

Can Lost Mankind Seek God?

Introduction:

1. There is a doctrine taught by Calvinists called "total depravity."
 - Here's the idea: mankind is so totally and completely depraved by sin that there is now a total **inability** of mankind to seek God or to believe God.
 - They believe that God must come and regenerate a person by His Spirit, and then he or she is able to believe on Christ.
2. Of course, there are serious problems with this if Scripture is our final authority.
 - First of all, faith is always seen as preceding regeneration in the Bible. **Ephesians 1:12-14** is one example. A person believes, **then** gets life. **John 20:31**
 - Second, to be regenerated, a person must first be justified (made righteous). Why is this? Because God's justice will not allow Him to put His life into somebody who doesn't have perfect righteousness.
 - Once you are justified (have perfect righteousness), then God can (and does) place His very life inside of you. How are we justified? By faith. It cannot happen apart from faith. **Romans 3:22, 26, 28, 4:5, 22-24, 5:1, 10:4, 9, 13**
3. If you place regeneration **before** faith (as Calvinists do), you only have two options:
 - You either believe that God places His life (regeneration) in sinful, unjustified people.
 - Or you must believe that God justifies a person **before** they ever believe and place their faith in Christ. This would mean the order would be: justification, regeneration, faith. This is **never** the Biblical order.
4. No wonder Calvinism is so speculative; it's called theological confusion. A Calvinist will say, "But we're quoting verses." Yes, but do you have any idea what those verses mean in the **context** in which they are found?
5. For instance, let's consider the question of whether or not a person can make a choice to believe and to seek after God.

Does Romans 3:9-12 teach that individuals can never seek God?

1. A Calvinist will look at verse 11 and say, "See, a person can't seek God." But wait a minute, what is the context?
2. Paul is discussing the fact that the Jewish nation and the Gentile nations have all forsaken God (verse 9). He is not accusing **every** person in **every** nation of **every** sin on this list.
3. This is a **general** description of the wickedness of the nations.
 - **For example:** In verse 18 it says that there is no fear of God before their eyes. But in **Acts 10:2**, a lost Gentile man by the name of Cornelius is said to be "a devout man that feared God with all his house." He is not regenerated until the end of this chapter.
 - Verse 15 says that "Their feet are swift to shed blood." Every lost person is not guilty of murder.
4. Paul is teaching in Romans 3 that Jews and Gentiles are under **equal** condemnation, therefore God can justly offer His mercy to both groups. **Romans 3:29, 10:12, 11:32**

5. **Romans 3:11** must be taken in its **context**. This is not a blanket statement about every individual who ever lived. This is clear from the context. cf. **Acts 17:26-27**

How are people able to seek God?

1. In **Isaiah 55:6-7** God called upon wicked and rebellious Israel (lost people without life - verse 3) to seek Him. If they would seek Him, He would have mercy and pardon them of their sin.
 - According to this passage, God was "findable." Why is this?
2. **Isaiah 45:19** reveals the reason why. Because God had spoken and given them **His Word**. This is why God could say, "Seek me."
 - Left to themselves, they would have never been able to seek and find God. But they **weren't** left to themselves. God said, "My Word is out there - its public - I've made it known."
 - **Romans 2:17-18** - God gave them His Word which gave them the **capacity** to understand and seek Him.
3. Mankind is lost and if left to themselves would never seek after God. But God did something and made the first move toward lost mankind. He sent His Word, and His Word brings life, light, and conviction. **Psalm 19:7-8, 119:130**
4. So a Calvinist may say, "You don't have any ability to find God because none seeketh after God."
 - That may be true if there were no other factors, but that is **not** the end of the story. God sent His Word, and it is a life-giving message. Jesus said that the words He spoke were life. **John 6:63**
5. God has no way of implanting His life in your dead spirit except through His Word. **1 Peter 1:23**
6. God's Spirit does not work in your heart in some unseen, mysterious, spooky way that allows His Word to come in. When God wants to make Himself known in the Bible, He speaks **words** and today those words are in a Book.
7. God's Word (and the gospel of Jesus Christ) gives mankind the **capacity** to seek God.