

BOOK REVIEW: WHAT IS SAVING FAITH? BY JOHN PIPER

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Reviewed by Jonathan Perreault

Although Piper's book is titled *What Is Saving Faith?*, after reading it I would say that it should instead be titled: *The Poetic Speculations of a Calvinist*. I say this because Piper begins with his theological belief system of Calvinism and then looks for proof-texts to support it. Since the Bible does not teach Calvinism, Piper uses a contrived and complicated set of arguments to twist the Bible to line up with what he already believes. Piper's method of Bible interpretation is not exegetical; he mainly just quotes the Puritan Reformed theologians and other Calvinists. *What Is Saving Faith?* is religious poetry, not exegesis! The thought that came to mind as I read Piper's book is when the Bible says, "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" (Job 38:2), "teaching as doctrines the precepts of men" (Matt. 15:9; Mk. 7:7). It's very revealing (though not surprising) that in the Introduction of his book: on the very first page, in the first few sentences, Piper appeals to "John Calvin" and a handful of other Puritans (Calvinists) before ever mentioning Jesus Christ or the Word of God! Piper even presses the issue by saying: "My perception is that millions of people who say they have saving faith would hear these voices as though they were a foreign language." (p. 12). Yes, and I wonder why? Maybe it's because those voices don't accurately represent what the Bible teaches on the subject!

Although Piper's book is generally very weak biblically and exegetically, there were a few things that I appreciated about it: (1) Piper seems to be honest and forthright. (2) The book is well organized. (3) Piper attempts to answer some Free Grace objections (but not convincingly). (4) Piper's definition of repentance is at times relatively good (although he does embellish it, typical of Reformed theologians), in that he correctly distinguishes between repentance, which he identifies as a change of mind and heart, and the fruit of repentance, which is behavior change (pp. 241-249). (5) Piper presents a non-Calvinistic view of John 3:16 (p. 223). Commenting on John 3:16, Piper says: "This message is valid and this offer is sincere to every person on the planet." Although this statement is true, it is quite baffling that Piper would say this considering his Calvinistic view of the Atonement (he believes in "Limited Atonement"), and also his views on predestination and election. After doing a little research, I found that the way Piper explains it is to say, "the reason this is so is that Christ purchased a full and complete and effective and eternal, infallible salvation for the bride of Christ, and everyone who believes [read: forced to believe] is part of that bride." (Piper, "Isn't Unlimited Atonement More Glorious Than Limited Atonement?" *Desiring God* website.) So in reality it's double-talk: although Piper says John 3:16 is valid for everyone on the planet, it's really only valid for the elect. (6) At times, Piper almost sounds like a Free Grace advocate (pp. 206-207, 220-223). But beware lest he beguile you with his subtlety; he speaks with a forked tongue! For more information see the YouTube video titled: "John Piper Is a Wicked False Teacher". (7) Piper does have several good illustrations in his book (e.g. pp. 17-18, 110).

Unfortunately the weaknesses of Piper's book far outweigh any positive aspects of it. Piper basically twists the Scriptures to conform to his Calvinistic presuppositions regarding saving

faith, and if I were to give even a cursory response to each and every instance where Piper engages in this, my review would quite possibly be longer than the book itself! So in the interest of time, I will simply highlight some key examples that are representative of his views. A repeated theme throughout Piper's book is that he attempts to read the idea of treasuring Christ into simple gospel invitations, such as when Jesus says, "*I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst*" (John 6:35). Commenting on this, Piper says: "There is treasuring like the satisfying of hunger, because Christ is the bread of life" (p. 19). But how is that treasuring? That's eating! To say that eating is "treasuring" is to write John's Gospel, not interpret it. Piper is reading too much of his preconceived theology into the text. That's eisegesis (reading one's own theology *into* the biblical text), not exegesis (getting one's theology *out of* the text). Piper goes on to say, "There is treasuring like the pleasure of quenched thirst, because Christ is the fountain of living water (John 4:10-11)." Piper concludes by saying, "So it is in the way Christ is received by saving faith" (p. 19). But notice that in both examples, wouldn't the supposed "treasuring" be the *result* (not the means) of salvation? For hunger is not satisfied until *after* eating, and thirst is not quenched until *after* drinking. The eating and drinking correlate to saving faith; the satisfaction and quenching are the result of it. Piper is conflating the result (what he calls "treasuring Christ") with the means: faith in Christ. Just to be clear, I'm not even saying that I agree that "treasuring Christ" is the result of salvation (although I would say it could be); I'm just pointing out that Piper's reasoning is flawed. Amazingly, Piper actually goes on to admit that satisfaction and joy are the effects, not the means, of believing! Concerning this Piper says: "Believing is the heart's coming to Jesus in such a way that the soul finds the end of its quest for satisfaction. I use the word *satisfaction* because, even though Jesus said his aim was their *joy* (John 15:11; 17:13), we don't usually describe the EFFECT of water and bread as joy. We say of a cold drink on a hot day, 'That was satisfying.' That is the analogy Jesus used" (p. 203, emphasis added). I also want to point out that John 15:11 and John 17:13 are clearly in reference to *believers*, but that doesn't stop Piper from front-loading these statements into his gospel to unbelievers.

Examples of this type of Scripture-twisting abound in Piper's book. To cite another example, Piper cleverly twists the meaning of the word "assurance" (Gr. *hupostasis*) in Hebrews 11:1. Piper takes it in the philosophical sense to mean "the same as", or "the substance or reality of". Commenting on Hebrews 11:1 & 12:2, Piper says: "What this means for our question is this: when we embrace a hoped-for joy by faith, that joy becomes a *substantial* element or dimension of our faith, because faith is the *substance* of things hoped for" (p. 170). Piper is trying to prove that "hoped-for joy" is a part of saving faith. To do this, Piper makes a future benefit ("hoped-for joy") part of faith itself! Piper justifies it by saying that "faith is the *substance* of things hoped for." But in this context faith is obviously the means, not the end. Commenting on Hebrews 11:1, the NT Greek scholar Henry Alford affirms: "There is no ground whatever for saying that our Writer [i.e. the writer of Hebrews] makes faith identical with hope. Faith is the ὑπόστασις [assurance] of ἐλπιζόμενα [things hoped for]: Hope *exists* independently of it, but derives its reality, and is ripened into confidence, by its means." So once again, Piper is conflating or confusing the means with the end. Related to this Piper asks the question: "How can the substance of hoped-for joy not itself be joy?" (p. 119). Piper goes on to conclude: "Saving Faith Is the Substance of Hoped-For Joy" (p. 167). But let's ask Piper's question more accurately: "How can the *hupostasis* [assurance] of hoped-for joy [i.e. future joy] not itself be joy?" That's what Piper is

really asking. And my answer is simple: because believing something is different than the thing itself. Having faith in something is different than the thing itself. It's like saying I believe you will give me \$100, but that doesn't mean I have \$100! They are two different things. The same is true if we define *hypostasis* to mean "title deed" (e.g. Robertson, *Word Pictures*). Faith is the title deed for the house, but the title deed is not the house. For example, if you lost the title deed you can apply for a replacement deed; you have not lost the house. You may have lost the title deed but you have not lost the house. And vice versa, if your house burns down you could still have the title deed, assuming of course that you kept it in a safe location.

Another example of how Piper reads his preconceived theological viewpoint into the biblical text is when Piper says that "Jesus told a story to illustrate how it offends him when we fail to treasure him above the things of the world" (p. 20). Piper then quotes Luke 14:16-21, which is a parable that Jesus told about a certain man who gave a great banquet and invited many guests, but none of them wanted come to the banquet. They all made excuses. What's interesting is that nowhere in the parable does Jesus ever say anything about "failing to treasure him above the things of the world"! Jesus never mentions "treasure"! But that doesn't stop Piper from reading it into the text anyway; he retells the parable in his own words: adding in the word "treasure" three times! Piper concludes by saying, "But for those who would not treasure the Master, judgment falls: 'I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet' (Luke 14:24)." But this is a blatant example of eisegesis: reading one's own preconceived theological bias into the text, not getting the meaning out of the text. Piper's motto should be: "I've made up my mind. Don't bother me with the facts." The truth is, what Jesus emphasizes in the parable is the invitation to "come" (vv. 17, 20, 23). Herbert Lockyer in his classic book *All the Parables of the Bible*, says that "the real truth was, they did not want to go. They typify those Jews Jesus spoke of, 'Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.' [Jn. 5:40.]" This is the biblical reason why they did not come, and Piper completely misses it!

Unfortunately, this is a perfect example of what Piper does throughout his entire book. He basically reads "treasure" into every gospel invitation. Regardless of what the Bible actually says, according to Piper we should just read into it the idea of "treasure". If the biblical word is "believe", we should read "treasure". If the word is "receive", we should read "treasure". If the word is "come", we should read "treasure". The same is true in regards to repentance. Although Piper does say some things that are true concerning biblical repentance, he unfortunately puts it all under the heading: "Repentance Is the Reversal of What We Treasure". Piper knows that this is not the true meaning of the biblical word for repentance (Gr. *metanoia*), because he goes on to give the actual meaning correctly several pages later when he says: "Repentance is the change of mind and heart moving from unbelief to belief" (p. 249). Unfortunately he embellishes that definition, which is typical of Reformed theologians.

Piper repeatedly confuses Christian-life truth with how to be born again (pp. 122-126, 140-141, 155-162, 167-169). And similarly, Piper conflates salvation with discipleship in his attempt to prove that saving faith means receiving Christ as our supreme treasure. This is a common error among Reformed theologians. For example, commenting on Matthew 10:37, Luke 14:33, and Philippians 3:8 (which are clearly describing discipleship/Christian-life truth), Piper

says: “This book is an argument that such texts are describing dimensions of saving faith” (p. 21; cf. pp. 31, 69, 145, 146, 160, 229-234). This is interesting, especially because Piper also says: “Experience teaches us to probe for distinctions” (p. 17). In light of this statement one wonders why Piper does not probe for the biblical distinction between salvation and discipleship? It’s unfortunate that he completely misses this distinction because it would clear up a lot of his false teaching on the gospel. Indeed, the apostle Paul instructs believers in exactly this duty when he says, “*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*” (2 Tim. 2:15, KJV).

Piper misrepresents Lewis Sperry Chafer in regards to Chafer’s view of repentance (p. 31). Piper quotes Chafer’s statement, “The New Testament does not impose repentance upon the unsaved as a condition for salvation” (*Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, p. 376). But Piper is taking Chafer’s statement quite out of context. When Chafer’s statement is read in context (and in light of his other statements on repentance), his statement should be understood to mean: “The NT does not impose repentance upon the unsaved as a [separate] condition for salvation” in addition to faith in Christ: because repentance is included in believing. This is what Chafer believed and taught. For more information see my article titled “The Meaning of Repentance: Quotes from the Ancients, Lexicons, and Theologians”. See under the heading: “Lewis Sperry Chafer”.

Piper likewise misrepresents Charles Ryrie on repentance (p. 31). Piper says that “*The Ryrie Study Bible* calls repentance a ‘false addition to faith’ when made a condition of salvation”. The truth is, what Ryrie actually says is just the opposite! Ryrie begins by affirming: “**Repentance.** This is a valid condition for salvation when understood as a synonym for faith.” Then Ryrie goes on to say: “It is a false addition to faith when understood as a prerequisite, requiring the cleansing of the life in order to be saved.” (Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible* [Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute, 1978], p. 1950.) Piper is twisting Ryrie’s statement and taking it quite out of context! Rightly did the apostle Paul warn of false teachers such as Piper, who “*by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting*” (Rom. 16:18).

What Piper does in his book is that he basically says that saving faith will have “virtuous affections” in it or else it’s not genuine saving faith. The virtues required by Piper in order for a person to get saved are the following; viz. a person’s faith must have at least some or all of the following: holiness, goodness, delight, gladness, happiness, love, joy, admiration, adoration, treasuring, cherishing, satisfaction, thankfulness, revering, and the list goes on and on (pp. 12, 34, 47, 51, 70, 85-86). Piper calls these “virtuous affectional elements” (pp. 45, 47, 48, 50, 51, 52, 54, 55). According to Piper’s view, these are not additions to faith but “faith itself includes virtuous affectional elements” (p. 47). Piper is quick to point out however, that these are not the ground of our justification. But he says that if faith doesn’t have these elements then it’s not saving faith. But what does the Bible say? According to 2 Peter 1:5-9, the apostle Peter instructs believers to “*add to your faith virtue, to virtue, knowledge, to knowledge, self-control, to self-control, perseverance, to perseverance, godliness, to godliness, brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, love*” (vv. 5-7). Thus it’s clear that these virtues are distinct from faith itself. For if they are to supplement or to be added to faith then they are obviously distinct from faith itself, if words have any meaning. These are clearly the fruits of faith, not faith itself. Peter affirms this when he goes on to say in the

very next verse, “*For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful*” (v. 8), obviously implying that faith itself can be “*useless*” and “*unfruitful*”—that is, if words have any meaning and if we read the Bible at face value and not with a theological bias. Piper’s view is in contrast to this. Piper says that faith is not genuine saving faith if it does not include these virtues. But as the apostle Paul says, “*Let God be true, and every man a liar*” (Rom. 3:4). Piper has a false view of saving faith because it contradicts the clear teaching of Scripture: that faith can be “*useless*” and “*unfruitful*”. That doesn’t mean it’s not faith; that just means it’s not “*fruitful*”. The corollary to this is that Piper’s view of saving faith is in reality salvation by virtue. Because although he says that these virtues are not the ground of our justification (thus he can claim that his view is distinct from Roman Catholicism), yet in his view these virtues must still be there for salvation to occur. So it’s double-talk. The bottom line is that according to Piper, a person can’t be saved if they don’t have these virtues. That’s salvation by virtue however you look at it. Apparently seeing the obvious conflict with justification by faith alone, Piper is quick to say: “Such faith does not undermine justification by faith alone, because God does not have respect to any virtuousness of the affectional aspects of faith [then why does Piper require it?], but only to faith as ‘uniting us to Christ,’ who is the sole ground of our right standing with God” (p. 54). But Piper’s statement is merely equivocation, because he still requires some or all of these virtues for salvation. How are we to take such tortuous reasoning seriously?

In order to preempt the obvious objection, Piper presents a straw-man argument related to Romans 4:5, saying: “The fact that faith may have an affectional dimension does not prove that justification then would be by works, or on the basis of our virtue” (pp. 52-53). But actually it does prove that justification would be on the basis of our virtue if the Bible distinguishes between faith and the “*virtuous affectional elements*” (i.e. the spiritual fruit): which it does (see 2 Pet. 1:5-9; cf. Gal. 5:22). Piper is a legalistic fruit inspector, so much so, in fact, that he has now made it a condition for justification!

Piper also promotes the Lordship Gospel (pp. 29-34, 67, 153, 285). Piper says saving faith is “*demanding*” (p. 37). Piper redefines faith (pp. 59, 90, 134). Piper says: “I do not discount or diminish the importance of real allegiance to King Jesus. No one will be saved without it” (p. 85). Piper says he read John MacArthur’s *The Gospel According to Jesus*, “*like a miser finding gold*” (p. 30). Piper says, “I could scarcely put it down for joy” (p. 30). Someone please tell Piper that “*not all that glitters is gold*”! “*Satan disguises himself as an angel of light, and his ministers as servants of righteousness*” (2 Cor. 11:14-15). Lewis Sperry Chafer has well said: “Satan’s life-purpose is to be ‘like the Most High’ (Isa. 14:14), and he appears ‘as an angel of light,’ and his ministers ‘as the ministers of righteousness’ (2 Cor. 11:13-15). His ministers, being ministers of *righteousness*, preach a gospel of reformation and salvation by human character, rather than salvation by grace alone, unrelated to any human virtue.” (Lewis Sperry Chafer, *He That Is Spiritual*, 1918 Edition, p. 101.)

Piper argues that the biblical terms *faith*, *belief*, and *trust* are inadequate and ambiguous (pp. 17-18). Piper says that these terms “*contain ambiguities that need clarification*” (p. 18). Piper says this because these biblical terms do not line up with Piper’s requirements for salvation. So Piper has to clarify them, which means that he needs to infuse the biblical terms with his so-called

“virtuous affectional elements” added in to faith itself. It’s very clever though, because by redefining faith to include virtues such as love, and joy, and delight, Piper can still claim that salvation is “by faith alone”. Of course, it is “faith alone” in name only, but it gives a veneer of legitimacy to Piper’s twisting of Scripture.

Piper is a modern-day Pharisee & a self-righteous legalist (p. 139). Piper says heaven is a “reward” (p. 176). Piper says final salvation is a “reward” (pp. 177). Piper says “never thirsting again” (from John 7:37-38) is a “reward” (p. 202). Piper implies that we buy salvation (pp. 143-146); he tries to explain it away by saying, “The point is not that you can buy Christ” (p. 145). Yet that is the logical conclusion of what Piper says. Elsewhere Piper overtly teaches works-salvation (p. 146). I’m going to quote Piper’s exact statement because it’s blatant works-salvation. Piper twists the words of Jesus in Luke 18:22 about discipleship and applies them instead to salvation. Notice what Piper says: “In other words, if you value me [Jesus] enough to open your money-grasping fist and let the money fall from your hand onto the poor and put your hand in mine as your new treasure, you will indeed have a treasure forever in heaven—me. But if you value your possessions more than me, you won’t have me or eternal life” (p. 146). Apparently the unsaved must now give to the poor in order to have eternal life!

Piper is a Calvinist, and it comes through loud and clear in his book. For example: Piper teaches that regeneration precedes saving faith (pp. 26, 38, 127, 128, 131, 135, 157). This is a typical belief among Calvinists. Related to this Piper says, “You cannot decide not to see” (p. 157). Notice the double-negative in Piper’s statement. Piper is saying: God makes a person see; God forces a person to see. God regenerates them apart from the person having anything to do with it. In Piper’s view, when an unsaved person sees (sees spiritually), it is not something they do (i.e. it is not them believing): God makes them see, and according to Piper that is regeneration. And in Piper’s view regeneration precedes saving faith. But what Piper fails to mention is that a person can decide not to see! A person can close their eyes to the Light. A person can choose not to come to the Light. For example, in John 12:20-21 some Greeks came to Philip and said, “We wish to see Jesus.” Why didn’t others come? It is because as Jesus said to the unbelieving Jews, “*you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life*” (Jn. 5:40). Conversely, when Philip found Nathaniel and told him about Jesus, and Nathaniel said, “Can anything good be from Nazareth?” (Jn. 1:45-46), Philip said to him, “*Come and see*” (Jn. 1:46). And thus it is a volitional choice. Piper even admits: “Decisions are doable” (p. 252). Piper appeals to 1 John 5:1 as his proof-text that regeneration (being born-again) precedes faith. Piper quotes John R. Stott as an authority on the subject, but Stott is simply another Calvinist. Quoting another Calvinist is unconvincing; and furthermore, what he says does not prove the point. For more information on Piper’s interpretation of 1 John 5:1 and my response to it, see my article: “Does Regeneration Precede Faith?” (*Free Grace Free Speech*, July 14, 2022). Piper says saving faith is a gift of God, which is another typical belief among Calvinists (pp. 16, 25, 38, 78, 121, 127, 128, 131, 135, 164-165). But as Daniel Wallace has noted: “If faith is not meritorious, then it is not a gift per se.” (Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, p. 335, note 53.) Piper denies that there is any human responsibility involved in saving faith (p. 157). This is the Calvinistic doctrine of “Total Depravity/Total Inability”. Piper also promotes the Calvinistic doctrine of “The Perseverance of the Saints” (pp. 121, note 1, 137, 141)

Piper's method of Bible interpretation is a complex guessing game. Piper mainly quotes other Calvinists to prove or support his points, not primarily the Scriptures (pp. 57ff, 127, 135, 159, etc.). Thus it's not surprising when Piper says: "Let's start with John Calvin." (p. 60). But quoting the Puritans is not biblical exegesis (pp. 31, 188). At times Piper seems to elevate these men on par with the Scriptures and even like unto God Himself! Such as when Piper says, "[Andrew] Fuller's insight is foundational to my argument in this book. It is the light that guides us along" (pp. 54). That's interesting because I always thought that the Bible was the light! "*The entrance of Thy Word brings light*" (Psa. 119:130). Piper goes on to say: "Andrew Fuller...became my guide" (p. 55). This is an alarming statement. Piper almost sounds like a necromancer channeling Andrew Fuller! Thus it's not surprising to see how Piper puts an undue emphasis on a certain analogy presented by Fuller in which a mariner's compass is used to explain saving faith. So once again Piper doesn't present any biblical basis for his beliefs, just a quote about a compass! How are we as Bible-believing Christians to take this seriously? The Apostle Paul's concern was: "*For what does the Scripture say?*" (Rom. 4:3; cf. Gal. 4:30). Where in the Bible do we ever find a mariner's compass used to illustrate saving faith? I think nowhere. By way of contrast, the illustrations that we do see in the Bible that are used to picture saving faith are not that of a compass but rather are figures of speech such as: Receive (Jn. 1:12), Look (Jn. 3:14-15), Drink (Jn. 4:10, 14; 7:37), Come (Jn. 5:40, 6:35; 7:37), Enter (Jn. 10:9), and Eat (Jn. 6:54, 57). Piper's compass illustration is actually self-refuting in that even Fuller admits: "whatever other properties faith MAY possess, it is as receiving Christ and bringing us into union with Him, that it justifies" (p. 52). Notice that Fuller didn't say that saving faith must possess any other properties, but only that it "may". This is a telling admission and it basically pokes a hole in Piper's entire argument because it points out (no pun intended) that all that really matters in terms of saving faith is not whether it has any particular "affectional virtues" (as Piper says), but rather the key issue is simply "receiving Christ"! The Apostle John could scarcely have been clearer when he wrote: "*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name*" (Jn. 12:12, NASB 95).

What I noticed throughout Piper's book is that he repeatedly makes pronouncements but does not provide biblical exegesis to support his claims (pp. 149, 153, 193, 207, etc.). Piper often uses very flowery and at times almost nonsensical language to make his points; his book abounds in pseudo-biblical profundity (e.g. p. 151). Piper's method of Bible interpretation consists mainly of assumptions (p. 18), guesses (p. 210), and conjecture (p. 230), not biblical exegesis: "a more exegetically thorough foundation [is needed]" (p. 34). Notice what Piper says: "Let's start with John Calvin" (p. 60). Piper goes on to say, "we will be able to share the good news in simple and comprehensible ways with unbelievers" (p. 65). But then in the very next sentence Piper says, "In this spirit, I cite Witsius's eight facets of saving faith"! Piper then spends the next several pages explaining Witsius's eight facets of saving faith, during which time he does not quote more than a single Bible verse (!), but rather, he waxes eloquent upon the words of his Puritan divine. How any of this is "simple and comprehensible" is mind-boggling. Piper also attempts to bolster his view by asking a loaded question saying, "how can this sight of the believer not be a treasuring, cherishing, admiring sight?" (p. 111). The "loaded question" is actually a logical fallacy, and is described as follows: "Loaded question, sometimes called a 'complex question', is a type of logical fallacy – an error in reasoning or a trick of thought used as a debate tactic. [...]" The

loaded question fallacy is a question containing an implicit assumption – that is unverified or controversial – putting the person being questioned in a defensive and unfavorable position” (www.finmasters.com/loaded-question-fallacy). Piper’s complex guessing game of Bible interpretation continues: “In other words” (p. 146), “[this] makes it extremely unlikely” (p. 154), “these verses lead us to think that Paul would say” (p. 154). More assumptions follow, such as Piper’s “four steps” to misinterpret Hebrews 11:24-27 (pp. 160-162). Piper’s guessing game continues as he surmises that “it is fair to say” (p. 160), “[such and such] makes it likely” (p. 161), “the answer seems obvious” (p. 164), “It also seems obvious” (p. 164), “Does it not seem, then....” (p. 181). Piper continues to build his case on inferences and assumptions: “verse 12 suggests” (p. 182), “I am suggesting” (p. 184), “the pointers are there” (p. 186), “Jesus hinted....” (p. 187), “He could have said...” (p. 187), “There is a hint in Matthew 24:12” (p. 188): thus in Piper’s view the meaning of saving faith is apparently a complex puzzle that we must piece together with hints! Piper actually says: “Paul is the one who puts the pieces together in the fullest way” (p.188). Piper’s unorthodox method of Bible interpretation continues in that he strangely appeals to 1 John before the Gospel of John when defining saving faith (p. 189), and he reads his preconceived theological ideas into the biblical text when he writes: “I am saying that saving faith is a composite of different ways that the born-again soul receives Christ. And one of those ways of receiving him is to receive him as superior to everything that makes God’s commandments difficult. John calls this faith” (p. 193). No, John doesn’t call that faith; Piper calls that faith. Piper just inserted his Calvinistic presuppositions into the biblical text. That’s not called faith; it’s called eisegesis! Piper goes on to say concerning the Gospel of John: “Here we find the more [or most] straightforward statements about the affectional dimensions of believing than we find anywhere else in the Bible” (p. 197). But then Piper curiously says: “I do not know with certainty what John was trying to tell us [in his Gospel]” (pp. 197-198). No doubt this has to do with the fact that John’s Gospel doesn’t fit into Piper’s Calvinistic belief system. Piper goes on to once again read his preconceived theological viewpoint into the biblical text when he says: “the desiring heart turns from...one treasure to another. This is the movement implied in the heart’s *coming*” (p. 207). Piper says it’s “implied” because it’s not actually in the text. It’s not implied; it’s misapplied! An example of Piper’s poetic nonsense is seen when he says: “the soul’s movement is the awakening of desire for the received. That desire is the motion of the soul” (p. 210). Observing “Piper’s pink prose – [his] flowery, ambiguous, and suspiciously pious [language],” one reviewer of Piper’s writings highlighted the dangers involved by saying: “The most effective attack on truth, the most subversive attack on the doctrine of the completeness and efficacy of the work of Christ for the salvation of his people, is always couched in pious language and Biblical phraseology. The music is gay; it will lead you astray: *Beware the Pied Piper.*” (John W. Robbins, “Pied Piper.”) More guessing games from *The Pied Piper of Calvinism*: “I would venture a guess” (p. 210), “What you have just read is my guess” (p. 210), “there is good reason to think....” (p. 230), “There is no reason to think....” (p. 230), “I think Paul’s response to that would be....” (p. 238). Ironically, Piper admits that “for people of integrity, reality governs language choices” (pp. 224-225), but he subtly advocates that Christians need to use “New Language” in evangelism (p. 227). Piper twists the objective truth of redemption by Christ’s “precious blood” (1 Pet. 1:18-19) into a sort of postmodern subjective experience of loving it and treasuring it (p. 286). Whereas in reality, faith is simply accepting something as true (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4-5).

A major premise of Piper's book is that he says that saving faith must include love (pp. 179-188). Piper bases this largely on 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12. For a detailed review of Piper's view on this see my article: "Must Saving Faith Include Love?" (*FGFS*, June 11, 2022). Piper says that people have to love the gospel to be saved (pp. 180-181). But Piper's own illustration about the lecherous brain surgeon (p. 18) disproves his entire premise that trust implicitly includes love, because someone can trust a lecherous brain surgeon without loving him. And this is not just my conclusion, Piper admits this himself! Piper says: "experience teaches us that it is possible, even necessary at times, to *trust* a person with our lives whom we neither love, nor admire, nor even want to be around." Piper's admission highlights the fact that the word *trust* does not inherently include love. Piper also admits that certain "respected brothers" personally told him that they "were concerned that what I am saying may obscure or even contradict the precious doctrine of justification by faith alone" (p. 22, footnote 11). Gresham Machen and Wayne Grudem (both Reformed theologians!) also push back against Piper's view of saving faith (pp. 71-73).

Some noticeably absent Bible verses nowhere to be found in Piper's book include: Jn. 3:17; Jn. 14:6; Jn. 14:15; Acts 4:12; Rom. 1:16-17; Rom. 3:10; Rom. 3:23; Rom. 6:23; Rom. 10:17; Rom. 11:6; 1 Cor. 15:4.