

A
Bible-Based Argument
Against Calvinism
(TULIP)

by

James Thomas Lee, Jr.
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Introduction

Chapter one provides a general introduction to the five points of Calvinism and to the acrostic, TULIP. The intent, whenever possible, was to share direct quotes from Pastor John Calvin on each of the points as a way to let him speak for himself. When that was not possible, the intent was to find and present consensus on the given point by other professing Calvinists. Their comments were provided along with the Bible verses that they use to defend their views.

Even though the writing of this book did not begin in earnest until a few months ago, preparation for it has been going on for about fifteen years. As a student at and eventual graduate of the Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary (LBTS) in 2001, I was first introduced to the tenets of Calvinism. At that time, my only goal was to learn enough about the view to pass a test. Once out of LBTS, I pursued other interests and quickly forgot about TULIP.

But several years ago, I was involved in a church conflict over Calvinism. While trying to stay out of the fracas, I did begin to realize that I needed to study the view more carefully to determine exactly how I really felt about it. So I pulled out my old class notes and tried to develop a better understanding of the material that I had only glossed over a few years earlier. As I went through each point, my first reaction was like that of many. I did not think that the five points of Calvinism could possibly be correct. So that was the beginning of my investigation. The guidelines that I established for myself and used during that investigation are the subject of chapter two.

A few years later, as a Sunday School teacher in a local church, I began to consider a thought that most people at the time thought was very radical.

However, because I believed that the Holy Spirit had revealed to me a truth that most people never even consider, I did not let it go. Instead, I continued to meditate on it and even started to formulate a strategy for proving that it is correct. The result of that effort is the subject of chapter three.

Last year, while teaching a Sunday School lesson on Genesis 12:1-3, I began to consider another thought that most people at the time thought was very radical. But as with the first thought, I did not let that one go, either. Instead, I continued to meditate on it and once again started to formulate a strategy for proving that it is correct. The result of that effort is the subject of chapter four.

At that point, in considering my two very radical thoughts and in remembering my earlier experience with the Calvinistic church, I started to see that both of my radical thoughts formed a strong basis for showing that the five points of Calvinism are not supported by the Bible. Therefore, I began to focus more on that. The main premise of Calvinism is that God chooses those that will be saved and those that will be lost. So chapter five tries to show that He wants to save everyone. Then, the discussion goes even further by suggesting exactly how He tries to make it happen. Next, Calvinists like to cling to God's sovereignty as His reason for not letting people make a choice about their own relationship with Him. So chapter six tries to show that He can let people have a choice about their salvation and still retain His sovereignty.

Finally, in chapter seven, conclusions about each view will be presented. In that chapter, the verses that were identified in chapter one as proofs for each point will be examined based on the discoveries of the preceding four chapters. If Calvinism is wrong, then it should be possible to show why and how it is wrong. It should also be possible to provide more accurate interpretations for the verses that they use.

When one understands from the Bible how people actually enter into a salvation relationship with God, it becomes clear that Calvinism (TULIP) is almost certainly wrong in its teaching that God chooses those that will and will

not be saved. This study has produced some very unique ideas from the Bible that are not often considered when one puts together a Bible-based argument against something like Calvinism. Each chapter has been carefully analyzed and written to intelligently and efficiently converge to the most logical conclusions. From start to finish, the goal has been to discover the truth about a very popular but perhaps very wrong theological view. In closing, every part of this study has been personally gratifying and informative plus great, great, great fun to conduct.

T. Lee

9/5/2012



To my Grandson,

Mark

A Future Servant for the Lord



Chapter 1 – John Calvin’s TULIP

Pastor John Calvin was born on 7/10/1509 and died on 5/27/1564. He was educated at the University of Paris where he studied Law. By profession he was a theologian and a journalist. He was also a late contemporary of Dr. Martin Luther, who was twenty-six years older than he and had lived from 11/10/1483 until 2/18/1546 [1].

Dr. Luther started the Protestant Reformation when he tried to fix problems within the Catholic Church. It was not his plan to start a revolution against the church. But he did so when he opposed the selling of indulgences and the pope's authority over the people, a practice that is called sacerdotalism [2]. He wanted to remove the Catholic domination of a pope figuratively standing between God and human beings. He also wanted to bring people into a closer and more direct salvation relationship with the Lord. Coming along a few years after him, Pastor Calvin continued to shape and to define the finer points of Christian salvation. He was a leading French Protestant Reformer and a prominent person during the Protestant Reformation [3].

Dr. Luther and Pastor Calvin were part of the same Reformation. But they did not share the same views on predestination. The Our Redeemer Lutheran Church published the following quote by Dr. Luther which was taken from the American Edition of Luther's Works.

"But it pleases me to take from this passage the opportunity to discuss doubt, God, and the will of God; for I hear that here and there among the nobles and persons of importance vicious statements are being spread abroad concerning predestination or God's foreknowledge. For this is what they say: 'If I am predestined, I shall be saved, whether I do good or evil. If I am not predestined, I shall be condemned regardless of my works.' I

would be glad to debate in detail against these wicked statements if the uncertain state of my health made it possible for me to do so. For if the statements are true, as they, of course, think, then the incarnation of the Son of God, His suffering and resurrection, and all that He did for the salvation of the world are done away with completely. What will the prophets and all Holy Scripture help? What will the sacraments help? Therefore let us reject all this and tread it underfoot" [4].

In direct contrast to what Dr. Luther had believed, Pastor Calvin wrote the following in his book, Institutes of the Christian Religion:

“The predestination by which God adopts some to the hope of life, and adjudges others to eternal death, no man who would be thought pious ventures simply to deny. ... By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God, by which he determined with himself whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man. All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and, accordingly, as each has been created for one or other of these ends, we say that he has been predestinated to life or to death” [5].

As the above direct quote of Pastor Calvin indicates, he believed that God chose some people to be eternally saved and others to be eternally doomed. He thought that the Lord’s sovereignty prevailed in all cases and that God would not give that up by allowing a person to make a choice about their own salvation. The purpose of this study will be to look at what the Bible teaches about how people are saved and then to examine the whole idea that some individuals could have actually been chosen for salvation and others not. In completing those tasks, the ultimate goal will be to present a Bible-based argument against Calvinism.

a. The Five Points of Calvinism (TULIP)

Pastor Calvin's beliefs about the Bible doctrines of predestination and election are usually referred to as the five points of Calvinism, and they are summarized by the acrostic, TULIP. The five points are Total Depravity (T),

Unconditional Election (U), Limited Atonement (L), Irresistible Grace (I), and Perseverance of the Saints (P). Each one will be discussed below in order.

1. Total Depravity (T)

Concerning Total Depravity, Pastor Calvin wrote the following in the same book referenced above:

“For our nature is not only utterly devoid of goodness, but so prolific in all kinds of evil, that it can never be idle. Those who term it concupiscence use a word not very inappropriate, provided it were added (this, however, many will by no means concede), that everything which is in man, from the intellect to the will, from the soul even to the flesh, is defiled and pervaded with this concupiscence; or, to express it more briefly, that the whole man is in himself nothing else than concupiscence” [6].

Concupiscence is defined by the online Merriam-Webster Dictionary as a strong desire, especially of a sexual nature [7]. That word is not terribly objectionable until one entertains the notion that the Lord actually chooses some people to die lost. Of course, that is exactly what Calvinists believe. Their reasoning begins with the idea of the Total Depravity or the Total Inability of humanity. Their position on Total Depravity is that a person is concupiscence, or driven by a strong desire to do wrong. They believe that he or she cannot even think about coming to the Lord for salvation unless the Holy Spirit first opens their eyes so that they can see and receive spiritual truth.

Three references in Scriptures have been used to support the belief about Total Depravity. The first is Romans 5:12, which teaches that every person is a sinner because of Adam's sin. The second reference, which is to Mark 4:11, was spoken by Jesus to His disciples when they asked why He spoke in parables. His answer to them was that His message was to be received by those to whom it had been given and to be hidden from those that were without. The third reference, which is Ephesians 2:1-5 and was written by the Apostle Paul, spoke about how the people at the church in Ephesus had been made alive by their relationship with

Christ. The apostle went on to remind them of their past sinful life and reiterated that they had been saved by grace through faith.

Other verses that are often used to express the Total Depravity of human beings are Jeremiah 17:9 which says that the heart is desperately wicked, John 6:44 which says that no one can come to the Son except the Father draw him, and John 6:65 which says that coming to Jesus is something that can only be given by the Father. Those six verses and how well they really support the belief of a person's Total Depravity will be considered in chapter seven.

2. Unconditional Election (U)

Concerning his belief of Unconditional Election, Pastor Calvin wrote the following in the same book referenced above:

"We say, then, that Scripture clearly proves this much, that God by his eternal and immutable counsel determined once for all those whom it was his pleasure one day to admit to salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, it was his pleasure to doom to destruction. We maintain that this counsel, as regards the elect, is founded on his free mercy, without any respect to human worth, while those whom he dooms to destruction are excluded from access to life by a just and blameless, but at the same time incomprehensible judgment" [8].

In The Five Points of Calvinism, which was derived from the Canons of Dordt written in 1618, Mr. Jonathan Barlow wrote the following to define in slightly different terms what is meant by Unconditional Election.

"Unconditional Election is the doctrine which states that God chose those whom he was pleased to bring to a knowledge of himself, not based upon any merit shown by the object of his grace and not based upon his looking forward to discover who would "accept" the offer of the gospel. God has elected, based solely upon the counsel of his own will, some for glory and others for damnation (Romans 9:15, 21). He has done this act before the foundations of the world (Ephesians 1:4-8)" [9].

The above words are more objectionable. Both Pastor Calvin and Mr. Barlow wrote that the Lord chooses some people to be saved and some to be lost by deciding before the foundation of the world those to whom He would give knowledge of Himself. With that belief, humans are chosen for a specific unchangeable outcome, and that makes it unconditional from their point of view.

The first two verses shown above to support Unconditional Election are Romans 9:15 and Romans 9:21. In the first verse, the Apostle Paul wrote that God had told Moses that He would have mercy and compassion on whomever He wanted. In the second verse, he compared God to a potter that can choose to mold a lump of clay into a vessel of honor or dishonor. The next set of verses was Ephesians 1:4-8. In them Paul wrote about those that had been chosen by God before the foundation of the earth.

Other frequently used references are as follows. John 3:16-18 speaks about the required response by a person seeking salvation. Then, Ephesians 2:10 says that God decided beforehand that those saved by His grace should perform good works. Finally, the Apostle Peter encouraged his readers, in II Peter 1:10, to make their calling and election sure. All of the above verses and passages will be examined in chapter seven and how well they support the belief of Unconditional Election will be considered.

3. Limited Atonement (L)

Pastor Calvin did not write about Limited Atonement, but most Calvinists accept its validity given his positions on election and the atonement [10]. In the same book which was referenced above, Mr. Barlow wrote the following to define what is meant by Limited Atonement.

“Limited Atonement is a doctrine offered in answer to the question, "for whose sins did Christ atone?" The Bible teaches that Christ died for those whom God gave him to save (John 17:9). Christ died, indeed, for many people, but not all (Matthew 26:28). Specifically, Christ died for the invisible Church -- the sum total of

all those who would ever rightly bear the name 'Christian' (Ephesians 5:25)” [11].

According to the tenets of Calvinism, if one does not have the freedom to choose their eternal destiny, then the atoning death of Christ is limited to only those that were chosen for salvation.

Supporting verses that were given above for that belief are John 17:9, Matthew 26:28, and Ephesians 5:25. In John 17:9, Jesus prayed specifically for those people that had been given to Him and would not pray for those that had not been given to Him. In Matthew 26:28, He shared His last supper with His disciples. When serving the wine, He indicated that it represented His blood that had been shed for many rather than saying that it was His blood shed for everyone. In Ephesians 5:25, the Apostle Paul wrote that Jesus had offered Himself on behalf of His church. That implied that He did not offer Himself for those outside the church. Those three verses and how well they support the view of Limited Atonement will be considered in chapter seven.

4. Irresistible Grace (I)

The doctrine of Irresistible Grace says that a person cannot resist or reject God's call to salvation or come to Him if not called. Calvinists believe that the Lord presents a general outward call to everyone but a special inward call only to those that have been chosen for salvation. The rationale behind Irresistible Grace is that if someone has been chosen to be saved and if that decision cannot be reversed, then the grace of God on that person's life is irresistible. In other words, he or she cannot say No to the Lord.

"According to Calvinism, those who obtain salvation do so, not by their own 'free' will, but because of the sovereign grace of God. That is, men yield to grace, not finally because their consciences were more tender or their faith more tenacious than that of other men. Rather, the willingness and ability to do God's will, are evidence of God's own faithfulness to save men from the power and the penalty of sin, and since man is so corrupt that he will not

decide and cannot be wooed to follow after God, God must powerfully intervene. In short, Calvinism argues that regeneration must precede faith.

Calvinists distinguish between a resistible, outward call to salvation given to all who hear the free offer of the gospel, and an efficacious, inward work by the Holy Spirit. Every person is unwilling to follow the outward call to salvation until, as the Westminster Confession puts it, 'being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed by it.'" [12].

The verses that have been used to support the Irresistible Grace view are John 6:37, Romans 8:14, and I Peter 5:10. John 6:37 says that everyone that God gives to Jesus comes to Him and that He will not drive any of them away. Romans 8:14 says that an evidence of being God's offspring is that the person will be led by the Holy Spirit. In I Peter 5:10, the Apostle Peter wrote that the God of all grace calls people into eternal glory through Jesus, which is very similar to a verse that was written by the Apostle John. John 6:44 says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." All of those verses and how well they support the view of Irresistible Grace will be examined in chapter seven.

5. Perseverance of the Saints (P)

Concerning Perseverance of the Saints, the Westminster Confession of Faith states the following:

"They, whom God has accepted in His Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.

This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them, and the nature of

the covenant of grace: from all which arises also the certainty and infallibility thereof." [13].

The final point of TULIP is that a person cannot lose his or her salvation because the saints will persevere to the end. Conversely, if someone does not persevere to the end, then that will be considered evidence that the person was an imposter and not really chosen to be saved.

One passage and two verses have been used to support the Perseverance of the Saints view. Romans 8:28-39 speaks about nothing being able to separate a saved person from the love of God. Philippians 1:6 talks about God continuing His work in the lives of believers until the day of Christ, which is the same as saying that He is not finished working on someone until that person departs this life. Finally in John 6:39, the Apostle John wrote that God's will is that Jesus would not lose anyone that has been given to Him. All of those verses and how well they support the Perseverance of the Saints view will be discussed in chapter seven.

b. Getting Started

The above verses have been recognized by professing Calvinists as important verses for developing and defending the five points of Calvinism. They will be examined in chapter seven to determine if they have been given the most reasonable interpretation. Also in chapter seven, each of the five points of Calvinism will be evaluated for their theological correctness based on the four Bible-based criteria that will have been presented and defended in chapters three through six.

But before getting into all of that, chapter two begins the whole study by showing from the Bible how a person can choose to put himself or herself onto the path that leads to Bible truth. While that chapter is not exclusively about Calvinism, it is about how to prepare oneself for a Bible-based argument against something like Calvinism. No knowledge in life has greater importance or

significance than that of the eternal true teachings of the Scriptures. Therefore, chapter two has been included for the following four reasons:

(1) to encourage the saints,

(2) to show the seriousness of studying and continuing to study the Word of God and then of telling others those truths that have been learned,

(3) to identify the four criteria that will be used to argue against Calvinism, and

(4) to develop one general and one specific truth that will be used throughout chapters three through six.

This entire study will be conducted by applying the simple principles and truths that are discussed in chapter two.



Chapter 2 – Putting Oneself onto the Path to Bible Truth

As was just stated in chapter one, "The Five Points of Calvinism (TULIP)," TULIP spells out the main points of Calvinism. The "T" stands for Total Depravity, the "U" stands for Unconditional Election, the "L" stands for Limited Atonement, the "I" stands for Irresistible Grace, and the "P" stands for Perseverance of the Saints. Calvinists believe that God chose before the foundation of the earth some people to be saved and some people to be lost. They maintain that once those choices were made they could not be altered for any reason. They further maintain that God made His choices simply because that was what He wanted to do.

Sad to say, though, when questioned about a view like Calvinism, most people are usually stumped and do not know how to answer. Then, after a few moments to collect their thoughts, they might respond by saying something like "I think" or "I believe" this or that. Unfortunately, those types of answers have no basis in reality or truth because they have no value in eternity. Simply put, a person's eternity will not be based on what he or she thought or believed about a particular view while in this life. It will be based on Bible truth and on how they responded to the various true teachings of Scripture. Therefore, while many people may express a wide range of opinions about TULIP, the real issue pertains to what the Bible actually says about it rather than to what some people might or might not think.

If no one ever got hurt by the incorrect views of others, then TULIP would be a case of no harm, no foul. But because people can be impacted for either good or bad by such teachings, there is a great need for each individual to know and understand the truth for themselves. A really sad commentary on the twenty-

first century church is that a large number of professing followers of God do not read the Bible or have any ideas about its major fundamental teachings. Another sad commentary is that they too often rely on other human beings to tell them the truth about the most important spiritual matters of life rather than seeking it out for themselves. To the Colossian church, the Apostle Paul wrote in Colossians 2:8: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Thus, the problems of false teachers, bad spiritual influences, incorrect theology, and lazy believers were around even in Paul's days.

The Bible holds the answers to all of the important issues of life. Therefore, because it is not just another book, there are at least three reasons why people should not read it like just another book. Those reasons, best expressed by II Timothy 2:15, John 8:31-32, and I Peter 3:15, encompass the ideas of studying, continuing to study, and telling others. When individuals turn those ideas into guiding principles and incorporate them into their everyday lives, then they can better understand what the Bible really has to say or not say about a particular issue. They will also be better equipped to evaluate the views of others and not be so easily swayed when those views stray too far from the Word of God.

Pastor Calvin was not an enemy of the church. But his beliefs about predestination and election can be and should be challenged because they were somewhat radical and also because he may have been wrong. Before getting into that challenge, though, the three guiding principles that can be developed from the above two verses and one passage will be presented because they are critical to how someone can seek the truth in all spiritual matters.

a. The First Guiding Principle Is Studying

The first guiding principle for seeking the truth in spiritual matters is studying. II Timothy 2:15 says, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." The

key words in that verse are study, approved, workman, ashamed, rightly dividing, and truth. To really understand what the Holy Spirit wanted to communicate, one must consider and evaluate each of those words.

1. Study to Shew Thyself Approved unto God

No follower of the Lord truly wants to be disapproved of by God or be found unacceptable by Him. So the above verse instructs him or her to study the Bible as part of the Lord's overall approval process. But what does that mean? The Greek word translated "study" in that verse, *spoudazo*, literally means to use speed, to make effort, to be diligent, or to be earnest. Clearly those meanings suggest a sense of urgency and importance. Thus, the verse is telling ALL believers to study the Bible as opposed to just reading it. When done properly that kind of digging into the Scriptures actually becomes an act of genuine worship. But why did the Apostle Paul emphasize to study the Bible instead of just reading it?

Some of the reasons are as follows. Reading is not the same as studying, and studying is much different than just reading. Reading is more passive while studying tends to be more active. People often read for enjoyment, for relaxation, or just to pass the time. They sometimes read to find an escape from their everyday life while those that study are almost always doing so to obtain greater understanding and knowledge. Studying involves actively trying to pull the meaning out of a text while reading is usually much less concerned with that. Studying focuses more on content and understanding while reading leans more towards entertainment and pleasure.

When an individual diligently and seriously studies the Word of God in genuine pursuit of spiritual knowledge, as opposed to just casually reading it, the Lord is pleased, honored, and glorified by that person's commitment. As a result, He will usually reward the person with the knowledge that he or she seeks. In Acts 16:14, Lydia was a devoted worshipper of God. She had a legitimate desire

to know more about the Lord. She listened to the Apostle Paul when he spoke, and the Lord gave her the knowledge that she had earnestly sought.

The Greek word translated "approved" in the above verse, *dokimos*, means accepted or pleasing. Connotatively, it was used in connection with the coins of the ancient world. Those people that did not try to cheat in the economic system of those early days by adjusting the weight of their soft metal coins were referred to as approved. That meant that they had done that which was right and proper in the handling of their coins. In the same sense, Paul used that Greek word because he wanted Timothy and any other readers to know that studying the Scriptures to show oneself approved unto God, as opposed to just reading them, is also right and proper.

The approval that one seeks, however, must not be confused with the biblical doctrine of salvation. A person does not study the Bible to be approved in the sense of being saved or not saved. He or she does so to do a good job, be pleasing to his or her Master, and to gain knowledge. Studying the Scriptures, as was commanded in II Timothy 2:15, is most beneficial to those that have already entered into a salvation relationship with the Lord. At that point, their studying enhances their relationship. Put another way, one person graduates valedictorian of their class while another, being something of a slacker, graduates in the last position. Both are graduates. But only one is recognized for high achievement, and only one brings real satisfaction and joy to their instructors. For those that follow the Lord, the Holy Spirit is the Teacher (John 16:13), and He is pleased when one of His people devotes themselves as good students to His Word. While the saved slacker is still saved, the Lord's satisfaction with that person is reduced.

2. A Workman That Needeth Not To Be Ashamed

The Greek word that was translated "workman" in the above verse is *ergates*. It refers to being a laborer or to one that toils for a wage. The obvious implication is that the follower of the Lord should devote the same energy and

effort to studying the Word of God that he or she would devote to their job. Sadly speaking, though, many people take very casually the idea of diligent Bible study. They probably act that way because there is not an immediately obvious negative consequence to their inaction. Most likely, they would never be so nonchalant about their job because most employers would not allow it. But what they fail to realize is that the Lord also sets very high standards for His people. While the issue once again is not about being saved or not saved, it is about what kind of workman the saved person chooses to be.

The idea of being a good workman leads to the fourth key word in the above verse. It is *anepaischuntos* in the Greek and it means "ashamed." When someone has not done their job to their true potential and he or she knows it, then a certain amount of discomfort and dread results. The discomfort comes because of the feeling of having come up short on something important. The dread comes from the fear of not being prepared for what might come next. A student that takes an examination without having adequately prepared will often fear the outcome. Then, when the poor grade becomes reality, he or she will probably feel ashamed because they were not diligent enough in their preparation.

The above verse tells those that follow the Lord to be diligent in their study of Scriptures and to do their very best to learn all that they can. Not everyone has the same potential. But the feeling of shame relates to effort, not potential. When a person has done their best to diligently study the Bible, then he or she will know it and have a real sense of peace and satisfaction instead of being ashamed.

3. Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

The Greek word that was translated "rightly dividing" in the above verse is *orthotomeo*. It means to travel on a straight path or to cut along a straight line. Connotatively, it means to live right and to teach the truth in a correct and forthright manner. Reaching that point in one's spiritual walk is always the result

of diligent study and never acquired haphazardly. In the same sense of wanting to be a good workman, a person should also want to rightly divide the Word of God. Many people have a casual attitude when it comes to understanding the more important truths of the Bible, probably because they have never seriously considered the consequences of not understanding those truths. They live most of their lives without giving much serious thought to what will happen to them when their life on earth is over. But what happens on the other side of the grave is extremely important, even much more so than what happens on this side of the grave. So, it should not be ignored

The sixth and final key word in II Timothy 2:15 is "truth" which from the Greek word *aletheia* means reality or fact. As much as anything truth is never based on opinion. What one thinks about salvation, eternity, God, Jesus, and heaven is not really important because his or her opinions will not hold any value on the other side of the grave. That point has already been made. The Bible is the authority. It is authoritative, and it is truth. In John 17:17, Jesus was quoted as saying, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." Consequently, a person's beliefs and opinions will only line up with truth when he or she has devoted themselves to a diligent study of God's Word and internalized sound Bible doctrine.

As this particular study continues, the question to be considered will be whether or not the five points of Calvinism actually line up with Bible truth and sound doctrine. But that question can only be answered by a diligent study of the Word of God.

b. The Second Guiding Principle Is Continuing to Study

The first guiding principle emphasized the importance of diligently studying the Bible as opposed to just reading it. After that, the second guiding principle for seeking the truth in spiritual matters is to continue studying the Word more deeply. John 8:31-32 says, "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed

on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Jesus gave the assembled Jews some tremendous promises on that day concerning knowing the truth and being set free. But those promises were conditional because they had to actually do something to get them. The key words in those two verses are believed, continue, Word, disciples, and truth.

1. To Those Jews Which Believed on Him

When put into the context of His overall message, the first key word meant that some of the Jewish people were confident in Jesus' claims of deity. According to the Blue Letter Bible, since the verb "believed" (*pisteuo*) was written in the perfect tense the action of believing had already been completed and would not have to be repeated [14]. He told them that He was and is the Son of God, and they believed that He was telling them the truth. They did not require any kind of detailed proof for God's existence, and they did not need to be further convinced that they should have Him in their hearts and lives. They were already very much aware of both of those truths, so they were almost certainly saved Jewish people.

After believing, though, some of the saints in that crowd might have thought that their spiritual needs were totally satisfied and that their spiritual journey was pretty much complete. But that was not even close to being true. While all people need to seek God with all their heart to enter into a salvation relationship with Him and be saved (Jeremiah 29:13), believing on Him and seeking Him for salvation are only the first steps in one's spiritual journey. Following that, based on John 8:31-32, the individual will be led to the Bible so that he or she can engage in deeper study and learn even more about the Lord. If that were not true, then those two verses would not have been spoken by Jesus or later recorded by the Apostle John. Thus, this passage clearly shows the believer

that studying and learning more about the Lord is an ongoing process that never ends.

2. Continue in My Word

The Greek word that was translated "continue" in the above passage, *meno*, means to abide, to remain, to endure, or to not depart. The implications of that word are diligent study and a disciplined lifestyle. While the Holy Spirit is the Teacher, the student must still put forth the effort to learn. Sometimes even much effort is required to learn some of the deeper truths of Scriptures. God does not just give knowledge about Himself to those that are not willing to work for it, and that pursuit sometimes requires a very serious personal commitment. Jesus did not tell the people that they had to continue believing on His deity to be set free because believing on Him happens automatically to those that enter into a salvation relationship with Him. But He did tell them that they had to continue in His Word so that they could know the truth and be set free. So what did He mean when He spoke to them about knowing the truth and being set free?

He was not promising that they would be set free from their sin because the passage says that they were already believers in the sense of salvation. Therefore, the freedom that they would have received from continuing in His Word would have pertained to being set free from their intellectual bondage. Most of them were confused. They did not understand the more important truths of the Old Testament. They did not really understand that much about Him. So they had a lot to learn.

I Corinthians 14:33 says, "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." The Greek word for "confusion" in that verse is *akatastasia*. It means instability or state of disorder. The Greek word for "peace" in that verse is *eirene*. It means harmony, concord, and even the peace that one can feel when they are confident about their eternal destiny. Based on that verse, God does not want anyone to be a victim of their own intellectual

bondage because that would create for them personal disorder. So He told them that the way to achieve the peace that brings internal harmony is by continuing in His Word. It must be pointed out that if the five points of Calvinism are wrong, then that bad theology also creates a type of intellectual bondage for anyone that accepts it. So based on what Jesus told those believing Jews, the only escape from that kind of bondage is by continuing in His Word.

The Greek word that was translated "word" in John 8:31-32 is *logos*. It refers to something that someone has said, to the moral precepts of God, or to the sayings of God. The person that has entered into a salvation relationship with God will naturally believe on the deity of Jesus because that is part of the conversion experience. However, that person will somewhat less naturally continue in a disciplined and committed study of what God has said in His Word because that involves real effort and sometimes a lot of work. The important thing to remember is that Jesus made all of the promises to those that would be willing to make that kind of commitment. So knowing the truth that sets one free from intellectual bondage is not automatic upon salvation.

3. Be Disciples and Know the Truth

The Greek word that was translated "disciples" in the above passage, *mathetes*, means pupil or learner. The ongoing quest for knowledge about God in His Word is the clear mark of a true believer. In the university, a student must commit to study and a disciplined lifestyle to gain knowledge. Jesus used those same adjectives to describe the people that will be His most devoted followers. They, too, will have to be committed to learning. In their case it will be learning more about Him.

Interestingly, John 8:31-32 presents the same truth as II Timothy 2:15, which was just discussed above. In the former passage, Jesus talked about His followers continuing in His word in pursuit of more knowledge about Him. In the latter passage, the Apostle Paul presented the same image of the diligent student

studying His Word to learn more about the Lord. When the people of God study the Word of God, they are approved of by God. They are good workers that can rightly divide His Word. They are people that understand many of the truths of the Bible. They are constantly learning more about their freedom in Christ. Therefore, studying and continuing to study the Word of God more deeply produces a win, win, win, win outcome for the believer.

It must be stated, however, that salvation is not just a matter of studying or not studying the Bible. The person that has entered into a salvation relationship with God but does not commit to studying His word with the same diligence and discipline as described above by Jesus and Paul will still be set free from the eternal penalty of their sin. But he or she will be like the graduate in the earlier example that had graduated last in their class. Such an individual will still be part of the graduation ceremony. But they will not be able to enjoy the same benefits as those that had worked harder and learned more. Their lack of a deeper knowledge about God will greatly reduce the joy that they could have had if only they had taken His Word more seriously. Thus, the conclusions are obvious. Studying the Bible does not save an unsaved person and failing to study the Bible does not un-save a saved person. But according to Jesus concerning those that are already in a relationship with Him, continuing in the diligent study of His Word means the difference between being a disciple and not. It also means the difference between knowing and not knowing the truth about God that sets the sinner saint free.

The fifth and final key word in the current passage is "truth". It was translated from the Greek word, *aletheia*. It means to have an understanding of those things that apply to the Lord. According to Jesus, having that kind of understanding is a direct result of continuing in His word. The faithful, diligent student of God's Word will possess spiritual knowledge and have positional confidence. He or she will know the truth about the Lord (knowledge) and

because of that they will also have a real sense of their personal freedom from their intellectual bondage (positional).

4. The Real Payoff for Continuing in His Word

What many people may not realize is that something magical happens to a saint once he or she commits to diligently studying the Bible. After the first time studying through the whole Bible, the person will probably recognize many of the more popular true Bible stories, like Noah and the Ark, David and Goliath, Daniel in the lion's den, and many, many more. After the second time through the whole Bible, the individual will probably be surprised by how much was missed or forgotten since the first time through. Then, after the third and even more times through, the magic rises to even higher levels because the saint will actually begin to know and understand the Lord more deeply than ever.

He or she will not have to ponder so much over what is right or wrong or even over what the Lord wants and expects from those that follow Him. They will have greater understanding when it comes to issues like the five points of Calvinism, and they will be better able to know the heart of God when it comes to dealing with such matters. Therefore, one of the very special rewards of long-term, consistent Bible study is that the person actually begins to know the Lord in a very personal way. That is a benefit that greatly outweighs anything else that this life has to offer.

In conclusion, the important message of John 8:31-32 is that a person can actually do something to know biblical truth, and that is a very good reason for not treating the Bible like just another book. The Word of God provides answers to all of the important issues of life; that of human origin, one's purpose in life, and an individual's final destination after being separated from this life. Bible truth is an important commodity that should not be taken for granted. According to Jesus, it can only be acquired by the disciplined, diligent study of the Bible by one that has already believed on Him. Therefore, the second guiding principle for

seeking the truth in spiritual matters is to add even more studying and even deeper studying to one's initial studying. The person that follows that simple prescription will find the Lord's blessings on all aspects of his or her life.

c. The Third Guiding Principle Is Telling Others

After studying and continuing to study the Bible even more deeply, the third guiding principle for seeking the truth in spiritual matters is telling others. The two passages that were discussed above, II Timothy 2:15 and John 8:31-32, yield positive results for the believer. In the first passage, studying the Bible provides evidence that one has been approved unto God and shows them to be a good worker that can rightly divide the Word. In the second passage, continuing to study the Bible more deeply turns the believer into a disciple, teaches him or her more and deeper Bible truths, and sets them free from their intellectual bondage.

All of the returns from those first two principles are positive for the believer. But the third principle is to always be ready to tell others about their hope in the Lord. That is an outward action that benefits the hearer. While that principle is less involved with digging the truth out of the Bible than the others, it is still important for the serious follower of God. According to the Apostle Peter, godly people should have the God-given desire of wanting to help others satisfy their own spiritual needs. In I Peter 3:15, he wrote, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:" The key words in that verse are sanctify, always, asketh, and reason.

1. Sanctify the Lord God in Your Hearts

The Greek word that was translated "sanctify" in that verse is *hagiazō*. It means to separate oneself from profane things and be dedicated to the Lord. God honors diligent study and is honored and glorified by the faithful student of His

Word. He can remove any obstacles that might hinder the discovery of truth, and He very often does. The Apostle Peter encouraged his readers to put the Lord first in all things and to not be fearful of what their adversaries could do to them. He believed that a person whose life had been dedicated to the Lord would learn to see every circumstance as an opportunity to share the gospel. For that person even the most severe consequences would not seem as bad.

2. Be Ready Always to Give an Answer to Those that Ask

The Greek word for "always" in the above verse is *aei*. It means perpetually and incessantly. Consistent with the word "sanctify," the dedicated believer will be incessantly or perpetually ready to share his or her faith in Christ with others. Such a person will be a true servant of the Lord rather than an imitator.

The Greek word (*aiteo*) for "asketh" is more in the sense of an apologetic or a defense of the Faith than a simple inquiry. The Apostle Peter anticipated enemies for the church and thought that it was important for dedicated believers to be able to verbally express their beliefs against such attacks. Thus, when a saint follows Peter's admonition, he or she will gain a better understanding of the important truths of the Bible simply because of his or her having articulated them so often. For that reason, sharing with others is the third way for a person to get on and stay on the path to Bible truth.

The Greek word for "reason" in the above verse is *logos*. It is the same word used in John 8:31-32 for the Word. In those verses, the reference was to the Word of God. But in this verse, the word is more in the sense of offering a word of encouragement or offering an explanation. People will sometimes notice that someone in a relationship with the Lord seems to be different, in a positive way. So the apostle thought that those times would prompt the kinds of questions that the faithful, dedicated saint should always be prepared to answer.

d. The Four Criteria for Showing Calvinism (TULIP) Wrong

How does someone really show the five points of Calvinism to be wrong? To begin with, a person must diligently study the Bible because the Lord always blesses the diligent student of His Word. Then, he or she must continue to study the Bible even more deeply and more prayerfully and always be ready to share his or her hope in the Lord with others. But in addition to practicing those three principles for finding Bible truth, the individual must also carefully consider each of the five points of Calvinism. From that, he or she then needs to develop some Bible-based criteria that can challenge each of those five points in a meaningful way.

Based on those steps, the four Bible-based criteria given below have been developed for showing that the beliefs of Calvinism are wrong. Those criteria do not try to force personal opinions but instead focus on presenting sound biblical instruction and giving a clearer picture of Bible truth. The criteria that have been created will not argue against Calvinism in the same way as most such arguments. Instead, they will present salvation from a different perspective and show from the Bible how someone is really saved. They will consider the Lord's efforts in trying to bring everyone to Himself and even take into account His sovereignty. Remember that God is not the Author of confusion. So trying to understand how someone is really saved should not be all that confusing either.

Much of what will be presented in the following chapters will be somewhat new and surprising to many people. But that does not make any of it less true. The four criteria, which will be the subjects of chapters three through six, are as follows:

- (1) The Bible from which Calvinists derive their beliefs must show that the name of Jesus is not required for salvation. The reason is because a great many people throughout history and even at this current time have had and now have absolutely no knowledge of Him. Therefore, it becomes important to show that a

person can be saved without having any direct knowledge of the Lord.

(2) The Bible must demonstrate that God has probably always been mostly silent since the early days in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. This point is critically important because it shows that the Lord has not shown partiality or favoritism towards any people or one person. For example, if He spoke out loud to Abram, Noah, and Moses but not to everyone else that lived during their times, then that would show clear favoritism on His part towards those men.

(3) The Bible must demonstrate that God has always tried equally hard to save everyone, which of course argues directly against the idea that He has ever chosen anyone to a particular eternal destiny. Abram was saved, and his father, Terah, probably was not. But it must be shown from the Bible that the Lord had wanted to save both of them and that He had tried equally hard to do so.

(4) The Bible must support the notion that the Lord can retain His sovereignty while still allowing for a person's free will choice concerning their salvation. This final criterion is especially important because the whole premise behind Calvinism is that God will not give up His sovereignty by letting a person decide for himself or herself about being saved or not saved.

Once those criteria have been presented and defended, the final part of this Bible-based argument against Calvinism will be to examine those key verses from chapter one that are typically used to support the five points and then to determine what they really mean. Throughout this study, the focus will be on understanding what the Bible is really saying about the various topics being discussed.

e. One General Truth and One Specific Truth to Carry Forward

Two important truths that have been derived from these first two chapters must be presented before going forward because both are significant. The first is that generations can build upon the knowledge of earlier generations. The second is that Bible truth has always been true, even before it is spoken or written and

even if it is never spoken or written. Both points are important and both will be discussed below.

1. General Truth: Finding the Truth Is a Building Process

Pastor Calvin was a well regarded theologian and pastor in the sixteenth century. But the thesis of this study is that his beliefs about predestination and election (TULIP) were wrong. His problem as much as anything, though, was that he was most likely born too soon. Knowledge builds upon knowledge. So, he did not have the benefit of as many generations of that knowledge-building process behind him as people living today. Those living today can benefit from whatever knowledge has been developed since the beginning of time. While he also had that same benefit, he still missed out on all the new discoveries that have been found after his life on earth was over. In another five hundred years, if the Lord tarries, people at that time will be able to look back in time to these days and make the same assertion about this generation because of the new discoveries that have not yet been made.

Thus, every generation is potentially smarter than the one before simply because of the previous generation's level of knowledge. In the pursuit of more knowledge, one generation can begin where the previous generation left off. It took the early church about three hundred years of building upon the knowledge of previous generations to finally identify the canon. Yet most people in this generation do not even know anything about the canon or about the early rigors of trying to decide what writings should and should not go into the Bible. It took a few hundred more years after that for them to build upon the knowledge of previous generations to the point that they could understand the Trinity. Yet most people today take for granted their knowledge of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as three Persons in One. Some of the most important Bible truths that people freely accept today were difficult and complex theological problems for many of the earlier generations.

The simple fact is that people have always been able to increase their knowledge by building upon the knowledge of earlier generations. That means that this study is possible only because about five hundred years ago a man named John Calvin expressed his beliefs about the biblical doctrines of predestination and election. Therefore, while the goal of this study might be to present a Bible-based argument against what he believed, it is definitely not meant to be a witch hunt against him or against his efforts to find the truth. When he stands before the Lord to give an account of his life, he will almost certainly not have reason to hold his head any lower than anyone else. As this study continues, the goal will be to add new knowledge to existing knowledge rather than to simply restate that knowledge that already exists.

2. Specific Truth: The Eternality of Bible Truth

An interesting observation drawn from John 8:31-32 is that Jesus made some very specific promises to those believing Jews that would continue in His Word. But He did not say anything one way or the other about those in the crowd that were not believers, and that leads to a very curious question about the saints that had lived before His Incarnation. People living before Jesus was born into an earthly body would not have known anything about Him in a physical sense. So they could not possibly have believed on Him. Was John 8:31-32 true for them, too, even though it had not yet been spoken or written, or were those words only true for the New Testament saints that have lived since the Incarnation? That same question can be expressed a little differently by asking when truth actually becomes true.

The answer is that the words spoken by Jesus on that day were true for all saints whether they entered into a salvation relationship with God before or after the Incarnation. This new concept, which is being called the eternity of Bible truth, makes the following claim. What Jesus told those people on that day was the truth because the truth about theological matters is true before it is spoken or

written and even if it is never spoken or written. When He spoke those words to them, none of the New Testament had yet been written. So all they had available to them was the Old Testament. But that was clearly enough for them because otherwise they could not have followed His instructions, known the truth, and been set free from their intellectual bondage.

The Old Testament saints living before and even after the Incarnation would have been able to learn about the Lord in a spiritual sense by studying whatever amount of the Old Testament was available to them. Remember that the Holy Spirit is the real Teacher. So their studying whatever was available to them would have produced in them the same or very similar results as the whole Bible does for the New Testament saints. They may not have had access to or known all of the doctrinal details that are given in the New Testament. But they would have still known all that they needed to know about the Lord. The author of Psalm 119 knew the revealed truth about God. He would have lived about one thousand years before the Incarnation of Jesus. In Psalm 119:151, he wrote, "Thou art near, O LORD; and all thy commandments are truth."

To develop an irrefutable Bible-based argument against Calvinism, this concept about Bible truth always being true will be used many times. It is very simple. It is very important. It should be easy for anyone to accept. Every word of the Scriptures that pertains to the truth about matters of theology is true before it is spoken or written and even if it is never spoken or written. To deny that is to deny that the saints living before the Incarnation could have ever known the truth and been set free in accordance with John 8:31-32.

This concept is even clearer when considering something like the Trinity. The three Persons of the Godhead were present at Creation (Genesis 1:1-2 and Colossians 1:16). They are eternal and real. But no one understood anything about Them as three Persons in One until about fifteen hundred years ago. As a Bible truth, the theological facts about the Trinity and Their roles have always been true despite the fact that nothing was known or understood about Them for

many centuries. Thus, Bible truth does not have to have been discovered to be true.

f. A Final Word before Beginning

The Lord gives knowledge, truth, and blessings to those that study His Word, to those that continue to study His Word even more deeply, and to those that are committed to telling others. While being a diligent student of the Bible and even a continuing student of the Bible does not guarantee that a person will always be correct in his or her theology, it does at least entitle the individual to have more than just a "think-so" or "believe-so" opinion. In the chapters that follow, the four Bible-based criteria that were listed above will be presented and rigorously defended. Many of the conclusions will be based on the original Hebrew and Greek words because a return to the Bible's original languages is almost always beneficial.

In addition, two new words need to be defined because they will also set the tone for the entire study. The first, exegesis, means to try to pull the intended meaning out of a Bible passage. The second, isogesis, means to read the Bible with the desire, either intentional or unintentional, to make it say what the person wants it to say. The intent of this study has been and will continue to be to always do good exegesis and to never be guilty of trying to make the Bible say something that it is not really saying.



Chapter 3 – CRITERION ONE: The Name of Jesus Not Needed

Many people that truly get saved go to church, hear a gospel message, go forward after a sermon, and repeat a prayer asking Jesus to forgive them for their sins and to save them. But in considering what it takes to get saved, one should begin by identifying the LEAST that a person must know for getting right with the Lord. That leads to the first criterion, which is to show from the Bible that the name of Jesus is not needed for salvation.

All knowledge has value, but exactly how much knowledge does one really need to get saved? Does a person to get saved have to be in a church? Does a person to get saved have to hear a gospel message? Does a person to get saved have to go forward in a church after a sermon is preached? Does a person to get saved have to repeat a special prayer asking Jesus to forgive him or her for their sins and to save them? The answer to all of those questions is No. In fact, a careful study of the Bible, comparing Scriptures with Scriptures, will show that a person to get saved does not even have to know the literal name of Jesus.

In showing that to be true, the meaning of true salvation will be considered. How to establish a salvation relationship with God will be presented. The similarity of salvation for Old Testament and New Testament saints will be discussed. Examples of four Old Testament Gentile saints will be shared. Finally, some key salvation-related Bible passages that pertain directly to Jesus will be examined. But first, one must see what true salvation is not.

a. What True Salvation Is Not

To understand what true salvation is, one should start by seeing a couple of things that it is not. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave

his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That verse is often quoted to tell someone about God's salvation plan. As a result, many people focus on the middle of the verse and quickly conclude that salvation means a simple belief in the existence of God's only begotten Son. When asked about their personal salvation, many times they will even respond by saying that they believe in God or in Jesus.

But the Apostle John was not trying to connect true salvation with a simple belief in Jesus' existence. If he had been saying that salvation only meant believing in the existence of God or Jesus, then according to James, the half-brother of Jesus, even the devils would have been saved. James 2:19 says, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." Thus, John 3:16 and James 2:19 appear to be contradictory. But that is impossible since every word of God's Word is true and correct. Both verses are correct. Both say exactly what the Holy Spirit wants them to say. Therefore, one must conclude that salvation is more and different than what one gets from just casually reading John 3:16.

Salvation also is not about jumping through hoops trying to appease a God that cannot be easily satisfied. People cannot simply be their best and obtain true salvation. Put differently, being saved is not about doing good works, not doing bad works, or trying in some other way to work one's way to heaven. Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." The Bible is clear when it says that all people are sinners and equally clear when it says that they cannot acquire salvation by trying to be as good as possible. Salvation is not even about going to church every time the doors are open although truly saved people will almost always want to be part of a local church assembly and faithful to that assembly. The concept of faithfully worshipping with like believers is as simple

as birds of a feather wanting to flock together. So then, true salvation is different than just believing in God and it is not based on good works.

b. Bible Salvation Is a Personal Relationship with God

Having seen those two things that salvation is not, one can now consider the truth about what it really means to be saved. The Bible is a difficult Book. But with help from the Holy Spirit and some individual effort, a person can see what the Bible means when it talks about being eternally right with God. True salvation is not working down a checklist of things to do or not do or even about going through a list of things to believe or not believe. The optimum word that best describes true salvation is relationship. Truly saved people are in a salvation relationship with the Lord.

Although many passages from the Bible will verify that point, the relationship aspect of true salvation can easily be seen by examining one Bible verse and one Bible passage. The verse is I Thessalonians 5:17, which says "Pray without ceasing." Prayer involves a conversation with God and a conversation with Him that does not have to cease suggests a relationship with Him that does not have to cease. The passage is found in Exodus 3:11-12. It says "And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain." God and Moses were communicating with each other. That shows that they were actively involved in a relationship with each other. Not only that, but all the prayers of all the Old Testament and New Testament saints show that the Lord was and is actively involved in salvation relationships with all of those that were communicating with Him. Active communications always prove active relationships.

Therefore, rather than talking about a simple belief in Jesus as the only begotten Son of God, John 3:16 is talking more about having a relationship with the God that created the world. To that end, Ephesians 2:8-9 is teaching that that relationship is established with God as a result of His grace and the believer's faith. The Bible teaches in Hebrews 12:2 that Jesus is the Author and Finisher of God's salvation plan. Those titles are true and accurate. But a person does not have to know that He is the Author and Finisher of one's faith to be saved. Like so much of the Christian walk, that kind of information usually comes later as the newborn child of God studies the Bible and grows spiritually.

c. Establishing a Personal Relationship with God

A salvation relationship between God and an individual is established when the following three salvation criteria are met.

- (1) The person recognizes that God exists.
- (2) In recognizing their own inadequacy, the person next realizes that he or she needs God for something very important that another source cannot provide.
- (3) Then, after understanding the first two salvation criteria, the person earnestly and sincerely seeks the Lord by faith with their whole heart.

Knowing about Jesus helps a person better understand the salvation process. But knowledge about Him does not have to come before salvation. As was stated earlier, all knowledge has value. But one does not need to possess all knowledge to get right with the Lord. The two Bible passages presented below demonstrate the above three salvation criteria and also emphasize the minimum of what a person MUST know and do to get saved. But obtaining salvation is not as complicated or as difficult as one might think. Actually, the two passages are very similar. One was given to the people that lived before Jesus. The other was given to those that have lived after Him.

Jeremiah 29:12-13 says, "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." That passage was given to the children of Israel just before they went into Babylonian captivity. It teaches an important Bible truth that applies to everyone. God wants to be found. But He will only be found by those that earnestly and sincerely seek Him with their whole heart, where earnestly and sincerely mean that nothing is more important to that individual at that time than finding the Lord. The second passage, which was given to those after Jesus, is Romans 10:13 and it says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Both passages show the same basic path for being in a right relationship with God. But neither requires that the person actually know the literal name of Jesus.

The Greek word translated "name" in Romans 10:13 is *onoma*. It means everything about the person rather than just his or her personal name. It can also be used literally or figuratively. Thus, in the context of the above verse, the word "name" would suggest believing something about the Lord's person or character. An individual could simply believe that He is the Creator of the world and everything that is in it. He or she could believe in something like His excellence and greatness or even that He rewards those that diligently seek Him. But that Greek word alone does not demand that the person actually know the literal name of Jesus. Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Thus, the key to salvation is seeking God by faith with one's whole heart, and that is it.

So what does a person need to know and what shape will their life usually be in for them to earnestly and sincerely seek or call upon the Lord with their whole heart? Very simply, upon believing in His existence, he or she must next want to be in a salvation relationship with Him or at least sense a need for His help, which was the second salvation criterion stated above. Along those lines,

the common thread in probably every instance of salvation is and always has been repentance. A person will feel guilty, inadequate, and condemned for their sins. So they earnestly and sincerely seek the Lord by faith with all their heart, ask for His forgiveness, and then as a natural response to what has supernaturally happened in their heart, turn from their sinful lifestyle. Any extra knowledge or understanding that the person may have had beforehand about the plan of salvation or about Jesus is a bonus but not a necessity. Luke 18:13 says, "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."

d. Salvation Before and After Christ

Some might think that Old Testament saints and New Testament saints were and are saved differently. But that conclusion does not follow logically. The way of salvation has always been the same all the way back to Adam and Eve. All saints, whether Old Testament or New Testament, will someday share the same eternity in the same place called heaven. They all were or will have been saved by the same God that never changes (Hebrews 13:8). Therefore, because He never changes, it only makes sense that He has not changed His way for reconciling people to Himself, either.

The only thing that has changed is that throughout history the Lord has revealed more and more about Himself. Therefore, later generations naturally have had access to more knowledge about Him than the earliest saints. But the same faith that saved the very first saint is still enough to save the very last saint that will be saved. That being true, the amount of knowledge held by that first saint is enough for anyone to be saved. If the very first saint did not have to know the literal name of Jesus, the gospel, or even God's plan of salvation to get saved, then the very last saint will not have to know those things to get saved, either. That is only logical. However, knowledge of that fact does not diminish or

eliminate the importance of Jesus' death on the cross. It also does not diminish or eliminate the atoning power of His shed blood.

Jesus' death on the cross is still and always has been the only vehicle by which people that earnestly and sincerely seek God by faith with all their heart are saved. Theologians frequently say that people before Jesus looked forward in time to the cross and that those after Him have looked back in time to the cross. But just as the earliest saints did not understand that their Messiah would someday die on a cross to pay for their sins, the later saints do not have to know or understand that, either. Through the years, knowledge about God has increased and with more knowledge comes greater assurance and responsibility. However, greater assurance and responsibility are the extent of it. The eternal reality of the saved person today will be the same as that of the very first person saved whether the person today possesses that increased knowledge or not.

e. Four Old Testament Examples of Gentile Salvation

People are not saved or lost based upon their intellectual knowledge. They are saved or lost based upon their response to God's revelation of Himself. The publican in Luke 18:13 was saved because he knew that he could not settle the sin question between God and himself. So he fell on his face and asked the Lord for mercy. The Bible never says anything about that man's intellectual knowledge, only that he responded properly when he became aware of his sinful condition. Similarly, the Old Testament provides at least four examples of other people that got saved with very limited intellectual knowledge of spiritual things. They were not Jewish. They almost certainly did not know anything about a coming Messiah or about His death on the cross. But in their own way, each completed the three salvation criteria stated above and each established their own salvation relationship with God.

The first Gentile is Rahab. Joshua 2:11-12 says, "And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage

in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath. Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token." In that passage, Rahab was talking to the two spies that were on a reconnaissance mission for Joshua. She told them how the people in Jericho were afraid because they knew that the children of Israel were coming to destroy them and their town. In her own words, she acknowledged that the Israeli God was and is the one true God. She hid the spies from the townspeople. But before they left she expressed a desire to be numbered with God's people.

She could have made a variety of different choices. But she chose instead to seek refuge with the Lord. Jeremiah 29:12-13 had not even been written at that time. But the eternity of Bible truth still applied. In her own way she was seeking the Lord by faith with her whole heart. The result is that she was saved. Hebrews 11:31 says, "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace." She had not earned her salvation by hiding the spies. She had gained it when she sought the Lord with all her heart. The evidence for her genuine conversion was that she knew that the Lord is the God of heaven above and of the earth below.

The second Gentile is Ruth. Ruth 1:16 says, "And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." Ruth was a Moabite, and her mother-in-law, named Naomi, was Jewish. Ruth's husband had died. So she did not have a place or future with Naomi or with the Jewish people. But at a time when they might have gone their separate ways, Ruth chose to forsake her Moabite heritage and become part of her mother-in-law's people. She also proclaimed that the God of Naomi was her God. So she made a conscious choice to seek the Lord with all her heart. She later married a Jewish man named Boaz. Her great-grandson was David, and he grew

up to be king of Judah and a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). According to Matthew 1:5, both Rahab and Ruth were direct ancestors of Jesus.

The third Gentile is Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel 4:34 says, "And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation." Nebuchadnezzar was a very wicked king in Babylon. But he went through a period when he was literally almost like an animal. He was driven from other people. He ate grass like oxen. He apparently lived outside. His hair and fingernails grew to exceedingly great lengths. But after that time had ended, he acknowledged that the Israeli God was the one true God. Furthermore, he praised and honored Him. Like Rahab and Ruth, the Bible does not literally say that he was saved. But his testimony and actions after his time in the wilderness showed that his attitude had become very much like that of any other true believer. Clearly he was better off mentally and spiritually after the Lord had finished dealing with him than he had been before.

The fourth Gentile or Gentiles were the king of Nineveh and the Nineveh people, respectively. Jonah 3:8 says, "But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands." When the prophet Jonah told that very wicked king and his people that divine destruction was headed their way, they repented of their evil ways and declared a time of praying and fasting for all of Nineveh. Their corporate attitude reflected a genuine repentance and earnest seeking of the Lord by faith. Those actions alone, when truly sincere, show how a person behaves when he or she has entered into or is entering into a salvation relationship with God. A further proof of their sincerity is that the Lord did not immediately destroy them or their town.

f. Two Observations in John 6:44 and John 14:6-7

Two interesting observations relating to a person's salvation arise from one verse and one passage in the Gospel of John. Either of them might seem to suggest that some knowledge of Jesus is necessary for salvation. But in reality they actually lead to some other critically important Bible truths.

The verse is John 6:44. It says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." That verse says that people can only come to Jesus or enter into a salvation relationship with Him when God the Father draws them. John 6:44 is often used by Calvinists to suggest that the Lord does not choose to draw everyone. But observation number one is that their conclusion does not necessarily follow. The verse does not say or even suggest that the Lord is not trying to draw everyone. It only infers that God the Father initiates the invitation in His own time and that the invitation may or may not be ongoing.

The passage is John 14:6-7. It says, "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him." The above verse talks about coming to the Son when drawn by the Father. The above passage talks about coming to the Father through the Son. Is a person trying to come to the Father or trying to come to the Son? Those two passages reflect the perplexing question about whether the chicken or the egg came first. But actually, the passage answers that question when it quotes Jesus as saying, in essence, to know the Father is to know the Son and to know the Son is to know the Father.

The simple theological fact, which is also the second observation, is that coming to One is exactly the same as coming to the Other. God the Father and God the Son are first and second Persons of the same Trinity or Godhead, respectively. According to the verse, God the Father draws the person to God the

Son. Then, according to the passage, the person completes coming to God the Father through God the Son.

According to Romans 5:8, God the Son is the Vehicle that allows the person to come to God the Father. That verse says, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." God the Son's finished work on the cross at Calvary is crucial to a person's salvation because it provided the way. But knowing His literal name or even that He died on a cross is not required information for coming to God the Father. A person does not have to know the name of the person that built the engine in their car to drive their car. Similarly, an individual does not have to know the literal name of Jesus or that He died on the cross to enter into a salvation relationship with God the Father.

g. Some Time-Related Questions to Consider

Because people living today have always had the whole Bible available to them, many individuals naturally think that all people throughout time have always had the whole Bible available to them, too. But that simply is not true. Therefore, some difficult questions can be asked based on what information was available to whom and when that information might have become required knowledge for salvation.

The below questions are not meant to be taken seriously as much as they are meant to show the absurdity of requiring people to know a certain amount of information prior to entering into a salvation relationship with the Lord. How much and how soon would a person have to know immediately before and after Jesus died on the cross? Thinking about those kinds of time-related issues can produce some very hard questions to answer. Scholars differ concerning the exact year. But Jesus' death is generally believed to have been around 30-33 AD. So here are a few extremely difficult and maybe impossible questions to consider.

(1) The Gospel of John was not written until around 85-90 AD. So in what year or at what time would John 3:16, John 6:44, and John 14:6-7 have become true, effective, and necessary knowledge for salvation?

(2) Similarly, the Book of Romans was not written until around 56-57 AD. So when would Romans 3:23 and Romans 10:13 have become true, effective, and necessary knowledge for salvation?

(3) Canonization of the whole Bible was not completed until about three hundred years after Christ's death, so when would an understandable knowledge about Jesus have become necessary for salvation?

To express those questions a little differently, how would a person have been saved one minute before Jesus died on the cross? How would a person have been saved one minute after His resurrection? Most people do not ask questions like these. But they are critically important to consider if a person is going to truly understand biblical salvation. The only possible answer to all of the above questions is that ALL of the verses mentioned above have ALWAYS been true even though they were not actually written until well after the earthly sojourn of Jesus. As was shared in chapter two, "Specific Truth: The Eternality of Bible Truth", that is what is meant by the eternity of Bible truth.

Because Jesus is eternal, those verses were even true before He was incarnated and even before their meanings were well understood. As the eternity of Bible truth states, theological truth does not have to be written or spoken to be true. John 3:16 has always been true, just as Romans 3:23 and Romans 10:13 have always been true. John 1:1-3 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." Jesus was the written Word before it was written, and the written Word was Jesus before He was incarnated. The fact that every word of the Bible pertaining to theology was true even before it was written

becomes one more way to know for sure that knowledge of Jesus' literal name was not and is not a requirement for salvation.

In recognizing that the New Testament Bible passages which connect Jesus and salvation have always been true, one can begin to realize that Noah was really saved by the shed blood of Jesus even though he did not know anything about Him or about His dying on a cross. Abram or Abraham, as his name would later become, was also saved by that same shed blood even though he did not know anything about Jesus or about His dying on a cross. All of the Old Testament saints were saved by faith when they realized that there was a God that they needed and then they earnestly and sincerely sought Him with all their heart (Jeremiah 29:13). Seeking God earnestly and sincerely by faith with one's whole heart is how EVERYONE that enters into a salvation relationship with the Lord does it, and that is how it has always been. But in every case, it is the shed blood of Jesus that makes a person's salvation possible.

People have never been saved by their intellectual knowledge. Instead, every person that has ever gotten saved or that will ever get saved experiences a time in their life when they, like the publican in Luke 18:13, acknowledge their sinfulness and inadequacy, seek the Lord by faith with all their heart, and ask Him for mercy. Then, a divine change takes place in their heart and they are forever baptized into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:13). That simple, childlike approach to God brought salvation to the Old Testament saints. After Christ it has brought salvation to the New Testament saints. But at no time in history, including now, has knowledge of Jesus' literal name, the gospel, or of the plan of salvation been necessary for entering into a salvation relationship with God.

h. But What about Romans 10:9-10?

Romans 10:9-10 says, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead,

thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Some might argue that salvation, based on that passage, is confirmed by an audible confession by the individual that Jesus is Lord and that He has been raised from the dead. Another person might suggest that such knowledge about Jesus is required before a person can even get saved. But both arguments are wrong.

That passage, while presenting two important truths about Jesus, is merely an evidence of salvation rather than an actual requirement for salvation. If it were a requirement, then the person seeking salvation would be working their way to heaven instead of being saved by faith. Besides that, no unsaved person is even capable of believing that Jesus is Lord and that He has been raised from the dead because they are spiritual truths rather than knowledge-based truths. I Corinthians 2:14 says, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The conclusions are that only spirit-filled, saved people can truly believe those two facts about Jesus and that unsaved people can never give such a testimony.

The kind of faith to believe those facts about Jesus does not exist in the individual until after he or she is saved. Even then, that kind of statement cannot be made until after the saved person has been told or shown that Jesus is Lord and that He has been raised from the dead. The knowledge and acceptance of Romans 10:9-10 comes after salvation, not before. The likely scenario is that someone repents of their sin, seeks the Lord by faith with all their heart, and asks for forgiveness. Then, he or she is told that Jesus is Lord and that God has raised Him from the dead. If the person truly got saved, then he or she will accept and believe those incredible, unbelievable truths. Their acceptance will be an evidence of their genuine conversion. But if the person hesitates or is unwilling to believe Romans 10:9-10, then that is probably evidence that the person did not really get saved.

Another thing to consider is that Romans 10:9-10 does not say that a saved person MUST confess that Jesus is Lord and that God has raised Him from the dead to be saved. Since the passage is only an evidence of salvation and not a requirement, it should not be used to imply that someone unlearned about Jesus is not saved. The literal language says “if thou shall confess,” so emphasis must be placed on the word “if.” The verse does not apply to the person that has never been told about Jesus and has therefore never said anything about Him one way or the other. According to John 14:6-7, Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. But just like a person does not have to know who invented the first automobile to drive a car, a person also does not have to know those truths about Jesus to be saved.

Christianity is a growing and learning process. No one has full spiritual knowledge at the moment of salvation. I Peter 2:2 says, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." Christians grow and learn by studying and by continuing to study God's Word, which were principles one and two in the previous chapter. They grow and learn by being part of a local assembly where the gospel is preached and taught and by listening to the Holy Spirit as He illuminates the Scriptures. Then, and only then, will the newborn Christian be able to confess the truths about Jesus that are indicated in Romans 10:9-10.

i. The Conclusion concerning Criterion One

Therefore, the clear conclusion for criterion one is that knowing the literal name of Jesus is NOT a requirement for salvation. That fact constitutes adding new knowledge to existing knowledge because most people would not have normally believed it. As was pointed out earlier, though, all knowledge has value. But not all knowledge is necessary to achieve the desired end of entering into a personal, salvation relationship with God. Many people that lived before Jesus were saved without ever having had any idea that their salvation would someday

be consummated by the Lord's death on the cross. But God is omnipotent. He can save anyone at any time in any place once that person recognizes that He exists, that they need Him, and then when they earnestly and sincerely seek Him by faith with all their heart. Those truths are consistent with Jeremiah 29:13 and Romans 10:13 and they are confirmed by the other verses that have been referenced in this chapter.

Chapter 4 – CRITERION TWO: God Has Been Silent since Eden

Showing that the five points of Calvinism are wrong requires use of the four Bible-based criteria that were listed in chapter two, "The Four Criteria for Showing Calvinism (TULIP) Wrong." The first was to show from the Bible that the name of Jesus is not required knowledge for someone to establish a salvation relationship with God, and that was important. But showing His non-audible communications with ALL people since Adam and Eve is even more important because otherwise it will be impossible to prove that He has always been impartial towards everyone. A God that chooses to speak out loud only to those to whom He wishes to impart favor but does not speak out loud to everyone is clearly a god that shows favoritism. Therefore, this second criterion, which is to show the Lord's probable non-audible communications with ALL people since the Garden of Eden, is almost definitely the most important of the four.

To defend that proposition, His probable silence during Creation and the evidence that suggests His silence after the Garden of Eden will be considered, along with why the Garden of Eden seems most likely to be the last time that He might have ever spoken out loud to anyone. The focus will then shift to those to whom He did speak and to why those conversations were probably not out loud. As additional evidence, three Old Testament examples of probable non-audible conversations will be presented. Then, two additional Hebrew verbs that imply oral communications will be discussed. That will be followed by three New Testament passages that challenge the idea of non-audible communications in every instance. The chapter will be concluded with two closing thoughts.

a. God Might Have Been Silent at Creation

Genesis 1:3 says, "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." Most people, when they read or hear those words, automatically imagine a strong masculine voice coming out of darkness or out of a void saying out loud, "let there be light." Then, like a light bulb being clicked on, the light magically or supernaturally appeared. But is that really how it happened?

In the Old Testament, "God said" occurs forty-six times, and "The Lord said" occurs two hundred-and-three times. Each of those times the Hebrew verb, *'amar*, was used, and each time it was translated as "said." But that word can be translated in other ways than just "said." It can mean to answer, to tell, to command, or to think. It can even mean the simple silent utterance of saying in one's heart. The word, *'amar*, does not have to automatically mean that God spoke out loud at Creation just because it has been liberally translated throughout the Old Testament to imply oral conversations. In other words, when the King James translators came up with, "And God said", the original human author, who was Moses, might have really meant something like, "And God said in His heart" or "And God thought in His heart." The same conclusion also applies to those cases where the Old Testament says, "The Lord said."

An interesting point to consider about communications during Creation is to Whom God would have been speaking out loud. The Bible is clear when it says that all three Persons of the Godhead or Trinity were present (Genesis 1:1-2 and Colossians 1:16). But was it really necessary for God the Son to speak out loud to God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, or vice versa? The answer is No. While They might have had oral communications among Themselves, speaking out loud during Creation certainly would not have been necessary.

Each Person of the Godhead shares the same three comparative attributes of omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence. Those words mean that each One is all-knowing, has all-power, and is able to be everywhere at the same time. Thus, if God the Father knew that God the Son, or vice versa, was thinking let

there be light, then why would the one Person have to say out loud, "let there be light?" The only reasonable answer, based on the liberal translation of '*amar*' by the King James translators, is that They could have spoken out loud but doing so would not have been absolutely necessary or have even made the most sense. Even among people, it is common for one person to say to another that he or she knew what the other person was going to say before they said it.

Therefore, an all-knowing God would not have had to literally hear an out loud transmission from another Person of the Trinity to know what that Person was saying or thinking. Also, because no human beings were at Creation, the perceived need for out loud communications would not have been as great, either. So it is very possible and even plausible to conclude that the three Persons of the Trinity did not speak out loud to each other during Creation. The light probably just clicked on without a single audible word being spoken by anyone.

b. The Rationale for God's Silence after the Garden of Eden

The importance of the Lord's non-audible communications with ALL people after the Garden of Eden, as it pertains to a Bible-based argument against Calvinism, is very simple. If He has ever spoken out loud to even one person but has not spoken out loud to all people, then that one person would have been given a very clear advantage over others in trying to enter into a salvation relationship with Him. Therefore, to show that the Lord has not made the path to Himself any easier for some to traverse than for others, three points will be presented. First, He is not unfair, heartless, or uncaring. Second, He is not a Respector of persons. Third, He would never intentionally hinder the ability of those that were the so-called "chosen" to demonstrate their faith.

1. God Is Not Unfair, Heartless, or Uncaring

If God had spoken out loud to Noah about building the ark but did not speak out loud to the other people of those days, then clearly Noah would have

had an unfair advantage over the others in establishing a salvation relationship with his Creator. Similarly, if God had spoken out loud to Abram but did not speak out loud to his father, Terah, then clearly Abram received preferential treatment and also had an unfair advantage over his dad in personally knowing God.

In the same regard, if the Lord has through the ages selectively spoken out loud to some people but not to others, then His having done so would actually lend credence to the Calvinist position rather than refute it. Why is that? First, if He speaks out loud to someone, then He is intentionally initiating a relationship with that person while intentionally NOT initiating a relationship with those to whom He does not speak out loud. Second, if He speaks out loud to someone, then Calvinism is on target because it centers on God's sovereignty in His choosing those that will be saved and those that will be lost. Speaking out loud to one person but not to another constitutes the Lord's clear choice. That choice would be a first step towards the person's salvation relationship with Him.

If Calvinism is true, though, that suggests that the Lord's treatment of those that are "not chosen" is unfair, heartless, and uncaring. But the argument against His being any of those is the many Bible verses that speak about His love. Just to state a few, John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." I John 4:8 says, "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." Romans 5:8 says, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

In the first verse, the Apostle John commented on the extent of God's love. It was so great that He was willing to die on a cross for the sin of humanity. In the second verse, he wrote that God's children should be the very essence of love because that nature exemplifies the very essence of God. The apostle was telling his readers that they could love others indiscriminately because the Lord's love extends to all. In the third verse, the Apostle Paul wrote that God's love towards

humanity was so great that He made a way for ALL people to be reconciled to Himself.

Thus, the belief that the Lord's sovereignty would be carried to such an extreme that He would actually become unfair, heartless, and uncaring towards anyone does not harmonize well with His love for others and with the whole teaching of Scriptures. The conclusion, therefore, must be that He is fair with everyone and not unfair with anyone. He has a heart for others, and He truly cares about a person's eternal destiny. Because of those positive attitudes, it is highly unlikely that He would have ever spoken out loud to Noah, to Abram, or to any of the other Old Testament saints without speaking out loud to everyone. If He had, then the above positive attitudes would be phony and the above three verses would not be true.

2. God Is Not a Respector of Persons

The next point to consider is whether or not God showed favoritism to Noah, Abram, and the others by speaking out loud to them. The answer as alluded to above is No because He also is not a Respector of persons. James 2:1 says, "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons." If Calvinists are correct in saying that God chooses some people to be saved and others to be lost, then one would have great difficulty trying to understand and explain the meaning of James 2:1. Someone might respond by saying that the verse is only talking about followers of Christ not showing favoritism towards or against others based on their financial status. But that position minimizes the greater truth that God does not show favoritism to any person for any reason.

The Bible is full of verses that speak about the Lord's fairness in dealing with everyone. Deuteronomy 10:17 says, "For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward." II Samuel 14:14 says, "For we must needs die, and

are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him." Acts 10:34-35 says, "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."

Not only is God not a Respector of persons, but the Apostle Peter clearly said that He accepts everyone in every nation that has a reverential fear of Him. Notice that the working of righteousness comes after the reverential fear in that verse. That is because people are not saved by good works. But good works follow soon after salvation and are immediate evidence that someone truly has been saved (Ephesians 2:8-10). Therefore, the conclusion must be that God is not a Respector of persons. The eternity of Bible truth, which was defined in chapter two, "Specific Truth: The Eternality of Bible Truth", means that He never has been. So the Lord could not possibly have spoken out loud to Noah, to Abram, or to any of the other Old Testament saints at the exclusion of everyone else and still been considered not a Respector of persons.

3. God Would Never Hinder the Faith of the "Chosen"

The Lord presumably would never intentionally hinder someone's faith unless of course the five points of Calvinism are true. But if He spoke out loud in those instances in the Old Testament where the Hebrew verb 'amar was used, then that is exactly what He would have done even for those that most Calvinists would identify as the "chosen." How their faith would have been hindered is something that can be seen in the following three ways.

First, his or her faith would have been hindered in salvation. As was stated in chapter three, "Establishing a Personal Relationship with God", the first requirement for entering into a salvation relationship with the Lord is that the person must believe that He exists. That same requirement is also clearly spelled out in the Bible. Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without faith it is impossible to please

him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." The words translated "he is" in the phrase "must believe that he is" are formed from the third person singular form of the Greek verb that means "to be." Those words compare very closely with the words "I am" in John 8:58 and Exodus 3:14.

John 8:58 says, "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." Exodus 3:14 says, "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." The only difference in those uses of the same verb is that the writer of Hebrews was writing from his perspective, making God third person singular from a literary point of view. The other two passages were written from God's perspective, making Him first person singular from a literary point of view. The implied meaning of the verb "to be" in all three verses is that the person coming to God must believe that He exists and also that He is the self-existing first Cause that did not have a previous cause. To put that statement a little differently, the person coming to Him must believe that He exists and that He is the Creator.

But one cannot believe that God self-exists without first believing that He exists. Thus, if He had been speaking out loud to Noah, Abram, and the others when the Bible translators implied an oral conversation from the Hebrew verb, *'amar*, then He would have in effect been robbing them of the opportunity to exercise their faith, first in His existence and second in His self-existence. If two people are having an oral conversation, then neither person requires faith to believe that the other person exists. So based on Hebrews 11:6, John 8:58, and Exodus 3:14, neither Noah, Abram, nor any of the others to whom God was supposedly speaking out loud could have ever pleased Him by their faith. Their coming to Him would have been based more on their audible knowledge of His existence than on their faith that He exists.

The second way that the hearer's faith would have been hindered is by what he or she would have been able to perceive. An important condition of faith, as pointed out in Scriptures, is that it requires a person to believe that which is not seen rather than that which is seen. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The Greek word translated as "seen" in that verse is *blepo*. It literally means to discern or have the power of seeing. But it can also mean to perceive by the senses, to feel, or to know by experience.

Therefore, Hebrews 11:1 does not automatically limit the evidence for one's faith to only what an individual does or does not see with their eyes. It also takes into account what he or she perceives by their senses, what they feel, and what they experience. It can even include what they hear. Thus, the latter part of the above verse could easily have been translated something like, "the evidence of things not seen, not heard, or otherwise discerned." So when a person exercises saving faith in God based on Hebrews 11:1, he or she is NOT coming to Him based on seen, heard, or otherwise discerned evidence. Their coming to Him is based on something that is happening in their heart and on that alone. So unless Hebrews 11:1 is untrue, Noah, Abram, and all of the others would also have had to come to Him based on a similar tugging in their heart. Furthermore, that tugging could not have been hindered by seen, heard, or otherwise discerned evidence.

The third way that audible communications with God would hinder the hearer's faith is in the matter of risk-taking. Exercising one's faith in a God that one does not see or hear audibly makes a person very vulnerable. It also involves risk and taking a chance on being wrong. If Noah did not hear an audible voice from God in Genesis 6:13-17 telling him to build an ark, then imagine the personal risk of humiliation, embarrassment, and failure that he was taking when he acted on a silent voice that he had only sensed or felt in his heart. Similarly, other saints like Abram and Moses would have also been taking great risks when

they acted based solely on what they were feeling in their heart. The prophets, too, would have been especially vulnerable to error if they were not hearing an audible voice from above.

But that is the very essence of faith. It is highly unlikely that the Lord would have taken away the opportunities for those saints to demonstrate their faith by engaging in audible conversations. Faith is the substance of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen, heard, or otherwise discerned. In the years since the Incarnation of Christ, saints have always had to demonstrate their faith by acting on a non-audible call to preach, to become a missionary, or to perform some other task for the Lord based solely on what they were sensing in their heart. So there is every reason to believe that Noah, Abram, the prophets, and all the other Old Testament saints would have also been required to do the same. But once again, that is the very essence of faith. John 10:27 says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

If one considers the eternity of Bible truth and accepts the likelihood of non-audible communications between the Garden of Eden and the Incarnation of Christ, then it provides greater understanding to passages like Genesis 12:1-3. That passage says, "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." If communications between God and Abram were non-audible, then Abram would not have heard the Lord's voice out loud telling him to get out of his country. Instead, as one of God's sheep (John 10:27), he would have only felt that inner voice or leading in his heart telling him what to do, and he did it. What an incredible amount of faith he would have demonstrated if he were only acting on God's silent leading rather than on an audible command.

The conditional aspects of faith were not any different before or after the Incarnation. People that lived before Jesus' physical birth would have had to trust in the Lord and His promises based on evidence not seen, heard, or otherwise discerned just like those that have lived after Him (Hebrews 11:1). Therefore, it is reasonable and plausible to believe that Noah, Abram, and all the other Old Testament saints also faced the same challenges of trying to believe in and live for a God that they could not see or hear. That being the case, God has probably always been silent or mostly silent since the Garden of Eden so as not to hinder the faith of the very people that the Calvinists would have called the "chosen."

c. Why Is the Garden of Eden so Important?

If God has been mostly silent, then the next concern focuses on exactly when He might have stopped speaking out loud to people or if He ever did speak out loud to them. The fact that He may have been silent at Creation has already been established. But did He ever speak out loud to Adam and Eve or to any of the other people that followed? The answer is maybe He did. His conversation with the first humans in Genesis 3:9-17 involved more than one person at the same time. So He probably did speak out loud to them. Adam and Eve probably also saw Him with their eyes because Genesis 3:8 says that He was walking through the Garden. But if those verses are true, and of course they are, then when did He stop speaking out loud and stop being visible? The most logical answer is immediately after Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden.

The Bible provides an interesting clue to support that statement. Hebrews 11:4 says, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh." Interestingly, the author of Hebrews 11:4 began naming the heroes of the Faith with Abel rather than with Adam and Eve. He could have written, based on Genesis 3:21, that Adam and Eve by faith had accepted God's covering for their sin. But for some reason, the Holy Spirit did

not lead him to do so. Were they left out of that chapter because they had sinned in the Garden? Probably not since all people, including Abel, are sinners.

A more reasonable answer is that Adam and Eve had heard God's audible voice while in the Garden. So they had not been afforded the same opportunity to demonstrate their faith as someone living after the Garden of Eden that had not heard any audible words from the Lord. Abel was identified as the first hero of the Faith because he had acted solely on what he was feeling in his heart rather than on what he was seeing with his eyes or hearing with his ears. Adam and Eve were not included because they knew by evidence seen, heard, or otherwise discerned that God existed and that He is self-existing. Thus, passages like Genesis 3:9-17 and verses like John 10:27, Hebrews 11:1, Hebrews 11:6, and James 2:1 all present a very strong case for believing that God began being non-audible with those that lived after the Garden of Eden.

d. Those to Whom God Spoke

As was stated earlier, the Bible records two hundred and forty-nine instances where the King James translators used the wording, "God said" or "The Lord said." Most of those involved one-on-one conversations between God and one person. That is consistent with what one would normally expect with non-audible conversations. It also becomes one more form of evidence that God has been mostly or completely silent with people since the Garden of Eden. He does not speak audibly or appear visibly to His saints today. So there is no reason to believe or automatically assume that He ever did.

When looking at the two hundred and forty-nine instances where the original Hebrew was translated "God said" or "The Lord said," it is interesting to note to whom He was speaking (see Table 1). In the Old Testament, only one hundred and seventy-eight times was He speaking to human beings and only eight of those times was He possibly speaking to more than one person at a time. Twice He was speaking to Adam and Eve, twice He was speaking to Moses and

Aaron, and four times He was speaking to the children of Israel. Twice He spoke to a man named Rabshakeh. But those two instances are questionable because first Rabshakeh was an Assyrian and second because he was trying to imply that God had spoken to him as a way to intimidate the Jews. Also, since both of those accounts were referring to the same event by different biblical authors, the Lord would have really only been speaking to him once, if at all.

Table 1. Instances of Human Conversations with God

To Person(s)	Old Testament Bible References
Adam and Eve (2)	Genesis 1:28, Genesis 1:29
Eve (1)	Genesis 3:13
Adam (1)	Genesis 3:17
Cain (3)	Genesis 4:6, Genesis 4:9, Genesis 4:15
Noah (5)	Genesis 6:13, Genesis 7:1, Genesis 8:21, Genesis 9:12, Genesis 9:17
Abram or Abraham (7)	Genesis 13:14, Genesis 17:9, Genesis 17:15, Genesis 17:19, Genesis 18:13, Genesis 18:26, Genesis 21:12
Rebekah (1)	Genesis 25:23
Jacob (4)	Genesis 31:3, Genesis 35:1, Genesis 35:10, Genesis 35:11
Moses (72)	Exodus 3:7, Exodus 3:14, Exodus 3:15, Exodus 4:2, Exodus 4:4, Exodus 4:6, Exodus 4:11, Exodus 4:19, Exodus 4:21, Exodus 6:1, Exodus 7:1, Exodus 7:14, Exodus 8:16, Exodus 8:20, Exodus 9:1, Exodus 9:13, Exodus 9:22, Exodus 10:1, Exodus 10:12, Exodus 10:21, Exodus 11:1, Exodus 11:9, Exodus 14:15, Exodus 14:26, Exodus 16:28, Exodus 17:5, Exodus 17:14, Exodus 19:9, Exodus 19:10, Exodus 19:21, Exodus 19:24, Exodus 20:22, Exodus 24:12, Exodus 30:34, Exodus 32:7, Exodus 32:9, Exodus 32:33, Exodus 33:1, Exodus 33:17, Exodus 33:21, Exodus 34:1, Exodus 34:27, Leviticus 16:2, Leviticus 21:1, Numbers 3:40, Numbers 7:11, Numbers 11:16, Numbers 11:23, Numbers 12:14, Numbers 14:11, Numbers 14:20, Numbers 15:35, Numbers 17:10, Numbers 21:8, Numbers 21:34, Numbers 25:4, Numbers 27:12, Numbers 27:18, Deuteronomy 1:42, Deuteronomy 2:9, Deuteronomy 2:31, Deuteronomy 3:2, Deuteronomy 3:26, Deuteronomy 4:10, Deuteronomy 5:28, Deuteronomy

	9:12, Deuteronomy 10:1, Deuteronomy 10:11, Deuteronomy 18:17, Deuteronomy 31:14, Deuteronomy 31:16, Deuteronomy 34:4
Aaron (2)	Exodus 4:27, Numbers 18:1
Moses and Aaron (2)	Exodus 9:8, Exodus 12:43
Balaam (1)	Numbers 22:12
Joshua (10)	Joshua 3:7, Joshua 5:2, Joshua 5:9, Joshua 6:2, Joshua 7:10, Joshua 8:1, Joshua 8:18, Joshua 10:8, Joshua 11:6, Joshua 13:1
Children of Israel (4)	Judges 1:2, Judges 10:11, Judges 20:18, Judges 20:23
Gideon (8)	Judges 6:16, Judges 6:23, Judges 6:25, Judges 7:2, Judges 7:4, Judges 7:5, Judges 7:7, Judges 7:9
Phinehas (1)	Judges 20:28
Samuel (8)	I Samuel 3:11, I Samuel 8:7, I Samuel 8:22, I Samuel 9:17, I Samuel 16:1, I Samuel 16:2, I Samuel 16:7, I Samuel 16:12
David (10)	I Samuel 23:2, I Samuel 23:11, I Samuel 23:12, II Samuel 2:1, II Samuel 5:19, I Kings 8:18, I Chronicles 11:2, I Chronicles 14:10, I Chronicles 14:14, I Chronicles 28:3
Solomon (5)	I Kings 3:5, I Kings 3:11, I Kings 9:3, I Kings 11:11, II Chronicles 1:11
Ahijah (1)	I Kings 14:5
Elijah (1)	I Kings 19:15
Jehu (1)	II Kings 10:30
Rabshakeh (2)	II Kings 18:25, Isaiah 36:10
Eliphaz (1)	Job 42:7
Isaiah (4)	Isaiah 8:1, Isaiah 18:4, Isaiah 21:6, Isaiah 21:16
Jeremiah (9)	Jeremiah 1:7, Jeremiah 1:9, Jeremiah 1:14, Jeremiah 3:6, Jeremiah 3:11, Jeremiah 11:6, Jeremiah 11:9, Jeremiah 13:6, Jeremiah 14:14
Ezekiel (4)	Ezekiel 4:13, Ezekiel 9:4, Ezekiel 23:36, Ezekiel 44:5
Hosea (3)	Hosea 1:2, Hosea 1:4, Hosea 1:6
Amos (2)	Amos 7:8, Amos 7:15
Jonah (1)	Jonah 4:9
Zechariah (2)	Zechariah 11:13, Zechariah 11:15

Twenty-five times God was not speaking specifically to any human beings. So it was as though He were speaking to His heavenly host. Once He spoke to the serpent in the Garden of Eden and seven times to Satan (see Table 2).

Table 2. Instances of non-Human Conversations with God

To non-Humans	Old Testament Bible References
Heavenly Host (25)	Genesis 1:3, Genesis 1:6, Genesis 1:9, Genesis 1:11, Genesis 1:14, Genesis 1:20, Genesis 1:24, Genesis 1:26, Genesis 2:18, Genesis 3:22, Genesis 6:3, Genesis 6:7, Genesis 11:6, Genesis 18:17, Genesis 18:20, Exodus 13:17, I Kings 22:20, II Kings 23:27, II Chronicles 18:16, II Chronicles 18:19, Psalm 68:22, Isaiah 20:3, Isaiah 29:13, Jeremiah 4:27, Jeremiah 15:11
The serpent (1)	Genesis 3:14
Satan (7)	Job 1:7, Job 1:8, Job 1:12, Job 2:2, Job 2:3, Job 2:6, Zechariah 3:2

In all, Tables 1 and 2 cover two hundred and eleven of the two hundred and forty-nine instances where the original Hebrew was translated "God said" or "The Lord said." Only six of those were cases after the Garden of Eden where the Bible implies that He might have been speaking to more than one person at a time. That means that He was clearly speaking to only one person in a little more than ninety-seven percent of all the cases where the Old Testament was translated "God said" or "The Lord said." Nine of the remaining thirty-eight cases that were not covered in the first two tables can be easily explained (see Table 3). After that, only twenty-nine remain. They are listed in Table 4.

Table 3. Other Instances of "God said"

Other "God said"	Old Testament Bible References
Reference to what God had said (3)	Genesis 3:1, Genesis 4:25, Genesis 41:51
God was speaking in a dream (1)	Genesis 20:6
The man of God said (4)	I Kings 13:8, II Kings 4:27, II Kings 5:20, II Kings 6:6
The angel of God said (1)	Judges 6:20

Table 4. Other Instances of the "Lord said"

Other "Lord said"	Old Testament Bible References
Reference to what the Lord had said (14)	Numbers 10:29, Numbers 16:40, Joshua 11:23, Joshua 14:6, Joshua 14:12, I Samuel 24:4, I Kings 8:12, I Kings 11:2, I Kings 22:17, II Kings 14:27, II Kings 21:4, II Kings 21:7, II Chronicles 6:8, Psalm 110:1
The Lord spoke to a spirit (3)	I Kings 22:22, II Chronicles 18:20, II Chronicles 18:21
The angel of the Lord said (10)	Genesis 16:9, Genesis 16:10, Genesis 16:11, Numbers 22:32, Numbers 22:35, Judges 13:13, Judges 13:16, Judges 13:18, II Kings 1:3, II Kings 1:15
Reference to whom the Lord had spoken (2)	Exodus 6:26, II Samuel 5:2

The specifically-named individuals to whom the Bible says that the Lord spoke were Adam, Eve, Cain, Noah, Abram, Rebekah, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Balaam, Joshua, the children of Israel, Gideon, Phinehas, Samuel, David, Solomon, Ahijah, Elijah, Jehu, Rabshakeh, Eliphaz, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, Jonah, and Zechariah. The discussion in the previous section suggested that He probably spoke out loud to Adam and Eve while they were in the Garden of Eden. That was based largely on the fact that that was before the Fall caused by Adam's sin and also that God had communicated with both of them at the same time, as is recorded in Genesis 1:28-29 and Genesis 3:9-17.

However, for the others, the belief based on Hebrews 11:1, Hebrews 11:6, John 10:27, and the many other verses cited earlier is that those individuals did not hear an audible voice from God because that would have been unfair towards others, shown favoritism, and robbed them of the chance to demonstrate their faith. But there is another even more subtle reason, based on the heroes of the Faith named in Hebrews Chapter Eleven, for believing that they probably did not audibly hear God talking to them.

e. Heroes of the Faith

To understand that reason one must think carefully about what it would have taken for someone to be listed in the Bible as a hero of the Faith. Obviously, the person would have to have done something really great for the Lord. But is that enough to actually be considered a hero of the Faith? The answer is probably not because simply being obedient should not be confused with demonstrating one's faith in some great or heroic way.

To be a hero of the Faith, one would think that the person's actions would have emphasized his or her faith more than what he or she did. But what would it have taken to qualify? The answer is doing something great for the Lord based on non-audible communications. To do something great for the Lord based on a command not heard out loud requires much more faith than simply doing something great based on a command that is heard out loud. For proof of that, ask any person that has ever been called into some kind of full-time ministry. If the heroes of the Faith accomplished their great works for the Lord without ever hearing Him audibly or seeing Him visually, then they really were heroes of the Faith.

The case of Noah mentioned earlier provides a good example of faith versus more faith. Which would have required more faith? For him to have built the ark because he audibly heard God telling him to build the ark or for him to have built the ark because he felt in his heart that the Lord wanted him to build the ark. The obvious answer is the latter because it takes a lot more faith to act on a feeling in one's heart than it does to act on a verbal command that one actually hears with their ears. That point was just made above.

Oral communications would have removed any doubts about what he was supposed to do whereas non-audible communications would have left many of those doubts. Had God really told him to build an ark? Why does He want me to build an ark? What is rain? What is an ark? Does God really exist? But Noah overcame whatever doubts he might have had and did exactly what he thought the

Lord wanted him to do. In the process, he figuratively elevated himself above mere mortals and became a hero of the Faith. Therefore, the conclusion is that the saints listed in Hebrews Chapter Eleven as the heroes of the Faith belong in that chapter because they almost certainly did not have the benefit of hearing God's audible voice.

Those to whom that remark applies are as follows. Noah was named in Hebrews 11:7, Abraham (or Abram) was named in Hebrews 11:8, Jacob was named in Hebrews 11:21, and Moses was named in Hebrews 11:23. Joshua was not explicitly named in that chapter but the fall of Jericho which is attributed to his human leadership was mentioned in Hebrews 11:30. Gideon, David, and Samuel were named in Hebrews 11:32 and the prophets were also named in that verse. Therefore, the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Elijah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, Jonah, and Zechariah, to whom God spoke, would probably have not heard an audible voice, either. So that means that none of the above heroes of the Faith heard an audible voice from God. But each one still said and did those things that they felt in their hearts that the Lord wanted them to say and do. Unlike New Testament saints, they also were not indwelt by the Holy Spirit. So that is one more reason that they really were heroes of the Faith.

But not everyone to whom God spoke became a hero of the Faith. Those to whom He spoke that were not listed in Hebrews Chapter Eleven are Cain, Rebekah, Aaron, Balaam, Solomon, Ahijah, Phinehas, Jehu, Rabshakeh, Eliphaz, and the children of Israel. For most of them, the implied conclusion is that He did speak to the hearts of those people but that they either did not respond to His non-audible voice or they were not being called upon to perform some great task as were people like Noah, Abraham (or Abram), Moses, and the other heroes of the Faith. Either way, the conclusion is that they also did not hear an audible voice from the Lord.

Finally, concerning those six cases where God seemed to be speaking to more than one person at the same time, a simple solution can be found in Hebrews

1:1-2. Those verses say, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." A somewhat reasonable answer, though not one hundred percent foolproof, is that God communicated with all of those people at the same time through a prophet or even an angel, where His probable silence to the prophets has already been discussed.

f. Three Examples of Probable Non-audible Communications

An especially compelling example of non-audible communications with God seems to have occurred with Gideon. The Lord was calling him to lead his people into battle against the Midianites. But the young man expressed some understandable doubts. Judges 6:12 says that an angel of the Lord appeared to him. However, the Hebrew word for appeared in that verse, *ra'ah*, does not automatically mean that he literally saw the angel. It could have only meant that he was aware of the angel's presence. Then, Judges 6:16-17 says, "And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man. And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me."

If an audible voice from the Lord had come to Gideon out of thin air or even from an angel that he could see or sense, then surely he would have recognized the sound to be of divine origin because who else would have been able to speak to him out loud in such a way? Since he was already aware of the angel's presence, the answer is no one. Also, if he could hear an audible voice and knew it to be of divine origin but still have difficulty believing what that voice was telling him, then how could a few miracles with some fleece have given him any more assurance?

The answer to the last question is that Gideon was being called to lead a group into battle in precisely the same way that a person is called into some kind

of full-time ministry. Because a man called to preach in modern times, for example, does not hear an audible voice, it is natural for him to pray and ask if the Lord is really speaking to him. Gideon probably did not hear an audible voice either. So he prayed to make sure that it was really the Lord calling him to attack his enemy. Experiencing doubts about a calling to do some seemingly impossible task is natural if the call is not audible, and that conclusion fits well with how and why Gideon responded as he did.

Another compelling example that suggests silent communications with God occurred with Abram in Genesis 12:1-3. God had told him to leave his country and go to a land that would be shown to him. So he obeyed the commandment and went. But in Genesis 12:12-20 while in Egypt sometime later, he partially lied to Pharaoh by telling him that Sarai was his sister rather than his wife because he was afraid that Pharaoh would kill him to take Sarai from him. The question is, why would he feel such a need to lie to Pharaoh if he knew that the Lord had spoken to him out loud about leaving his country and about being blessed? Did he not think that God could protect him? His behavior with the Egyptian does not seem especially logical unless one acknowledges the possibility that the Lord had not really spoken out loud to him but had only spoken to him in his heart.

Later Abram committed the same sin again with King Abimelech in Genesis 20:1-2 and in addition to that he even strayed from the Lord a few more times over the next few years. So when considering everything, his behavior did not seem to accurately reflect that of someone that was periodically having out loud communications with the Creator of the world. He was listed in the Bible as a hero of the Faith. But his shortcomings in his personal life, if he really had been hearing God's audible voice, do not make him seem so heroic. However, since every word of the Bible is true, he was a hero of the Faith and he does belong among that listing. Thus, the more reasonable conclusion is that he had not really been hearing the audible voice of God. So he occasionally experienced the same

doubts as all other saints. The Lord had spoken to his heart on several occasions, and he was always obedient to respond to how he felt himself being led. But God just did not speak to him out loud.

A final example that adds credence to the idea of non-audible communications occurs in I Samuel 23:2, I Samuel 23:11, I Samuel 23:12, II Samuel 2:1, and II Samuel 5:19. In each of those verses, the Bible says that the Lord spoke directly to David and that David acted on what He understood from those conversations. However, in II Samuel 12:1-7, the Lord sent the Prophet Nathan to confront David about his sins with Bathsheba and Uriah. That seems somewhat illogical.

First, it seems somewhat illogical that a person could be having so many one-on-one audible conversations with the Creator of everything and then behave as David had by committing adultery and murder. But second, if God and David had already been having audible conversations up to that point, then the Lord could have easily expressed His dissatisfaction directly to him rather than going through Nathan. So it seems somewhat unreasonable that He would not have gone to David, a man after His own heart, instead of to Nathan. One should note that the answer for why God went through Nathan is not that He was separated from David by his sin. At other times, He spoke to Hagar in her sin in Genesis 16:13 and He spoke to Nathan even though Nathan was also a sinner. Therefore, David probably did not hear God speak to him audibly, either.

g. More Hebrew Verbs that Imply Audible Communications

Genesis 8:15-16 says, "And God spake unto Noah, saying, Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee." Genesis 16:13 says, "And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?" Genesis 17:3-4 says, "And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many

nations." Exodus 33:11 says, "And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle."

Those passages used the Hebrew verb, *dabar*, which was used one thousand and forty-seven times in the Old Testament. It means to command, declare, converse, speak, promise, warn, threaten, or sing. Of all those times, however, only one hundred and fifteen were cases where God was actually speaking or talking to people. In each of those, He was only speaking to one person, which as with the Hebrew verb, *'amar*, also suggests a voice that was not audible.

Genesis 3:9 says, "And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?" Exodus 3:4 says, "And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I." Leviticus 1:1-2 says, "And the LORD called unto Moses, and spake unto him out of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man of you bring an offering unto the LORD, ye shall bring your offering of the cattle, even of the herd, and of the flock." I Samuel 3:4 says, "That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I."

Those verses used the Hebrew verb, *qara*, which means to properly address someone by name. The word was used six hundred and eighty-seven times in the Old Testament. While it can be used in a wide variety of applications, it was most often translated "call" or "called" by the King James translators. Of those times, however, only eight were instances where either God or the Lord was calling to people. In each of them, He was only calling to one person at a time. So, once again that suggests a voice that was not audible.

h. Conclusion of Non-Audible Old Testament Communications

The evidence to support God's non-audible communications in the Old Testament after the Garden of Eden is overwhelming. With the Hebrew verb, *'amar*, one hundred seventy times out of one hundred seventy-eight times, the Lord was speaking to only one person. With the Hebrew verb, *dabar*, one hundred fifteen times out of one hundred fifteen times He was only speaking to one person. With the Hebrew verb, *qara*, eight times out of eight times He was only speaking to one person. In total, He was speaking to only one person for an incredible two hundred ninety-three times out of three hundred and one times.

That means that, in the Old Testament, He was speaking to only person for a little over ninety-seven percent of the time. Added to the significance of that number are the other reasons for believing that He would not have selectively spoken out loud to some people while ignoring everyone else. Those reasons are that He is fair, that He is not a Respector of persons, and that He would never rob His so-called "chosen" of the opportunity to demonstrate their faith. There is also the rationale that was presented concerning those that were listed in Hebrews Chapter Eleven as heroes of the Faith. Therefore, one should easily see that God almost certainly did not speak out loud to any of the Old Testament saints after the Garden of Eden.

i. Some New Testament Passages That Suggest Audible

Showing God's non-audible communications in the New Testament is more difficult than in the Old Testament but not necessarily impossible. The first passage to be considered is Matthew 3:16-17, which says, "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Apparently a voice from heaven said some things as Jesus was being baptized. So the obvious questions about that event pertain to who was present and what did they see and hear? The account given by Luke indicates that other people were there. Luke 3:21-22 says, "Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." Those people probably saw Him being baptized. But that may have been all that they saw or heard. According to John 1:32, John the Baptist saw the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, come upon Him. But that passage does not say or suggest that he heard the voice or that the assembled people either heard the voice or saw the dove. The likely conclusion when comparing the three passages is that they did not, which is consistent with God being non-audible in the Old Testament.

The parallel passage of Jesus' baptism in Mark 1:11 mentions a voice from heaven. But like the others it does not say to whom that voice was directed. Jesus surely heard the words from His Father. But another possibility is that God the Father was really addressing Satan. In a similar discourse, Job 1:8 says, "And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" Many years before, God had commended His servant Job to the devil. So, on this later occasion, He may have been commending Jesus to him. Since none of the passages say that the people actually heard the voice or saw the dove, there is no reason to automatically assume that they did. Certainly the voice from heaven was audible to God the Son and maybe Satan. But the people probably did not see or hear anything out of the ordinary because that is how the Lord has usually always worked. Remember with Elijah in I Kings 19:11-12 that He was in the still small voice rather than in the mighty wind, the earthquake, or the fire.

The second passage to be considered is Acts 9:3-7. Those verses say, "And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man."

The last verse of that passage says that the men traveling with the Apostle Paul to Damascus heard a voice but did not see anyone. While that verse seems to definitely suggest that God spoke out loud to the Apostle Paul in such a way that the others around him heard it, too, another passage written by Luke says something entirely different. Acts 22:8-9 says, "And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me."

So what really happened? Which account is correct? The answers are that the men probably did not hear the voice and that Acts 22:8-9 is correct. Luke was not on the road to Damascus with the group when Paul was confronted by the Lord. So his information for Acts 9:3-7 would have most likely been based on talking to others since much of what he wrote was attributed to eye-witness accounts. By contrast, Paul was there. So his personal testimony in Acts 22:8-9 would have naturally been much more accurate.

An important possibility is that the men with Paul heard something but that they did not understand what they heard. From their perspective, the noise could have sounded something like simple thunder because the Lord has sometimes spoken from heaven through thunder. John 12:28-29 says, "Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both

glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him."

The fact that the Lord spoke to the Apostle Paul is clear. But equally clear is that the people around him were not aware of an audible voice from God. It may well have been that the noise really was thunder and in that thunder Jesus spoke directly to Paul's heart. God speaks to people through His Word all the time, but they do not hear an out loud voice. He speaks to them through preaching, but they do not hear an audible voice from above. Perhaps God did just speak to Paul through simple thunder. But if that is all that it was, then the apostle still very definitely got the message. The real point is that the people with him were not aware of God actually speaking out loud to him. Therefore, whether or not he was actually hearing words with his ears or just sensing them in his heart is debatable.

The third passage to be considered is Matthew 17:4-6, which says, "Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid." In this passage, the Lord seems to have spoken out loud to three of the disciples. This is the only observed instance in the New Testament where there may not be a reasonable explanation. So, perhaps on this occasion, He really did speak out loud.

j. Two Closing Thoughts

The first thought asks a simple question. What is the big deal about God not speaking out loud to those saints mentioned in the Bible? He has not spoken out loud to His New Testament saints for all these years. But under His leadership the church has been building since Pentecost. He speaks to the heart of

a man or woman and by faith that person goes to the mission field. He speaks to the heart of a man and by faith that man goes into the ministry. If He has worked that way for the past two thousand years, then what would have prevented Him from having worked that way for the past six thousand or possibly more years? The answer is nothing.

The second thought concerns the term, anthropomorphism, which means to assign human characteristics to non-human entities. In Psalm 4:1, David asked the Lord to hear his prayers. But according to John 4:24, God is a Spirit and He does not have any literal ears. Exodus 8:19 mentions the finger of God. But as a Spirit He does not literally have any fingers. Ezekiel 28:2 mentions the heart of God. But again as a Spirit He does not have a literal heart, either. In all of those instances, the Holy Spirit used terminology to which human beings could easily relate because it makes understanding God's nature and attributes easier. In like manner, the Bible says in many places that God said this or that the Lord said that. But He does not have a literal mouth or a literal voice box or any of the other normal human physical characteristics that would typically enable literal audible communications. Thus, while it would be biblically incorrect to say that God cannot speak out loud, it may be perfectly correct to say that those instances in the Bible that seem like audible communications are really anthropomorphisms.

j. The Conclusion concerning Criterion Two

In conclusion, while it may not be possible to prove the Lord to be totally non-audible in every single Bible instance, showing that more than ninety-seven percent of His statements were made to only one person and that more than half of those were to the heroes of the Faith named in Hebrews Chapter Eleven has been possible. Perhaps the arguments presented in this chapter for His non-audible communications are not totally foolproof. But they are still pretty strong. Therefore, the reasons for believing that He has been non-audible since the Garden of Eden are reasonable and convincing. Furthermore, His being non-

audible since the Garden of Eden also constitutes adding new knowledge to existing knowledge because most people would not have normally believed it.



Chapter 5 – CRITERION THREE: God Tries to Save Everyone

In arguing against Pastor Calvin's beliefs, it was important in chapters three and four to show from the Bible that the name of Jesus is not required knowledge for entering into a salvation relationship with the Lord and that God has almost certainly been non-audible since the Garden of Eden. Now that those first two Bible-based criteria have been discussed in detail, it is necessary to show from the Bible the third criterion, which is that God has always tried equally hard to save everyone. He wanted to save both Terah and Abram. He proved it by giving both of them three sources of General Revelation.

General Revelation, which is the name given to any kind of information about God that does not come directly from the Bible, plays an important role in bringing people into a salvation relationship with the Lord. The simple premise is that probably every person that has ever gotten saved has done so in large part by responding to God's General Revelation of Himself. To support that thesis, six different topics will be discussed. First, the way of salvation has never changed. Second, God's nature has never changed. Third, God wanted to save both Terah and Abram. Fourth, there are at least three important sources of General Revelation. Fifth, Abram probably came to personally know the Lord by responding to the three sources of General Revelation. Sixth, responding to the three sources of General Revelation plays a very large role in the whole salvation process.

a. The Way of Salvation Has Never Changed

In earlier considering salvation before and after Christ in chapter three, "Salvation Before and After Christ", the comment was made that Old Testament

saints were saved in the exact same way as New Testament saints. That ultimately means that all people that get saved do so by seeking God by faith with all their heart (Jeremiah 29:13). How can someone be sure about that? Simple, basic logic and the Bible say so. It would be totally inconceivable and illogical that Jeremiah 29:13 was incorrect before it was written, correct after it was written and before the Incarnation of Christ, but then somehow became incorrect again or no longer valid after the Incarnation. Based on the eternality of Bible truth, that verse has always been true, even before it was written, and it is still true today. People can still only find the Lord by searching for Him with all their heart.

Hebrews 13:8, which says, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever," also proves that the way of salvation has never changed. If the second Person of the Trinity never changes, based on that verse, then the first and third Persons of the Trinity can never change, either. If They ever did, then that would be an admission that They had either made a mistake that required modification or improvement or that They would be about to make a mistake by going to a lesser arrangement for whatever it was that They were about to change. Therefore, because They have never changed, the way to enter into a salvation relationship with Them has never changed, either. The only thing that has changed is God's revelation of Himself over time to mankind.

b. God's Nature Has Never Changed

Two verses pertaining to God's nature that have always been true are II Peter 3:9 and James 2:1. The first verse says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." The second verse says, "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons." Those two verses were among the last

written for the New Testament. But the theological principles that they present have always been true.

The Lord has always been longsuffering not wanting anyone to die separated from Him, and He has never been a Respector of persons. That latter point was discussed earlier in chapter four, "God Is Not a Respector of Persons." To dispute those somewhat lofty claims, critics have sometimes pointed to Israel as being a warrior nation that killed other people to take their land. They have then used that example in Israel's history to question God's love for the people that He let be destroyed. But according to I John 4:8, God is love and anyone that does not have that same kind of love does not know Him.

That verse about God being a God of love, like all the other verses in the Bible relating to theology, was true before it was written. It was true even as the Israeli armies were marching against their enemies. So that verse is yet another example of the eternity of Bible truth. What the critics usually overlook about Israel's warring days, though, is that God was longsuffering with the Canaanites. He did not want them to perish, and because He genuinely felt that way, He also was not a Respector of persons. The proof for how He truly felt towards them is that He always received everyone that came to Him by faith whether they were Jewish or not.

As was mentioned in chapter three, "Four Old Testament Examples of Gentile Salvation," He received Rahab before destroying Jericho (Joshua 2:11-12). He received Ruth, a Moabite, when she professed her devotion to Him (Ruth 1:16). The Lord's commitment to all people, whether Jewish or not, was demonstrated by His receiving the two of them and further demonstrated in the fact that the incarnated Jesus was descended from both of them even though neither was Jewish (Matthew 1:5). But that is not all. God also received Nebuchadnezzar while the Babylonians were holding the nation of Israel in captivity (Daniel 4:34). He received the very sinful and wicked people of Nineveh when they repented and asked for forgiveness (Jonah 3:8). In Matthew

8:5-13, Jesus even healed a Roman centurion's servant and remarked about the centurion's remarkable faith.

Therefore, if the Lord allowed many of the Canaanite nations to perish at the hands of the Israelites, it was because they would not repent and seek Him by faith with all their hearts. It was not because He loved the Jewish people more from an eternal perspective or even because He wanted to take land from the Canaanites to give to the Jewish people. If all of the Canaanite nations had repented and sought Him like Rahab, Ruth, Nebuchadnezzar, the Ninevites, and the Roman centurion, then they, too, would have been spared. All of those nations would have been able to somehow live harmoniously together by God's help. But instead of humbly coming to Him with repentant hearts, the Canaanite nations sharpened their weapons and prepared for battles that they could not possibly win.

c. God Wanted to Save Both Terah and Abram

The importance of the two above comments about God's nature is that they can be used to show that God wanted to establish a salvation relationship with both Terah and Abram. Abram, whose name was later changed by God to Abraham, was the son of Terah, and Terah was an idolater. Joshua 24:2 says, "And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods." So while Abram was clearly in a salvation relationship with God, his father just as clearly was not.

The tenets of Calvinism would respond to that by saying that God had chosen before the foundation of the world to reveal knowledge about Himself to Abram. But He had for whatever His reasons chosen to leave his father spiritually in the dark. To their response, one must wonder if that is really how it happened. The most logical answer is probably not. Even though the Bible does not specifically discuss Abram's conversion, some clues can be found based on

what was and was not available to his father and him that can help a person understand how he found the Lord. At least, four things were NOT available to them.

First, they did NOT have a Bible. When they lived none of the Old Testament books had even been written. Second, there were NO prophets in those days that could have told them about entering into a salvation relationship with God. In Genesis 14:18, Abram met with the king of Salem, who was Melchizedek. But by that time, he was already in a salvation relationship with God because he had already left Ur and had already received the promises in Genesis 12:1-3 of a seed and the land. Third, the synagogue had NOT yet been established. So they did not have that as a possible source of information. Fourth, the belief expressed throughout chapter four that God did NOT speak out loud to anyone after the Garden of Eden would have taken away any audible communications as a possible method for getting through to either his father or him. Therefore, even though II Peter 3:9 implies that God had wanted to save both Terah and Abram, they did not have very much, if anything, to help them learn about God. But yet what they did have was enough because one found Him and one did not.

Concerning how Abram probably established his relationship with the Lord, one possibility that must be eliminated right away is that God simply chose to be related to him in a personal way and that was it. If that were true, then Abram would not have had to do anything except just let it happen. But his doing nothing cannot possibly be correct because Jeremiah 29:13, which would have been true even though it had not yet been written, requires a person to actually seek God with all his or her heart. In other words, no one is ever just saved automatically. Abram would have had to know at least enough to seek the Lord with all his heart. That means that he could not have just done nothing and still entered into a salvation relationship with God.

Neither Terah nor Abram had available to them the above four things that might have helped them learn about the Lord. God also did not just save either of them without their having to do anything. So the following question must be asked about Abram's conversion and Terah's lack of conversion. What did his father and he know about God, and when did they know it? Also, why did only one of them respond favorably to the Lord?

d. Three Important Sources of General Revelation

The key to answering those questions is found in Romans 1:20, which says, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." Terah and Abram could not have relied on the traditional sources of spiritual information that have been readily available to most generations because they were not available to them. But they could have looked at the trees and the stars and the sun and the moon and all of the other elements of Creation and concluded that there must be a Creator. Such rationalizations are common. People of all generations have often entertained thoughts of a Supreme Being.

Terah and Abram probably did the same thing or very close to it. So without having available to them any of the more traditional sources of information about the Lord, they would have still been able to look around at their surroundings and conclude the existence of a Creator. Even though the Book of Psalms had not yet been written, they would have been able to see the same things that the psalmists saw. Psalm 19:1 says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork." Psalm 74:17 says, "Thou hast set all the borders of the earth: thou hast made summer and winter." Psalm 89:11 says, "The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them." Psalm 102:25 says, "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands." Psalm

104:24 says, "O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches."

Being able to see a Creator in Creation is the first important source of General Revelation. Abram and Terah would have been able to see God in Creation because the Lord has chosen to reveal Himself in that way. Next, when He created human beings, the Lord equipped them with an internal belief mechanism that automatically causes them to think that there must be some kind of Supreme Being. That automatic belief mechanism is the basis for the ontological argument for God's existence. It is also the second important source of General Revelation.

Because of that automatic mechanism, Abram and Terah would have almost certainly considered the possibility that there must be a Supreme Being. At that point, they would have been able to see a Creator in Creation. They would also have been able to benefit from having had the same automatic tendency to believe in a Supreme Being. But the Lord places into all human beings one more important source of General Revelation. It is a spiritual void. He would have placed within each of them a void that could only have been satisfied by entering into a salvation relationship with Him.

Thus, the three important sources of General Revelation are seeing a Creator in Creation, having an internal belief that there must be a Supreme Being, and experiencing an internal void that can only be satisfied by a salvation relationship with the Lord. Terah and Abram did not have much in their lives to point them to the Lord. But they did have those three sources of General Revelation, and that would have been enough for both of them to be saved. Titus 2:11-12 says, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Once they had reached that point, however, they would have still needed to do one more thing before

they could have actually entered into a salvation relationship with God. Because of that one thing Abram entered in. But Terah did not.

e. Abram Was Saved by Responding to the General Revelation

Whenever someone becomes aware of the above three sources of General Revelation, they will usually respond in one of two ways. Because of their human nature, they will either try to do some great thing like build a monument or something to appease the Supreme Being of their imagination, or they will fall on their face before Him and acknowledge their inability to appease Him. In that scenario, the person that tries to do the great thing is NOT the one that enters into the salvation relationship. To the contrary, it is the individual that realizes his or her inability to appease the Supreme Being and then figuratively falls on his or her face asking for mercy.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." The important, unwritten truth of Jeremiah 29:13 is that the person upon recognizing his or her shortcomings before the Lord will seek Him with all their heart. Then and only then will they find Him. Abram saw his inability, sought the Lord with all his heart, and found Him. His father, on the other hand, did not do those things, and he did not find Him. Humbly seeking God with one's whole heart is now and always has been the only way to enter into a salvation relationship with the Lord. That same point has already been made in chapter two, "To those Jews Which Believed on Him," in chapter three, "Some Time-Related Questions to Consider," and above in "The Way of Salvation Has Never Changed."

Unfortunately for the Calvinists, the blame for Terah's choices must be put squarely on him and not on the Lord. The Lord chose to be longsuffering with him not willing that he should perish (II Peter 3:9). The Lord chose to reveal His grace to him that brings salvation to all people (Titus 2:11-12). The Lord is not a

Respecter of persons (James 2:1). The list can go on and on. But the point is that Terah was not interested. The Lord even put into his path the same three sources of General Revelation that He has put into everyone's path, including Abram's. But Terah was more interested in other things.

The Bible says that Terah was an idolater (Joshua 24:2). By historical tradition he was in the idol-making business. If tradition is correct, then he was probably busy making and selling idols so that he could increase his wealth. If that is true, which it certainly could have been since he was in the business, then his desire for riches might have been what kept him from ever responding to the Lord. Like so many people throughout history, he may have planned to seek God one day. But for him that day never came. He simply never found the time for the Lord's long-suffering nature, for His grace that brings salvation to all people, for His not being a Respector of persons, or for the three sources of General Revelation that point all people to the Lord.

Another very likely possibility is that he made his idols to worship the Supreme Being of his imagination. Rather than figuratively fall on his face before the Lord asking for mercy like his son, he tried to do great things like build a monument or something. But as he eventually learned, probably in eternity, doing great things is not the way of salvation. Therefore, it was not God that chose to keep Terah spiritually in the dark. It was Terah that had made those choices for himself. Either he let himself be drawn to less important things or he chose to worship the wrong Supreme Being. But either way, he ignored or turned his back on everything that God had done to try to establish a relationship with him. Thus, Abram entered in. But Terah did not.

f. Responding to General Revelation Is the Key

Contrary to what many people may think, a person does not come out of a vacuum, hear a presentation of the gospel, and come to the Lord. He or she may ultimately get saved in a church where a message about Christ on the cross is

preached. But God did not just start working on that person the moment that he or she entered into the church building. Because of the three sources of General Revelation that were just discussed, He actually started revealing Himself to the individual long before that day in church. The person has probably been able to see a Creator in Creation. He or she is probably aware of their natural belief in a Supreme Being. They have probably already experienced the spiritual void that can only be satisfied by a salvation relationship with the Lord.

Therefore, when viewed from the perspective of General Revelation, salvation becomes simply a matter of connecting the spiritual dots that the Lord has placed into every person's path. The Total Depravity or Total Inability of man to seek God on His own, as the Calvinist would say, may be true in part. But the argument against it is that God uses General Revelation to educate people about Himself. He reveals Himself to each individual in such a way that that person can respond to Him. Abram saw God in Creation, had the belief in a Supreme Being, and felt the void. Then, he did what every saved person has done at some point in their life by responding to that revelation of God.

Since the beginning of time, cases like those of Terah and Abram have repeated themselves over and over in people's lives where some end up finding the Lord and some do not. But in all cases, the belief is that General Revelation is what initially starts an individual on the path that leads to the Lord. God has established that path because He is longsuffering and does not want anyone to perish apart from a relationship with Him (II Peter 3:9). In establishing that path, He has also shown that He is not a Respector of persons in His dealings with lost humanity (James 2:1).

Chapter 6 – CRITERION FOUR: The Lord Is Still Sovereign

A Calvinist's probable sticking point with someone saying that God has always tried equally hard to save everyone is that that position goes against their whole perception of God's sovereignty and control over everything. To their way of thinking, if a person is allowed to choose to NOT come to the Lord, then that in essence makes that person sovereign over the Lord. He or she would be telling God what they will or will not do. Similarly, if a person is allowed to choose to come to the Lord to be saved, then that, too, in their mind makes that person sovereign over the Lord. Their argument is that God is sovereign over everything and everyone. Furthermore, He will not give up His sovereignty or control to anyone for any reason.

If a person dies lost, then the Calvinist says that it was because God had chosen for him or her to die lost rather than that the individual had made that decision for themselves. In like manner, if a person dies saved, then the Calvinist says that it was because God had chosen for him or her to die saved and not that the person had made that decision for themselves. The whole Calvinist position is derived from the same basic belief about God's sovereignty and control over everything. From that belief each of the five points of Calvinism has been derived. Without question, the Lord is sovereign. But one can find in Scriptures some very interesting examples about how He has chosen in the past to exercise His absolute control over everything and everyone. After looking at some of those examples, some very profound conclusions can be drawn.

a. Chosen but Not Automatically Saved

Deuteronomy 7:6-8 says, "For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt."

Those verses say that God chose the nation of Israel to be His special people over all the other nations. But that did not mean that He chose to exercise His absolute control over all of their actions and decisions. For example, His choosing them did not cause them to live more righteously. It did not cause them to choose Him back. It did not even cause them to try to enter into a salvation relationship with Him. The following three discussions show where a holy, controlling deity might have chosen to control His people. But God did not choose to do that with them on any of them.

1. He Could Have Forced Them to Live Right

First, by His choosing Israel to be His special people, one might expect that a holy, controlling deity would have forced His people to behave more righteously than other people. But that was clearly not true about the Lord. Isaiah 1:4 says, "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward." Judges 2:11 says, "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim." Judges 3:12 says, "And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD."

The Old Testament abounds with passages like the above that show Israel's rebellious and sinful nature. One can see it over and over when reading through its pages. Therefore, while God is sovereign and holy and while He could have forced His people to live any way that He wanted, many Bible passages show that He simply did not do that. In fact, He often punished them because of their disobedience. But He never forced them to be obedient.

2. He Could Have Forced Them to Choose Him Back

Second, His choosing them did not mean that He would make them choose Him back. A sovereign deity could have done that, too. But He obviously did not. Hosea 10:12 says, "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you." The prophet, Hosea, told the people that it was time for them to seek or come back to the Lord. That suggests that they had been allowed to turn away.

Ezekiel 2:3 says, "And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day." Jeremiah 5:23 says, "But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone." Like Hosea, both Ezekiel and Jeremiah also wrote about Israel's rebellious heart and sinful ways. I Samuel 8:7 says, "And the LORD said unto Samuel, Harken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them."

Calvinists do not think that a person is free to choose about their salvation relationship with the Lord because that would go against God's sovereignty. But the nation of Israel, God's own chosen people, was not prevented by God's sovereignty from constantly failing to seek Him, from rebelling against Him, or from rejecting Him. So even though God is able to control whatever He wants,

very little evidence exists to show that He actually did so with respect to His own chosen people.

3. He Could Have Forced Them to Be Saved

Third, His choosing them did not mean that they would automatically be guaranteed an eternity with Him in heaven. Romans 10:9-13 says, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

According to the Apostle Paul in the above passage, the Lord does not view non-Jewish people any differently than Jewish people when it comes to matters of salvation. Because of the eternality of Bible truth, that theological truth has always been true. So the children of Israel, God's own chosen people, would have only been saved by seeking the Lord with all their heart just like everyone else. That point, which is borne out by Jeremiah 29:13, has been emphasized throughout this entire study. The fact that Paul compared the lost Greeks to the chosen Jewish people implies that everyone must call upon the Lord for salvation. Thus, if he was correct, and of course he was, then no one has ever been chosen for automatic salvation.

Jesus further confirmed in His Sermon on the Mount that the Jewish people were not automatically saved. In Matthew 5:27-30 when speaking to a Jewish crowd, He told them that plucking out an eye or cutting off a hand was better than dying lost. In Mark 9:44, He warned them about the place where the worm does not die. In Matthew 22:13, He warned them about a place of outer darkness where there will be gnashing of teeth.

So for what, if not salvation, were the chosen people chosen? The answer is that they were chosen for a variety of blessings in this life. Joshua 2:9 says, "And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you." God blessed them by sometimes making their enemies afraid of them. Psalm 1:3 says, "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Even though they did not often meet the qualifications for obtaining it, He blessed them by making prosperity potentially available to them.

Genesis 49:10 says, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." Far and away, though, He blessed them by bringing a Savior into the world through them. Lastly He blessed them by letting them be the first to hear the good news of the gospel. Matthew 10:5-7 says, "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

The Jewish people truly were God's chosen people. But the Bible does not support the idea that they would have been saved any differently than anyone else. While they might have been chosen for earthly blessings, they still would have been required to make the same choices about their own salvation as everyone else.

One should note, however, that the Lord's choosing to let His chosen people make many of their own choices, especially about their own salvation, did not demonstrate any weakness on His part because He is omnipotent. If He had wanted, He could have made them do whatever He wanted them to do. But the simple fact is that He chose to not control everything about them. That same

decision to let people be free to choose or reject Him is still true today. Obviously, He can force some people to get saved and prevent others from being saved. But just as He did not micromanage His own chosen people in everything that they did, it is only logical that He also does not micromanage people today about their choice to come to Him or not. God is sovereign. But because of that, He can choose to NOT control everything.

His desire is for people to come to Him because they love Him and want to be in a salvation relationship with Him, not come to Him because they have been programmed or forced to do so. He was longsuffering with His chosen people. By giving them choices He even put Himself at risk of being rejected by them. But He did so because He loved them with an everlasting love (Deuteronomy 7:8). It was because of that love that He still does not force people either to be saved or to NOT be saved.

b. Free Will to Sin but Not to be Saved

Calvinists do not think that people can be allowed the freedom to choose or reject for themselves a salvation relationship with God. But the Bible is clear when it says that the Lord gives people the free will to sin. II Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." The fact that God is longsuffering and wants everyone to come to repentance suggests that He wants them to repent or change their ways about something. That something is sin because He hates sin. Psalm 119:11 says, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

The unreasonableness of Calvinism is even clearer when one considers God's attitude about sin along with His longsuffering about not wanting anyone to perish. If Calvinists are correct about God's sovereignty and about an individual's not being free to choose salvation for themselves, then God would be essentially

giving people the free will to do the sin that He hates while not giving them the free will to enter into the salvation relationship with Him that He desires. While that conclusion could possibly be true, it is most illogical and even seems ridiculous. The much more sensible conclusion is that He gives people free will. Many times they use it to do the sin that He hates. But sometimes they use it to repent and enter into a salvation relationship with Him. God does not try to control people or treat them like robots because He loves them. Therefore, the most logical conclusion is that He is sovereign. But because of that He can choose to NOT control everything.

c. His Sovereignty Could Be like the Kenosis

How God exercises His sovereignty concerning a person's choice about salvation might also be similar to the kenosis, which is based on Philippians 2:6-7. Those verses say, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."

The Greek word that was translated "of no reputation" in those verses is *kenoo*. From it comes the word "kenosis." When the Apostle Paul wrote that Jesus emptied Himself, he was talking about those attributes of deity that He had voluntarily given up when He was incarnated. As God and man, He voluntarily gave up or set aside the free use of His comparative attributes. That meant that He did not allow Himself to always know everything (omniscience), to always be everywhere at the same time (omnipresence), or to always be able to do anything (omnipotence). While in the body of a man, He was still God. But He voluntarily chose to limit Himself.

In the kenosis, He voluntarily gave up the free use of His comparative attributes. But He still possessed them. He was still omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. But as a human being, He just did not let Himself use those capabilities freely. In like manner, in the context of God's sovereignty, the Lord

could voluntarily give up or lay aside the free use of His sovereignty so that people would be able to make their own choices about entering into a salvation relationship with Him. If He did that, then His sovereignty would still be intact because He would be doing what He had chosen to do. Also, if for some reason He ever wanted, He could always reverse His choice and take away a person's ability to choose for himself or herself. Of course, He would never do that because too many verses in the Bible already emphasize how much He wants people to come to Him and how that He has even made it possible for them to do so.

d. The Conclusion

The conclusion from the above three observations is that the Lord can be absolutely sovereign and still let a person choose whether or not he or she will enter into a salvation relationship with Him. He was sovereign when He let His chosen people live in sin and rebellion. He was sovereign when He let them reject Him. He was sovereign when He gave people the free will to sin even though He hates sin. Finally, He would be sovereign if He voluntarily laid aside His sovereignty so that people could choose whether or not to enter into a salvation relationship with Him.

From the Calvinist point of view, however, hanging onto the Lord's sovereignty no matter what may be for an entirely different reason than that He does not give up His control for any reason. Depending upon how one might want to look at it, always falling back to God's sovereignty could be their feeble attempt to protect Him from the apparent failure caused by repeated rejection. It could also be to keep Him from appearing weak and vulnerable. However, those issues, which may often motivate many people, do not seem to concern or affect the Lord very much.

Jesus said it all in Matthew 23:37. That verse says, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto

thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Those words do not seem to reflect a God that is so worried about being rejected or appearing weak that He has predetermined some people to be saved and some people to be lost.



Chapter 7 – Considering Each of the Five Points of Calvinism

The four Bible-based criteria that have been developed during this study to argue against Calvinism were presented in the previous four chapters. The first is that a person does not have to know the name of Jesus or anything about Him to enter into a salvation relationship with God. The second is that God almost certainly did not speak out loud to anyone after the Garden of Eden. The third is that God has always tried equally hard to save everyone and that He has largely used the same three sources of General Revelation to do it. The fourth is that He can let people make up their own minds about entering into or not entering into a salvation relationship with Him and still retain His sovereignty.

Now that those criteria have been presented and exhaustively discussed, it is important to carefully re-examine each of the five points of Calvinism (TULIP) along with some of the key Bible verses that have been used to support it. If Calvinism is NOT correct, then a person should be able to use the above Bible-based criteria to show how and why each point fails. Also, an individual should be able to use good exegesis to determine how the supporting verses for each point were wrongly interpreted and to show how they should be interpreted. Following those discussions, some final thoughts will be shared to bring a logical conclusion to this whole study.

As in chapter one, the five points of Calvinism that form the acrostic TULIP are Total Depravity (T), Unconditional Election (U), Limited Atonement (L), Irresistible Grace (I), and Perseverance of the Saints (P). Each one will be discussed below in order. But first, the above four criteria will be redefined into a more delineated list to summarize those specific things that the Lord has and has

NOT done to try to bring people into a salvation relationship with Himself. That list is based on the observations that have been made during this study.

a. Things from this Study that the Lord Has and Has Not Done

1. He HAS been longsuffering not wanting anyone to leave this life outside of a relationship with Him.
2. He HAS given to everyone the same three sources of General Revelation so that they can acknowledge His existence and seek Him without actually having to know anything factual about Him.
3. He HAS always tried equally hard to bring everyone into a salvation relationship with Himself.
4. Similar to the kenosis, He HAS voluntarily laid aside His sovereignty so that people can choose to come to Him or choose to NOT come to Him. Either that or He HAS simply chosen to not choose concerning a person's eternal destiny. But either way, He still retains His sovereignty.
5. He has NOT made the path to Himself overly complicated by requiring people to know anything factual about His Son. To get saved, a person does not have to know the gospel, the plan of salvation, or even the name of Jesus.
6. He has NOT spoken out loud to anyone since the Garden of Eden because that could have been a stumbling block for those to whom He did not speak out loud.
7. He has NOT been a Respector of persons.
8. He has NOT been unfair, heartless, or uncaring.
9. He has NOT hindered the faith of the "chosen."
10. His nature has NOT changed.
11. He has NOT turned away anyone that has ever come to Him by faith with the right attitude and motives.
12. He was sovereign even though He did NOT force His "chosen" people to live right.

13. He was sovereign even though He did NOT force His "chosen" people to choose Him back.

14. He was sovereign even though He did NOT force His "chosen" people to automatically be saved.

b. Total Depravity (T)

The Calvinist belief about the Total Depravity or the Total Inability of human beings is not completely irrational. However, the part that they seem to miss is that God HAS or has NOT done all of the above fourteen things to bring ALL people into a salvation relationship with Himself. Each of those fourteen points has been developed in the preceding chapters. Each one comes from the Bible. Together, those points present a pretty clear picture of God trying very hard to bring ALL people to Himself. So the obvious conclusion based upon those points is pretty simple. While all human beings may have been born totally depraved and may only be able to respond to God when He calls to them, a significant amount of evidence exists to show that He has been and still is calling to ALL people through at the very least the three sources of General Revelation.

1. Does God Close Eyes or Dull Senses?

A Calvinist might counter that statement by saying that God simply closes the spiritual eyes of some people so that they are not aware of the three sources of General Revelation. But why would He do that? Why would He provide those sources that reveal Himself to others and then close their eyes so that they cannot see them? A Calvinist might say that He is sovereign and that He does that because that is what He wants to do. But that answer sounds more desperate than reasonable. Romans 1:18-20 says that he revealed Himself in Creation to the ungodly and to the unrighteous in such a way that they could see Him and be without excuse. But if He has revealed Himself so that He can be seen and then closed their eyes so that they cannot see Him, then they have their excuse. Also, if He has intentionally done all of that, then Romans 1:18-20 is wrong. Therefore,

the suggestion that He ever closes people's eyes so that they cannot see what He has done for them is not supported by the Bible.

A Calvinist might argue that He does not close their eyes but that He dulls their senses so that they cannot respond to the stimuli that He has put before them. But that response would be a very poor commentary for a God that is the very essence of love (I John 4:8) and for One that is longsuffering not wanting anyone to die apart from Him (II Peter 3:9). Romans 3:4 says to always put God's messages above the messages of human beings, and that is what must be done. Based on what the Bible says, the Lord would never dull a person's senses to His General Revelation of Himself. If He ever did, then I John 4:8 and II Peter 3:9 would be untrue and the ungodly and unrighteous would again have their excuse.

2. Does God Issue a General Call?

A Calvinist might next say that sin, not God, has dulled people's senses so that they are not able to comprehend the three sources of General Revelation. But that creates a whole new set of problems.

1. If the Lord knew that all humans would be blinded by sin, after all He is omniscient, then why did He even bother revealing Himself in Creation? No one would be able to see Him. But if they cannot see Him in Creation, then why do so many NOT chosen people believe in a Creator?
2. If the Lord knew that all humans would be blinded by sin, then why did He give people an internal belief that there is a Supreme Being? No one would be able to understand that belief or know what it meant. But if they cannot understand their belief in a Supreme Being, then why do some civilizations erect statues and build monuments to worship the false gods of their imagination? Why did Terah even make and sell idols? If he had been totally blinded by his sin, then he would not have even known enough to worship false gods.
3. If the Lord knew that all humans would be blinded by sin, then why did He put into each person a spiritual void that can only be satisfied by a salvation relationship with Him? No one would even

be aware of their emptiness. But if they are not aware of their emptiness, then why do ALL people search for happiness by trying to find some kind of meaning to their life?

Other questions also arise with the suggestion that sin has totally blinded people. How can the Lord control who does and does not get saved without also micromanaging many other aspects of the person's life? Scriptures support the idea that He does not continuously or forever invite a person into a salvation relationship with Himself (John 6:44). So does He alert His chosen that He is about to issue an invitation?

Another question pertains to what happens to the chosen person that sins again? Will he or she be blinded again to where God will have to choose to rescue them again, or will they be enlightened enough at that point that they will be able to "choose" to repent on their own? But then, rather than being bothered with all of that, why not just go one or two steps further and force the redeemed, chosen person to NOT sin again? It has already been pointed out in chapter six, "He Could Have Forced Them to Live Right" that the Lord does not force His chosen people to live right. But because He is omnipotent, He could have.

Another problem with saying that people are hopelessly blinded by sin is Jeremiah 29:13. According to the King James translators, the Lord told the Jewish people through Jeremiah that they could find Him WHEN, not IF, they searched for Him with all their heart. But if they have been completely blinded by their sin, then they will probably never get to the point of searching for Him. Another problem is II Peter 3:9. That verse says that the Lord is longsuffering because He wants ALL people to come to Him in repentance and to not perish. But if they are totally blinded, then they will never know enough to come to Him in repentance. Also, if He has already decided everyone's fate, then why does He even need to be longsuffering?

The only way to logically get around all of the problems presented by the belief that sin, not God, has blinded people might be to resort to what Calvinists call a "general" call to everyone. That call, which was mentioned in chapter one,

"Irresistible Grace (I)," will be considered below along with its problems in the discussion about Irresistible Grace. But concerning God's grace that cannot be resisted, the Westminster Confession of Faith states the following.

"All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, He is pleased, in His appointed time, effectually to call, by His Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature to grace and salvation, by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and, by His almighty power, determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ: yet so, as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace.

This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.

Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated, and saved by Christ, through the Spirit, who works when, and where, and how He pleases: so also are all other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word.

Others, not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the Word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come unto Christ, and therefore cannot be saved: much less can men, not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the laws of that religion they do profess. And to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious, and to be detested." [15]

According to that quote, the Calvinistic general call to everyone would make even the vilest of sinners know something about God. It might even address some of the questions raised above. But the NOT chosen sinner, because they have not been chosen for salvation, still would not be able to respond to the Lord in the right way.

3. Coming Full Circle Back to God's Sovereignty

To the many problems presented to the Calvinists by their view of Total Depravity or Total Inability, they would probably say that that is why the Lord must choose who will be saved and who will not be saved. But even that remark creates a problem. If He truly is NOT a Respector of persons and if He truly IS the very essence of love, then why would He not just choose to save everyone? How does He or anyone else benefit when only a limited number of people are chosen for eternal salvation?

At that point, the only response left for the Calvinist is to say that God can do whatever He wants because of His sovereignty, and that is exactly what they have done. Pastor Calvin wrote, "By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God, by which he determined with himself whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man" [16]. But even that is a problem because what God really wants, based on II Peter 3:9, is to see ALL people come to Him in repentance so that no one will perish. Therefore, resorting to God's sovereignty or even to mankind's Total Depravity or Total Inability as a way to explain why some people die saved and why some people die lost just does not seem to fit the biblical data.

4. Dismissal of Three Minor Verses

Six of the verses that have been used to support a belief in the Total Depravity or Total Inability of mankind are Romans 5:12, Mark 4:11, Ephesians 2:1-5, Jeremiah 17:9, John 6:44, and John 6:65. But three of those can be dismissed right away. Romans 5:12 states the simple theological fact that sin entered the world through Adam and that all people are sinners. That verse puts all in sin. But it is neither controversial nor critical to a belief in Total Depravity. Similarly, Ephesians 2:1-5 makes all people children of wrath by nature, and Jeremiah 17:9 speaks of their wicked heart. But those Bible truths are not needed for defending the Total Depravity view, either. The other three verses, however,

are relevant to one's view of Total Depravity or Total Inability. So they will be discussed.

5. Exegesis of Mark 4:11 on Parables

The first verse is Mark 4:11, which says, "And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables." A Calvinist would focus on the words "unto you" and say that that verse talks about special knowledge that was given to those that God had chosen for salvation. However, when one focuses on the words "to know," which do not appear in the original manuscripts for Mark 4:11 but do for Matthew 13:11 and Luke 8:10, those verses can mean that God had chosen to give certain knowledge to those that had chosen to enter into a salvation relationship with Him.

In the first rendering, He would have been choosing the person. But in the second rendering, He would have been choosing what He would do for the person that had chosen to enter into a salvation relationship with Him. In the first rendering, the ones that are without would have been those that had not been chosen for salvation. In the second rendering, they would have been the ones that had ignored the three sources of General Revelation and chosen to not come to the Lord. So which interpretation is correct? In Mark 4:11, was God choosing the person or was He choosing what He would do for the person that had chosen Him?

The clear answer is the latter because of Mark 4:12. Mark 4:12 says, "That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them." In referring back to "unto them that are without" in the previous verse, Mark 4:12 indicates that Jesus thought that they might have been able to see, hear, understand, and be converted if He did not speak in parables. Thus, His use of parables shows that He did not believe in the Total Inability of human

beings. He thought that it was possible for those that were without to receive information that the Calvinist would say they had not been chosen to receive and to then respond to that information in a way that the Calvinist would say they had not been chosen to respond.

Theologian Adam Clark wrote that those without were not meant to receive the truth because "they are gross of heart, earthly and sensual, and do not improve the light they have received" [17]. As a non-Calvinist, he did not refute the idea that those without could have received the light of Jesus' words. But he did say that the truth would have been wasted on them. Therefore, the Total Depravity or Total Inability of mankind cannot be supported by Mark 4:11.

6. Exegesis of John 6:44 on Being Drawn

The second verse is John 6:44, which says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." When a Calvinist reads that verse, he or she sees "No man" and concludes that some people are automatically excluded from salvation. But that is not necessarily correct. The Greek word for "except" in that verse is *ean me*. It means unless or before. While those words may imply delay, they definitely do not demand exclusion. The Greek word for "draw" in that verse is *helkuo*. It means to draw someone by creating an inward desire, which is exactly what the three sources of General Revelation do.

Therefore, the verse is actually saying that no one can come to the Lord "before" God draws them and that He will draw them by using the "inward persuasion" of General Revelation. The verse in no way suggests or means that He is not trying to draw everyone. In fact, the fourteen points listed above show just the opposite. He has been actively trying to draw all people to Himself dating all the way back to Adam and Eve.

However, the point made in chapter three, "Two Observations in John 6:44 and John 14:6-7," and reiterated above is that the Lord does not require

Himself to draw people continually or forever into a saving relationship with Himself. The word "except" may imply exclusion. But the better word "before" implies that He will draw whenever and for however long He chooses. So the wise person will respond without delay when they sense themselves being drawn to Him by the three sources of General Revelation.

Terah cannot claim that He was unaware of the Lord's call on his life. He would have seen God the Creator just like Abram. He would have been aware of his personal belief in a Supreme Being just like Abram. He would have sensed the spiritual void that has led to the development of the ontological argument for God's existence just like Abram. But unlike Abram he did not respond in a timely manner. Therefore, he must declare himself at fault, not God. The day came in his life when the Lord stopped trying to draw Him. That is why he and a great many other people like him die lost and are eternally separated from God.

7. Exegesis of John 6:65 on Those Given

The third verse is John 6:65, which says, "And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father." The same Greek word for "except" in John 6:65, *ean me*, was also used in John 6:44 to mean unless or before. So that places more of a time factor on God's actions than an exclusion factor. Jesus was telling the people that God tries to draw everyone into a relationship with Himself. But He does not require Himself to try forever on those that ignore His efforts. The Bible teaches that today is the day of salvation. That implies that the Lord sets the time, not the individual. II Corinthians 6:2 says, "(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.")" So, as was just stated above, the wise person will respond without delay when they sense themselves being drawn to Him by the three sources of General Revelation.

8. Conclusion about the Total Depravity View

The conclusion to the Calvinist position on the Total Depravity or Total Inability of mankind is that it seems to be less about human moral deficiency and more about protecting the Lord from what might be perceived as failure on His part. That point was made in chapter six, "The Conclusion." Someone might think that God fails if He is long suffering with a lost person about getting saved and then that person chooses to NOT come to Him. So the convenient way to get around that apparent failure on His part is to simply say that He had never chosen that individual to come to Him in the first place.

Another way is to just create the idea of a general call for both the elect and the non-elect where the non-elect person always declines. However, while such concessions by those that want to spare His image may be generous, the Lord does not need that kind of help. He was perfectly sovereign and satisfied when He let His chosen people, the nation of Israel, sin and rebel against Him. He was perfectly sovereign and satisfied when He did not force His chosen people to choose Him back. Therefore, He is still perfectly sovereign and satisfied when He lets all the people of the world see Him through the three sources of General Revelation but then choose to NOT come to Him.

For all of the above reasons, the Total Depravity or Total Inability view of humanity is not tautologically supported by the verses that have usually been given to support it. In addition, the four Bible-based criteria and fourteen points that have been established to argue against Calvinism present a reasonable argument against this first point. Finally, the three sources of General Revelation that the Lord gives to everyone sufficiently show that the Total Depravity view is not Scriptural.

c. Unconditional Election (U)

The very nature of the word "unconditional" is that human beings do not have a choice. In John 8:31-32, discussed in chapter two, "The Second Guiding

Principle Is Continuing to Study," Jesus told the assembled Jewish people that had believed on Him that they could be His disciples, know the truth, and be set free from their intellectual bondage IF they continued in His Word. He gave them a choice either to continue in His Word and receive the promises or to not continue in His Word and not receive the promises.

But according to the Calvinists, the Lord is not so charitable when it comes to His FREE gift of salvation. When they talk about His choosing some people to die saved and some to die lost, they emphasize that human beings are totally depraved and unable to make a choice for themselves about their own eternal destiny. Therefore, God must do it for them. Furthermore, since the person's position in salvation is both unconditional and unalterable they cannot even do anything about what He has decided. Those chosen for salvation MUST be saved and those chosen for eternal doom MUST be lost. In describing this second point of Calvinism, the following has been said:

"In Calvinist theology, election is considered to be one aspect of predestination in which God selects certain individuals to be saved. Those elected receive mercy, while those not elected, the reprobates, receive justice without condition. This unconditional election is essentially related to the rest of the TULIP hinged upon the supreme basic belief in the sovereignty of God. Unconditional election is God's choice to save people regardless of their sin or any condition. This basically means, God's act of saving is not based on what man can do or choose to will, but man is loved by God without any conditions or man's action or deeds but solely by God's grace, thus unconditional election." [18]

Based on the above remark, the Unconditional Election view fails already because it was derived from the unsubstantiated, non-biblical view about the Total Depravity or the Total Inability of each person. However, some other matters still need to be considered before just throwing it out.

1. Three Relatively Important Statements about this View

From chapter one of this study, "Unconditional Election (U)," Mr. Barlow wrote the following:

"Unconditional Election is the doctrine which states that God chose those whom he was pleased to bring to a knowledge of himself, not based upon any merit shown by the object of his grace and not based upon his looking forward to discover who would "accept" the offer of the gospel." [19]

Three relatively important statements were made in that quote. First, the author said that God chose those to whom He would give knowledge of Himself. That is a true statement. But it does not go far enough because God has actually chosen to give knowledge of Himself to ALL people. He has given to everyone the same three sources of General Revelation so that they can acknowledge His existence and seek Him without actually having to know anything factual about Him. Based on chapter five, "Three Important Sources of General Revelation," if He had only done that, then that would have been enough.

But He has also made the path to Himself much less complicated by not requiring people to know anything factual about His Son. He is not a Respector of persons, and He has proved it by trying to draw ALL people to Himself. He has probably not spoken out loud to anyone since the Garden of Eden. In doing that, He has removed a potentially major stumbling block for anyone that would earnestly want to come to Him. He is not unfair, heartless, or uncaring. He has demonstrated that by expressing the same love and compassion for everyone, which is why the Bible says that He is love (I John 4:8). Therefore, the Scriptures are clear when they suggest that God chooses to give knowledge of Himself to everyone, and that is a far stronger statement than what Mr. Barlow wrote.

The second relatively important statement is that God's decision about whom to choose was NOT determined by the person's merit or goodness. Two comments must be made about that. First, the Lord chooses to give knowledge of

Himself to everyone rather than to just a few by using the three sources of General Revelation. That point has already been made numerous times. The conclusion each time has been that He will be found by anyone that seeks Him with all their heart (Jeremiah 29:13). Therefore, it is technically inaccurate to even suggest that He would leave anyone out, merit or no merit. Second, even though he did not say so exactly, merit also has no part in a person's entering into a salvation relationship with God. Ephesians 2:8-9 says that all people that get saved do so through grace by faith and that the recipient's merit or goodness has nothing to do with it.

The third relatively important statement is that God's choice for saving someone is not based on His foreknowledge of who would accept or reject His offer. Like above, two comments can be made about that. The first is the same as the first comment above. The Lord chooses to give knowledge of Himself to everyone by the three sources of General Revelation. Therefore, His foreknowledge of what a person will or will not do has nothing to do with it. He chooses everyone. So it is again technically inaccurate to suggest that He would ever leave anyone out. Second, He is omniscient. He knows beforehand who will and who will not enter into a salvation relationship with Him. But having that foreknowledge does not change anything. Because He is NOT a Respector of persons, He does not try any more or any less to draw one individual or another to Himself. He also does not love the person that rejects Him any more or any less than the one that comes to Him.

The conclusion, then, resulting from an analysis of Mr. Barlow's statement is that the Bible does not support the Unconditional Election view. That means that God does NOT force the unchangeable decision of salvation on anyone. They are free to make that choice for themselves. There is NOT an unconditional aspect and there is NOT a forced selection aspect. So like Terah, those that choose to NOT come to God decide their own fate. Being saved or being lost cannot be put on the Lord.

2. Exegesis of John 3:16-18 on World and Believeth

John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The Greek word translated "world" is *kosmos*. It can mean the world, the universe, the circle of the earth, the inhabitants of the earth, or the human race. It can refer to the ungodly or to those that are hostile to the cause of Christ. Calvinists maintain that "world" in John 3:16 does not mean that Jesus gave Himself for each and every person in the world. Their belief is that He only died for a small subset of the world's population that they call the elect. They base that view on the fact that the Apostle John did not always mean each and every person whenever he used the word "world."

Reverend David J. Engelsma, in "The 'World' of John 3:16 Does Not Mean 'All Men Without Exception'" cited John 1:29, John 6:33, and John 17:9 as three examples where John did not mean each and every individual when he used the word "world" [20]. John 1:29 says, "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John 6:33 says, "For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." John 17:9 says, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine." In the first two cases Reverend Engelsma maintains that world meaning everyone would say that all men without exception are saved. In the third case if world means everyone, he asks if Jesus refuses to pray for all men without exception. But in "Calvinism & John 3:16," by the Guided by Truth Ministries, the author countered those remarks by writing, "If you look closely at the way John uses the word world in all of his writings, you will find that it is usually referring to those who are not Christians. It is not typically a term used for the elect, but rather one used for those who reject Christ." [21].

So which view is correct? In John 3:16, was the apostle writing that Jesus gave Himself for the elect or was he writing that Jesus gave Himself for those that

are not Christians? The answer must be the latter. First, even though the Calvinists want "world" to refer to the elect, they cannot automatically conclude that John always used the word "world" to mean that. If he had then John 7:7 would be a problem. That verse says, "The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil." If John had meant the elect in that verse when he said the world, then he would have been saying that the elect hate Jesus. Clearly, the better interpretation is to say that those that are not Christians are the ones that hate Jesus.

Second, in John 12:32 Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." He indicated that His death on the cross would draw ALL men to Him. Saying that He did not mean each and every person when He said all men is about as foolish as saying that He did not include women just because the King James translators said all men. Most Bible commentators agree that "all" in that verse does not mean universal salvation but that it is a reference to the fact that Jews and Gentiles would be drawn.

Third, a basic rule for Bible interpretation says to seek no other sense if common sense makes good sense. If one applies that rule, then believing that John meant that God gave His Son for each and every person in the world makes good sense when trying to understand John 3:16.

Next, John 3:18 says, "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." According to the Blue Letter Bible, the Greek words, *pisteuo* and *krino*, for "believeth" and "condemned," respectively, in the first clause were written in the present tense to show that the actions of believing and of not being condemned were current [22]. Thus, the first part of the verse means that the person currently believing is currently not condemned.

In the second clause, "believeth not" and "condemned already" were written in the perfect tense to show completed action that would not have to be repeated. That clause means that the person NOT currently believing is

condemned already and that the choosing to NOT currently believe and the condemnation that results from NOT currently believing will not have to be repeated. In other words, the second clause shows that a person is born lost, and if he or she does nothing about it then they will remain lost.

The Greek word, *ede*, was translated "already." It can mean now, even now, by this time, and now already. That word is the really important word in the verse because it causes the greatest concern. In looking at the first clause, the Calvinist would say that the believer is saved now already because he or she was chosen before the foundation of the world to be saved. In looking at the second clause, they would say that nonbelievers are condemned now already because they were NOT chosen for salvation before the foundation of the world. By associating believing, not believing, and already with before the foundation of the world, they are saying that God did the choosing and that His choice cannot be changed.

But their focus on those two clauses and trying to tie them to the foundation of the world may not be what the verse is really saying. As a completed action that does not have to be repeated, perfect tense, the second clause in John 3:18 is teaching that ALL people are born as NOT believers into an unsaved or condemned state. But that clause is NOT saying that they have to remain in that condition. They can do as Abram did and choose to become a current believer. John 3:18 shows that ALL people are born lost. But it does NOT show that the decisions about a person's salvation were made by God before the foundation of the world. It also does not show that the lost person is forced to remain lost.

A final point about John 3:16-18 pertains to the clear reference to the name of Jesus. In Chapter three, "CRITERION ONE: The Name of Jesus Not Needed," it was shown that a person does not have to know anything about Jesus, not even His name, to enter into a salvation relationship with the Lord. While all knowledge has value, a person does not have to possess all knowledge to get right

with the Lord. That comment was made earlier and was also listed above as one of the fourteen things that God has or has NOT done. Therefore, one should not be thrown off by the specific mention of Jesus by name in this passage. The Bible is simply adding more knowledge about salvation to existing knowledge. But that added knowledge does not change how people have always been saved.

3. Exegesis of Romans 9:15 and Romans 9:21 on Sovereignty

Romans 9:15 says, "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." In that verse God told Moses that human beings cannot decide who gets mercy and compassion. That decision belongs only to Him. The context for the verse comes from the Old Testament. In Exodus 33:1-33, the Lord was angry with the children of Israel because they had rebelled against Him. Moses pleaded for mercy on their behalf. In Exodus 33:19 God's response to him were the words repeated in Romans 9:15. Moses continued to plead and the Lord finally showed them mercy. However, it was God's choice and not Moses that had enabled the children of Israel to receive mercy. A Calvinist would say that God's choice to show or not show mercy reflects His sovereignty and parallels His right to choose who gets saved and who does not.

Romans 9:21 says, "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" In that verse, the decision for how a vessel is made belongs only to the potter. With respect to one's eternal salvation, the implied conclusion, which is consistent with Romans 9:15, is that that decision belongs only to the Lord. A Calvinist would say that God's choice in how He molds the vessel reflects His sovereignty and parallels His right to choose who gets saved and who does not.

Both of the above verses show God's sovereignty. Chapter six, "CRITERION FOUR: The Lord Is Still Sovereign," discussed several choices that the Lord has made in the past with respect to His sovereignty. Those choices are

also listed in the fourteen points at the beginning of this chapter. In the case of the children of Israel and Moses in Exodus 33:1-33, He could have forced His chosen people to live right. But He "chose" to not do that. The very fact, that they had angered Him by their rebellious actions leading up to Exodus 33:19, proves that He had allowed them to be disobedient. He also could have forced them to choose Him back. But He "chose" to not do that, either. He could have forced them to be saved. But He "chose" to not do that. The conclusion about God's sovereignty, based on Romans 9:15 and Romans 9:21, is simple. Because He is sovereign, He is not threatened by His choice to let people choose for themselves about entering into a salvation relationship with Himself. Also, because He is sovereign, He can simply choose to NOT choose and still retain His sovereignty.

4. Exegesis of Ephesians 1:4-8 on Hath Chosen in Him

Ephesians 1:4-8 says, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;" That passage uses four important phrases that seem to provide strong support for the view of Unconditional Election.

The first is "he hath chosen us." However, because God has chosen to reveal Himself to ALL people through the three sources of General Revelation, the idea of some people being excluded is probably not the intended meaning of "he hath chosen us." The Apostle Paul used the pronoun "us" because he was writing his letter to the specific church at Ephesus. But he would have used that same pronoun in writing to any of the other churches. The fact that Paul said "us"

to that church did not mean that the Lord had not chosen to reveal Himself to the people in all of the other churches. It also does not mean that anyone living before or since the church at Ephesus was left out because the people in that church were no closer to the Lord than anyone else.

The Greek word translated "chosen" is *eklegomai*. It means to pick out or to choose out for oneself. The verb was in the middle voice, which meant that the action of choosing had been performed upon the one doing the choosing. The tense was aorist, which is usually translated as simple past tense. That means that the King James translation of "he hath chosen us in him" would have probably been better translated as "he hath chosen us for himself." The rest of the sentence explains why the Lord has chosen us for Himself. But that reason makes His choosing exclusive because Paul makes it clear that his words ONLY apply to those people that are in a salvation relationship with the Lord. They were chosen to "be holy and without blame before him in love." Those words would not apply to someone NOT in a salvation relationship with God.

The second important phrase in Ephesians 1:4-8 is "before the foundation of the world." Combined with the first phrase, the verse means that God decided before the foundation of the world that those people that choose to enter into a salvation relationship with Him should live holy lives and be without blame before Him in love. Calvinists believe that verse four is saying that God chose before the foundation of the world to bring some people into a salvation relationship with Him while excluding others. But that does not seem to be what that verse is really saying. The problem might be with how the King James translators interpreted the Greek middle voice for *eklegomai* as "in Him" rather than "for Himself."

The Bible often speaks of people in a salvation relationship with the Lord as being IN Him. For example, II Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Galatians 3:28 says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is

neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Ephesians 2:13 says, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." In John 15:5, Jesus said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." Even Ephesians 2:10, which will be discussed below, says that people in a salvation relationship with the Lord are created in Christ Jesus. Therefore, reading "in Him" in verse four could have easily caused some Calvinists to think that the verse is talking about people being chosen for salvation.

The third important phrase in Ephesians 1:4-8 is "having predestinated us." The Greek word translated "predestinated" is *proorizo*. It means to predetermine or to decide beforehand. In the New Testament, it frequently indicates that God decreed something from eternity past. So what in the current passage did He decree from eternity past? It was to adopt as "children by Jesus Christ to himself" those that choose to enter into a salvation relationship with Him.

That conclusion is consistent with other passages in the Bible. Romans 8:15, says "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Galatians 4:5 says, "To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." People that choose to seek the Lord with all their heart will find Him. Then, they will enter into a salvation relationship with Him and be adopted as His children by Jesus. However, as a reminder, it must be pointed out that a person does not have to actually know or understand any of those things for them to happen. For more about what a person must know concerning a salvation relationship with the Lord, please review chapter three, "CRITERION ONE: The Name of Jesus Not Needed."

The fourth important phrase is "according to the good pleasure of his will." So what is the significance of God deciding before the foundation of the

world that people who choose Him should live holy lives and be adopted as children? That is a simple question to answer. It was for "the good pleasure of his will." Ever since the creation of Adam and Eve, the Lord has desired a holy people for Himself. When Cain killed the god-fearing Abel, the Lord gave Seth as another son for Adam and Eve. Seth started a new godly line that included Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and even the incarnated Jesus. In Genesis 6:1-7, the Lord caused the Great Flood because He wanted to rid the earth of evil so that He could protect and continue His godly line through Noah. Therefore, saying that God "hath chosen us" for Himself "before the foundation of the world" to continue a godly line and has "predestinated us" to be adopted as children for "the good pleasure of his will" is both plausible and consistent with other biblical teaching.

5. Exegesis of Ephesians 2:10 on Good Works

Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Consistent with Ephesians 1:4, this verse emphasizes that followers of God should live holy lives and perform good works. The Greek word for "ordained" is *proetoimazo*. It means to prepare before or to make ready beforehand. That means that the Lord made ready beforehand, probably before the foundation of the world, the decree that those that seek Him with all their heart and enter into a salvation relationship with Him should produce good works. But based on Ephesians 2:8-9, one should note that the good works are not performed so that the person can be saved. They are a byproduct of salvation and they become an evidence of salvation. However, they do not provide a biblical basis for the view of Unconditional Election.

6. Exegesis of II Peter 1:10 on Calling and Election

II Peter 1:10 says, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." The Apostle Peter encouraged his readers to make their calling and election sure. But what did he mean by that? To find out, the two words "calling" and "election" need to be considered. They also need to be considered to see if they support the view of Unconditional Election.

The Greek word translated "calling" is *klesis*. It means an invitation to a feast or more appropriately to the divine invitation of a salvation relationship by God. The Lord gives three sources of General Revelation of Himself so that He can reveal Himself to every person. According to John 6:44, He uses those sources to draw or invite ALL people to Himself. However, as was pointed out in chapter three, "Two Observations in John 6:44 and John 14:6-7" and above in "Exegesis of John 6:44 concerning Being Drawn," that invitation has a time factor attached to it. He does not call, invite, or draw forever. So Peter was saying that the only way that they could be sure about their calling was for them to respond as soon as they sense God's revelation of Himself.

The Greek word translated "election" is *ekloge*. As a verb, it means the act of picking or choosing. As a noun, it means a person or a thing chosen. In II Peter 1:10, it was used as a noun to imply that the reader of the verse would be the person chosen. The Greek word translated "sure" is *bebaios*. It means stable, fast, firm, and trusty. Thus, Peter's implied meaning was that a person should be very certain that their having been called or invited into a salvation relationship with the Lord is stable or firm because people can sometimes be fooled about such things. The word "election" was used because people become part of the elect "when" they respond to the three sources of General Revelation. Because of that, Abram was NOT among the "elect" until after he sought the Lord with all his heart.

While the above verse uses two words that cause Calvinists to take note, it does not provide support for the belief of an Unconditional Election. It shows that God reveals Himself to people in such a way that they can sense His calling them into a salvation relationship with Himself. It shows that a person becomes part of the elect when they respond to the Lord's invitation. It shows that a person really needs to be sure that they have actually come to the Lord and not been fooled into something phony like a simple belief in God's existence or the belief that salvation comes from good works. For more on that, please review chapter three, "What True Salvation Is Not." But "calling" and "election" in that verse do NOT show an unconditional aspect or a forced selection aspect.

7. Conclusion about the Unconditional Election View

The description of Unconditional Election provided by Mr. Barlow raised three issues. But none of the three sufficiently supported the belief of the Unconditional Election view. Analysis of the six Scriptural references also has not proved Unconditional Election. Therefore, like the Total Depravity or the Total Inability view, this view cannot be supported tautologically by the evidence.

d. Limited Atonement (L)

Having found that the first two points of Calvinism fail because of the four criteria discussed in chapters three through six, because of the fourteen points listed above in "Things from this Study that the Lord Has and Has Not Done," and as a result of exegesis on the individual key verses, Calvinism becomes like a five-legged stool with only three legs. The stool is still standing but just barely. The third point of Calvinism, which is the Limited Atonement view, comes from the belief that Jesus did not die for those that were NOT chosen for salvation by God before the foundation of the world. The three verses often used by Calvinists to support that view are discussed below.

1. Exegesis of John 17:9 on World and Thou Hast Given Me

John 17:9 says, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine." The Greek word translated "world" is *kosmos*. Interestingly, Calvinists say that the "world" in John 3:16 represents the elect that God chose to force into a salvation relationship with Himself. But in this verse, they say that the word "world" represents those that God did NOT choose. The verse says that Jesus did not pray for them. So, according to a Calvinist, that also means that He would not have died for them, either. Hence, the idea of a Limited Atonement view was born.

However, Calvinists should not be allowed to have their interpretation of the word "world" both ways in the two different verses just to accommodate their beliefs. The more accurate rendering of the word in both verses is that it represents those that have NOT entered into a salvation relationship with the Lord. That determination was expressed earlier in: "Exegesis of John 3:16-18 concerning World and Believeth."

The phrase "which thou hast given me" in referring back to the second "them" implies that Jesus prayed only for those that had been given to Him. That sounds very Calvinistic. But one should look back to John 6:65, which says, "And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father." In "Exegesis of John 6:65 concerning Those Given," that verse was found to suggest more of a time parameter to God's giving than to an exclusion parameter. In other words, the Lord reveals Himself to everyone through the three sources of General Revelation. He then tries to draw ALL people to Himself. He just does NOT try to draw them forever. Concerning those that seek Him with all their heart, He chose before the foundation of the world that He would receive and adopt them as His children. Then, having done that, they became the object of the Lord's prayers in John 17:9.

Because Jesus acknowledged two different groups of people in that verse, those that are saved and those that are NOT saved, Calvinists believe that God

predetermined the eternal destiny of all people. But that does not necessarily follow. One cannot automatically assume that God decided before the foundation of the world that specific people would comprise each of the two groups. He is omniscient. He knows who will be saved and who will NOT be saved. But to say that He forced the composition of those two groups based on John 17:9 is logically and biblically invalid. The verse says that there are two groups of people. It does not say that those NOT saved were forced to be NOT saved, or vice versa. Therefore, this verse does not support the Limited Atonement view.

2. Exegesis of Matthew 26:28 and Ephesians 5:25

Matthew 26:28 says, "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Ephesians 5:25 says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." The word "many" in the first verse implies that Jesus' blood was not shed for everyone. The word "it" in the second verse refers back to the church and implies that Jesus does not love those outside the church and that He did not give Himself for them. But like John 17:9, God the Son, being omniscient, knew that many people would not seek Him with all their heart. He knew that they would not enter into a salvation relationship with Him. But that does not in any way support the belief that He chose for it to be that way or that He intentionally made it that way. Therefore, the above two verses do not support the Limited Atonement view, either.

3. Conclusion about the Limited Atonement View

Without the Total Depravity and Unconditional Election views, the Limited Atonement view cannot be valid. Limited Atonement does not mean that some people will die saved and that some will die lost. If that were true, then it would be a simple play-on-words to say that Jesus did not die for everyone. But to get the real flavor of what Calvinists mean with this view, one must understand

that they would say that God intended for Jesus' death on the cross to only benefit a limited number. If that were true, then by His design Jesus would not have died for everyone. However, because the Bible shows that the Lord is longsuffering not willing that any should perish apart from Him, God clearly did NOT design a Limited Atonement. Scriptural evidence strongly supports the idea that He wants everyone to seek Him with all their heart.

e. Irresistible Grace (I)

In chapter one, "Irresistible Grace (I)," this point was described by saying that God issues a general call to ALL people and a special call to ONLY those that He chose before the foundation of the world for salvation. Those people receiving the special call are called the elect. Everyone else makes up a group that is called the non-elect. According to the Calvinists, the special call is the basis for the Irresistible Grace view because the person being called cannot resist that call. They must accept, and they must be saved. Those in the non-elect group do not get the special call. So they cannot be saved.

1. Abram as the Elect and Terah as the Non-Elect

When considering someone like Abram, a Calvinist would say that he was one of the elect. He had received the special call and had had no choice about entering into a salvation relationship with the Lord. They would say that his father, Terah, was one of the non-elect. So he had ONLY received the general call and he had had no choice about NOT being able to enter into a salvation relationship with the Lord. The Calvinist would also say that neither of them could have changed the choices that God had made for them.

To determine if the Irresistible Grace view has a viable biblical basis, three Bible verses, which are John 6:37, John 6:44, and John 8:14, will first be considered. Then, I Peter 5:10 and Acts 16:14 will be examined. The goal will be to specifically determine if any of those verses provide support for a general

call AND a special call. If any of them do, then the next step will be to determine if either or both of those calls can be resisted. If support cannot be found for both calls, then the Irresistible Grace view and all of Calvinism will fail. Just as it was critically important earlier in chapter four to show that God has almost always been non-audible since the Garden of Eden, it is now critically important for the Calvinists to show from the Bible that there is a special call.

2. Comment on the Three Key Verses

John 6:37 says, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." John 6:44 says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." Romans 8:14 says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." None of the above verses provide support for a general call AND a separate special call. Furthermore, Mr. Steele and Mr. Thomas did not provide any Bible references in chapter one, "Irresistible Grace (I)," to justify their comments for two separate calls, either.

3. Exegesis of I Peter 5:10 on Called

I Peter 5:10 says, "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." Dr. Marvin R. Vincent, in his work Vincent's Word Studies of the New Testament, wrote that the words "who hath called us" are better translated as "who called you" [23]. He also indicated that the best manuscripts do not contain the words "by Christ Jesus." Lastly, the word translated "unto" in that verse is from the Greek word, *eis*, which means for, to, into, unto, and among. Therefore, when returning to the original language, the above phrase actually becomes "who called you for His eternal glory" or "who called you to His eternal glory."

When looking at that verse, a Calvinist might first focus on the word "called," which was translated from the Greek word *kaleo* meaning to call out loud or to invite. That word is also used when trying to indicate that someone is "called" by a particular name. For example, Matthew 1:21 says, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." A Calvinist might next focus on the words "eternal glory" and conclude that the Apostle Peter was saying that his specific readers had received an invitation or a special call from the Lord for salvation. If that conclusion is correct, then they might have a biblical basis for believing in a special call that is ONLY sent to those that get saved and also in a call that cannot be resisted.

However, that conclusion probably is NOT correct. For one thing, the Greek word *kaleo* does not support the idea that the call MUST be accepted. The Apostle Matthew used that same Greek word in his gospel in an instance where the invitation was resisted. Matthew 22:4-5 says, "Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise."

The word translated "bidden" in that passage is the same Greek word that is translated "called" in I Peter 5:10. Those that had been bidden or that had received a special invitation to the marriage dinner from the king resisted his invitation and went their separate ways. Therefore, even though Peter might have been writing ONLY to those that had responded to the Lord's call, it does not automatically mean that they were the only ones that had received the call. Others, like Terah, may also have been bidden. But they simply ignored the invitation and went their separate ways. If this latter point is true, then the call expressed by Peter would NOT have been consistent with the special call of Irresistible Grace because it could have been resisted.

A second objection, about I Peter 5:10 being a special call to only those that had gotten or would get saved, is that nothing about the verse suggests that God's calling was exclusively just to Peter's readers or to only a few. In other words, that same invitation may have been issued to everyone. But Peter was only writing to those that he knew had responded. The invitation could also have been in the form of the three sources of General Revelation, which the Lord has given to everyone and which has also been discussed throughout this study. Therefore, because of this objection, the call does not match the special call of the Irresistible Grave view because it was possibly issued to more than just those that would accept.

A third objection, about I Peter 5:10 being a special call to only those that had gotten or would get saved, is that the words "eternal glory" may not even be referring to salvation. If Peter meant for the word *eis* to be translated "for" then he probably was writing about their salvation. But if he had intended for the word to mean "to" then he probably was NOT writing about their salvation. John 17:1 says, "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." According to Jesus, everything is about the Father's glory, and that may also have been about what Peter was writing.

If so, then the call to eternal glory would have been a simple invitation for those already in a salvation relationship with God to share in the Father's eternal glory. The latter part of the verse indicates that the people to whom he was writing were enduring great persecution and suffering. So Peter was trying to present the rosier picture of an eternity with the Lord in all His splendor and glory as a way to encourage them. He wanted them to know that their trials and tribulations would only be for a short while whereas being with the Lord in His eternal glory would be forever.

For all of the above reasons, I Peter 5:10 does not support a general call AND a separate special call. Therefore, this verse should not be considered a viable biblical basis for the Irresistible Grace view.

4. Exegesis of Acts 16:14 on Worshipped

Acts 16:14 says, "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." In addition to the above four verses, Calvinists also frequently use Acts 16:14 to defend their position on Irresistible Grace. They conclude that Lydia's heart was closed. Then, as Paul spoke, the Lord opened her heart with a special call. She was able to understand the truth AND be saved. But is that really what happened?

In answering that question, the word to consider in that verse is the Greek word used for "worshipped." In Acts 10:25, the Greek word translated "worshipped" is *proskuneo*. It means to worship in the sense of falling down prostrate before the object to be worshipped. But in Acts 16:14, which is the verse being examined, the word for "worshipped" is *sebomai*. It means to revere or worship. Luke used the second word for worship because he wanted to emphasize that Lydia was already saved. When she intently listened to the preacher, the Lord expanded her understanding. As was pointed out in chapter two, "Study to Shew Thyself Approved unto God," she was then able to learn what she wanted to know. The result in the next verse was that she got baptized, NOT saved.

Because of the ordering of Luke's phrases, that verse does not support the idea that she was saved AFTER the Lord opened her heart. Instead, she had had the same limited knowledge about her salvation as most Old Testament saints. When she listened to Paul, her heart was opened to the fact that she had not been baptized. So, in the next verse, the Bible says that she was baptized.

5. Conclusion about the Irresistible Grace View

Based on a review of the above five verses, no reason exists for believing that the Lord makes a general call AND a special call to anyone. But if the Bible does not confirm both calls then all of Calvinism collapses. Why is that? Because having two separate calls is the only way that someone can claim that God is sovereign and still explain how people can die saved or lost without having a choice.

The rationale for that statement is not too difficult. The first thing to remember is that Calvinists demand God's sovereignty in every instance without compromise. But if there was NOT a special call, then both Abram and Terah would have only received a general call. More importantly, they both would have received the exact same call. So if Abram was saved and Terah was lost, then either or both of them would have had to make a choice about entering or NOT entering into a salvation relationship with the Lord based on the same general call. But if that is true, then it means that God was not totally in control of their salvation. He would NOT have been absolutely sovereign and in total control over everything and everyone. But if those things are true, THEN THE WHOLE THEORY FAILS.

Therefore, the core beliefs that have been presented throughout this study remain. God has revealed Himself through the three sources of General Revelation. He tries to draw ALL people to Himself. Those that respond by seeking Him with all their heart enter into a salvation relationship with Him. Those that reject by not seeking Him with all their heart die lost. In both cases, however, the individual will have been given the freedom to decide their own eternal destiny. Concerning Irresistible Grace, Mr. Loraine Boettner, who is a Calvinist, wrote the following:

The Scriptures and Christian experience teach us that the very faith and repentance through which we are saved are themselves the gifts of God. 'By grace have ye been saved through faith, and that

not of yourselves, it is the gift of God,' Ephesians 2:8. The Christians in Achaia had 'believed through grace,' Acts 18:27. A man is not saved because he believes in Christ; he believes in Christ because he is saved." [24]

In the "Conclusion about the Total Depravity View" section, the comment was made that the Total Depravity view seemed to be less about human moral deficiency and more about protecting the Lord from what might be perceived as failure on His part. That same comment also seems to be a possible motive behind the above quote about Irresistible Grace. It is as though a Calvinist cannot accept that someone can die lost unless God has chosen for him or her to die lost. Then, once the Calvinist has convinced himself or herself concerning that belief, the only natural conclusion is that the Lord must have also chosen those that will be saved, too.

But Chapter six, "CRITERION FOUR: The Lord Is Still Sovereign," thoroughly addressed God's sovereignty and presented the idea that He can allow people to have a choice and still retain His sovereignty. Therefore, the Irresistible Grace view with its general and special call is NOT supported by the Bible. Not only that, but the lack of evidence for a special call puts all of Calvinism at risk because the Calvinist cannot explain God being sovereign and someone dying saved or lost without having had a choice.

f. Perseverance of the Saints (P)

Perseverance of the Saints presents a once-saved, always-saved theology. The verses presented for this view, which are Romans 8:28-39, Philippians 1:6, and John 6:39, do not require discussion because they somewhat support the view. Romans 8:28-39 speaks about nothing being able to separate a person in a salvation relationship with God from His love. Philippians 1:6 talks about God continuing His work in the lives of believers until the day of Christ. In John 6:39, the Apostle John wrote that God's will is that Jesus would not lose anyone that has been given to Him. So, none of those verses require special examination.

In somewhat agreeing with the fifth point of Calvinism but for a couple of different reasons, the Bible seems to support a once-saved, always-saved theology. First, in John 3:1-15, the Apostle John recorded a conversation between Jesus and a Pharisee named Nicodemus. He told the Pharisee three times that he had to be born again to enter into a salvation relationship with God. In telling him those words, Jesus gave an analogy that could be easily understood. Being born is a simple concept. Once a person has been born in a physical sense, he or she can never be unborn. They can be killed or their life can be ended in other ways. But they can never be unborn. In the same sense, nowhere does the Bible ever talk about a person being unborn spiritually. Therefore, the conclusion is that once a person has entered into a salvation relationship with the Lord, been born again, he or she can never be unborn spiritually.

The second reason for concluding that the Bible supports a once-saved, always-saved theology is Ephesians 4:30. That verse says: "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." The Greek word translated "sealed" is *sphragizo*. It means to be marked with a seal, possibly for protection from Satan or for proving, confirming, or attesting to a thing. The Greek word translated "redemption" is *apolutrosis*. It means to be released from a burden by the payment of a ransom. So the last part of that verse says that the person in a salvation relationship with the Lord has been sealed and is protected from a doomed eternity by the payment of a ransom.

From the cross, Jesus made seven statements. His last was John 19:30, which says, "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." The Greek word translated "finished" is *teleo*. In His last statement as an incarnated human being, Jesus used the business term *teleo* to indicate that man's sin debt had been paid in full. Putting Ephesians 4:30 and John 19:30 together says that the person in a salvation relationship with the Lord has been marked with a seal by the Holy Spirit for protection from Satan because Jesus has paid His sin debt in full.

Therefore, because of Jesus the saved sinner has been set free from his or her debt for all eternity. From that comes the idea of once-saved, always-saved but for two entirely different reasons than were offered by the four verses above.

g. Some Final Thoughts

The first four points of Calvinism do not seem to be supported by the Bible. Man is depraved, maybe even totally depraved. But God uses the three sources of General Revelation to get through to him. He does not require people to know anything about Jesus to enter into a salvation relationship with Him. He has probably not spoken out loud with any human beings since the Garden of Eden because that could be a stumbling block for those to whom He has not spoken out loud. He has always tried to save everyone. Finally, His sovereignty does not have to get in the way with His allowing people the choice of whether or not to enter into a salvation relationship with Him.

In conclusion, no one should foolishly assume that the Bible is an easy book to understand. Actually, it is a very difficult book that takes great study, prayer, and effort to understand some of the more difficult doctrines. As has been brought out by this study, the Lord has made salvation simple. But He has not always made His truths so easy to understand. When it comes to the doctrine of salvation, some people might think that they have to be either Armenian or Calvinist. But that is not true. Both views are at opposite extremes, and one can easily find themselves somewhere between the two.



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About the Author

I. Became a Christian on 12/14/67

II. Married with 5 grown children, 17 grandchildren, and 6 great-grandchildren

III. Education

B. A. in Mathematics, Old Dominion University, 1972

M. S. in Mathematics and Computer Science, William and Mary, 1975

M. B. A. in General Business, Liberty University, 1993

M. A. R. in Bible and Pastoral Counseling, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2001

IV. Other Writings

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The End May Be Much Nearer Than We Think (12/17/2006)

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Against 'The Shift of the Ages' (5/18/2011)

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