

The 500-Year Divide

Why Methodists
Reject Calvinism.

At the center of a 500-year
theological debate is a single,
defining question: Does God
choose who gets saved, or do
we choose God?

Sovereignty

Responsibility

and-into

?

??

Sovereignty vs. Free Will

The Calvinist View

God unconditionally elects some to salvation. The rest receive justice.

DIVINE
SOVEREIGNTY

THE
ELECT

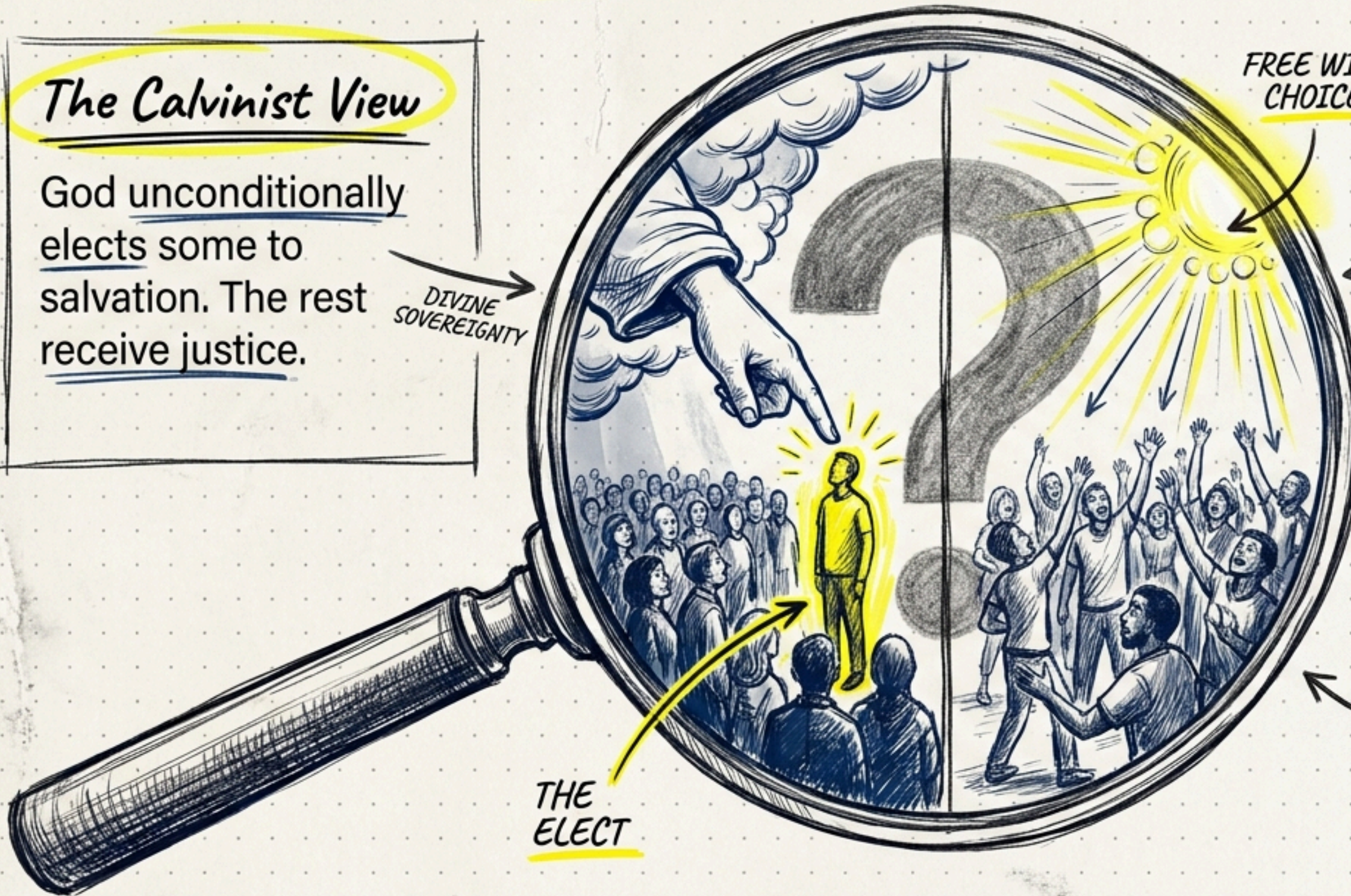
FREE WILL
CHOICE

The Methodist View

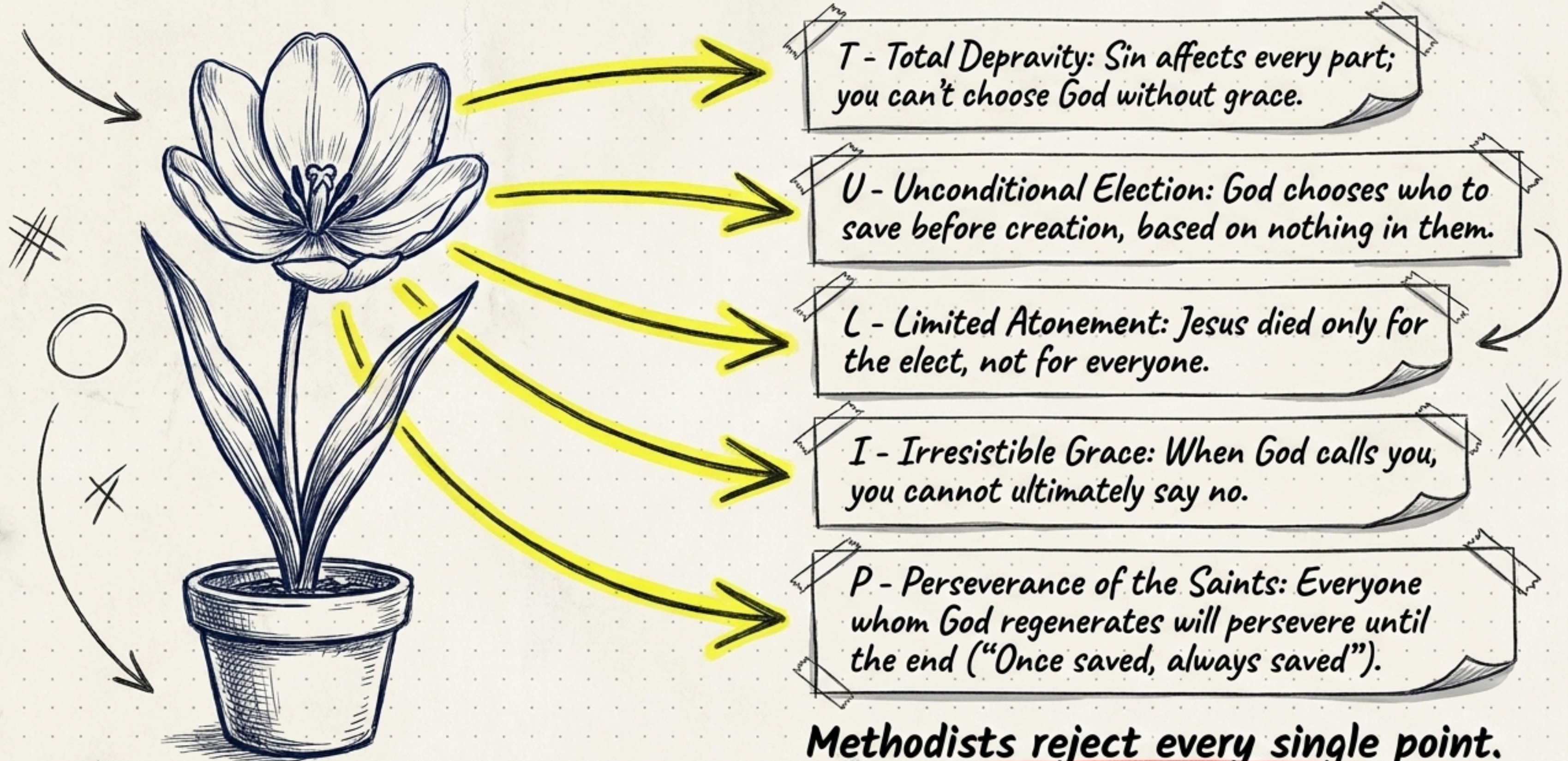
God loves everyone, Christ died for everyone, and everyone has free will to accept or reject Him.

HUMAN
FREE WILL

John Wesley called Calvinist predestination "a doctrine full of blasphemy" and "the horrible decree"—arguing it makes God responsible for condemning people without giving them a real opportunity to be saved.



The Baseline: What is Calvinism?



Rejecting 'U' — The Problem of Fairness



The Objection

Unconditional election makes God a 'respector of persons'—the definition of favoritism. It makes God arbitrary and less loving than a decent human father.

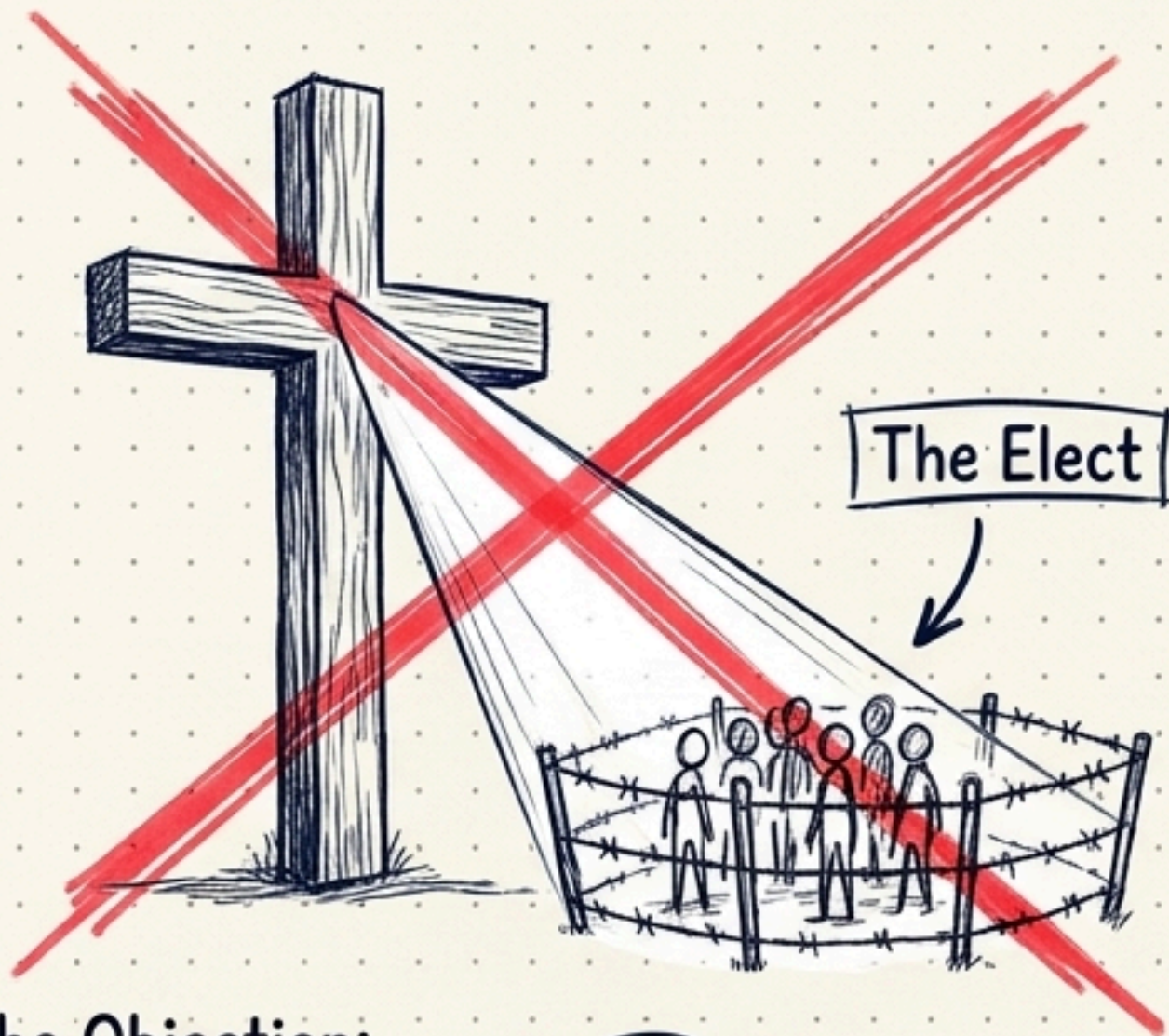
Scriptural Evidence

- Acts 10:34 – “God does not show favoritism.”
- 1 Timothy 2:4 – “God desires all people to be saved.”

Wesley's Logic

Calvinists claim God has a 'revealed will' (desiring all) and a 'sovereign will' (ordaining only some). Wesley called this a contradiction. A good God cannot genuinely desire something He deliberately prevents.

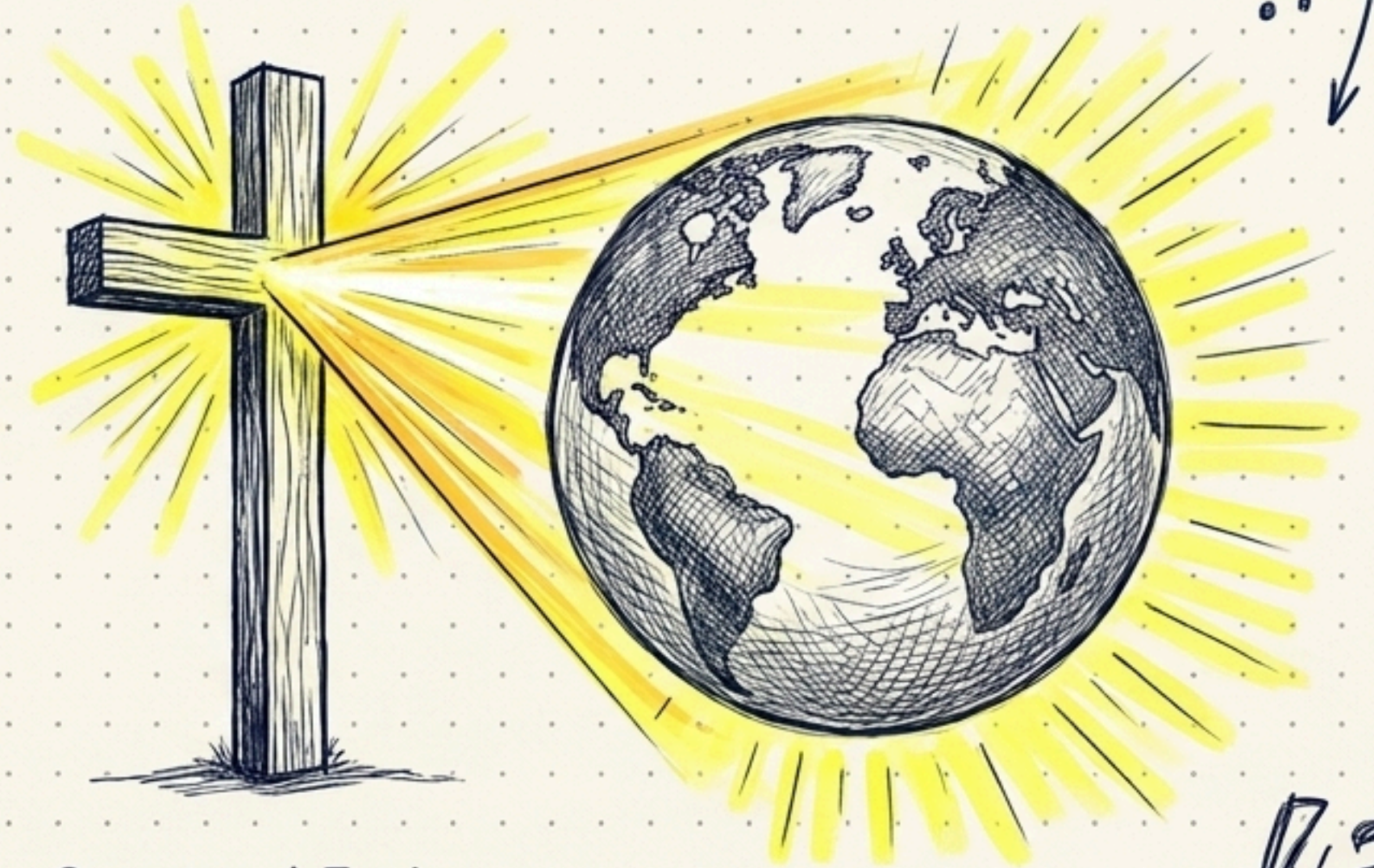
Rejecting "L" — The Scope of the Cross



The Objection:

Christ died for everyone, not just a pre-selected few. If the atonement is limited, you cannot honestly tell an unbeliever, "Jesus died for your sins." You would have to say, "He died for the elect—hope you're one of them."

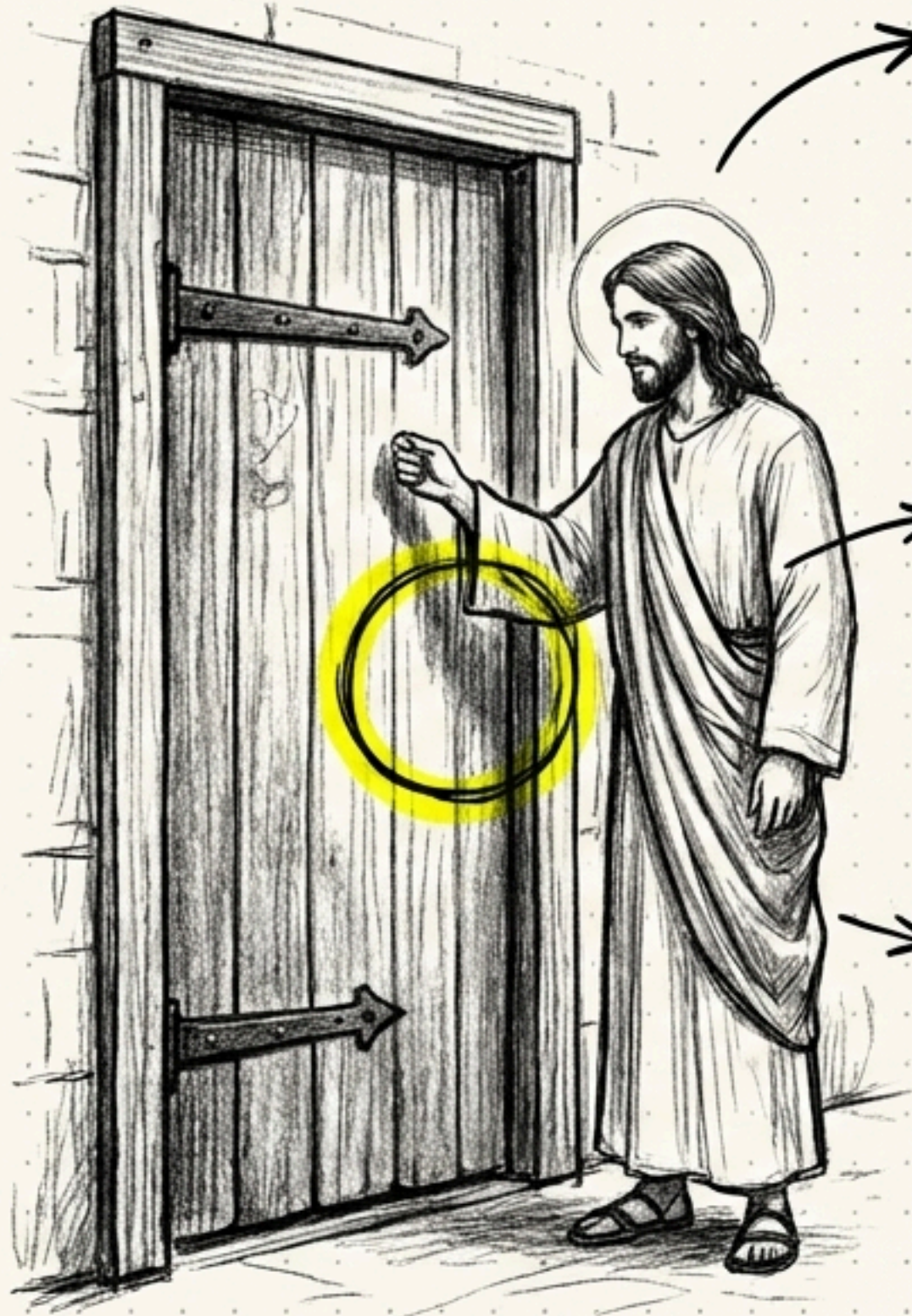
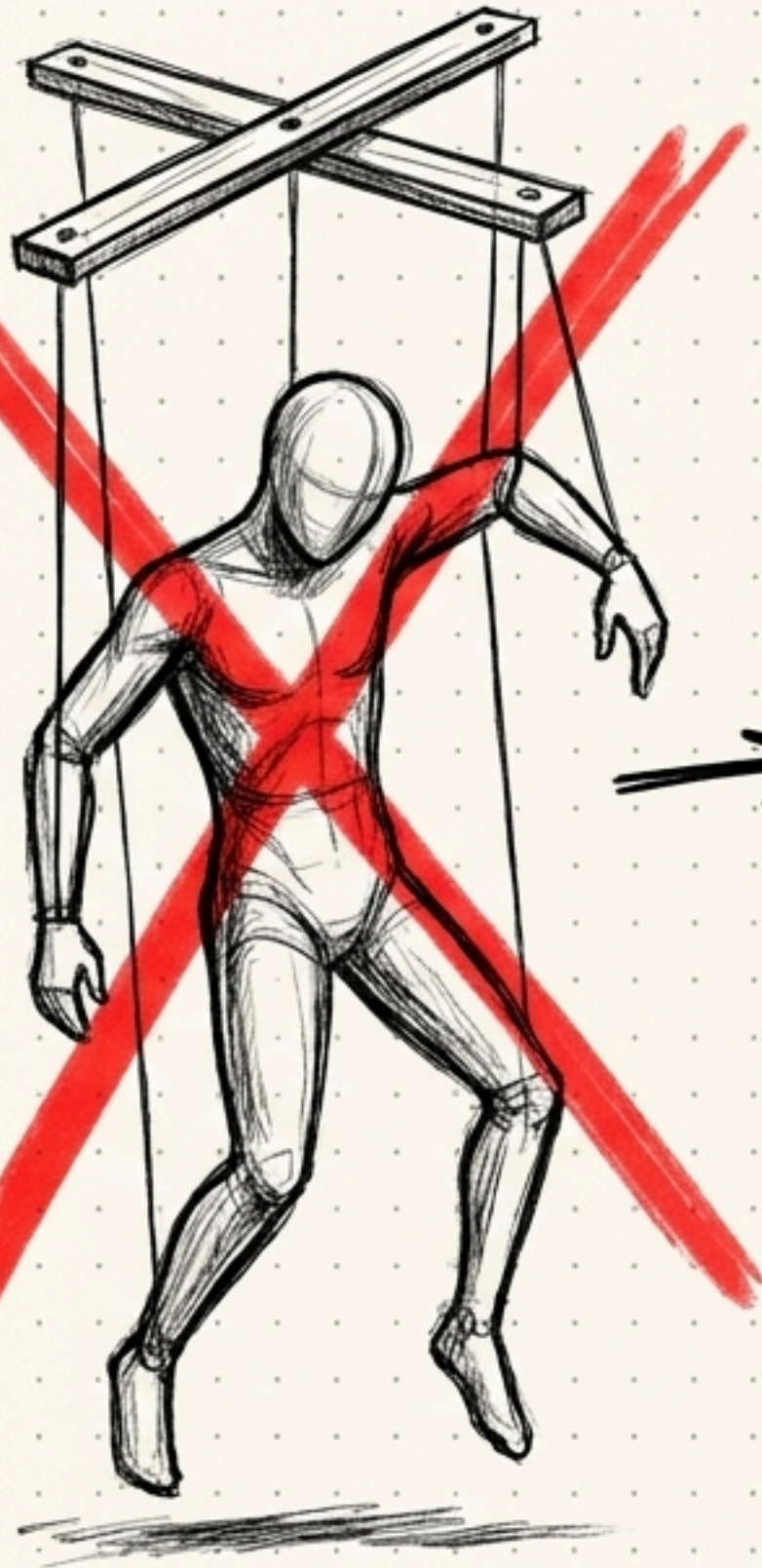
This destroys the free offer of the Gospel.



Scriptural Evidence:

- 1 John 2:2 – "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the WHOLE WORLD."
- 2 Peter 2:1 – Even false teachers who end up lost are described as those who denied the Lord who BOUGHT them.
- John 3:16 – "God so loved the world."

Rejecting "I" — Puppets vs. Partners



The Objection:

Love requires the possibility of **rejection**. A God who overpowers the human will creates **robots**, not sons and daughters. Irresistible grace turns humans into **puppets**, and a puppet cannot truly love.

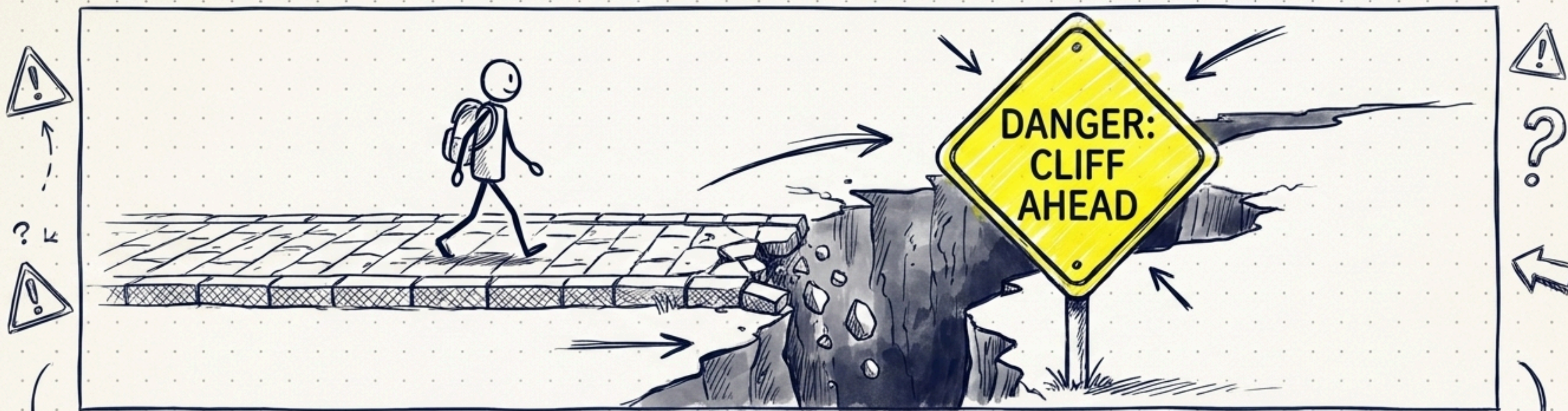
Prevenient Grace:

Wesley taught that God's grace goes before every person, restoring enough **free will** to say yes or no. The Holy Spirit draws, but you can resist.

Scriptural Evidence:

- **Revelation 3:20** – "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door..." (The person inside must **choose** to open).
- **Acts 7:51** – "You always resist the Holy Spirit."

Rejecting 'P' — The Reality of Warnings



The Objection

Believers are kept by God's power, but they can willfully reject Him and be lost. Salvation is conditional on continuing faith.

Willful

Conditional

Willful

Wesley's Logic

While falling away might not be common, if it were entirely impossible, the biblical warnings against it would be deceptive.

Scriptural Evidence

- Hebrews 6:4-6 — Speaks of those who shared the Holy Spirit, noting “if they fall away, it is impossible to bring them back.”
- Ezekiel 18:24 — “If a righteous person turns from their righteousness... all the righteous things they have done will not be remembered.”
- Colossians 1:22-23 — Reconciled “IF you continue in your faith...”

The Practical Objection — Fatalism vs. Urgency



The Calvinist Risk — Complacency

If God has already chosen who will be saved, and they can't resist, why bother evangelizing? If salvation cannot be lost, why pursue holiness?

Wesley warned this naturally tends toward fatalism.



The Methodist Reality — Urgency

Active Grace → - Because grace is freely offered to all and can be resisted, evangelism is an urgent rescue mission.

- Wesley's preaching of free grace produced massive transformation, proving the power of human responsibility activated by God's love.

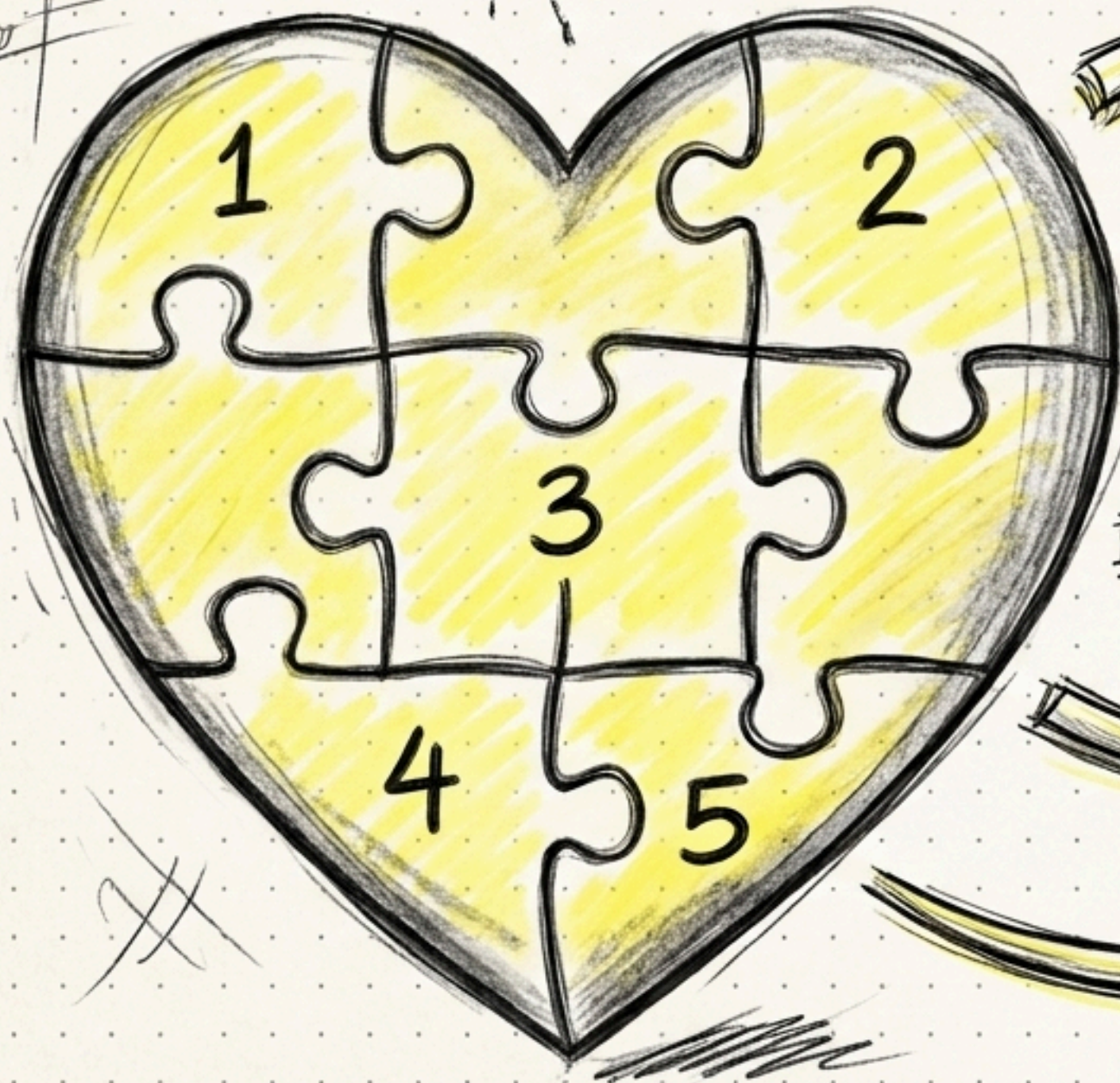
Choice Matters

Transformation

Scriptural & 1604

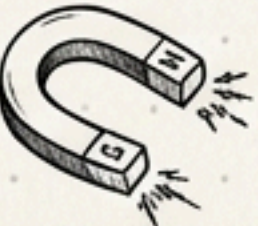
The Alternative: Wesley's Arminian Framework

→ Rather than TULIP, Wesley followed Jacobus Arminius to establish "The Grand Scriptural Doctrine of Free Grace."



1. **Prevenient Grace:** God's grace restores free will to every person. No one is totally unable to respond.
2. **Conditional Election:** God elects those He knows will believe. Based on foreknowledge (Rom 8:29), not arbitrary choice.
3. **Universal Atonement:** Christ died for every person without exception. Sufficient for all, efficient for believers.
4. **Resistible Grace:** The Holy Spirit draws, but you can say no.
5. **Preservable Salvation:** Believers are kept by God's power, but salvation remains conditional on continuing faith.

The Diagnostic Matrix

The Issue	Calvinism (TULIP)	Methodism (Wesley)
 Depravity	Total inability; requires <u>forced</u> grace.	Total inability; overcome by freely given <u>Prevenient Grace</u> .
 Election	<u>Unconditional</u> (God's arbitrary choice).	<u>Conditional</u> (Based on God's foreknowledge).
 Atonement	Limited to the Elect.	<u>Universal</u> (Offered to the whole world).
 Grace	Irresistible (Cannot say no).	<u>Resistible</u> (Requires human partnership).
 Security	Guaranteed ("Once saved, always saved").	<u>Conditional</u> (Requires continuing faith).

Unity in the Essentials

Friends Above Frameworks

Despite their fierce disagreements, John Wesley and prominent Calvinist preacher George Whitefield remained great friends.



The Common Ground

They agreed entirely on the essentials: Jesus died for sinners, salvation is by grace through faith, and the Bible is God's Word.

A Matter of Emphasis

The divide is ultimately about where you place the emphasis. Calvinists tip the scale toward God's absolute sovereignty. Methodists tip it toward universal love and human responsibility.

The Final Word:

The goal of theology isn't to win an argument—it's to know the living God.