely a corpse is quite as unable as unwilling. Or again, do not all men see that there is a distinction between will and power? Might not that corpse be sufficiently quickened to get a will, and yet be so powerless that it could not lift as much as its hand or foot?

Have we never seen cases in which persons have been just sufficiently re-animated to give evidence of life, and have yet been so near death that they could not have performed the slightest action? Is there not a clear difference between the giving of the will and the giving of power? It is quite certain, however, that where the will is given, the power will follow. ***Make a man willing, and he shall be made powerful, for when God gives the will, He does not tantalize man by giving him to wish for that which he is unable to do, nevertheless He makes such a division between the will and the power, that it shall be seen that both things are quite distinct gifts of the Lord God.***

Then I must ask one more question, if all that were needed to make a man willing, do you not at once degrade the Holy Spirit? Are we not in the habit of giving all the glory of salvation wrought in us to God the Spirit? But now, if all that God the Spirit does for me is to make me willing to do these things for myself, am I not in a great measure a sharer with the Holy Spirit in the glory? And may I not boldly stand up and say, "It is true the Spirit gave me the will to do it, but still I did it myself, and therein will I glory, for if I did these things myself without assistance from on high, I will not cast my crown at His feet, it is my own crown, I earned it, and I will keep it." Inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is evermore in Scripture set forth as the person who works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure, we hold it to be a legitimate inference that He must do something more for us than the mere making of us willing, and that therefore there must be another thing besides want of will in a sinner—there must be absolute and actual want of power....

<https://www.spurgeongems.org/tulip-1.pdf>

John Calvin on the Role of Apologetics...

Cornelius Van Til wrote that "presupposition is the best proof." I do agree with the fact that presupposition is a proof, an evidence to be sure. But it cannot be regarded as the best. John Calvin got it right when he wrote:

Yet, they who strive to build up firm faith in Scripture through disputation are doing things backwards. For my part, although I do not excel either in great dexterity or eloquence, if I were struggling against the most crafty sort of despisers of God, who seek to appear shrewd and witty in disparaging Scripture, I am confident it would not be difficult for me to silence their clamorous voices. And if it were a useful labor to refute their cavils, I would with no great trouble shatter the boasts they mutter in their lurking places. But even if anyone clears God's Sacred Word from man's evil speaking, he will not at once imprint upon the certainty which piety requires. Since for unbelieving men religion seems to stand by opinion alone, they, in order not to believe anything foolishly or lightly, both wish and demand rational proof that Moses and the prophets spoke divinely. But I reply ***the testimony of the Spirit is more excellent than all reason.***

From The Role and Use of Evidence in Reformed Presuppositional Apologetics by by Alejandro Moreno Morrison at ThirdMill.org

Excerpts...Total Inability and Efficacious Grace in the Writings of R. A. Finlayson (Banner of Truth)

Author Brentnall, John M. Date August 9, 2013

Judged by the unqualified appeals in much modern 'evangelism' to the natural man's unaided reason, emotions and will, one might conclude that 'modern man' is able to respond positively, and that he has no need of God's efficacious grace. That such presumption is wholly groundless was the firm conviction of the late R. A. Finlayson, Professor of Systematic Theology in the old Free Church of Scotland College in Edinburgh. In this article we shall summarize his teaching on man's total inability and God's efficacious grace.

Man's Total Inability

...Whenever man is confronted with the claims of God, he reacts as one both unable and unwilling to comply. 'God approaches the sinner when he is dead in trespasses and sins.' What, then, can he do? 'Can he do anything at all?' Clearly, the answer is 'No'! As fallen, man exists in the state of 'living death,' the elements of which leave him without the least 'power to heed God's wooing call.' True, he was originally 'endowed with free will,' but by sinning he 'has put his will into the power of another, and it is now in bondage.' Whatever freedom it retains is freedom 'only to choose the evil and to refuse the good; certainly it is incapable of exercising its freedom to turn to God.' It resembles a car 'whose engine is fixed in reverse gear,' so that whenever God approaches him, man chooses only to depart further and further from him. His inability to return to God is both wilful and total.

God's Efficacious Grace

'Thus it is,' Finlayson continues, 'that every movement God-wards is of grace from first to last.' God takes the initiative and maintains that initiative in all his saving dealings with the elect. By his 'prevenient grace' he 'brought Zacchaeus into the sycamore tree to await the Saviour . . . Lydia to the riverside where she was to hear of the Saviour and have her heart opened,' and 'Onesimus to Rome to meet with the messenger of the cross that he might be free for ever.'

By his regenerating grace he creates 'a God-ward response to the divine call,' thereby enacting Ezekiel's 'divine surgery' of removing the heart of stone and replacing it with a heart of flesh (Ezek. 11:19) In this 'first decisive and effective act of saving grace . . . the soul is endowed with spiritual life from God.

The necessity for such a work of creative power is evident from man's total inability to regenerate himself.

The sin that has ‘invaded the whole of man’s nature,’ leaving no part immune from its paralyzing power, can be countered only by a superior ‘new governing principle that affects the entire man. This is tantamount to a new creation, for there is implanted a new life . . . animated by’ the very ‘life of God.’

This mysterious act ‘takes place instantaneously in the hidden depths of the soul,’ so that the new-born person himself ‘is not actually conscious of what has happened.’ How long this new life remains dormant we cannot say. John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb. Others are changed later in life, in God’s appointed time. In their case, ‘it is at that moment that the soul hears the call of God and responds to it,’ just as the new-born infant responds to its mother’s voice.

‘The response is made by faith, the active principle of the new life.’ Before efficacious grace made its inroads into the heart, ‘there was no ear to hear, no eye to see, no hand to accept.’ But when the regenerate soul believes on Christ crucified, placed before his mind’s eye in the gospel, it becomes conscious of having passed from death to life. This is the point that marks ‘the beginning of our Christian state.’

God’s efficacious grace now moves the new-born soul into conversion. This is ‘the outer expression of the inner life,’ the ‘act of God by which he causes the regenerate soul, in conscious life, to turn to him in new obedience.’ Conversion is therefore not a process, but a decisive, unrepeatable act. It is the God-given power to will and do his good pleasure...

Conclusion

Although ‘conversion . . . is not an end in itself, as we so often seem to think,’ but is merely the commencement of an entire life devoted to God in which grace is constantly operative, it is over the great change – from unregeneracy through regeneracy to conversion – that confusion reigns in so many preachers and churches today. When will self-styled ‘evangelists’ learn that man really is unable to convert himself to God, and that he needs God’s efficacious grace to perform the work in him? Until they learn this, they will continue to rob God of the glory of his grace, and produce only spurious conversions that will leave their victims lost for eternity.

And when will their hearers learn that they can no more contribute to their salvation than a corpse lying in a grave can raise itself from death at the bidding of one standing on the turf above it? Oh, how essential is our need to discover that if we are to be saved at all, it will be by God’s efficacious grace alone! Salvation is of the Lord, from its inception to its consummation. Help, Lord, for vain is the help of man! <https://banneroftruth.org/us/resources/articles/2013/total-inability-and-efficacious-grace-in-the-writings-of-r-a-finlayson/>

The Sovereignty of God and Evangelism

Paul Helm

Many people struggle with God's sovereignty in election because they believe it excludes the activity of evangelism. If people are eternally elected or not, they ask, what good will preaching do? What difference will it make? However, as Scripture teaches, God's sovereignty in election and the activity of evangelism are not enemies but friends. Evangelism is rooted in election, and while man may plant and water the seed of the gospel, God brings the growth.

Means and Ends

The sovereignty of God in salvation is most clearly and vividly seen in Scripture's teaching regarding election. Election is "unconditional," that is, God's choice is not based on anything good or meritorious in the one chosen, something deserving that inclines or biases God in His choice. Instead, God's choice is made solely on the basis of His good pleasure.

It may seem that such a choice makes any human activity unnecessary. How could any creature affect anything? But consider this simple example: Suppose that God eternally wills that you receive a letter from me. For this to occur, other things must happen first. Obviously, I must write the letter and then use some means or other to get the letter to you. These activities — the writing and the sending of the letter — do not take place apart from the will and purpose of God Almighty but as part of His will and purpose. They are means to the end of you receiving a letter from me.

What does this show? It shows that ***in the divine purposes, means and ends are connected. Perhaps in electing people "in Christ," God could have immediately glorified them. But according to Scripture, He has not chosen to do this. Instead, He uses means. He brings the good news of salvation to our attention. How does He do that? He could presumably have done this by imparting the news immediately to a person's mind in a dream or by a "whisper." But, in fact, He does it by the twofold agency of "Word" and "Spirit."***

Scripture has various different ways of making this clear. In the Gospels, there is the parable of the sower: "Behold, a sower went out to sow." The seed is the Word; the various kinds of soil are different kinds of hearts. "As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit" (Matt. 13:23). So, there is seed sown, and there is fruit, according to the type of soil. And this represents hearing the Word, understanding it, and being fruitful. No one can "understand" the Word without it first being "sown."

Here is a second example. Let us consider the words of the Great Commission found at the end of Matthew's gospel: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19– 20). Jesus instructs or commands His eleven disciples to "make disciples." And how are they to do that? By "teaching them [people from all nations] to observe all that I have commanded you." Discipleship comes by being taught what Christ commanded His first disciples.

Paul uses very similar language to that of Christ in the parable of the sower as he describes his ministry, both its importance and its limitations, when he writes, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth" (1 Cor. 3:6). What is he saying here? That he sowed the seed and his fellow preacher Apollos came along and, by what he taught, "watered" what Paul had sown. But who made it grow? Only God, by His Spirit, gave life — understanding, faith, and obedience — to those who became believers at Corinth.

Similarly, other things that Paul writes echo the teaching of Jesus' Great Commission. For example, in Romans 10 Paul discusses the relation between calling upon Christ, belief in Him, and preaching the need to call on the Savior:

How, then, can [people] call on the one they have not believed in? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard. And how are they to hear without someone preaching. And how are they to preach unless they are sent? (Rom. 10:14–15)

Paul's questions answer themselves: no believing, no calling; no hearing, no believing; no preaching, no hearing; no sending, no preaching.

All these passages have one thing in common. They reveal the connection, a connection set up in the wisdom of God, between communicating the gospel through preaching — sowing, teaching, calling, and watering — and belief — faith and calling on the Lord, conversion to Christ in its various aspects. So, ***under ordinary circumstances, preaching and teaching are the indispensable means of the Lord bringing men and women to faith in Christ. More than such preaching is needed, of course. God Himself must prepare the heart, and by His Spirit He alone can "give the increase." But He ordinarily does this "by the Word" proclaimed by ministers of the gospel.***

Election

There is one passage above all others in the Bible that clearly sets forth the scope of this interplay of means and ends, from election on the one hand to glorification on the other. In Romans 8, Paul teaches that God's ultimate purpose for His people is their conformity to the image of His Son. How are we to understand this?

Paul's answer is to first take the reader back to ***“those who are called according to his purpose” (v. 28). These, he says, are foreknown by God. That is, He knows before they are born who these individuals are, for He has chosen them.*** And He predestines them to be conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ (v. 29). And what does this predestining involve?

“And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified” (v. 30). In a few words, the Apostle takes the reader from eternity to eternity. To stress the certainty and completeness of this process, Paul uses the past tense, as if all of the saints were already enjoying glorification. But for our purposes, it is the two critical and important words called and justified that need highlighting. They underline the need for the elect to be glorified by being brought by the Spirit out of spiritual darkness — the new birth — and their need for change in status, as their sins are pardoned and Christ's righteousness is reckoned to them.

When do these changes, regeneration and justification, occur? The answer is during the earthly lives of men and women. By what means? By the communication and presentation of the gospel through preaching and teaching. Moreover, these changes occur by the sovereign agency of God the Holy Spirit, who opens the eyes for understanding, renews the will, grants repentance and the faith that justifies, and enables the growth of Christian virtue, that is, sanctification.

The View from the Other Side

So, preaching is ordinarily an indispensable means for calling out God's elect. In a parallel fashion, listening to and making an effort to understand gospel preaching is indispensable. This is not a bit of good reasoning: “Either I am elect or I am not. Either way, there's no point in listening to good preaching. For if I am elected, God will bring me to heaven somehow. And if I am not, I can find better ways of spending my time than in going to church.” Jesus, for example, emphasized the importance of listening carefully: “He who has ears, let him hear (Matt. 13:43). What does Jesus mean? That we should listen intently, with the aim of gaining “understanding.” After His resurrection, Jesus spent time opening the minds of the disciples to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45).

If we are puzzled and perplexed, we should continue to search the Scriptures for all we are worth (for Scripture interprets Scripture) and to pray to Jesus for understanding. Paul recounts how the Thessalonian Christians came to faith in Christ as follows: “When you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God” (1 Thess. 2:13).

The reasoning that says, “Either I am elect or not; either way it is pointless to attend to the Word of God,” makes the very same mistake as does the belief that God's eternal election makes preaching unnecessary.

We separate the end of election — renewal in the image of Christ — from those means of communicating the gospel through preaching and the other ways God has ordained. It divides what God has, in fact, united. “What God has joined together, let no man put asunder.” <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/the-sovereignty-of-god-and-evangelism>

R C Sproul on “Why the Apologist Must Also Play Offense”

Christianity on the Defense

With each passing generation, wherever Christianity flourishes, so too do distortion, misrepresentation, overemphasis, and outright malicious deceit. The church’s opponents will continue to accuse her of doing evil (this is assumed in 1 Peter 3:16), and so the Christian apologist assumes a defensive posture in order to repel false accusations whenever they come.

The Apologist’s Task: Proof and Persuasion

Apologetics, however, does not just entail defense. It also involves offense, the positive task of constructing a case for Christianity that shows itself to be applicable to every culture, as well as being the only (and therefore the best) alternative to the world’s philosophical and theological systems of thought. In other words, apologetics can be used to show that Christianity is true and that all non-Christian worldviews are false.

Not all Christians agree on where to start this task. But we do all agree on this: non-Christian thinking, according to Scripture, is “folly” (Ps. 14:1; 1 Cor. 1:18–2:16; 3:18-23).

The skeptic at this point might respond, “Prove it,” which is a good thing, because proof is actually another facet of the apologetic task. Sadly, in our day many Christians argue that we ought not to be engaged in attempts to “prove” the truth claims of Christianity, that faith and proof are incompatible. While it is true that Reformed theologians generally believe that human nature is radically corrupt (which is a scriptural viewpoint: see 1 Kings 8:46; Rom. 3:9-23; 7:18; 1 John 1:8-10; cf. John 6:44; Rom. 8:7-8), they wrongly assume that, since in our corrupt nature we are unable to respond positively to the gospel, this spiritual inability renders the apologetic task useless. If objective proof cannot persuade a person to respond to Christ without the intervention of the Holy Spirit, then why bother trying to give sound arguments for Christianity?

Before we answer this objection, let us remember Peter’s words, “Yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame” (1 Pet. 3:16).

The apostle clearly expects that one outcome of apologetics is that the enemies of Christ are put to shame. This is reminiscent of the great Genevan reformer John Calvin (1509–1564), who wrote in his Institutes regarding the proof of the authenticity of biblical prophecies, “If godly men take these things to heart, they will be abundantly equipped to restrain the barking of ungodly men; for this is proof too clear to be open to any subtle objections.”

If anyone believed that the total inability of man required the Holy Spirit to convert a soul, it was Calvin. Likewise, if anyone believed in the total inability of apologetics to convert a soul, it was Calvin. He, of course, did not abandon the apologetic task but still used evidence and argument to prove matters of faith—not to convert the hearts of the ungodly, but to “stop their obstreperous mouths.” This is a large part of the task of the Christian apologist: to prove the Christian worldview, and to rely on God to cause the acquiescence of the unbelieving heart to the soundness of biblical doctrine. ***The church is up against not mere ignorance but biased enmity (Rom. 8:7). Only the Spirit can overcome this enmity, but the Spirit never asks people to believe what is absurd or irrational. Calvin noted the distinction between proof and persuasion. Proof is objective and persuasion is subjective. People who are hostile to certain ideas may have those ideas proven to them, but in their bias they refuse to be persuaded—even by the soundest of arguments.***

Apologetics, for this reason, is not merely about winning an argument. It is about winning souls. The old aphorism rings true: “People convinced against their will hold the same opinions still.” That is why, for example, if a Christian were to “win” an intellectual debate with a non-Christian, the victory celebration may never take place. The non-Christian might concede defeat, though usually not until his head hits his pillow at the end of the day...***On the one hand, as Calvin said, the unbridled barking of the ungodly may be restrained; and on the other, the intellectual victory provides assurance and protection to the young Christian who is not yet able to repel the bombardment of criticism from scholars and skeptics. It serves as a confirmation of the Christian’s faith.***

The Christian bothers to engage in apologetics because, quite simply, how will the nonbeliever hear the truth of Christ Jesus “without someone preaching?” (Rom. 10:14c).....

Notes:

1. John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 20 of The Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), I.8.8 (88).
2. John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, ed. Henry Beveridge, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1962), I.7.4 (71).

This article is adapted from *Defending Your Faith: An Introduction to Apologetics* by R. C. Sproul.

An excerpt from J. I. Packer's classic, *Evangelism & the Sovereignty of God* (InterVarsity Press, 1961)...

- **The belief that God is sovereign in grace does not affect the *necessity* of evangelism.** Whatever we may believe about election, the fact remains that evangelism is necessary, because no man can be saved without the gospel. . . . They must be told of Christ before they can trust Him, and they must trust Him before they can be saved by Him. Salvation depends on faith, and faith on knowing the gospel. God's way of saving sinners is to bring them to faith through bringing them into contact with the gospel. In God's ordering of things, therefore, evangelism is a necessity if anyone is to be saved at all. . . .
- **The belief that God is sovereign in grace does not affect the *urgency* of evangelism.** . . . The world is full of people who are unaware that they stand under the wrath of God: is it not similarly a matter of urgency that we should go to them, and try to arouse them, and show them the way of escape? . . . The non-elect in this world are faceless men as far as we are concerned. We know that they exist, but we do not and cannot know who they are, and it is as futile as it is impious for us to try and guess. . . . Our calling as Christians is not to love God's elect, and them only, but to love our neighbour, irrespective of whether he is elect or not.
- **The belief that God is sovereign in grace does not affect the *genuineness* of the gospel invitations, or the *truth* of the gospel promises.** . . . The fact remains that God in the gospel really does offer Christ and promise justification and life to 'whosoever will'. '*Whosoever* shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.' As God commands all men everywhere to repent, so God invites all men everywhere to come to Christ and find mercy. . . .

The fact that the gospel invitation is free and unlimited—'*sinners* Jesus will receive'—'*come and welcome* to Jesus Christ'—is the glory of the gospel as a revelation of divine grace. . . . Some fear that a doctrine of eternal election and reprobation involves the possibility that Christ will not receive some of those who desire to receive Him, because they are not elect. The 'comfortable words' of the gospel promises, however, absolutely exclude this possibility. As our Lord elsewhere affirmed, in emphatic and categorical terms: 'Him that cometh to me I will *in no wise* cast out.' . . .

- **The belief that God is sovereign in grace does not affect the *responsibility* of the sinner for his reaction to the gospel.** . . . A man who rejects Christ thereby becomes the cause of his own condemnation. . . . The unbeliever was really offered life in the gospel, and could have had it if he would; he, and no-one but he, is responsible for the fact that he rejected it, and must now endure the consequences of rejecting it. . . . The Bible never says that sinners miss heaven because they are not elect, but because they "neglect the great salvation", and because they will not repent and believe.

Spurgeon Quotes on Evangelism...

Let each one of us, if we have done nothing for Christ, begin to do something now. The distribution of tracts is the first thing.

When preaching and private talk are not available, you need to have a tract ready....Get good striking tracts, or none at all. But a touching gospel tract may be the seed of eternal life. Therefore, do not go out without your tracts.

Do you want arguments for soul winning? Look up to Heaven, and ask yourself how sinners can ever reach those harps of gold and learn their everlasting song, unless they have someone to tell them of Jesus, who is mighty to save. But the best argument of all is to be found in the wounds of Jesus. You want to honor Him, you desire to put many crowns upon His head, and this you can best do by winning souls for Him. These are the spoils that He covets, these are the trophies for which He fights, these are the jewels that shall be His best adornment.

If there be any one point in which the Christian church ought to keep its fervor at a white heat, it is concerning missions. If there be anything about which we cannot tolerate lukewarmness, it is the matter of sending the gospel to a dying world.

If sinners will be damned, at least let them leap to Hell over our bodies. And if they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees, imploring them to stay. If Hell must be filled, at least let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go there unwarned and unprayed for.

We are not called to proclaim philosophy and metaphysics, but the simple gospel. Man's fall, his need of a new birth, forgiveness through atonement, and salvation as the result of faith, these are our battle-ax and weapons of war.

Appendix...Excerpt from "The Role and Use of Evidence in Reformed Presuppositional Apologetics" by by Alejandro Moreno Morrison at ThirdMill.org

Reformed presuppositional apologetics is characterized by its contention that a Christian's assured belief in the core of the Christian faith does not depend on evidence.

Whether or not he is aware of it, whether he is outspoken or reserved about it, and moreover, whether or not he wills it that way, every true Christian presenting and defending the Christian message shares with his fellow believers the same starting point.

Whatever doorway God has used to bring each Christian to a personal and saving relationship with him, the believer's knowledge and certainty of the core of his Christian beliefs depends not on the efficacy of the method, technique or arguments that triggered or accompany his believing, but on the internal, efficacious and irresistible witness of the Holy Spirit.

To be precise, we need to use the passive voice. It is not the case that the Christian is sure that Christianity is true, in the sense that he is the subject bringing about such certainty as a result of his action (i. e. his having faith or believing). Rather, the Christian is enlightened and assured of that truth by God. Certainty is not something that the autonomous fallen creature can bring about. This often leads nonbelievers into the path of skepticism - which is the most proper and sound conclusion for man when he foolishly attempts to be autonomous. In contrast, the Christian has given up the arrogant pretension of being the supreme judge, the ultimate standard of what is rational and true, and has received humbly the certainty or assurance which God grants and of which man is incapable on his own.

The regenerated believer does not only know that Christianity is true (and in a qualitatively superior way than that in which even non-Christians know it), but he is also assured of it. The Christian's assurance flows from the testimony of the Holy Spirit. It is not only that such testimony comes from such a reliable, utterly trustworthy source that we ought to trust it and that we cannot reasonably dismiss it. It is also that such assurance is the personal activity of an almighty God, who in giving his testimony is also dynamically involved in transforming the individual, reversing the noetic effects of sin in this fundamental area of our fallen beings so that his testimony is efficacious and irresistible. It is not just that the Christian cannot disbelieve without doing violence to the reality he knows to be true. Rather, he cannot possibly not believe. By God's sustaining grace alone, the Christian is able to persevere, because of Christ's finished, efficacious atonement for the Christian and God's manifested sovereign will of adopting us unconditionally as his children forever.

Therefore, even in the darkest night of doubt in the life of a Christian, he is not able to "disbelieve" because his believing (not merely his belief but the continued action or state itself) does not depend on himself but on the ministry of the Holy Spirit. This is why in the middle of the spiritual battle the Christian can cry to his covenant Lord, "Say to my soul, 'I am your salvation'" (Ps 35:3). The fact that the regenerated believer struggles with doubt is evidence of the new life into which he has been ushered by grace through faith. Doubt in spiritual matters is not a foe for the nonbeliever because both are on the same side of the war. Just as faith and obedience to the Lord are marks of the believer, unbelief and disobedience to the Lord are marks of his enemies. Therefore, when doubt and disobedience appear or assault the life of a Christian, it is always as his enemies, and that is what causes distress in him.