

Acts 056
Gentile Salvation, Part 1
Acts 10:1-2
Dr. Andy Woods
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Let us take our Bibles, and open them to Acts 10:1. We are continuing on Wednesday evenings, our verse-by-verse teaching through the Book of Acts. We are at a major turning point in the Book of Acts where we now have described for us in Acts 10:1-11:18 the first salvation of a full-fledged, uncircumcised Gentile.

- Cornelius' Salvation (Acts 10:1-11:18)
- I. Cornelius' Vision (10:1-8)
 - II. Peter's Vision (10:9-16)
 - III. Vision's Application (10:17-23a)
 - IV. Caesarean Ministry (10:23b-33)
 - V. Peter and the Keys of the Kingdom (10:34-43)
 - VI. Gentiles' Salvation (10:44-48)
 - VII. Peter's Defense in Jerusalem (11:1-18)

As we work through this—and it has about seven parts to it, so obviously we cannot get through all of this tonight—you will see everything that God did to get the gospel to the first Gentile in the Church Age. In fact, this is such a major thing that is happening that they actually have a meeting in Jerusalem to see if this is true: Can a Gentile really get saved?

The leadership of the church at that time was still primarily Jewish in Jerusalem. Peter is put on trial, because he is the one that leads the first Gentile to Christ. They have to have a meeting there in Jerusalem to ask the question: Can a Gentile really get saved?

As we go through the Book of Acts, you will hear about the Jerusalem Council. Most people think the first Jerusalem Council was in Acts 15:10, but that is not the first Jerusalem Council. The first Jerusalem Council is in Acts 11, where they are trying to figure out if it is true that a Gentile can really get saved—a man named Cornelius and his entourage.

Cornelius is going to have a vision (Acts 10:1-8); Peter is going to have a vision (Acts 10:9-16); and then we will see how the vision is applied (Acts 10:17-23), leading to a brief ministry by Peter in Caesarea (Acts 10:23-33). Next, Peter, who has the keys of the kingdom, is going to turn the key, and he is going to preach the gospel to this Gentile (Acts 10:34-43). Cornelius gets saved along with those with him (Acts 10:44-48), and it is such an abnormality that they have to have a meeting in Jerusalem (Acts 11:1-18) to see if this is really so.

That is the big picture as we get into these pivotal chapters. These are really pivotal chapters. It is hard to emphasize that enough. This is a major step in the growth of the church that Dr. Luke, in the Book of Acts, is documenting for us. We have had Jewish salvations (Acts 2); we have had half-breed Samaritan salvations (Acts 8); and we even have had someone that is a proselyte, a Gentile convert to Judaism—the Ethiopian eunuch—saved (Acts 8). Half-breed, saved. Proselyte, saved. Full-fledged Jews, saved. But we have never had a non-proselyte Gentile saved until it happens right here in Acts 10-11.

What you will see from that point on is how the church, particularly when Paul leaves the borders of Israel on his first missionary journey, becomes predominantly Gentile—not that Jews do not get saved from that point on, but their salvations are less frequent than Gentile salvations.

Let us start off with the first part of this: Cornelius, the man who is going to be saved, has a vision (Acts 10:1-8). Here is an outline of those verses:

- I. Cornelius' Vision (10:1-8)
 - A. Cornelius introduced (1)
 - 1. Place (1a)
 - 2. Person (1b)
 - B. Cornelius' spiritual state (2)
 - 1. Devout (2a)
 - 2. Feared God (2b)
 - 3. Generous (2c)
 - 4. Prayerful (2d)
 - C. Vision (3-6)
 - D. Cornelius' obedience (7-8)

We start with Acts 10:1 where Cornelius is introduced:

"Now there was a man at Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort" (Acts 10:1).

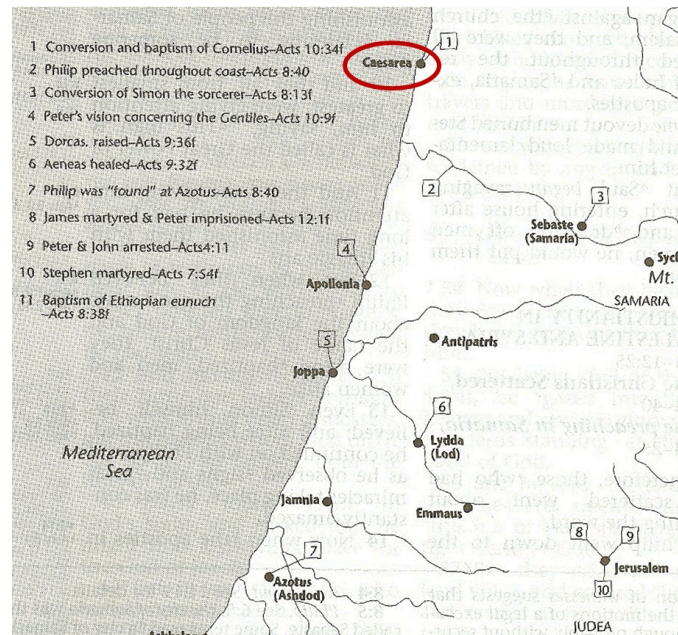
There are a couple of things there in Acts 10:1: we have a place and we have a person. The place is Caesarea—"Now there was a man at Caesarea" (Acts 10:1). Where is Caesarea? Caesarea is up north from Joppa, about 30 miles. This is where this first conversion to the church is from.

Who is Cornelius? We know he is from Caesarea:

"...a man at Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort" (Acts 10:1).

He was a centurion, which means that he worked for Rome. You have to understand that the Jews hated the Romans because Romans, beginning around 63 BC under

General Pompey, had come into the land of Israel and subjugated it and forced the Jews to pay exorbitant taxes. They took away their sovereignty and their freedom, and did not even allow them to execute their own criminals. That is why the Jews had to turn Christ over to Rome for execution, because Rome took away from them the power of capital punishment.



If you were a tax collector like Matthew that went to work for Rome, you were looked at as the scum of the earth by the Jewish population. First of all, you were a traitor because you were working for the enemy. Secondly, you were looked at as a thief because the tax collector could, after he extracted his taxes for Rome, take from the people beyond that, anything he wanted for his own personal gain. That is how people got employed as tax gatherers and started to work for Rome against Israel as tax gatherers.

This guy is a centurion, and he would be looked at by the Jews as the occupying enemy. You can imagine the impact that reading this book would have on the person that it was addressed to, Theophilus. Both Luke and Acts—prequel and sequel—were written to Theophilus to show him that Christianity is really for him.

Theophilus, as I will show you in a moment, was also a Roman official. You get that from the designation: "*most excellent Theophilus*" (Luke 1:1). The best, who have looked into that and compared it with everything we know of Greco-Roman times, have said that "most excellent" is a title for someone working for Rome.

Theophilus, as I have tried to show you, was saved, and he is probably wondering if Christianity is really for him. The whole thing looks so Jewish and he is a Gentile, so you can imagine the encouragement that Acts 10-11 would give to him, because it is describing the story of a saved Gentile.

Luke's prologue back in Luke 1:1-4 says:

"Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out to you in consecutive order, most excellent, Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught" (Luke 1:1-4).

Theophilus had already been taught about Christianity. He was probably already saved, and he was probably having doubts as to whether Christianity was really for him. Have you ever had doubts as a Christian? Theophilus was having his doubts, so Luke, who is putting together the prequel and the sequel, is putting all of this historical information together, being a very detail-oriented person because he is a physician, a doctor. If you have a medical doctor that is not detail-oriented, you might think about getting a new medical doctor.

Luke is painstakingly putting this history together to assuage Theophilus' doubts, and that is what is happening in Luke's gospel (the prequel) and in the Book of Acts (the sequel) which is the story of Jesus not on the earth, but from the right hand of the Father, through the church. Luke is putting these two volumes together for the benefit of Theophilus.

When you look at Acts 1:1-2, Luke says, "The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. Theophilus, I have told you what He did on the earth. Now I am telling you what Jesus did through the right hand of the Father after He ascended, through the church. The whole effort of Jesus was to get the gospel to people just like you, Theophilus. So you do not need to have doubts anymore as to whether you know Christianity is for you. You have always been contemplated in the mind of God."

You can see how a story like this—the conversion of Cornelius—would greatly contribute to what Luke was trying to communicate to Theophilus. Theophilus would read the conversion of Cornelius and he would say, "You know what? Forgive me, Lord, for ever doubting. Look at what you did to reach Cornelius, a Roman official. By way of analogy, look what you did to reach me as well."

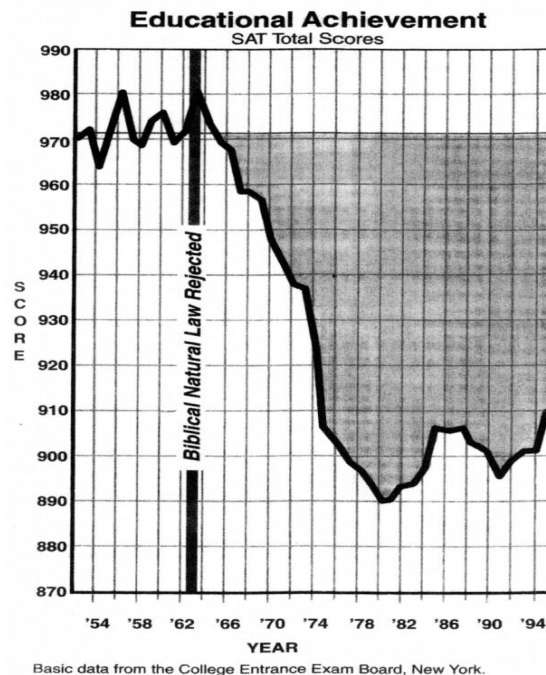
Cornelius is the leader of a cohort. What is a cohort? A cohort is a group of about 100 soldiers. That means Cornelius is used to being in charge of 100 soldiers. You will notice that it is the Italian cohort. The cohorts serving in these different Roman battalions were organized according to nationality, so he was the one that presided over the cohort of the Italian soldiers. The interesting thing about Cornelius is that he was seeking the Lord:

"A devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the Jewish people and prayed to God continually" (Acts 10:2).

What do we know about this man, Cornelius? Number one, he is devout. He is a pious man. He is not saved yet, as I will show you, but he apparently had renounced paganism. Number two, he feared God, which is really smart.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7).

I have shown you this slide many times, have I not? The year 1962 is when the SAT scores in America hit a precipitous decline. I had a few people wanting to know online where I got that chart from. It is from David Barton's book, "Original Intent," page 245. It shows you that the capacity for thinking and knowledge just started to decline precipitously in 1962, even though the United States has kept throwing money at the educational system.



What happened in 1962? That is when the Supreme Court said, "You cannot have the Bible or prayer in the public schools anymore." We moved away from a Christian-based, God-centered educational philosophy into a humanistic one. That is never good for knowledge, because "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7).

Your brain starts to work like it is supposed to work when it is submitted to the authority of God. If a person does not want to submit to the authority of God, then the brain does not work the way it is supposed to. Paul calls it a reprobate mind (Romans 1:28). In other words, a mind that cannot come to correct conclusions. It cannot think correctly because it is living outside of its intended design.

Theophilus was someone that feared God. Fear of God does not mean you are off in a corner somewhere, shaking because you are in a state of panic. It has to do with the idea that you respect God. You respect God's principles. You respect God's ways. That is where knowledge begins. This is commonly misquoted. People think it says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Other proverbs say that, but not the first one.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7).

Knowledge is correct thought. Wisdom is the application of thought. So if you are not going to fear God, you certainly cannot have wisdom because there is no knowledge to apply. Wisdom is knowledge applied; it is called "hakma." If you want a really good book on it, read the Book of Proverbs. It will take God's wisdom, knowledge, and apply it to every area of life—emotions, finances, business dealings. Should I build my house first or my business first? Should I go into debt or not? Who should I partner with in the business world? It is just amazing what Proverbs talks about because it is taking knowledge and applying it.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Proverbs 1:7).

You cannot have "hakma," wisdom—the Greeks called it "sophia"—unless you have knowledge and you cannot have knowledge to apply unless you respect God and His ways.

Cornelius has some things going for him here. He is also generous. You notice that he is very generous to the Jewish people as a Roman. That is good, because what does God say to those of us relative to the Jewish people?

*"And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse" (Genesis 12:3).*

It is something God promised to Abraham, going all the way back to Genesis 12. That is another thing that puts this man Cornelius on the right side of God.

Number four, he is also a prayerful man: "[he] *prayed to God continually.*"

"Now there was a man at Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the Jewish people and prayed to God continually" (Acts 10:2).

You look at that and say, "This guy is obviously going to heaven, right? He sounds like a believer in Christ." The problem is, when you go to Acts 11:14, as Peter in Jerusalem giving a recount to the leadership of the church how this guy actually got saved, Peter, in that testimony he clearly says that when all these wonderful things are said about Cornelius, he was unsaved.

""And he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household"" (Acts 11:14).

When you are reading all these wonderful things about Cornelius in Acts 10:2, you have to understand that Cornelius was an unsaved person. That creates a lot of theological problems, does it not? Because the Calvinists have taught us that we are totally depraved. I agree with them; we are totally depraved, but I think they mis-define total depravity. What they mean by total depravity is inability.

Calvinism, known by the acronym TULIP—T stands for Total Depravity. This is what the Calvinists mean by that:

"Man is completely and wholly depraved and he has no ability whatsoever to respond (repent or believe) to God until he is first 'regenerated' by God."¹

Calvinism is a system that really flows from the T—Total Depravity. Man without Jesus is in an insensate state. He is like a rock. He has no ability to respond to God. So God on the front end has to regenerate the soul. Regeneration precedes faith so that the lost sinner can believe. They do not believe that you believe first and as a result of that are regenerated. Regeneration means the impartation of divine life—being born again.

What they teach is that regeneration precedes faith. We teach the opposite here, that first you believe and then you are regenerated immediately as a result of believing. What they are saying is that the lost sinner has no ability to believe. It is like a rock. God has to regenerate him on the front end so that he can believe. They call this: God giving to some the gift of faith. You have to be given the gift of faith. Why do you have to be given the gift of faith? Because you do not have the ability in and of yourself to believe if you are not a believer.

A couple of the big doctrines in Calvinism are: faith is a gift and regeneration precedes faith. We reject both teachings here at Sugar Land Bible Church, by the way. Who gets the faith, since it obviously does not go to everybody? They have another doctrine. It is the I—Irrresistible Grace, that once you are given the gift of faith, you cannot resist God. Resistance is futile.

That must mean that there are some people walking around the earth today that have never believed. Why have they not believed? Because they were never given the gift of faith. Why are some people given the gift of faith and other people are not? Because of the doctrine of election. God, beforehand, chooses the ones to whom He is going to give the gift of faith—doctrine of election. If you are fortunate enough to be in that class of people, then you are given the gift of faith; but if you are not one of the elect—one of the chosen—God passes over you and leaves you in the state of the rock that you are.

¹ Bob Kirkland, *Calvinism: None Dare Call It Heresy; Spotlight on the Life and Teachings of John Calvin* (Eureka, MT: Lighthouse Trails, 2018), 34.

What John Calvin actually taught—and this is a direct quote from him, which I will also be showing in our Sunday School class—he taught "doomed from the womb." If you are not one of the elect, then you are doomed from the womb. God's whole purpose in creating you is so that you would have no ability to believe, and then you would go into hell. Supposedly in John Calvin's, in my opinion, very sick and twisted mind as a person is going into hell for all eternity, never having been given the opportunity to respond to the gospel, God is glorified in that. If you say to the Calvinist, "That is not fair," they will say back to you, "Who are you to question God?"

Dave Hunt, in response to this, wrote a book called "What Love Is This?" In other words, this does not sound like the God of the Bible. The God of the Bible, according to 2 Peter 3:9 is not willing that any should perish. In Calvinism, you get this idea that certain people are created for the purpose of being "doomed from the womb" because they are not one of the elect, and because they are not one of the elect, they are not given the gift of faith. They are not regenerated first so that they can believe.

People teach this all the time. People are sitting in churches and under ministries that tell them this constantly. Here are the words of one of the most popular Calvinists of our day, John MacArthur. This is a direct quote from his book "Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles":

"Because we were dead to God, we were dead to truth, righteousness, peace, happiness, and every other good thing, no more capable to respond to God than a cadaver."²

Do you know what a cadaver is? It is a corpse. A dead person cannot respond to anything, so that is John MacArthur's interpretation of total depravity. It is not that man has been touched in every area with sin, which I agree with, but that even when the gospel is preached to somebody, and even when the Spirit of God convicts the sinner of their need to receive the gospel (John 16:7-11), even though the unbeliever has the witness of creation and the witness of conscience, they cannot respond to it. They are like a cadaver.

Why does anybody respond to the gospel? The only people that respond to the gospel are the elect, because they are given some kind of supernatural gift to believe because they cannot believe on their own. The whole Calvinistic system flows from this T, a perverted or distorted understanding of total depravity.

The MacArthur quote goes on. I have tons of quotes that I will be sharing with you on this, because what happens when you put up somebody's favorite Bible teacher negatively, everybody says, "You are misrepresenting them." So I have to produce all of these quotes to show you that I am not misrepresenting anybody. This is what they

² John F. MacArthur Jr., *Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles* (Dallas: Word, 1993), 64-65.

teach. This is what R.C. Sproul teaches; this is what John Piper teaches; this is what Alistair Begg teaches.

Macarthur goes on:

"[they are] spiritual zombies, death walkers, unable to even to understand the gravity of their situation. They are lifeless."³

You are like a rock or something that is inanimate, like this wooden platform. You can preach the gospel all day to a wooden platform, it will never get saved unless the wooden platform was one of the elect. If the wooden platform is fortunate enough to be part of that small fraction of humanity that is one of the elect, then the wooden platform would be given the gift of faith on the front end. They would be regenerated first so they can believe second. That is Calvinism.

How does any of that make sense in light of Acts 10:2? Acts 11:14 makes it very clear that Cornelius was unsaved. Yet how does the Calvinistic doctrine of depravity comport at all with verse Acts 10:2? If Calvinism is right, how could Cornelius be a devout man, one who feared God with all his household, one who gave many alms to the Jewish people, one who prayed continually? This guy was seeking God.

Why was he seeking God? Because God has disclosed Himself. He has disclosed Himself in creation. You do not have to be a rocket scientist to know that God exists. Look at the design of this universe. He has disclosed Himself in creation (Romans 1) and in conscience (Romans 2). Every human being has within them a barometer put there by God, a standard of right and wrong that alternately accuses or excuses them based on how they live.

All of us have an inherent sense of guilt. Do you know why we have an inherent sense of guilt? Because we are guilty. I violate God's standards constantly. I knew before I was saved that I violated God's standards because God put a conscience inside of me. If you do not believe people have a conscience, just run a little experiment at your home with your children or grandchildren. Say to Child A, "If you take out the trash, I will take you to Burger King." Then say to Child B, "If you take out the trash, I will take you to Disney World." What is child A going to say? "That is not fair." Whoever gave you the idea that things were supposed to be fair? Why do you inherently recognize unfairness? Little kids will recognize unfairness. How can they instinctively know that? Because of something called conscience.

Why is Cornelius responding to God? Creation and conscience. Jesus said in John 16:7-11 that when He leaves, the Spirit will come and convict the world of three things: sin, righteousness, and judgment. Those three things are happening here with Cornelius.

³ Ibid.

I am not trying to downplay the inherent sinfulness of man. I completely agree with that. If we were not inherently sinful, we would not need a Savior. The problem with the Calvinistic system is that they have taken the doctrine of depravity, and they have inflated it to such a degree, out of biblical proportions. Then they built a theological system on their inflated assumption.

Is Cornelius a sinner? Yes. Is he totally depraved? Yes. Does that mean he has no ability to respond to God? Obviously not, because here is a man in a sinful state who is devout, fearing God, giving alms, and praying continually. He is a God seeker. "But, Pastor, what about that verse in Romans 3 where it says no one seeks God?" Well, what about that verse? We do not seek God naturally, but God has built into our universe certain realities that cause us, even as inherently sinful people, to seek something beyond ourselves. What are those things? Creation, conscience, and conviction of the Holy Spirit.

I agree that if those things were not built into our world, then no one would seek God, but they are built into our world. Even people that do not know Jesus can and do have the ability to seek God. Acts 10:1, in my opinion, almost demolishes the whole Calvinistic system just on that one single verse.

There is another false doctrine that is out there that says: Cornelius was saved. It is called Inclusivism. Inclusivism is the idea that as long as you are seeking God to the best of your abilities, then you are saved. It really does not matter if you know the name Jesus or not. If you are a Muslim and you are seeking God to the best of your abilities then you are in, you do not have to know the name Jesus. If you are a Buddhist or an atheist or whatever you are, as long as you are seeking God to the best of your abilities, responding to the light that you have, then you are saved, regardless of whether you know the name Jesus. That is called Inclusivism.

The Inclusivist will always quote Acts 10:2 because they think that Cornelius was saved here. The Calvinists will say he was not seeking God; I am saying he was; the Inclusivist will come along and say that he was saved, even though he did not know the name Jesus.

Probably one of the greatest spiritual leaders in the world today is Oprah Winfrey. Usually when I say that people laugh, but it is unbelievable the amount of influence that Oprah Winfrey has in the area of theology. There is a lot more going on with Oprah Winfrey than cooking tips or whatever. She teaches theology around the clock and the theology that she teaches is Inclusivism. Everybody is saved; it does not matter if they know Jesus or not.

You can pull this up on YouTube. She is interacting with someone in her studio audience, and she says:

"...One of the mistakes that human beings make is believing there is only one way...[there are] many ways...many paths to what you call God...It

does not matter whether she called it 'God' along the way or not...There couldn't possibly be just one way with millions of people in the world!...You are in some remote part of the earth and you never heard the name of Jesus. You cannot go to Heaven...?"⁴

Everybody says, "What about that guy living on a desert island that has no access to the name Jesus? Are you telling me God is going to send that guy to hell?" We are going to answer that in just a second. What Oprah would say is: As long as the guy on the island is seeking God, it does not matter if he has a Bible or does not have a Bible, he is in. Inclusivism.

One of the sad things to discover is that one of the greatest evangelists in Christian history, Billy Graham had a lapse into Inclusivism. People say he taught this when he got a little senile towards the end of his life. People debate that, but very clearly, Billy Graham had a lapse into heresy in this interview with Robert Schuller, an Inclusivist. You can pull this up on YouTube and watch it.

I grew up in Garden Grove, California. Robert Schuller had built the Crystal Cathedral, the giant church of glass. I drove by it on the Garden Grove Freeway all the time. You probably saw Robert Schuller on TV in his "Hour of Power." He constantly taught Inclusivism. Here he even gets Billy Graham to acquiesce to Inclusivism.

You start the chain with a guy named Norman Vincent Peale. The late Walter Martin said that Paul is appealing but Peale's theology is appalling. Norman Vincent Peale started this and it went down the line to Schuller. Schuller had a big influence over a guy named Rick Warren. You have heard that name, and then you have younger spin-offs: Joel Osteen, for example.

When I listened to Joel Osteen preach, it is really interesting to watch him because they pull up the Bible and they say, "This is my Bible. I believe what it says." Have you ever heard that? You are thinking that this is going to be a great sermon, but then he puts the Bible down and gives a motivational talk for half an hour. Where did the Bible go? Joel Osteen is in that train of thought—Peale to Schuller, Rick Warren to Joel Osteen. They are all singing off the same song sheet.

Here is an excerpt from an interview with Dr. Schuller and Billy Graham:

Dr. Schuller: "Tell me, what is the true future of Christianity?"

Dr. Billy Graham: "Well Christianity and being a true believer, you know, I think there's the body of Christ which comes from all the Christian groups around the world, or outside the Christian groups. I think that everybody that loves Christ or knows Christ, whether they're conscious of it or not, they're members of the body of Christ. And I don't think we're going to see a great sweeping revival that will turn the whole world to Christ at any

⁴ www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lb2RUUpMDk34

time...and that's what God is doing today. He is calling people out of the world for His name. Whether they come from the Muslim world, or Buddhist world, or the Christian world, or the non-believing world, they are members of the body of Christ because they've been called by God. They may not even know the name Jesus, but they know in their hearts they need something that they don't have and they turn to the only light that they have and I think they're saved and they're going to be with us in heaven."⁵

What He said here is: You are going to have a whole throng of people saved because they are living up to the light that they have; they do not need to know the name of Jesus. If that is true, why has Billy Graham wasted so much of his life being an evangelist for Jesus? It seems to me that it would be a waste of time. Why go around the world and have crusades and tell people about Jesus if people can be saved without the name of Jesus?

Now Schuller, when he hears the greatest evangelist, numerically speaking, of the 21st century, say that he can hardly control himself. He is so happy that he got Billy Graham to cough this up. By the way, this is all on YouTube. You can go pull it up for yourself and watch it.

Dr. Schuller: "This is fantastic. I'm so thrilled to hear you say that. There's a wideness in God's mercy."

Billy Graham: "There is."

I am not saying that Billy Graham always taught this, because you can go back to the old black and white Billy Graham reels and it sounds pretty good to me. I am saying that at this point in his ministry, he lapsed into a moment of heresy in the Schuller interview, and I am not sure why he did it. Maybe he wanted to say what Schuller wanted to hear. The problem is that he did it on TV.

Tony Evans—that is a tough subject, because I think there has been a moral situation with him recently. Long before that moral situation, Tony Evans is in print; it is not a misstating of something in an interview or over a microphone. He wrote this down in the first edition of the book "Totally Saved." There have been some reprints of that book where they took this out with no apology for what they said in the first book. There has been no recanting of it, they have just republished it with this little excerpt missing. Just like Graham and just like Oprah, it is pure Inclusivism.

"In a class I once taught at Dallas Seminary, I inadvertently asked an exam question on material I had not covered in class. One of the students brought this discrepancy to my attention. To be fair, I had to rescore all of the test papers because I could not hold students liable for information

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hrf60-zHI9A>

they had never been given...So the premise is that God will not hold people accountable for a decision they cannot make, based on information they have not received...And people in faraway lands who have never heard the gospel still have their sins to answer for. This means we need to talk about the provision God has made for those who cannot believe...Here's the spiritual principle at work: When people respond to what they do know of God, He takes personal responsibility for giving them more information about Himself...In the case of a person who never hears the gospel and never knows the name of Jesus, but who responds to the light that he has, God, treats that person as an Old Testament saint, if you will. That is, if the person trusts in what God has revealed, God deals with that person based on the knowledge that he has, not the information he never received."⁶

Here it comes. It is in print. I did not mishear him on the radio; I read it. As you know, when someone is publicly speaking, they can make mistakes. I have made my share. I think last Sunday I said Dinah was gang raped or something like that, which was not true. She was not gang raped; she was raped by one individual. I have to correct that. Anybody can misspeak, but when you are writing something down, you are calmly and coolly, deliberately reflecting on your words. It is different, particularly when it goes through an editorial committee. Tony Evans, and those involved with the publication of this book "Totally Saved," knew exactly what he was saying, and they put it into print anyway. Shame on you, Moody publishers, for putting this in print. What they should have done with the second revision is recanted and repented and said, "We are sorry that we put that out to begin with," but they never did that.

"I call this trans-dispensationalism...By this I mean if a person is sincerely seeking God and desiring to know Him, and is responding to the truth that he knows, if there is no missionary or direct manifestation of God, then God judges that person based on his faith in the light he has received. And as in the case of Abraham, God will retroactively count this person as righteous by applying the death of Christ from the dispensation of grace."⁷

"Abraham did not know the name Jesus and he was in. So what is the harm today of saying people that do not know the name Jesus are saved?" "Well, Tony, things are a little different now from how they were in Abraham's time." There has been a Messiah whose name we do know, who, through His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, provided for our sins. There are 27 New Testament books. There is the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Abraham was looking forward to a Messiah whose name he did not know. That is why he was saved. We are looking backward to a Messiah whose name we do know by way of faith. It is true that Abraham was saved by faith, just like we are, but we are held to a

⁶ Tony Evans, *Totally Saved: Understanding, Experiencing and Enjoying the Greatness of Your Salvation* (Chicago: Moody, 2002), 355, 359.

⁷ Ibid.

higher standard because there is more knowledge available in the redemptive, progressive outworking of God's purposes. You cannot make the statement: Abraham was saved without knowing the name of Jesus, so it is fine today, as long as people are seeking God to the best of their abilities.

Those of you on the missions committee need to understand this stuff, because let me tell you something that will destroy missionary efforts faster than anything in Christianity is these kinds of beliefs: There is no need to send out missionaries. There is no need to translate the Bible from Greek and Hebrew into some foreign dialect. There is no urgency to do those things if people are saved anyway by responding to the light that they have.

Everybody applauds you when you criticize Oprah, because she is outside the camp. I agree obviously with a lot of what Tony Evans says, but not here. I agree with an awful lot of what Billy Graham says, but not here. I think they are more dangerous because you can recognize false teaching from an outsider, but if someone is in the camp, no one wants to point out that they are teaching something false. "You just criticized my favorite Bible teacher, Brother."

They are all running to Cornelius as some kind of example for Inclusivism. What does Peter say? Peter says, "Cornelius was not saved." In Acts 11:14, as he is recounting the chronology to the Jerusalem leadership, he says,

"And he will speak words to you by which you [Cornelius] will be saved"
(Acts 11:14).

Despite the fact that Cornelius was praying to God, giving alms, fearing God, and was devout and had renounced paganism, he was not saved. Do you know why he was not saved? Because he did not know the name Jesus Christ. Earlier in the Book of Acts, Peter said,

"And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name [Greek word "onoma"] under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

The Greek translation of the word "must" is "dei." When Luke uses the word "must" in his writings, he means it is 100% essential.

"But He said to them, 'I must ["dei"] preach the kingdom of God to the other cities, for I was sent for this purpose'" (Luke 4:43).

In other words, this is not optional. Luke also records the words of Jesus:

"Now He said to them, 'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of

Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must ["dei"] be fulfilled" (Luke 24:44).

When you take that word "must" in Acts 4:12, and you connect it with the word "name" Acts 4:12, it is obviously saying that people are not saved until they believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, just seeking God as a Buddhist, or as a Muslim, or as an atheist, or as a humanist or a Marxist or an evolutionist, or whatever you are does not save anybody. Those things will make you conscious of God, but a person is not actually saved until they hear the gospel—which includes the name of Jesus—and specifically believe on that message.

This is the testimony of the Bible from cover to cover. You all know John 14:6, right?

"Jesus said to them, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me'" (John 14:6).

"For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

A mediator is someone who represents two competing parties, and tries to reconcile them. That is what mediation is. How do you reconcile God and man? There is only one person that can do that: The God-Man. That is why you have to come through Jesus—He is the only God-Man.

"I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly" (Galatians 2:21).

If you can get to God through the Law without Jesus, if you can get to God through all of these other sources without the name of Jesus, then why did Jesus have to come into the world? There is no point in it. "Thank you, Jesus, for Your wounds and side, and floggings and everything that You endured on our behalf, but I really do not need it because I am saved through my own path." You become an Inclusivist and you render the sacrifices of Jesus null and void. There is no need for them. That is why what Graham, Evans, and all these guys are saying is blatant heresy.

"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few that find it" (Matthew 7:13-14).

What do you do then, with the person that is in some remote part of the world where they never heard the name Jesus? They have no Bible and they have no missionary? The truth of the matter is they have a Bible: every time you wake up in the middle of the night and you look down at your stomach and it is, breathing in and out (assuming you are still alive), anytime your heart is palpitating, you are reading the Bible because there is a design. If you know there is a design you are supposed to seek for the designer.

Once you start seeking for the designer, then guess what shows up at your door? The missionary, the Bible society.

Then why is it that so many people in those conditions never hear the name Jesus? Here is the answer: They do not want Jesus. Paul says in Romans 1:18-20, that our basic proclivity as sinful beings is to take the truth of God and suppress it. You take the obvious manifestation of God in creation, conscience, and conviction, and you suppress it.

Why in the world would God send a missionary in your direction? If you are going to try to explain away creation, think about what you are going to do with His Word. The Bible says you have to be faithful with something small before He can trust you with something bigger (Luke 16:10). Many times, this becomes the reason why people do not hear the name Jesus many times. They suppress the light that God has given them.

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness"
(Romans 1:18).

In other words, you can be an atheist if you want to be, but you are going to have to work real hard at it.

"...who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without what excuse" (Romans 1:18-20).

Why is it that Cornelius is getting light here in Acts 10? Because he is responding to the light that he had, and Peter's going to show up on his doorstep with the name Jesus, which is sufficient to save. Why is it that the Ethiopian eunuch gets saved through the ministry of Philip in Acts 8? Because he is responding to the light that he had. God sent Philip to save him.

If someone is going to respond to the light, God will move heaven and earth to get them the truth that they need—which is the name Jesus—so as to be saved. If a person is going to take the light that they have and hold it down and suppress it—which is man's natural proclivity—then why in the world would God send them further revelation?

Do you realize what intellectual gymnastics you have to go through to dismiss the knowledge of God in our created world? If you are going to do that with creation, what is a person like that, with that kind of jaded heart, going to do with the Bible? God sending the Bible to a person like that is a waste of His time. That becomes the answer.

"What about the person in some remote part of the world that does not know the name Jesus?" You are assuming that that person in that remote part of the world wants Jesus,

but they are not responding to what they have. If they did, God would move heaven and earth to get them what they need to be saved, which is the name Jesus Christ.

General vs. Special Revelation		
	General	Special
Examples	Nature, conscience (Rom 1–2)	Incarnation, Scripture, miracles
Availability	All	Some
Accomplishment	Accountability (Rom 1)	Salvation (Acts 4:12; 2 Tim 3:15)
Form	Non-written or non-verbal	Written
Quality	Natural	Supernatural, miraculous

There is a big difference between general revelation and special revelation. Examples of general revelation are nature and conscience. Examples of special revelation would be the incarnation of Christ, Scripture, and miracles. General revelation is available to anybody. Anybody that has the powers of observation has general revelation. Special revelation is available to some.

What does general revelation accomplish? It cannot save you, but it can make you accountable to search for truth. That is why Paul says men are without excuse (Romans 1:20). Every human being is responsible to search for truth. Some do, some do not. Cornelius did; the Ethiopian eunuch did. Others do not. Others suppress it, but the accountability is there. It is built into the universe through the three Cs. The only thing general revelation can really do is make you accountable.

Special revelation, though—the gospel, this book, the name Jesus—is sufficient to save. You cannot get saved by looking at rocks and trees. Looking at rocks and trees will make you accountable to an understanding that God exists. God says, "All right, now you are responsible to search for Me. Do not suppress that truth. Search for Me. If you are searching for Me, I will get you what you need to be saved."

General revelation, in and of itself, does not save. That is the error of the Inclusivist. General revelation is really a non-written and nonverbal form; special revelation, like the Bible is written. General revelation is natural because everybody has it; special revelation is supernatural—it is miraculous. The putting of this book together was miraculous. The incarnation of Jesus was miraculous.

Here is the truth of the matter: If someone will respond to the general revelation, God sends him the special revelation. If someone suppresses the general revelation, it is a

waste of God's time to send him the special revelation. The only thing that would do to a person who does not want God, if God sent them the truth, that would only increase the threshold of their judgment on the Day of Judgment, because the more light a person has, the more they are responsible to seek God.

Woe to the person that hears the gospel, let us say on TV or the radio, accurately communicated over and over again, and does nothing with it—I would not want to be in that person's shoes on the Day of Judgment. God will bring all of that up to determine their degree of torment in the lake of fire.

God knows that there are certain people that if He sent the gospel to them, they would reject it. They do not want it. The only thing sending them more truth is going to do is increase their threshold of torment on the Day of Judgment. That is the difference between general and special revelation.

Cornelius is unsaved, but he is responding to the light that he had—creation, conscience, and conviction. He is responding to that, and he has the ability to respond to it, contrary to what the Calvinist says. Contrary to what the Inclusivist says, he is not saved yet. God is now going to move heaven and earth to get Cornelius the gospel so that he can be saved, because he is responding to the light that he has.