

# Unpacking the mechanics of predestination and free will

A Visual  
Guide to  
Calvinism.



The Great Debate over  
Grace, Sovereignty, and the  
T.U.L.I.P. Framework.

# Two massive questions at the center of the Christian faith

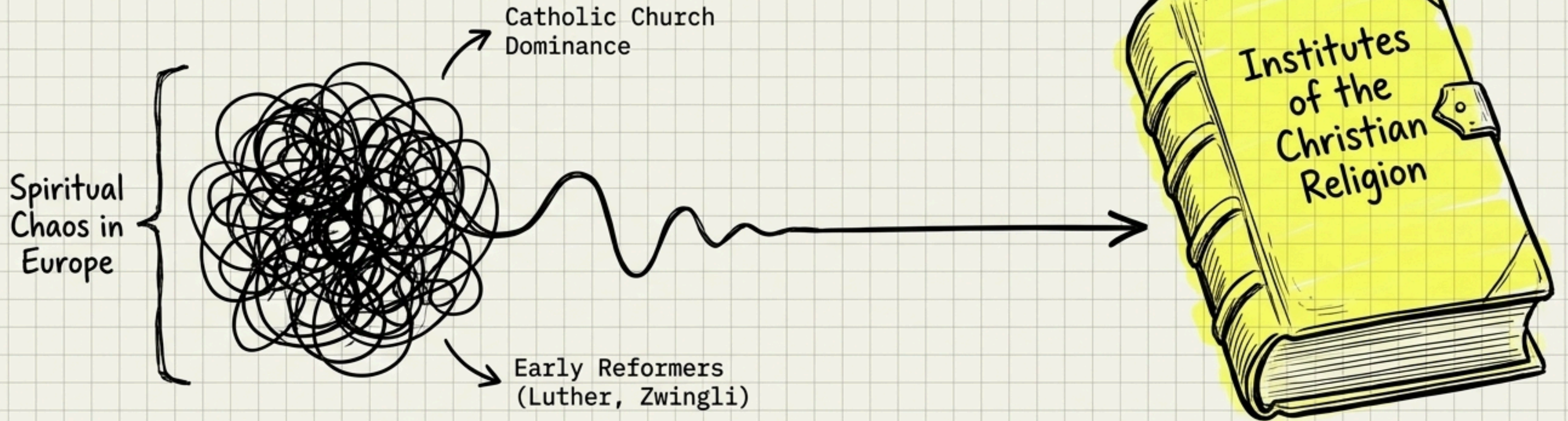
God's  
Absolute  
Sovereignty.

How much  
control does  
God have over  
our lives?

Human  
Free Will.

Do we genuinely  
have a choice,  
or is it all  
predetermined?

# Order from the spiritual chaos of the 1500s



## Did you know?

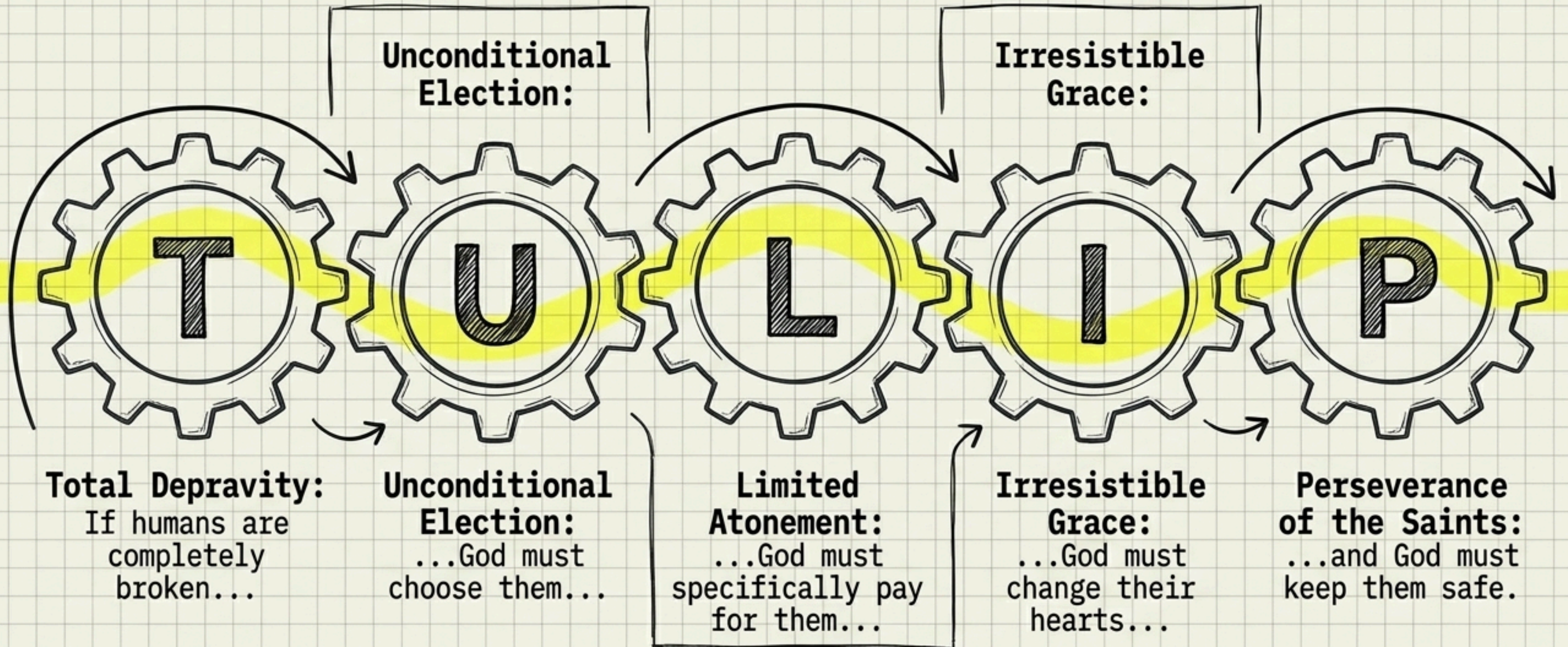
Calvin never actually founded a "Calvinist" church. He just wanted to reform Christianity according to scripture. The label came later from critics and fans!



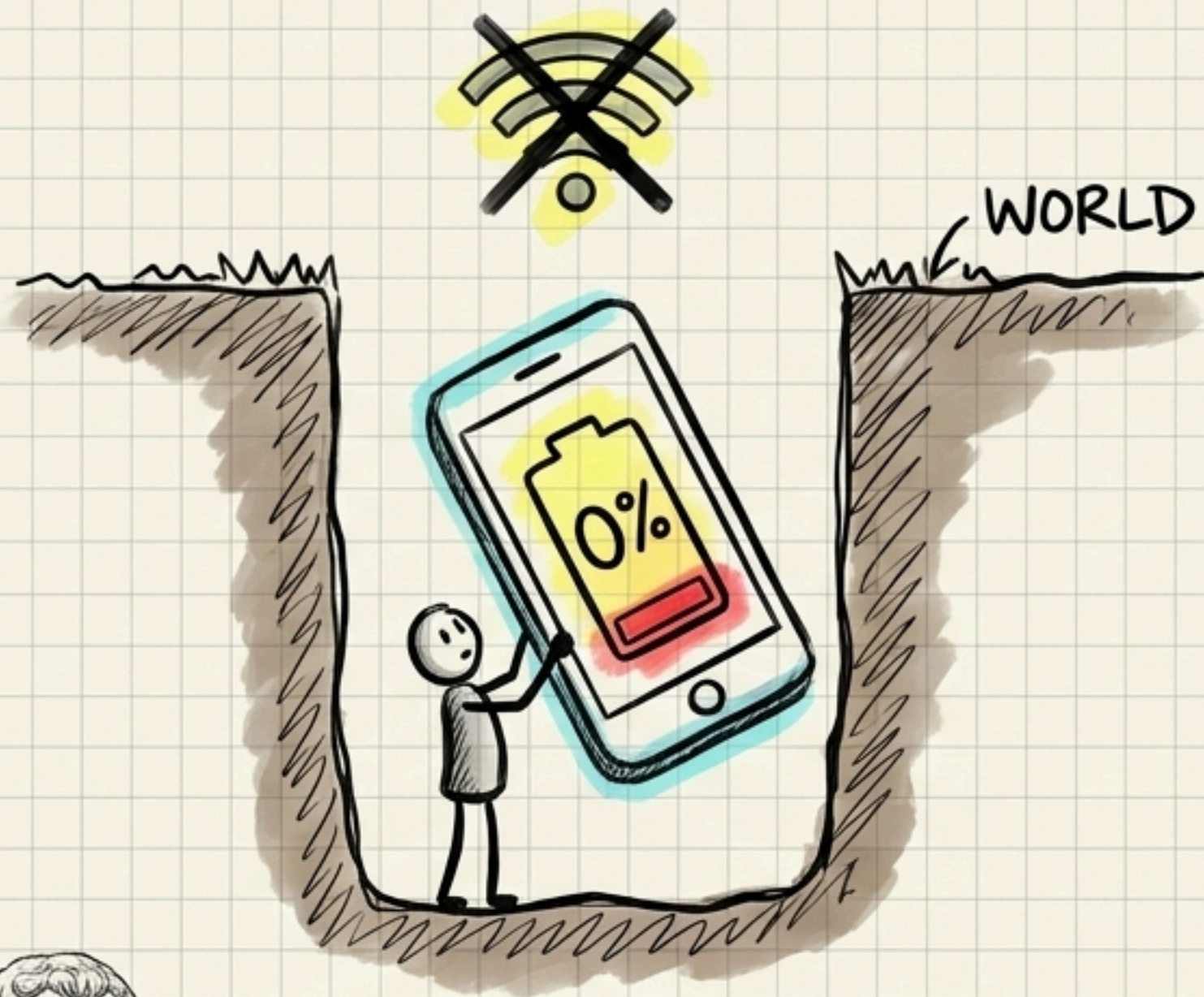
John Calvin:  
A brilliant 20-something French lawyer who fled to Geneva to pastor, teach, and write.

# The five interlocking gears of reformed theology

Over time, Calvin's teachings were summarized into these five key points by his followers. They function as a single logical engine of salvation.



# Total Depravity means spiritual inability, not maximum evil



← Calvin didn't invent this!  
Augustine taught the exact  
same corruption of human  
nature in the 4th century.

Because of Adam's sin, every human is born **spiritually dead**.

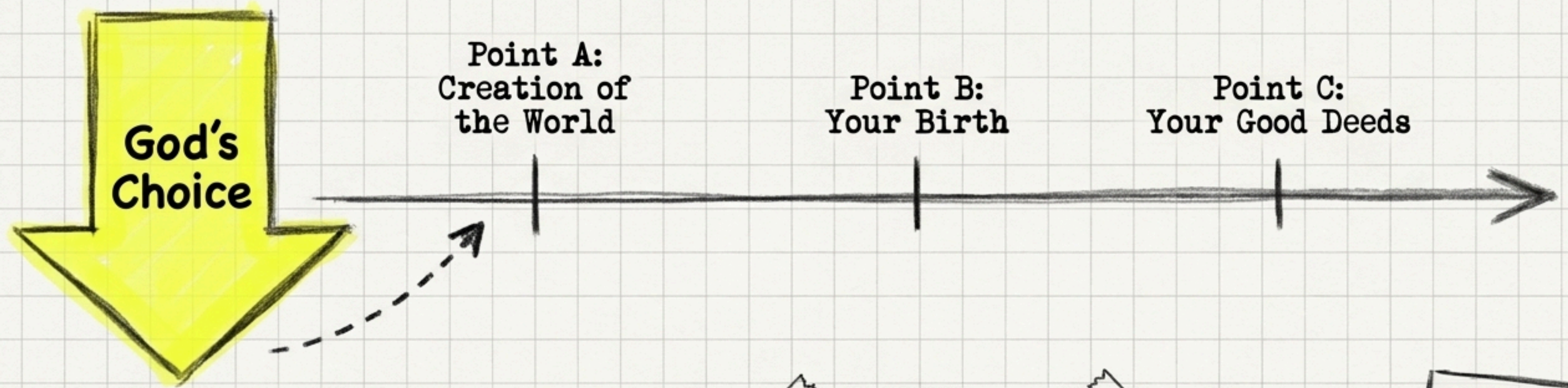
Sin corrupts the mind, emotions, and will.

No one can seek God **without divine help** making the first move.

Romans 3:10-12 ("There is none who seeks after God")

Ephesians 2:1 ("You were dead in your trespasses")

# Unconditional Election happens before the timeline begins



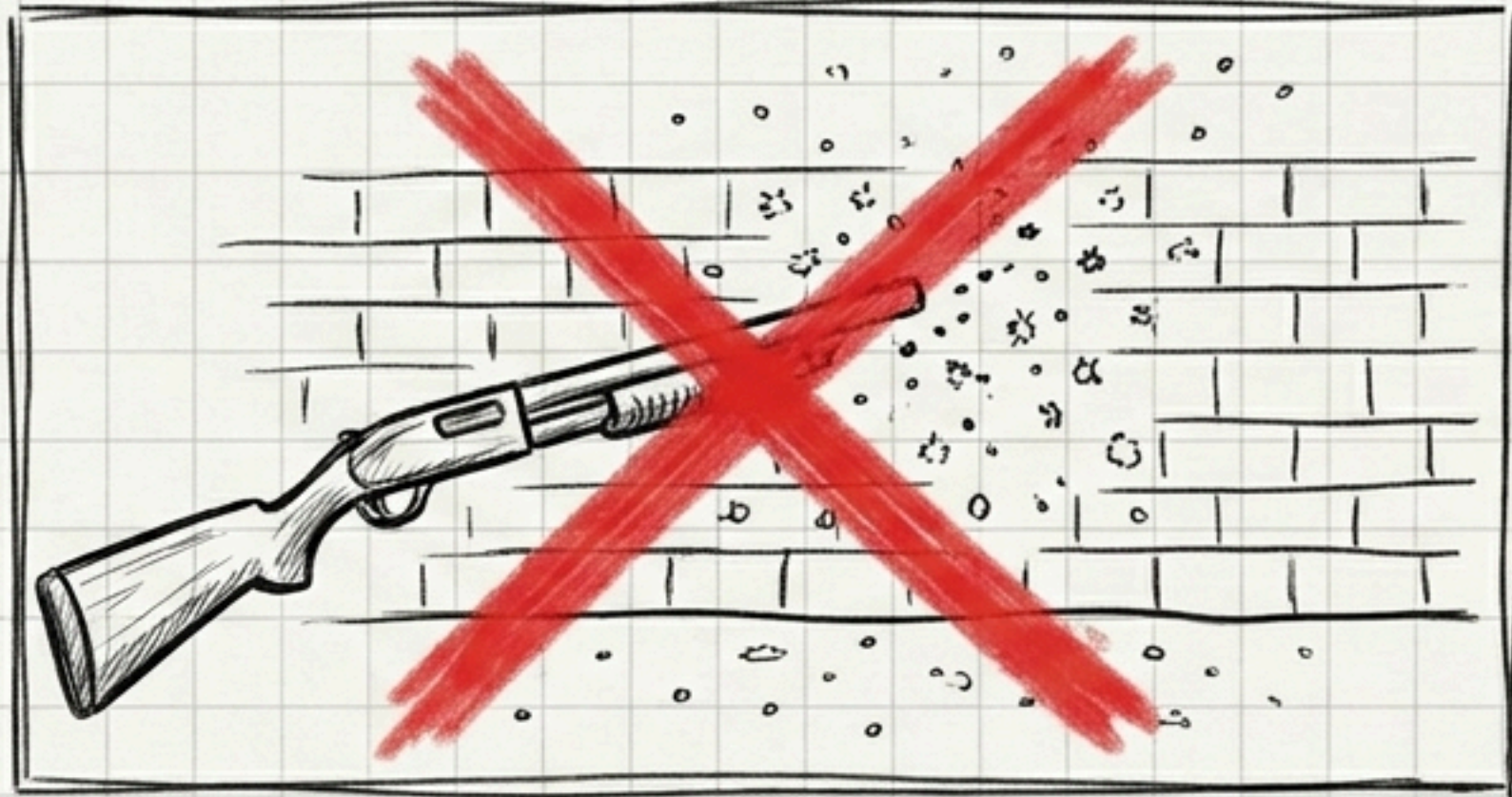
God chooses individuals to be saved based entirely on His mercy and plan. He does not look into the future to see who will do good deeds or choose Him first.

**Ephesians 1:4-5**  
("He chose us in him before the foundation of the world")

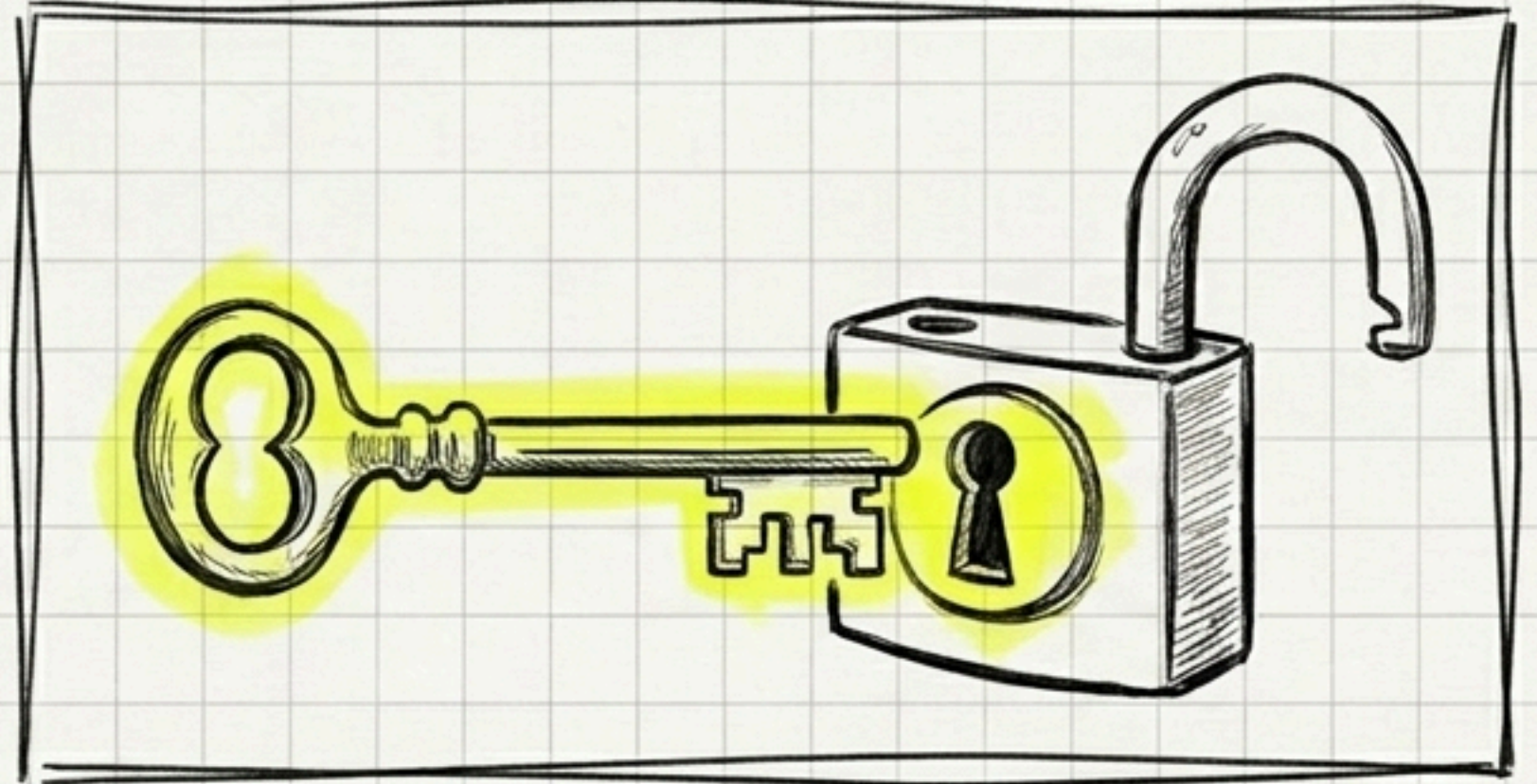
**Romans 9:15-16**

**Calvin:**  
He called this the "Awful Decree"—meaning awesome and completely beyond human understanding.

# Limited Atonement accomplishes salvation for specific people



Making salvation merely possible for everyone.



Fully accomplishing salvation for the elect.

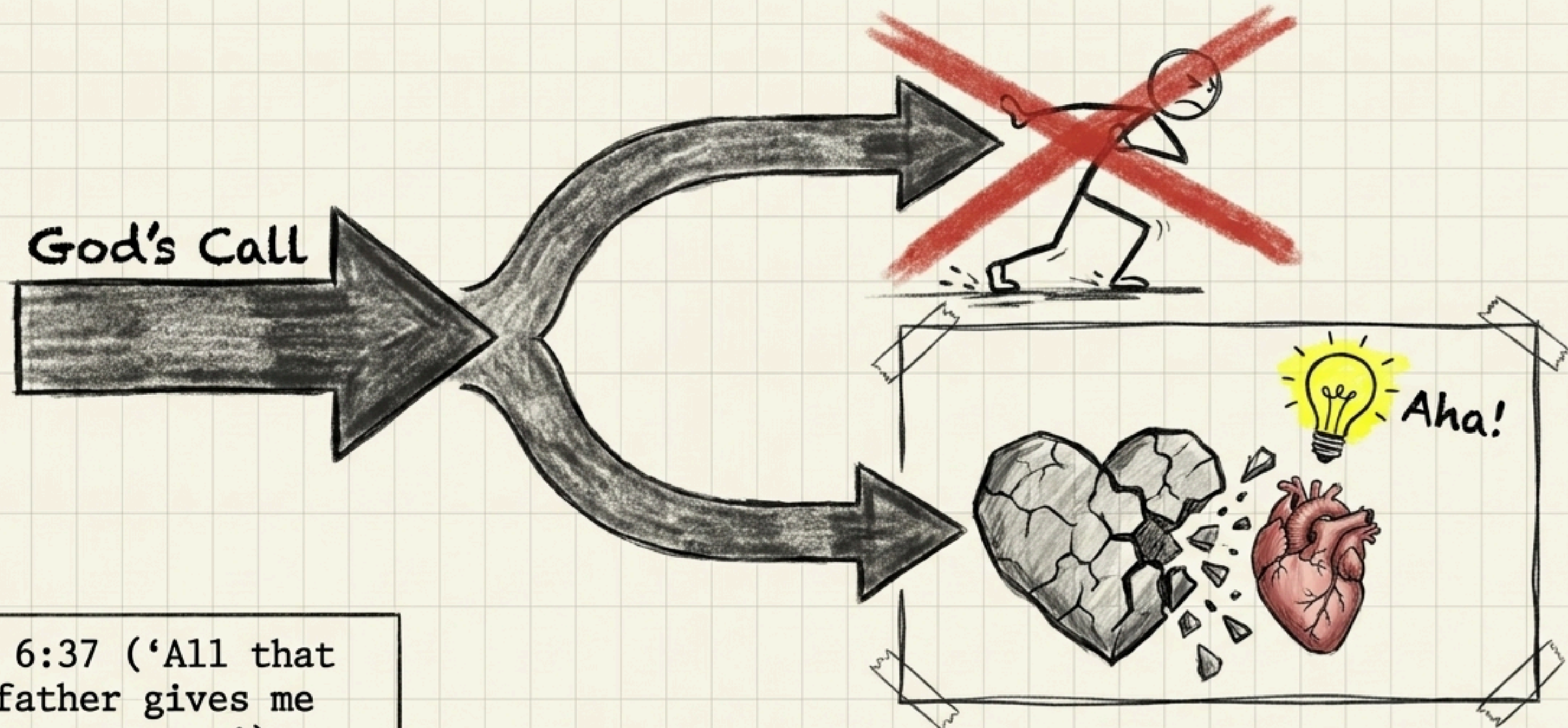
John 10:14-15  
("I lay down my life  
for the sheep")

Matthew 1:21

Also called "Particular Redemption."  
Christ's death was specifically intended to pay for and secure the salvation of those God chose, rather than being a general payment that requires human activation.

Enter the 4-Point Calvinist:  
Many reformed Christians accept T-U-I-P but reject this point, believing Jesus died for all, but only believers benefit.

# Irresistible Grace is transformation, not coercion



John 6:37 ('All that the father gives me will come to me')

Acts 16:14 ('The Lord opened her heart')

God doesn't force people; He changes their nature so that they genuinely want to come to Him. Many prefer the term 'Effectual Grace'.

# Perseverance of the Saints means God holds onto you



‘Once saved, always saved.’

True believers will remain in the faith until the end. Salvation is a reassurance of God holding tightly to you, not the exhausting effort of you holding tightly to God.

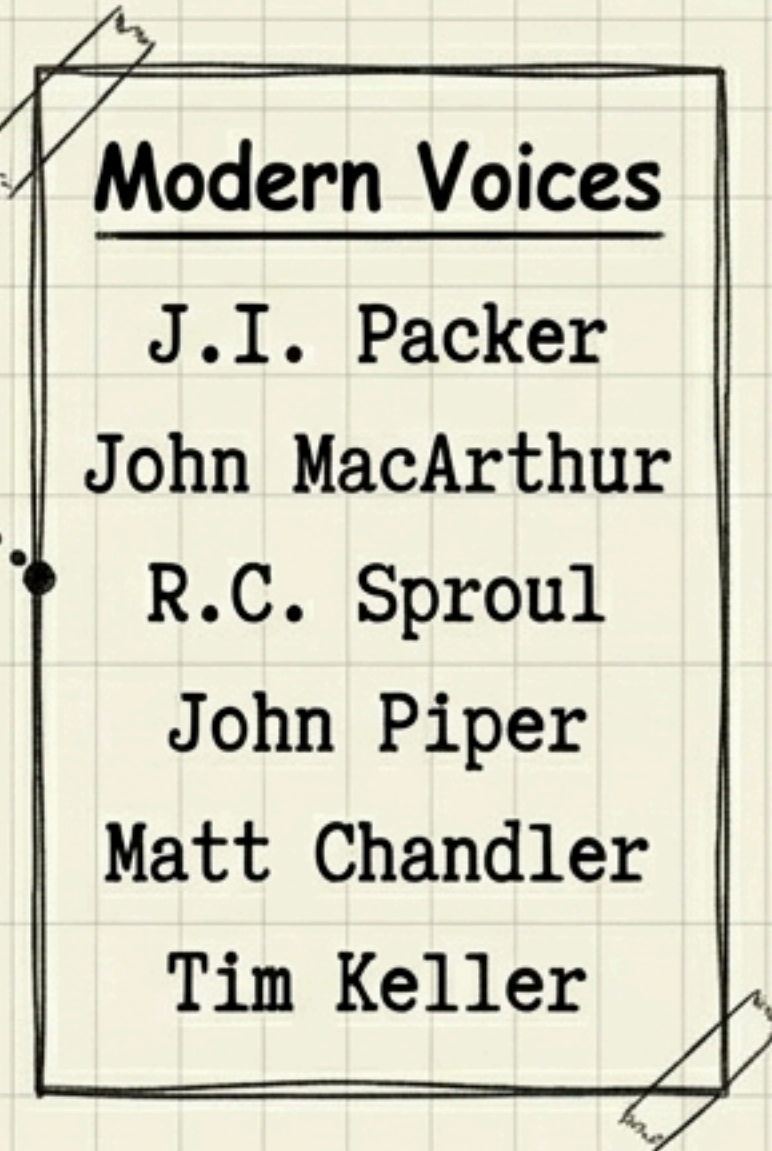
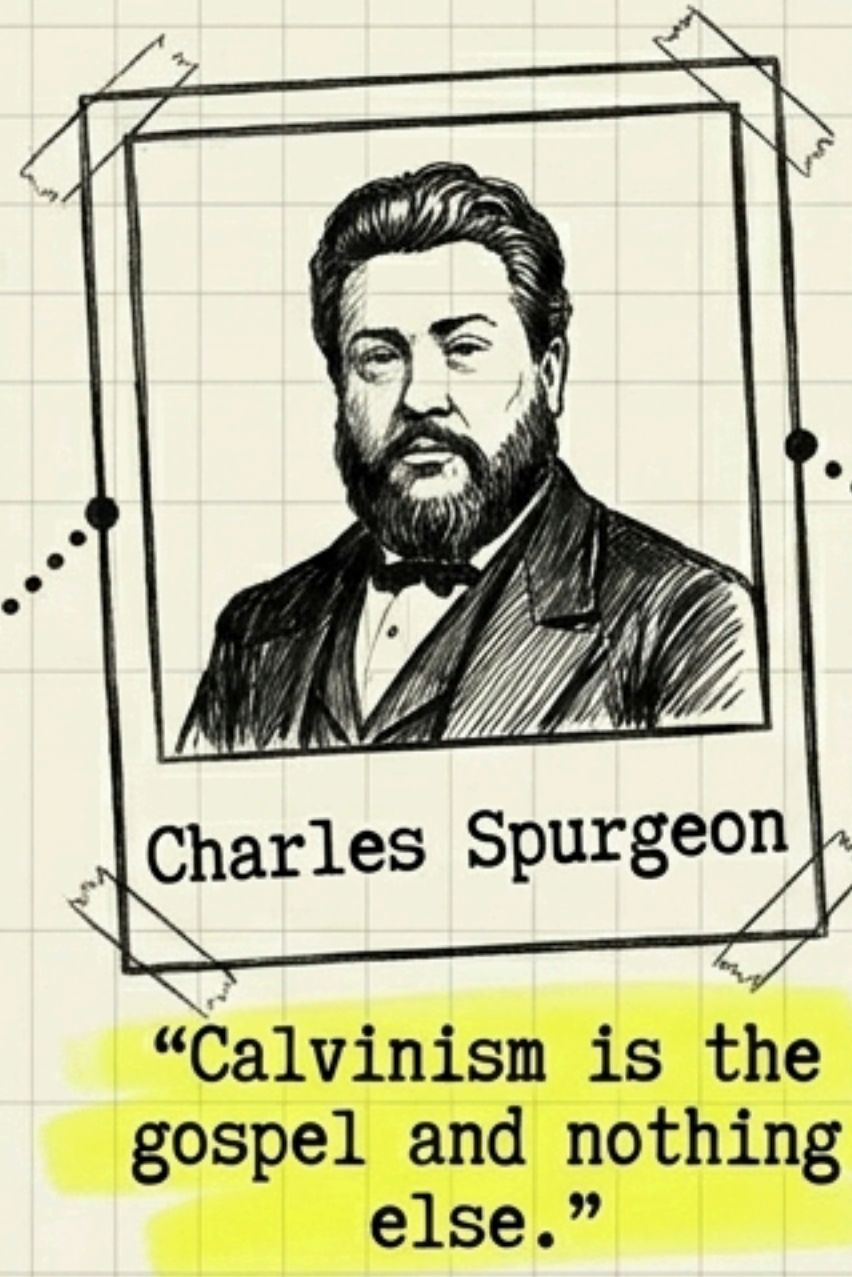
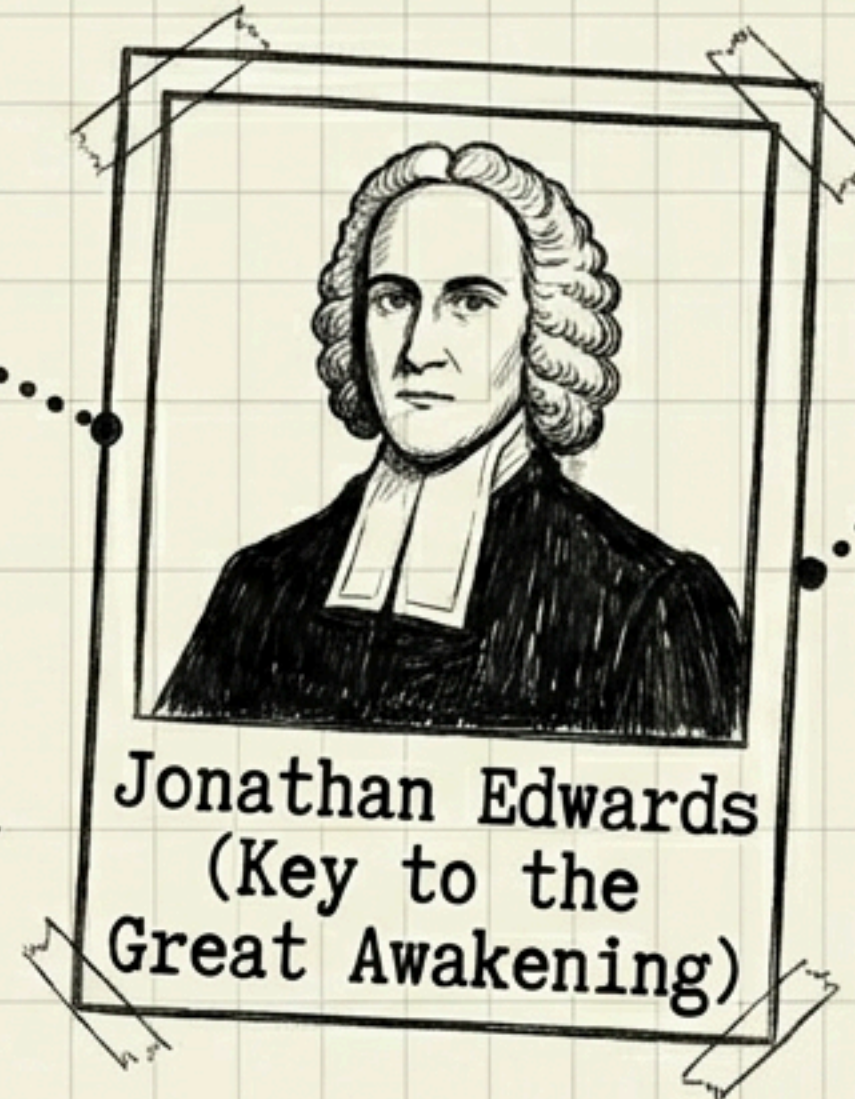
John 10:28-29 (‘No one will snatch them out of my hand’)

Philippians 1:6



This deep reassurance inspired John Newton—a former slave trader turned Calvinist preacher—to write the hymn *Amazing Grace*.

# The historical ripple effect of reformed theology



Lincoln was deeply influenced by Calvinist views on providence. The emphasis on discipline also heavily shaped Western education, economics, and the 'Protestant Work Ethic'.

# The Arminian counter-perspective relies on a cooperative relationship



Arminians believe God gives everyone genuine freedom to accept or reject His grace. God calls and invites, but He does not override human will. Salvation is cooperative: God invites, we respond.

John 3:16 ('For God so loved the world')

I Timothy 2:3-4

2 Peter 3:9 ('Not willing that any should perish')

# The Great Debate mapped out side-by-side

Topic	Calvinism	Arminianism
Human Will	Totally depraved, unable to seek God	Freed by grace to genuinely choose
Election	Unconditional, based solely on God's choice	Conditional, based on God foreseeing our faith
Atonement	Specific, intended to save the elect	Universal, intended to make salvation possible for all
Grace	Irresistible, effectively changes the heart	Resistible, humans can reject the call
Security	God preserves the saints completely	Salvation can potentially be lost if faith is abandoned

# Passionate disagreement does not require division



George Whitefield (a staunch Calvinist evangelist) and John Wesley (the Arminian founder of Methodism) disagreed fiercely on the mechanics of grace and free will.

Despite their intense theological battles, they remained close friends, preached alongside one another, and deeply respected each other as brothers in Christ. A historical model for navigating modern theological debates.

# Two lenses seeking to understand the nature of God

## The Greatness of God

Calvinist comfort in certainty:  
Salvation is 100% His work from beginning to end, and He is in total control.



## The Love & Fairness of God

Arminian emphasis:  
God genuinely invites all and desires none to perish.

These aren't just academic arguments; they shape how we view the creator. Some find immense peace in absolute sovereignty, while others prioritize the genuine nature of divine love and human responsibility.

# The purpose of the debate is a deeper faith



Whichever side of the framework you lean toward, wrestling with these profound questions shouldn't lead to exhaustion. It should deepen our understanding of scripture, reflect on how grace actually works, and strengthen our relationship with God.

**Keep seeking truth, studying the word,  
and keeping faith alive.**