**Does Regeneration Precede Faith? Not according to Scripture**

**By Andy Brock**

A refutation of an article titled *“Regeneration Precedes Faith”*

excerpted from a book [*The Mystery of the Holy Spirit*](http://www.monergismbooks.com/The-Mystery-of-the-Holy-Spirit-p-19788.html)*,* by R.C. Sproul

Black = except from RC Sproul

Green = scripture quotes

Blue = My comments

One of the most dramatic moments in my life for the shaping of my theology took place in a seminary classroom. One of my professors went to the blackboard and wrote these words in bold letters: "Regeneration Precedes Faith."

These words were a shock to my system. I had entered seminary believing that the key work of man to effect rebirth was faith [No wonder he was pushed off this position fairly easily. His understanding of faith and what it is was wrong to begin with if he believed that faith was a “key work of man”. Responding to God in faith is not a “key work of man.” It is not a work at all (at least not in the sense that Paul used the word when positioning man’s work, or “works,” in opposition to faith, arguing that we are saved by faith, not by works). It is certainly not a meritorious work that man takes any credit for or gains any merit from. This is a favorite target and trick of Calvinists. Some of them will actually say that faith is a type of work. Most others will say faith is not a type of work, knowing that saying that faith is a type of work is not supported by scripture. But in their concept of salvation, in which they take God’s promises of salvation, man’s taking God at His word and responding to God with faith in Him, and God’s response back to the man of grace, salvation, and regeneration, and throw those all together and call it “salvation,” they still think that if a man willingly responds to God through faith that it is a type of work, or a “work of cooperation”. Paul spent a great deal of time directly contrasting faith or “faith righteousness” as diametrically opposed to “work” or “works righteousness.” So to say that faith is a type of work goes against everything Paul taught about faith vs works, especially in Romans and Galatians.]

I thought that we first had to believe in Christ in order to be born again [Why did he think that? Probably because as a new Christian he read his Bible and simply believed what he read for what it said. He hadn’t yet been exposed to the determinist Manichean-Gnostic philosophy introduced into the church by Augustine and had not yet learned to read his Bible with the pre-suppositions of Augustine and Calvin as he was now learning to do in seminary. I’ve not yet met a single Calvinist who became a Calvinist simply by reading his Bible. They have all been taught it from a college professor as R.C. Sproul was or Calvinist preacher or a Calvinist friend.]

I use the words in order here for a reason. I was thinking in terms of steps that must be taken in a certain sequence. I had put faith at the beginning. The order looked something like this:

"Faith - rebirth -justification."

I hadn’t thought that matter through very carefully [I disagree. All he needed to do was read his Bible and understand the words he read, which it appears he had done. No additional “thinking of the matter through” is necessary. Just read the Bible for what it says. I’m assuming what he means by thinking the matter through carefully was that he hadn’t yet been taught the ideas of Augustine and Calvin by his seminary professors.].

Nor had I listened carefully to Jesus’ words to Nicodemus [See notes below in regard to this section of scripture. There is nothing in John 3 in Jesus conversation with Nicodemus that supports regeneration, or being born again, before faith. It simply says “you must be born again”. We all agree we must be born again. There is no dispute that one must be born again to enter the kingdom of God. We also agree that rightly understood God does 100% of the rebirth. We simply believe scripture when it says that we must believe, then we will be born again. Read Jesus words carefully. Nowhere in Jesus words to Nicodemus in John 3 does Jesus state or even infer that being born again comes before faith or that we are first born again so that we can believe or have faith. It simply says we must be born again before we can enter the kingdom of God.]

I assumed that even though I was a sinner, a person born of the flesh and living in the flesh, I still had a little island of righteousness, a tiny deposit of spiritual power left within my soul to enable me to respond to the Gospel on my own [Sproul here presents the Calvinist concept of total inability and assumes it for the rest of the discussion. Total inability is the concept that requires the Calvinist to distort scripture into saying that regeneration occurs before faith. If one accepts that idea that man is totally unable to respond to God’s invitations and commands to repent and be saved, then there has to be some other mysterious force that enables a man to respond. This is why the concept of regeneration before faith was created and developed by Augustine and Calvin (and prevenient grace was created by Arminius). Reference other discussions to refute the Calvinist idea of total inability, which is also not taught anywhere in scripture].

Perhaps I had been confused by the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. Rome, and many other branches of Christendom, had taught that regeneration is gracious; it cannot happen apart from the help of God.

No man has the power to raise himself from spiritual death. Divine assistance is necessary. [This is a straw man argument. No one, Arminian or traditionalist or other non-Calvinist believes man has the power to raise himself from spiritual death. If RC Sproul at one time believed he did, then he was in error then. But don’t project that error on the rest of us. Just because we don’t have the power to perfectly obey the Law or raise ourselves from spiritual death doesn’t mean we can’t cry out to the one who has obeyed the Law perfectly and does have the power to raise us from spiritual death. This is the erroneous assumption and conflation that the Calvinist continues to make. They assume that because we can’t raise ourselves from spiritual death, we also can’t cry out to the one who can. It’s like saying, because we are not able to jump 20 stories to get to the top of a building, this means we also are not able to get on the elevator that can and will take us to the top if we just get in it. There are hundreds more analogies to illuminate how wrong this assumption and conflation is. In addition, RC Sproul here is presuming (begging the question) that we accept the Calvinist definition of spiritual death that they erroneous mis-translate from Ephesians 1, which we don’t accept.

This grace, according to Rome, comes in the form of what is called prevenient grace. "Prevenient" means that which comes from something else. [Pre-venient primarily means that which comes before] Rome adds to this prevenient grace the requirement that we must "cooperate with it and assent to it" before it can take hold in our hearts. [Another trick that Calvinists use quite often. Sproul has set up the false dichotomy that there are only two choices, Rome (and Arminianism in this case) or Calvinism. He’s set up Rome (and Arminian theology) as your “opposite of Calvinism” straw man and then proceeds to to knock it down. Because Rome (and Arminianism) also accept the concept of total inability (and require prevenient grace), he has a fairly easy target. Again, he acts as if these two are the only other beliefs that exists. It’s either the errors of Rome and Arminianism or you have to embrace Calvinism. As usual, he doesn’t address those who simply take the Bible to mean what it says (those of us who might be called traditionalist, provisionalist, or just Bible believers). We don’t accept the false dichotomy of either regeneration before faith or the concept of prevenient grace espoused by Rome and/or Arminius, because scripture simply does not teach that men, when they sinned, lost the full, libertarian free will that God endowed them with at creation (a topic for another discussion).

God provided His word (which is “powerful unto salvation” and “it is the power of God for salvation”), His prophets, His creation, His apostles, His very Son, His Holy Spirit. Yet, according to the Calvinist and Arminian and Rome, all of these apparently aren’t ***really*** powerful unto salvation and aren’t enough to bring a man to repentance and belief, even though scripture says they are. They apparently aren’t powerful enough to overcome what the Calvinist teaches is man’s inability to respond to God, so there is a need for one more, mysterious act of God, “regeneration before faith” or “prevenient grace” (even though neither of these are found in scripture.]

This concept of cooperation is at best a half-truth. Yes, the faith we exercise is our faith. God does not do the believing for us. When I respond to Christ, it is my response, my faith, my trust that is being exercised. [This is word play. The Calvinist doesn’t really believe that the faith we exercise is our faith, our response, or our trust. Sproul says it is my response, my faith, my trust, but if you go just a bit further you will hear him teach that what he really believes is that men don’t have their own faith and can’t respond to God. They teach that for a man to have faith, it must be irresistibly given to them by God when God irresistibly acts upon a person and regenerates them (before they have placed their faith in Christ) and gives them this faith (so they can now respond with this faith they have been given). So in any logical sense, it’s not really my faith at all, it’s God’s faith that God gave the man (irresistibly forced upon him). If I have no faith, but am given a “belief pill” that makes me believe, is it really my faith and my response? Not within the confines of any kind of recognizable logic. Scripture however squarely puts the “respons-a-bility” to respond and exercise our faith on each person, with the obvious assumption that each person has the “ability-to-respond.”

Jesus commended the Centurion for his faith, not for God’s faith that was irresistibly forced upon him. Jesus marveled that his faith was greater than any he has seen in all of Israel. Why would Jesus marvel at a faith that was irresistibly given to him by God? If God must first irresistibly give the faith, is some of the faith God gives weak (Jesus said this man’s faith was much greater than any other He had seen in Israel)?]

The issue, however, goes deeper. The question still remains: "Do I cooperate with God's grace before I am born again, or does the cooperation occur after?" [The Calvinist likes to use this word, cooperation. It’s hard to really pin down because “cooperation” in salvation is not a biblical word. Scripture never uses cooperation in the context of salvation. It does many times use the word “receive” in the context of salvation, but never cooperation].

Another way of asking this question is to ask if regeneration is monergistic or synergistic. Is it operative or cooperative? Is it effectual or dependent? Some of these words are theological terms that require further explanation.

A monergistic work is a work produced singly, by one person. The prefix mono means one. The word erg refers to a unit of work. Words like energy are built upon this root. A synergistic work is one that involves cooperation between two or more persons or things. The prefix syn - means "together with." I labor this distinction for a reason. The debate between Rome and Luther hung on this single point. At issue was this: Is regeneration a monergistic work of God or a synergistic work that requires cooperation between man and God? [The Calvinist continually makes the error of conflating two things that were never meant to be conflated together. They conflate man’s choice, responsibility, decision to place his faith in the person and work of Christ (exercising his faith), with God’s invitations, commands, and promises to respond to man’s decision and subsequent response to man’s faith with the act of washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit (salvation) and call it all “salvation.” They then say that if a man responds to God in repentance and faith (as God invites and commands him to do) then man “cooperates” in his salvation. The act of salvation and regeneration is a monergistic work of God and God only. Man can not save himself. Man can not regenerate his own soul or spirit. The Bible believing traditionalist has never made the claim that man has any part in the salvation and regeneration process, it’s all of God. We do however believe that scripture clearly teaches that man’s part is to respond to God’s invitations, commands, and promises as God invites us to do throughout scripture. Man’s response to God in repentance and belief is not salvation. A man confessing his sin and repenting and turning to the Lord does not accomplish anything on its own and it does not save. All it does is acknowledge that man is sinful and without hope to save himself. It is not in any way a meritorious act or work. The only reason it has any value is because in God’s grace and mercy God has determined and promised that if a man would do these things and believe in Him, He promised He would respond with the act of salvation. So the act of salvation is monergistic and all of God. There is no “cooperation” from man in the act of salvation. Only when one conflates man’s responsibility to respond to God with God’s act of salvation does it become muddled and appear that man “cooperates” and has some part in his salvation. If salvation is rightly understood then, for salvation to be monergistic, there is no requirement that regeneration has to come before faith! That only becomes necessary because of the erroneous Calvinist doctrine of total inability and their conflation of adding man’s responsibility into God’s act of salvation].

When my professor wrote "Regeneration precedes faith" on the blackboard, he was clearly siding with the monergistic answer [again, as just discussed, a completely false statement here only based on his presuppositions of Calvinist doctrine and mis-understanding and conflation of man’s responsibility with God’s act of salvation. The Calvinist creates another false dichotomy. He tries to corner us into only two options, either you accept the false assumptions of Calvinism and are on the side of the monergistic answer, or if you don’t, you are on the side of the synergistic answer].

After a person is regenerated, that person cooperates by exercising faith and trust [again, the unbiblical concept of regeneration before faith is only necessary in Calvinism because of total inability].

But the first step is the work of God and of God alone [again, we believe regeneration (act of salvation) is of God and God alone. But as scripture clearly teaches, God does this work after a person first places his faith in God (man’s responsibility, not salvation)].

The reason we do not cooperate with regenerating grace before it acts upon us and in us is because we can- not. We cannot because we are spiritually dead. We can no more assist the Holy Spirit in the quickening of our souls to spiritual life than Lazarus could help Jesus raise him for the dead. [Sproul has been assuming total inability throughout up until now. He only now brings this up. This is a typical Calvinist deception. They “beg the question” by arguing according to their assumptions, then once they think they have convinced you, they then bring their assumptions into view. The first error here is that he continues to conflate regeneration/salvation with man’s response of faith. I, nor any non-Calvinist that I know, don’t and never have believed that one assists the Holy Spirt in the quickening of our souls to spiritual life. Man’s choice to cry out to the one who can regenerate him and place his faith in Christ is in no way “assisting the Holy Spirit in the quickening of our souls.” The quickening of our souls is accomplished by the Holy Spirit alone because of God’s grace in response to our crying out to Him, our repentance, our faith. (“through whom we have access by faith into this grace” (NOT through whom we have access by irresistible grace into faith) Romans5:2) The second error is another question begging assumption he brings in. Sproul assumes the unbiblical and erroneous concept of the Calvinist mis-interpretation of spiritual deadness. When studied deeply and compared and contrasted to the whole of scripture, spiritual deadness does not equal nor lead to inability to respond to God. Neither the Calvinist concept of spiritual deadness nor total inability are biblical concepts as taught in scripture and his arguments are built solidly on these assumptions (discussion of total inability and the mis-reading of spiritual deadness can be found elsewhere)].

When I began to wrestle with the Professor's argument, I was surprised to learn that his strange-sounding teaching was not novel. [Oh, maybe not novel in the 20th century, but if you had done a little more homework and gone back and studied the early church, you would have found that these strange sounding teachings were in fact very novel and very strange sounding to those in the church when they first appeared in Augustine’s writings. This teaching was actually considered heretical to the early church in the first four hundred years of its existence and to those in the church when Augustine first introduced them into the church (this can be proven, but for another study). But I bet your professor never mentioned anything about the early church, because he would have had to admit that the early church was one hundred percent unified against the determinist theology they fought against in the Stoic-Gnostic-Manichean branches of thought. He probably presented it to you as if the church started with Augustine. If your professor had not ignored the early church, you would have found that these strange teachings did not exist in any way, shape, or form in the early church or with the early church fathers before Augustine suddenly introduced these novel ideas into the church. You would have found that they did exist in the Stoic, Gnostic, and Manichean philosophies, but not within the church. You would have found that the early church fought vigorously against these very same strange sounding teachings within the Gnostic and Manichean beliefs. You would have found that Augustine’s mentor and teacher was appalled when Augustine began to introduce these strange new teachings for the first time ***within the church***].

Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield - even the great medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas taught this doctrine. (R.C. Sproul, as is typical of Calvinists, cite the “great theologians.” What he should say is the “great Calvinist theologians.” If it was useful, the non-Calvinist side can cite just as many if not many more “great theologians” that were opposed to this doctrine. What matters is what doctrine is taught by scripture, which we will go to for our authority shortly). Thomas Aquinas is the Doctor Angelicus of the Roman Catholic Church. For centuries his theological teaching was accepted as official dogma by most Catholics. So he was the last person I expected to hold such a view of regeneration. Yet Aquinas insisted that regenerating grace is operative grace, not cooperative grace. Aquinas spoke of prevenient grace, but he spoke of a grace that comes before faith, which is regeneration. [So Aquinas spoke of grace coming before faith. Paul in Romans 2 wrote the opposite, that faith comes before grace (“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand” Rom 5:2). So which one should we base our theology on, Aquinas or the Holy inspired word of God written by Paul? The Calvinist obviously chooses Augustine and Aquinas and Calvin. The one who bases his beliefs on the Bible chooses scripture. Augustine (the father of the Catholic Church) was no doubt very influential and has influenced a great many theologians (including Calvin, the “reformer” whose hero was the father of the Catholic Church?) with this erroneous and unbiblical doctrine].

These giants of Christian history derived their view from Holy Scripture [Unfortunately, as we have just seen, they didn’t. This is ultimately the problem. They derived their view from the erroneous teachings of Calvin who got his erroneous ideas from Augustine who first brought his Stoic-neo Platonic-Manichean-Gnostic philosophical ideas into the church. As we will see, this view is not supported from Holy Scripture].

The key phrase in Paul's Letter to the Ephesians is this: "...even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have you been saved)" (Eph. 2:5). Here Paul locates the time when regeneration occurs. It takes place 'when we were dead.' [agreed, God making us alive together with Christ takes place when we were spiritually dead, but scripture teaches very clearly this happens after we come to God in repentance and faith. Spiritual death means we were separated from God, without the Holy Spirit, does not mean we were unable to respond to God’s ubiquitous if-then statements and promises throughout scripture].

With one thunderbolt of apostolic revelation all attempts to give the initiative in regeneration to man are smashed. [Sproul did it again. He created a straw man and conflation all in one. Who gives the initiative in regeneration to man? I know of no flavor of non-Calvinist that gives the initiative in regeneration to man. He’s knocking down the argument of someone who doesn’t exist. Again, because man responds to God (as God invited and commanded him to do) and God then responds to man according to His promise that He would with forgiveness and salvation and regeneration, this in no way results in giving the initiative in regeneration to man! God is the one who initiated the entire process by first inviting and commanding us to repent and believe. God is the one who promised that if a man does repent and believe, He will respond with salvation and regeneration. Because a man responds positively to God’s initiative doesn’t now place the initiative in regeneration to man!]

Again, dead men do not cooperate with grace. Unless regeneration takes place first, there is no possibility of faith. [Dead men. Again, the assumption of the incredibly erroneous and unbiblical concept of spiritual death that Calvinists have come up with that has man as not just separated from God as scripture teaches, but as a “dead man” who can not understand the word of God or respond to God in faith. This concept results in ridiculous scenarios where we have Jesus speaking in parables to “dead men,” otherwise these “dead men” would understand and turn to Him, all the time knowing they are dead men who can’t even hear him or understand him to begin with. We have Satan working really hard to steal the word of truth from the minds of “dead men” and closing the eyes and ears of “dead men” so they could not believe, all the while knowing that they are dead men who can’t hear or understand to begin with (This is Calvinist logic? This is a high view of scripture?).

No possibility of faith. So when God invites, commands, and promises to all people, Jews and Gentiles alike, throughout the world, that if a person will respond to His promises with repentance and faith, God promises He will respond with forgiveness and salvation. But the Calvinist says there is no possibility of faith. So we end with God’s invitations, commands, and promises as all just a big divine joke because what God is promising to men is not possible and God knows it is impossible when He promises it. We have the equivalent of God standing in a cemetery, inviting and commanding and promising things to “dead men” who can’t hear him, see him, or respond to Him. Is this the God of scripture?

This says nothing different from what Jesus said to Nicodemus. Unless a man is born again first, he cannot possibly see or enter the kingdom of God. [Yes, this passage says a man must be born again before he can see or enter the kingdom of God. We all agree and believe Jesus words in this passage. How in the world does this prove regeneration proceeds faith? It doesn’t. It simply says one must be born again, regenerated, saved, before he can see or enter the kingdom of God. This verse simply doesn’t address the order of faith vs regeneration either way. This verse certainly doesn’t preclude one responding in faith, then being born again/regenerated, and then they can then see and enter the kingdom of God. This is one of the verses that is used to support regeneration proceeding faith? One that says nothing about the order of regeneration vs faith? This is typical of what a Calvinist does in regard to this topic. Since there are no clear passages that explicitly teach regeneration before faith, they come with their presupposition of regeneration before faith first to the vague verses or verses that don’t address it one way or another and try to twist and read into these the teaching of regeneration before faith to try to plant in your mind that scripture teaches regeneration before faith (as RC Sproul has just done with the John 3 passage above). They then hope that you’ll have already swallowed this concept when you come to the clear passages that teach the opposite (see the 20+ passages below that clearly and explicitly teach that faith precedes receiving the Holy Spirit and regeneration). So when you come to theses verses, you’ll either ignore them or place your new presuppositions on them and twist them completely to mean something totally different than what they say. In other words, presupposition on top of a few obscure or vague passages trumps the twenty plus clear passages.

If we believe that faith precedes regeneration, then we set our thinking and therefore ourselves in direct opposition not only to giants of Christian history but also to the teaching of Paul and of our Lord Himself.

[This is a very strong statement. This can be backed up with what (some) of the “giants of (determinist/Calvinist) Christian history” taught. However, not even all of them accepted this doctrine.

Charles Spurgeon is regarded to be one of the greatest preachers in church history and proclaimed to be himself a Calvinist (although, if you read what he wrote and preached, he was a conflicted and inconsistent one, even by his own admission). Even he recognized the folly of saying that the sinner must be regenerated before he can believe:

*"If I am to preach the faith in Christ to a man who is regenerated, then the man, being regenerated, is saved already, and it is an unnecessary and ridiculous thing for me to preach Christ to him, and bid him to believe in order to be saved when he is saved already, being regenerate. Am I only to preach faith to those who have it? Absurd, indeed! Is not this waiting till the man is cured and then bringing him the medicine? This is preaching Christ to the righteous and not to sinners.*" [from Sermon entitled *The Warrant of Faith*].

Of course, I can back up the opposite with what the “giants of (traditional non-determinist/non Calvinist) Christian history” taught as well. So if we’re going to depend on what the giants of Christian history say, we are at best at a stalemate. But to make the statement as Sproul does that if we believe differently we are in opposition to what Paul and our Lord Himself taught, you better be able to back this up with ***a lot*** of ***really clear scripture***s which explicitly teach the concept of regeneration before faith. Sproul didn’t even begin to do this (he’s given one verse that speaks of being born again but doesn’t even speak to the order of faith vs regeneration). The fact is that the Calvinist can’t supply such verses for support of this doctrine. They have only a few vague verses, like the one above from John that don’t even speak to the order of regeneration and faith, and the few below that I’ve noted that are at best vague and don’t speak to the order of faith and regeneration. On the other hand, I have a multitude of verses cited below that very directly and clearly speak to the order and clearly teach that faith precedes receiving the Holy Spirit and Spirit wrought regeneration. I don’t mind being in direct opposition to the great (Calvinist) giants of the faith. What I don’t want to be in opposition of is what Paul and Christ taught in scripture. So let’s go to scripture and see what scripture supports.]

Excerpts are from book, [The Mystery of the Holy Spirit](http://www.monergismbooks.com/The-Mystery-of-the-Holy-Spirit-p-19788.html), by R.C. Sproul, Christian Focus

Before looking at the individual scriptures, note that there are 3 types of verses in scripture that can and are be referenced in regard to this issue ...
1 Verses that are ***extremely clear*** that it is faith then regeneration/Holy Spirit and regeneration/salvation. There are MANY of these as noted below.
2 Verses with ***no clearly defined order*** in this regard or are vague to the order or don’t directly speak to the order, just speak of being born of God. There are SOME of these. (John 1:13, John 3:3,5, John 6:44,63,65, Rom 9:16, Titus 3:5-6, 1 John 5:1,)
3 Verses that are ***extremely clear*** that one is given the Holy Spirit first, is regenerated/saved, and then is given faith. There are none cited here nor will you see any cited by a Calvinist as there are NONE of these.

Let’s go to scripture:

“And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, **whom God has given to those who obey Him**."” Acts 5:32 NASB
Scripture says: To whom does God give the Holy Spirit? To those who obey Him. Is there a condition? Yes. God gives the Holy Spirit conditionally to those who obey Him. Does man have the ability to obey Him? Apparently so.

Calvinism says: …God give the Holy Spirit unconditionally to certain individuals (for no apparent reason, or for no reason revealed to us), so that then those certain individual can (have the ability to) obey Him.

“And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also **after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ**, who was I that I could stand in God's way? When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also **the repentance that leads to life**." Acts 11:16-18 NASB
Scripture says: When is the Holy Spirit given? After believing. How does one get life (ie. how does one that is spiritually dead get life?) through repentance. Repentance leads to life. (note: God has granted ... sometimes granted twisted and used by Calvinist to try to show God is irresistibly forcing salvation. This verse proves the opposite. God has granted repentance to the Gentiles. Are all the Gentiles saved? No, of course not. So God’s granting of repentance is not an irresistible act of repentance forced on them, otherwise they would all be saved. It is a making available, or better yet, provision, a providing of repentance to them, all the Gentiles, in the same way it was granted to the Jews. It is to each Gentile then to repent.)
Calvinism says: The Holy Spirit is given first so they can believe. God grants life/regeneration so they can/have the ability to repent. To support this I reference Sproul above who writes that we were dead in sin and God made us alive, gave us life, so we could then repent and believe. In other words life that leads to repentance. Again, from RC Sproul above, “Aquinas spoke of prevenient grace, but he spoke of a grace that comes before faith, which is regeneration.”
Sproul said his doctrine was based on scripture. But what does scripture say? It says the opposite of what Sproul writes above, scripture says repentance that leads to life, not life that leads to repentance.

 “Therefore, having been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have **obtained access by faith into this grace** in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.” Romans 5:1-2
Scripture says: ... through whom also we have gained access by faith into this grace ...
We have access into God’s grace by faith. This verse is crystal clear on what the order is and how we have access to grace. It is through faith we have access to grace.

Calvinism says: According to Calvinism, grace (irresistible grace) comes before faith. Calvinism says we have access by (irresistible) grace (and regeneration) into faith. Scripture teaches the opposite.

“that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, **resulting in righteousness**, and with the mouth he confesses, **resulting in salvation.”** Romans 10:9-10
Scripture says: Belief results in (and by necessity then precedes) righteousness. By faith one confesses, and this results in (and by necessity then precedes) salvation (receiving Holy Spirit, regeneration).
Calvinism says: “you will be saved (regenerated) so that you can confess with your mouth, you will be made righteous and regenerated so you can then believe with your heart; Calvinist version of Romans 10:9-10 reads as follows: “for thru regeneration a person is changed and cleansed and made righteous resulting in belief, and thru regeneration a person is saved and born again resulting in confession of sins”

“In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-**having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit** of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.” Ephesians 1:13-14 NASB
Scripture says: Listened to gospel, believed, then given HS/sealed in Him with HS, then given pledge of inheritance (heir, adoption), all to God’s glory.
Calvinism says: After being predestined by God to be saved, having been given the Holy Spirit and sealed in Him, when you heard the message of the truth you also then believed.

“For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached **to save those who believe**.” 1 Corinthians 1:21 NASB
Scripture says: Save who? Save those who believe. Save those on the condition of their believing through the foolishness of the message preached.

Calvinism says: ... God was well-pleased to save those who He (unconditionally) saved and regenerated so they could believe when they heard the foolishness of the message preached

“Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies," declares the Lord GOD. "Therefore, repent and live."” Ezekiel 18:31-32 NASB
Scripture says: First repent, then live. Cast away your transgressions (repent) then you will have new heart and spirit (live). Do they actually make the new heart and new spirit? No, God does that. But the words say it this way because it is on them to repent and cast away your transgressions (by repenting and casting them away to God). The words read this way because it is the person’s responsibility to repent.
Calvinism says: First live, then repent. God has to give life so you can repent. God has to first give a new heart and spirit, only then can you can cast away your transgressions. (In Calvinism this verse is meaningless or makes God fairly clueless since what God is commanding them to do is impossible for them to do because they are totally unable to respond to God’s commands. Doesn’t God know they can’t respond?).
Note: No one in the O.T. is said to be regenerated. The HS has not yet been given to every believer, yet they are saved, declared righteous, said to live by faith. So if all are totally unable to respond to God and one has to be regenerated in order to have faith, how are the saints in the O.T. saved? I’ve seen John Piper’s response to this, and it is basically “I don’t know.”

“but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the
Son of God; and **that believing you may have life in His name**.” John 20:31 NASB
Scripture says: By believing you may have life. Life comes through (after) believing.
Calvinism says: But these have been written so that you may discover who has been predestined to be given life, and that you (if you are one of the elect) will be made alive so as to believe.”

“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are **unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life**.”John 5:39-40
Scripture says: Come to me (thru faith) so that you may have life. If unwilling to come to me, you will not have life (not unable, but unwilling).
Calvinism says: You must have life so you will be willing to come to me. Calvinism teaches that regeneration/new life changes one’s will, so that one will willingly and happily come to Christ.

“So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves.” John 6:53
Scripture says: unless eat the flesh and drink blood of Christ (meaning of course unless one partakes of Christ, and thru faith receives his blood to cover his sins) you have no life.
Calvinism says: You must be given life (irresistibly regenerated) so that you will want to eat the flesh and drink blood of son of man.

“As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me.” John 6:57
Scripture says: he who eats (partakes of Christ, can only be done through faith) he also will live (eats, also lives).
Calvinism says: He who lives, he also eats. In Calvinism, must be given life (regenerated) so can also then eat of Christ.

If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’” But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. John 7:37-39
Scripture says: If-then. If (conditional particle denoting indefiniteness or uncertainty) anyone is thirsty and comes to me and drinks (believes in Me), [then] from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water. Come (respond) to Jesus, believe in Jesus, receive the HS/be saved (rivers of living water in him).
Note: Spirit not yet given. See note on OT saints and those before the Spirit was given. How were those in the O.T. regenerated and given new life so that they could believe before the Holy Spirit was given?
Calvinism says: Are unable to respond to Jesus until Holy Spirit first regenerates, then they will believe. Calvinist version of this verse must say If one has been irresistibly given rivers of living water in his innermost being, only then will he be thirsty and will he come to me and drink. Are unconditionally elected to salvation. Conditional if-then statements such as Jesus makes here are opposed to and make no sense with Calvinism’s unconditional election.

“He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. Acts 15:9
Scripture says: “He purified their hearts by (or through) faith.” A purified heart is a fruit of faith.
Calvinism says: He purified their hearts by regeneration so as to make them have faith. Faith is a fruit of a purified heart.

“Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God. John 1:12-13
Scripture says: The right to be born of God is given only to those who believe and received Christ. The order clearly laid out is as follows: “…all who did receive him…who believed in his name …”“…he gave the right to become children of God… “You are not even given to right to become a child of God, much less be born again as his child, until you “receive him” and “believe in his name.” And while placing our trust in Christ is what God has invited and commanded us to do, after we respond to God, the work of regeneration, being born of God, salvation, is all of God’s doing (a monergistic work of God). It does not come by way of being a physical descendant of Abraham, or by inheritance, or by marriage, works or striving, but from receiving Christ and believing in Him.
Calvinism says: He gave the right to be children of God by unconditionally electing them, he then irresistibly regenerated them so they could believe and receive Him. Humans have no will and are unable to respond to God so they have to be born of God first. This means God has to irresistibly bring one to Himself so they can believe and receive Him.

Galatians 3:26 “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus…”
Scripture says: “Through faith… in Christ … You are sons of God

Calvinism says: Through election, then regeneration and being placed in Christ, then given faith, you are sons of God

“Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light.” John 12:36
Scripture says: Believe in the light (Christ: I am the light of the world) ***so that you may become*** children of light.

Calvinism says: Your are made children of light (regenerated) so that you can believe

Galatians 3:2, 5 “I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard?… So again I ask, does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you by the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?”
Scripture says: God gives His Spirit and the Spirit was received by believing what you heard (or, by or through believing God gives His Spirit and it is received).

Calvinism says: God gives (irresistibly forces upon one) His Spirit so one will believe

2 Corinthians 3:14-16 “But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.
Scripture says: “…whenever anyone turns to the Lord the veil is taken away.”

Calvinism says: The veil is taken away (that’s what the Calvinist version of regeneration before faith does, before one can’t understand and respond to God, regeneration takes away the veil so they can understand and respond to God) then one can turn to the Lord

“But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.” 1 Timothy 1:16
Scripture says: Believe and receive eternal life.

Calvinism says: Receive eternal life/one is given life (by regeneration), then they believe.

 “…having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.” Colossians 2:12
Scripture says: Through faith we were raised with him

Calvinism says: You were raised with him (regeneration), then had faith.

“He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.” James 1:18
Scripture: “…give us birth…” “…through the word of truth…” (ie. after reading or hearing the word of truth, understanding the word of truth, and following what Peter and Paul instructed those who heard the word of truth, believe and you will be given new life).
Calvinism: Give us birth not through the word of truth (because an unregenerate unbeliever can not understand the truth) but through irresistible regeneration based on unconditional election. Only after we have been given birth can we understand the word of truth.

The Philippian jailer inquired, “What must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30). “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.” Acts 16:30
Scripture says: Paul does not hesitate to simply say, as if it was obvious the jailer had the ability to do so, “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! That is the gospel appeal sent for all to hear and respond.
Calvinism says: If Paul was a Calvinist he should have replied, like John Piper did here (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ozgU2GlWVwQ&t=792s>) “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 and will then be saved.” In other words, good luck, hope you are one of the elect and are regenerated so you can believe, you’re just going to have to wait around and see if God regenerates you”

Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the  apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” 38 Peter said to them, “**Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.** Acts 2:37
Scripture says: Repent, be baptized in name of Jesus Christ (believe, faith), your sins will be forgiven, and then you will then receive the Holy Spirit (the gift of the Holy Spirit, who is a seal of your faith (Eph 1). Repent – baptized/forgiveness of sins - receive Holy Spirit

Note: Only confusion is about baptism. Look at big picture of scripture and multitude of other verses for good hermeneutics. Baptism goes along hand in hand with repentance (and from other verses, faith). But always baptism is after repentance and faith, never before it. Baptism by itself does not save. Repent first. Believe. Then be baptized. Saved.
Calvinism says: Holy Spirit must be irresistibly given (a dead corpse can’t “receive” the Holy Spirit) so you can repent and believe and be baptized; if Peter was a Calvinist ... “wait for God to irresistibly bring you to life, force the gift of the Holy Spirit on you so you can have faith, so you can then repent and be baptized for forgiveness of sins.

**Summary from Scripture: salvation, new life, regeneration, after faith**

I have just given twenty three (23) scriptures that clearly lay out that salvation, regeneration, new life, occur after we first repent and believe. Faith and belief are required before we receive the Holy Spirit and are regenerated. By repentance and faith we come to Christ, He then regenerate us and makes us a new creation, then we are “in Christ” and one of the elect, and are then given a destiny to be adopted as sons, are given an inheritance, and are destined to be transformed to be like Christ.

Where are the scriptures that clearly and explicitly lay out receiving the Holy Spirit and regeneration before, or so that, we can have faith and believe? There aren’t any. Not one. Which is why R.C. Sproul didn’t give any in support of what he wrote, but only gave a verse that simply teaches about new birth and regeneration but says nothing of the order.

*If we believe that faith precedes regeneration, then we set our thinking and therefore ourselves in direct opposition not only to giants of Christian history but also to the teaching of Paul and of our Lord Himself. R.C. Sproul*

So who is setting their thinking in direct opposition to the teaching of Paul, the apostles, and of our Lord Himself? Read scripture for what it actually says and you decide.