

Sermons from the Greats II: John Calvin, The Salvation of all Men

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Sermon Summary & 5-Day Devotional Jan. 4th, 2026

Sermon Summary

We opened 1 Timothy 2:3–5 and sat with the tension and beauty of God’s saving will. In Paul’s day, the world assumed salvation belonged to one people—the descendants of Abraham. But in Christ, the wall came down. God now reveals His grace to all peoples, all nations, all conditions. So, when Paul says God “wills all men to be saved,” he is opening the door wide: the promise that once seemed fenced in is now preached to the world. “All” in this text points to all kinds—not every individual without exception—yet the offer is real, sincere, and global.

At the same time, we do not save ourselves. We cannot come unless the Father draws us. The gospel is the outward gate to paradise; the Spirit is the inner hand that leads us through. Left to ourselves, we remain blind and unwilling. But God, by free election, calls, enlightens, and gives faith. This humbles us—none of us were chosen for our worth—and it assures us: what the Father has given to the Son, no one can snatch away. Our confidence is not in our grip on God, but in God’s grip on us.

This truth guards us from two errors: despair and presumption. We do not despair, because Christ is a mediator for men—He is offered to all, and God is ready to receive any who come. We do not presume, because hearing the word does not save us unless the Spirit makes it living truth in our hearts. So, we attend to the means—prayer, the Word, repentance, faith—while refusing to pry into God’s secret counsel beyond Scripture.

Therefore, we pray for all people and labor for those far off. We do not despise anyone God may be pleased to draw. We plead for God to open eyes, to turn hearts of stone to flesh, and to make the preached gospel take root. And as we go, we take comfort: the same grace that sought us when we were enemies will finish what it started. Jesus will not lose His own.

Key Takeaways

- The gospel is for all peoples.

God broke down the wall that once stood between Jew and Gentile. The promise now goes to every nation, class, and condition without distinction. This rescues us from narrow love and small prayers and turns us outward toward those we’d be tempted to overlook. We are called to pray and speak as wide as God’s invitation.

- Election humbles and assures our hearts.

We contributed nothing to our choosing; grace preceded our first step. That truth levels pride and silences boasting yet also steadies us when our hearts condemn us. What the Father gave to the Son, the Son keeps—our assurance rests in His hold, not our strength.

- Word preached; Spirit makes it live.

The gospel opens the door, but the Spirit leads us through. Without His inner work, hearing becomes judgment, not life. So, we ask Him to make truth luminous, to turn duty into delight, and to plant the seed where it bears fruit.

- Pray widely, labor patiently, hope deeply.

Because God wills the gospel for all kinds of people, we intercede for all and do not give up. Some soil breaks hard and slow; God’s timings are not ours. Patient love, steady prayer, and faithful witness honor both the wideness of the offer and the mystery of His work.

- Hold truth with obedient faith.

Salvation comes “by the knowledge of the truth,” not by vague spirituality. Knowing in Scripture is relational and obedient—trust that walks, not just a mind that agrees. To refuse the truth we hear is to harden ourselves; to receive it is to find life.

5 Day Devotional Based on the Sermon

Day 1: God's Will: Mercy for All Peoples

In a world that once seemed divided between insiders and outsiders, God's heart is revealed as far wider than anyone imagined. He desires that people from every nation and condition be brought into the knowledge of the truth through Jesus. This does not mean every individual is automatically saved, but that the promise has burst beyond old boundaries and is now offered openly. So pray for all people—near and far, familiar and strange—because God's mercy is aimed at the world. Let your heart mirror His by welcoming those who once felt excluded and by receiving the truth that leads to life. Today, give thanks that the doorway stands open to you as well.

1 Timothy 2:3-5 — This is pleasing to God our Savior: He purposes to rescue people from every kind of background and to bring them into a true understanding of the gospel. For there is only one God, and the only go-between who brings God and humanity together is Jesus the Messiah, fully human for our sake.

Reflection: Whose name outside your usual circle will you intentionally add to your prayers this week, trusting God's heart for all peoples?

Day 2: Drawn by Grace, Not Human Merit

Left to ourselves, we are unable to climb to God or even take the first true step toward Him. The Father must draw, the Spirit must open blind eyes, and hard hearts must be made soft. This humbles pride and silences boasting, because salvation rests on God's gracious initiative. Ask Him to awaken you afresh, to teach you to receive the gospel with living faith, and to make obedience a delight. As He draws, He also keeps, and as He opens, He also fills. Let your prayer today be, "Lord, do in me what I cannot do for myself."

John 6:44 — No person can truly come to Jesus unless the Father who sent Him pulls that person close; and Jesus will raise that one up at the last day.

Reflection: Where are you relying on willpower alone, and how will you ask the Spirit this week to do the deeper work of drawing and changing you?

Day 3: Christ Has Broken Down the Wall

What once separated peoples—heritage, law, and long histories of distance—has been torn down by Jesus. Those who were "far off" are now invited near; strangers become family; outsiders become fellow citizens with the saints. God's promise, once held by one nation, now reaches every nation, and the same grace creates one new people in Christ. Receive this welcome again and extend it to those you might overlook. Let your life be a doorway, not a barrier, to the kingdom's embrace. In Christ, there is room enough for you and for them.

Ephesians 2:14-19 — Christ Himself is our peace. He removed the dividing wall, reconciling us to God and to each other through His cross. Those far away have been brought near, and those near have been made one household. We are no longer strangers to God's promises but members of His family.

Reflection: Who feels like an "outsider" in your world, and what is one concrete act of welcome

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you can offer them this week for Jesus' sake?

Day 4: Election Gives Assurance and Humble Courage

God's unchangeable purpose steadies fearful hearts: those the Father gives to the Son, the Son will surely keep. Assurance grows not from our grip on Him but from His grip on us. This truth does not puff us up; it bows us down in gratitude and strengthens us to endure. Do not pry into mysteries God has not revealed; rest in what He has clearly shown in His Word and by His Spirit. Take comfort: the One who began His work in you will finish it. Let this certainty quiet your doubts and embolden your obedience today.

John 10:27-29 — My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them lasting life, and they will never finally be lost. No one can snatch them from My hand, for the Father who entrusted them to Me is greater than all.

Reflection: When anxiety about your standing with God surfaces, what simple practice (a daily psalm, a whispered prayer, or confessing a promise) will you adopt to rest in Christ's keeping?

Day 5: Pray and Proclaim: The Gate Stands Open

The gospel is God's generous invitation and His powerful means to save, yet He must also work within hearts so the Word takes root. Therefore, we pray for all people, and we speak to all people, trusting God to make our witness fruitful. Jesus presents Himself as Savior of the world, and He sends us to carry this good news near and far. Our task is faithful prayer, humble proclamation, and patient love; His task is awakening, drawing, and transforming. Do not delay the step you already know to take—reach out, invite, share, and keep praying. The Lord delights to open doors no one else can open.

Mark 16:15 — Go into the whole world and announce the good news to every person, in every place.

Reflection: Name one person God is putting on your heart; what specific step will you take this week to pray for them and to offer a gentle invitation toward Jesus?