



Sermons from the Greats II



Jan. 4th-18th, 2026 at CPC
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The Salvation of All Men

John Calvin – 1 Tim. 2:3-5

Adapted by Pastor Paul Hudson

Jan 4th, 2026

As I did last year, I'm starting the year off with a mini-series of sermons from the greats. This will be a 3-part series where I will preach from the heart of John Calvin, George Whitefield, and Martin Luther King Jr. These sermons are edited and shortened for clarity and conciseness— The language is modernized and non-essential parts that do not affect the overall message are edited out. They preached a lot longer back in the old days— so I'm bringing hour long sermons down to about 25 minutes, but in the edits, I've made sure that the golden nuggets remain.

This morning's sermon is from John Calvin, who was one of the great reformers of the 16th century. This is a classic sermon that speaks to the Reformed, Calvinist doctrine of election. You may have heard of Calvin's acronym, TULIP. So, TULIP is an acronym that explains the Calvinistic view of election, I'll tell you what those are in a second — but when we say election, we're not talking about voting for politicians— election in Christianity is about how God saves us. In the 16th century, there were two competing doctrines of election, one was Calvin's doctrine in which God alone chooses whom he will save. The acronym TULIP describes Calvin's doctrine as Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints— we'll hear about all of those in this sermon.

The other doctrine of election was from Jacob Arminius, called Armenian. Contrary to Calvin, Arminius believed in absolute human free will, and a 5-point acronym of his own came out in the word DAISY, which stands for Diminished depravity, Abrogated election (meaning, God's election is based on his foreknowledge of one's faith), Impersonal Atonement (Christ's sacrifice was meant for all, not only the elect), Sedentary grace (meaning, resistible grace), and Yield-able justification, which implies a person can lose their salvation.

Don't worry about trying to remember all that, all you need to know is that Calvin's idea of election is that it's God's choice, and Arminius' idea of election is that it's man's choice.

Arminius was born just after Calvin died, but this sermon was preached in the context of this budding argument about salvation— is salvation God's choice or man's choice?

Let's get the sermon.

I invite you to open to 1 Timothy 2:3-5— I'll read this from the King James Version.

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior: Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. 1 TIMOTHY 2:3-5 (KJV).

The Word of God for the people of God.

Let's pray.

When we despise those whom God would have honored, it is as much as if we should despise Him. So it is, If we ignore God's salvation for those He calls, we obstruct His mercy to poor sinners on the brink of ruin. St. Paul uses this argument because God intends to save all the world. We should seek to save those seemingly banished from God's kingdom, especially unbelievers.

We must remember the world in St. Paul's days. The gospel was new and strange, as it seemed God had chosen the descendants of Abraham and left the rest of the world without hope of salvation. Holy Scripture proclaims the adoption of this people, but St. Paul commands us to pray for all the world. He adds a reason: God wills to save all men. As if to say, we should observe God's will to save, then serve Him accordingly.

Seeing it is God's will that all men partake of salvation through His Son, we must strive to draw poor, foolish, and ignorant creatures to us, so we may all inherit the kingdom of heaven promised to us. However, St. Paul speaks of all men and people, not individual men. When he says God will save all, he doesn't mean individually but means He will show mercy to the world, even those who seemed excluded from salvation.

He says the heathens were without God and without promise because they weren't part of the Jewish people. This was a special privilege for the descendants of Abraham. St. Paul's meaning isn't that God will save every man but that the promises given to one people are now extended to all the world. The wall was broken down when Jesus Christ came for the salvation of the world. God separated the Jews from other nations, but when Jesus appeared, this difference between them and the Gentiles was taken away.

Therefore, God will embrace us all, and this is the entrance to our salvation. If God's plan had always continued, we would all be cursed, and the gospel wouldn't have been preached to us. We wouldn't have had any sign of God's love and goodness. But now we have become His children, no longer strangers to the promises as our fathers were. Jesus Christ came to be a Savior for all, offering God's grace to all who receive it.

As St. Paul speaks of all nations and conditions, he also speaks of God's saving grace for all, not just a few. He emphasizes God's favoritism to all, and His will for all to know the truth. We can't know God's will unless He reveals it to us through signs or tokens. The gospel is God's mighty power and salvation for all who believe, the gate to paradise.

If God's will is that the gospel be preached to all, salvation is common to all. St. Paul proves this by commissioning his apostles to preach to all creatures, from Jerusalem to Samaria and beyond. The apostles are sent to proclaim God's truth to all people and conditions. God presents Himself to all, and the promise belongs to both great and small, Gentiles and Jews.

Before we proceed, we must beat down the folly, or rather the beastliness, of those who abuse St. Paul's passage, claiming that God's election is meaningless and His will indifferent. They argue that if God wants all men to be saved, He must have chosen a few and cast the rest away. They claim that men are left to choose to save themselves or not, and that God lets us alone to decide whether to come to Him. He then accepts those who come to Him.

However, they destroy the foundation of our salvation. We are cursed and far from salvation. If Jesus Christ came to fix this, we must examine our nature. We are contrary to God and cannot resist Him. We are given to evil and wickedness, unable to conceive a good thought. How can we become partakers of the gospel unless God draws us to it by His Holy Spirit? Jesus' words are not in vain when he said, "No one can come to me, except the Father, who has sent me, draws him." God bestows a special grace on those He pleases to draw and teaches them to believe the gospel and to receive it with true faith.

Why does God choose one and leave another? Men cannot come to God by their own merits, and those chosen are not more worthy than others. Before the world was made, God chose those He pleased, but we don't know why. Still, we must confess that God's actions are just, though we can't comprehend them. Let's accept what Holy Scripture certifies and avoid being led astray by ignorance of God's Word.

When the Scriptures say God chose those He pleased to choose before the world began, it's a counsel beyond our comprehension. This is a profitable doctrine if received as it should be. It reminds us that we're not called to the gospel by our worthiness. We are all sinners, subject to the same condemnation, and under the slavery of sin and death.

God drew us out of unbelief and gave us the gospel, choosing us before any service or virtue. St. Paul emphasizes this in Romans 8, saying we must not take the glory to ourselves. The calling of the faithful rests on God's counsel, and He reveals His decree before birth. He touches us with His Holy Spirit, ingrafting us into His body, Jesus Christ. This is the true assurance of our adoption, a pledge that God holds us for His children through faith in Jesus Christ.

God's will is so sure that despite our ignorance, He assures us of our election. He gives us a hope we'd lack if Jesus hadn't called us to be members of His body. This doctrine of election humbles us, knowing our salvation depends not on our merits or God's potential in us, but on His election before we were born.

When we know God has called us to Himself according to His unchangeable election, our doubt of salvation diminishes. Jesus Christ says, "No one takes from Me what the Father has given Me" (John 10). What is it that the Father has given to Jesus Christ? Those whom he has chosen and knows to be his. God has given us to His Son, who will keep and defend us. Jesus promises that none of us will be lost, but He will use all His might to save and defend us. Isn't this a comfort beyond all treasures? Isn't this the true ground of our assurance and certainty of salvation?

We are like birds on a bough, set out as prey to Satan. What assurance do we have of tomorrow and our life? Even after death, God, who called us, will end His work as He began it. How did He gather us in the faith of His gospel? It's not based on us; it is entirely His free election. Therefore, we can be more freed from doubt. We shouldn't try to know more of God's counsel than what's revealed in Holy Scripture.

God's will is revealed through His Word, calling and exhorting us to repentance. After showing us our condemnation, He urges us to renounce ourselves and escape this pit. God's exhortation suggests His will is for all to be saved, as He says in Ezekiel, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he should turn from his way and live" (Ezekiel 33:11).

God's prophet declares that the Lord wants all men to turn and live. Can a man turn himself? No, a man has no power within himself to turn from sin. Throughout Scripture, our Lord Jesus Christ takes credit for turning us away from sin. He says, "I will put a new spirit within you: and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 11:19).

The faithful should give God the glory and confess that He alone can turn us. He adopted us in such a way that He must draw us by His grace.

Do men have such knowledge that they can attain this faith and wisdom? The angels themselves are in awe of it. God says in His Word that He will open our eyes and our ears. The natural man understands no part of God's secrets; the Holy Ghost reveals them to us.

Holy Scripture is full of words that say men are blind by nature until God opens their eyes. They cannot come to Him until He draws them and enlightens them by His Holy Spirit.

Experience and Scripture teach us that God alone turns men from their wickedness. He doesn't give His grace to all men. He says, "The Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day" (De. 29:4). God doesn't cast forth His grace without direction; He only gives it to those He has chosen, those in His church and flock.

St. Paul means that God will have all men to be saved, some from all nations and conditions. He offers His gospel to all, the means of salvation. Does this benefit all? No, our own experience proves it. When we hear the truth of God and rebel against it, it condemns us. Yet many don't profit from the gospel; they even become worse. Therefore, not all are saved. God must go farther. He must appoint faithful teachers and operate on our hearts. He must touch us, draw us to Him, and make His work profitable, causing it to take root in our hearts.

The gate of paradise is open to us when we participate in the redemption purchased by our Lord Jesus Christ. God's will is that He will receive us when He exhorts us to repentance. Let's illustrate this doctrine. God chose the children of Abraham for His inheritance and dedicated them to Himself. He loved them and took them for His own household (De. 7).

Circumcision was a sign that God had chosen the people for Himself, accounting all for His flock. Yet, there was a special grace for some and a withholding of grace for others from God's chosen people. St. Paul says, "For they are not all Israel which are of Israel: neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children" (Romans 9:6, 7). God deprived some of this benefit to make His grace and goodness seem greater to those He called.

The will of God made manifest to the children of Israel is now made manifest to us. God rained on one city and not another, as seen in Amos 4:7. He sends His gospel wherever He pleases, pouring out His grace on all the world. Yet, He works differently with those He draws to Himself. We are deaf and blind unless He prepares us to receive His Word. When the gospel is preached, it's as if God reaches out to us, inviting us to come to Him. This should touch our hearts when we perceive God's coming to seek us. He doesn't wait for us to come to Him; He shows His readiness to receive us, even though we were His enemies. He wipes away our faults and makes us partakers of the salvation purchased by Jesus Christ.

Thus, the gospel is a treasure worthy of esteem. St. Paul said, "It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth: it is the kingdom of heaven." God opens the door, allowing

us to enter His glory from the bottomless pit of nature. Remember, it's not enough to receive the Word; God must speak to us inwardly by His Holy Spirit to bring us to the knowledge of the truth. When God has given us the light of faith, hold it firm and pray He will continue it and bring His work to perfection.

Let us not be proud, for God chose us and set us apart by His grace and mercy. When God calls us to Him and offers us salvation, if we don't come, can we deny that we are unthankful? Let's not separate salvation from knowledge of the truth. God doesn't lie when He says those who know the truth will be saved. God wants all men to be saved, but how? By coming to the knowledge of the truth. Every man would be saved, but no one will draw near to God. The Scripture says that if we desire salvation, we must follow God's appointed means: receive His Word with obedience and faith.

The Scripture teaches that everlasting life is knowing God the Father and receiving Christ as our only Savior. Therefore, let us learn not to doubt our salvation, for the kingdom of God is within us. To receive God's favor, we must accept St. Paul's doctrine. Let me ask you, how are we called to the hope of salvation? By the grace of God that reveals his love and favor to us. By this we see what St. Paul means when he says, "God will make his grace known to all the world, and his gospel preached to all nations." We must endeavor to persuade those who are strangers to the faith to accept salvation.

Jesus Christ offers Himself to all, not just a few. When the gospel is preached, we should consider God's call to Him. If we attend to this call, it will not be in vain. However, can we come to Him without any assistance from God? We cannot. The carnal mind is set against God and cannot accept His law.

When God touches our hearts with His Holy Spirit, His gospel works profitably to our salvation, displaying the virtue spoken of by St. Paul.

Remember, the gospel does not leave us with any excuses. God has shown us His readiness to receive us to mercy, so our condemnation will increase if we draw back when He calls so lovingly. Nevertheless, let us not stop praying for all men in general, as St. Paul teaches that God will have all men to be saved, regardless of their people or nations.

Though men vary greatly, God made us all in His image and likeness, and He works through us. He extends His goodness to those far away, as we've seen. When He drew us to Him, we were His enemies. How then are we now part of the household of faith, children of God, and members of Jesus Christ? It's because He gathered us to Himself. He's the Savior of the whole world, including us. Did Jesus Christ only mediate between a few men? No, He mediated between God and men.

Therefore, we can be more certain that God holds us for His children if we try to bring those far away to Him. Let's comfort ourselves and take courage in this calling. Though we may feel forlorn and condemned, we must labor to draw those to salvation. Above all, let's pray for them, patiently waiting for God's good will to show itself, as He has shown it to us.

Study Questions
Read 1 Tim. 2:3-5

Observation Questions (What does the text *say*?)

1. What two main truths does Paul state in these verses about God's desire and Christ's role? Point to the phrases in the text.
2. What exact words does Paul use to describe the scope of God's saving will? Which phrase connects that will to human knowing?

Interpretation Questions (What does the text *mean*?)

1. How does the sermon interpret the phrase "all men to be saved" — as a promise of individual universal salvation or as an extension of the promise to all kinds of people? What reasons from the sermon support that reading?
2. How does the sermon explain the relationship between God's election and the preaching of the gospel to all people?
3. How does the doctrine of election, as the sermon presents it, serve both to humble the believer and to provide assurance? What scriptural proofs or images did the sermon use to make that point?

Application Questions (How should the truth *change* us?)

1. How should the doctrine of election shape our humility and gratitude toward God for our salvation?
2. In what ways does this sermon call us to pray for and reach people who are far from faith?
3. How can trusting God's sovereign grace bring comfort and assurance when we struggle with doubt or fear?
4. Pick one short prayer you will use this week when you see someone far from faith (example: "Lord, open their eyes and turn their heart"). Say it now and commit to using it at least once each day this week. Who will you tell in the group to help keep you accountable?