



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1st Timothy 4:1-10

“The Savior of All Men, Especially Those Who Believe”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Our Heavenly Father, we come to Thee again in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ asking that through the time of the study of the Scriptures the Holy Spirit may enlighten us and lead us into an understanding of Thy word. We thank Thee for the apostles and particularly for the Apostle Paul who has given us many epistles which expound the ministry of Jesus Christ and glorify his name. And we pray that through the study tonight his name may be lifted up that we may understand and profit from the teaching of Thy word. And we ask particularly for the spiritual needs of each one of us. We know they are many. We know that Thou art fully able to meet them all. We commit this hour to Thee. We pray Thy blessing upon each individual present. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Tonight we are turning to 1 Timothy chapter 4, and I hope in the exposition to be able to cover verses 1 through 10. The subject for tonight taken from the critical clause of verse 10 is “The Savior of All Men, Especially of Those Who Believe.” But I admit right at the beginning that the title tonight is really a come on because I hoped that perhaps some of you that wondered about the meaning of that passage might

come and listen to the exposition of the entire 10 verses. Let me read these 10 verses now, beginning with verse 1 of 1 Timothy chapter 4.

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving by them who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God (that could be rendered probably a little more understandably to us, for every creation of God) is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, unto which thou hast attained. But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance (I take that to be a reference to the preceding, although the commentators differ, some referring it to the statement that follows). For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe.”

One of the striking things about the word of God is that it presents both the light and dark aspects of truth, the good and the bad aspects of truth, the pleasant and the unpleasant aspects of truth, the positive and the negative aspects of truth. It speaks of heaven and it speaks also of hell, and here it turns from truth to error, from godliness to apostasy. We have just been speaking or listening as Paul has been speaking about, “Great is the mystery of godliness.” He has said, incidentally, that this is something that

by common consent we Christians may agree with, “Great is the mystery of godliness,” without controversy.

Now, I said last week that this probably means something like “by common consent,” or confessedly. This is something that gives us the great common bases of the faith, the incarnation. He was manifest in the flesh. Incidentally one of the men, in fact, it was the man who some time ago told us a little joke about Aggies, and he has repented, and he wants some information about the Greek text. Anybody who wants information about the Greek text I consider to be in a repentant state. [Laughter]

I had made reference to the fact that in the Greek text, last time, at verse 16 where we read, “God was manifest in the flesh,” that the Greek word found in some of the more recent manuscripts is the word *Theos*. *Theos* means God. But I also commented upon the fact that this particular statement, “God was manifest in the flesh,” appears in different forms in some of the Greek manuscripts. And in one particular manuscript, Codex Alexandrinus, I referred to it as being in the British Museum today, there has been a controversy over the reading of that text because in ancient Greek manuscripts, when a scribe wished to write *Theos* rather than spending the time of writing the entire word, it's just two syllables, but nevertheless, scribes got tired.

Many years ago I remember seeing in a secular magazine a cartoon with a long line of scribes, each one sitting at a desk, and they had pens and they were obviously copying ancient manuscripts before the time of printing. And one of them turns to the one behind him and says, “There must be a better way of doing this.” [Laughter] And the scribes abbreviated, and particularly the *nomina sacra*, or the “sacred names.” And the abbreviation for *Theos* is the “theta” plus the final “sigma” and usually a line is placed over it to signify that it is an abbreviation.

Now, the word for the relative pronoun in Greek, “He who,” or, as we say in English simply, “who” is *hos*, “omicron” , “sigma.” So that you can see that this since the last sigma was ordinarily written in manuscripts that have letters similar to our capital

letters, and unsealed manuscripts was always written with something that's like our “c,” you can see that the difference between *Theos* and *hos* is simply the two lines. And if these lines were made very faintly it would be possible for these to be confused, and even in fact if they were written normally it would be easy to confuse them because the only difference between the two things is the lines. But this means “God,” “Theos.” God, this is “hos” which means “He who.” That accounts for the different reading in Codex Alexandrinus at this point. That's all done for one of the deacons. They get special service. [Laughter]

We were looking at chapter 3 verse 16, and we were pointing out the fact that what Paul is saying here is that here are some great truths which we as Christians may all agree to. There is the truth of the incarnation. “God was manifest in the flesh.” There is truth of vindication, “Justified in the spirit,” then the truth of his self exhibition to angels, “Seen of angels,” third, the proclamation of the gospel, “Preached unto the nations.” And incidentally we commented upon the fact that the “Preaching unto the nations,” is the preaching of a person, “He who,” or God preached among the nations, not a program, a person. And then “Preached unto the nations, believed on in the world,” or reception, and finally, “Received up into glory,” which we have said is a reference to the ascension and the session. There is one great final event which Paul does not refer to, and this outstanding event, according to the New Testament is the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus, but this has not come yet. And so the apostle writes, “Without controversy, confessedly, by common consent, great is the mystery of godliness,” and here are the features of it.

Well we move immediately now from the confession of “God manifest in the flesh,” to the Doctrine of Apostasy. And in verse 1 of chapter 4, right after having written that most unusual and very familiar section, the apostle writes, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons.” This is not a new subject for the apostle in Paul's first

letter to Timothy. Back in the 1st chapter he made reference to the errorists and we identified them as being errorists of a type of apostate teaching related to what later became full blown Gnostic teaching of the 2nd century. He writes first of all of the certainty of this apostasy, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith.” That Greek word means something like explicitly or without disguise. There is no question. “The Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith.”

The question has been raised in the study of this passage, to what is the Apostle Paul referring when he says, “The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith?” Some have said he’s referring to the general tenor of apocalyptic passages, and of course, it is true that generally speaking in the apocalyptic passages of the word of God there is some reference made to apostasy. On the other hand, Paul may be referring to that which the Holy Spirit has spoken to him specifically. We have instances of this also. In the Book of Acts in the 20th chapter and the 29th verse, the apostle says, speaking to the Ephesian elders, “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” So it was part of the apostle’s own individual sense of the guidance of the spirit that there would be false teachers who would enter in among the saints and who would seek to draw off the saints to follow them rather than to follow the apostolic teaching. And of course, when we read the other prophetic portions of the New Testament, call them apocalyptic if you like because Matthew 24 and 25 really falls into that category, we have there specific reference to the fact that in the last days there shall arise apostates. There shall even be men coming who say that they are Jesus Christ. We have already had that. There are numbers of men today who affirm that they are Jesus Christ. That’s not uncommon. If you just keep your ears and eyes open, sooner or later, you’ll run into one

of these queer characters who will say, “I am Jesus Christ.” So it is not a strange thing at all

So the apostle begins by speaking of the coming apostasy and affirming the certainty of it. So you can see he moves right from the truth to the error, apostasy. And I like that about the Bible because the word of God is direct and to the point. It speaks, as we say today, it tells it precisely as it is. I am reminded of Oliver Cromwell who when he was sitting for a picture with a well known painter said, “Paint me wart and all.” [Laughter] And that’s the way the Bible puts it, and the saints of the word of God are saints but at the same time, they are sinners. They are justified, and yet they are sinners at the same time. And that gives us confidence in the word of God.

Error, we are filled with error in the Christian church. I have before me an article that appears in a popular magazine just last month. It’s entitled, “Radical Theology Surfaces Again.” It’s an article by Professor Harold Kuhn, and it is written in *Christianity Today*. It’s an interesting account of some of the meanderings of modern theologians. We were exposed just a few years back to the “God is dead” theology, or secular theology. The primary of the secular theologians was simply this. The term “God” and all of the other terms that we use do not have any meaning for us anymore because of the scientific era of which we are a part and because of the fact that we cannot accept the kind of God that the Scriptures present, “God is dead.” Now ordinarily they did not mean that God was really dead. They meant simply that the concepts by which we speak of God are no longer valid. The terms, the symbols, and hence, that God is a dead God, but God now reveals himself in the secular process.

Now this was very popular and many of you, of course were exposed to lots of the articles and discussions that appeared even in the daily newspaper over the so called, “God is dead” theology. One of the leaders in this movement at that time was Professor Paul van Buren of Temple University. It reminds me of a saying, incidentally, of one of the most liberal of the theologians of a past generation, who said something like this,

“That he who is wedded to the spirit of this age will find himself a widower in the next.”
Implying what we all know is truth, and that is that error is constantly changing. Truth remains. Truth is unchanging, but error is constantly changing. And the man who runs after the modern error, the error of the moment, will, in a few years, have to give it up because something new will have come along and the error will have been seen to be error by that time.

Professor van Buren of Temple University is a good illustration of this. He has now come to a return in the belief in the transcendent God. And so for him, God is no longer dead in the sense that he was dead before, though the God that he worships is not the living God of the Scriptures. When Professor van Buren comes finally to describe what has happened in Christianity, he says Christianity has experienced a perversion in its theology and that perversion may be traced to three factors. The first is the church has misunderstood Easter. They have thought that this was a triumph, but the result has been a radical bypassing of Israel. Well that's wrong. The second thing, and the second wrongheaded view, is Christian Messianism. And that is an error. The third error was the acceptance of the priority of the New Testament. And this error, Professor van Buren says, it's very difficult to follow his logic, but nevertheless, this is what he says, this error, he contends, charted a course for Matthew's gospel through the church fathers in a direct line to the gas ovens in which the Jews were exterminated during World War II. What Professor van Buren offers us is a new theology, but it is not Christian theology at all.

So the apostle turns to apostasy, and every believer, as a result of the apostle's warning should have his eyes open to what is transpiring around him. Notice Paul says, “Some shall depart from the faith.” Now that expression, “the faith,” does not refer to the faith by which we believe in the Lord Jesus. Every man who comes to faith in Jesus Christ experiences person trust in him. We've often said that faith is made up of knowledge, ascent, and trust. Now everybody who believes and is saved, has experienced faith. It is climatically the reliance upon Jesus Christ and what he has done

for us, that saving faith. We renounce all other trusts, and we rely on what he has done for us. That's the faith by which we believe. But now when we believe, we believe in something, a message, a truth, a system of truth. We believe in a theology. Now that is the faith which we believe. Now the New Testament uses faith in these two senses. It actually uses it in other senses too, but I want you to be sure to get these two. Sometimes the term faith means the faith by which we believe and are saved. At other times, the faith is a reference to that which we believe, the body of truth.

Now Paul is clearly refereeing here to the faith which we believe, not the faith by which we believe. He is talking about certain doctrines, and he says, that there are men who shall depart from the faith. Now this is the Christian creed. There are people who do not like creeds. But we all have a creed that is if we are a Christian. We have a certain creed. It is necessary for us to believe a certain body of truth. That's our creed. Now we may have a creed that is broader and deeper than the apostle's creed. I hope you do have. The apostles never knew anything about the apostle's creed. That, at best, is a second century document and not a first century document, but essentially it's a truthful statement of the objective facts of the Christian faith. But it's very limited. It doesn't tell us about a whole lot of things that a person ought to believe if he's going to be a healthy, fruitful Christian, but all Christians have a creed. All Christians are theologians. All of them have a body of truth to which they hold.

And Paul says there are men going to arise, “In the latter times who will depart from this faith,” this body of truth. And they will give “heed to doctrines of demons.” Now when he says, “doctrines of demons,” he doesn't mean doctrines about demons. There are lots of Christians that believe doctrines about demons. If you read the Bible you have to have some kind of doctrine about demons. Billy Graham writes books about demons, and others write books about demons. And some people discuss demons today more than they do Jesus Christ, it would appear. There's a great deal of interest in the demonical today. But when he says, “The doctrines of demons,” he means doctrines

which demons are proclaiming. He means the doctrines which have their source in the demons. So what he is talking about is not doctrines about demons, but doctrines that come from demons. And if you have a Greek testament before you, what I’m saying essentially is that this is not the objective genitive, but the subjective genitive.

So, doctrines of demons, and the apostle evidently considers apostate teaching to be ultimately traceable to the demoniacal, traceable to Satan. He is after all the God of this age, and characteristically Satan is not nearly so much interested in the sins of the flesh of Christians as he is in the sins of the spirit in which they believe wrong things. He’s especially concerned about that. Often times we think that it is Satan who leads us astray into specific fleshly sin. Occasionally that’s just the result of the flesh. We all have the old nature. Sometimes our sins are traceable to our worldliness, but generally speaking, the Satanic kind of sin is the sin that blasphemes the truths of the word of God, truths concerning Christ, truths concerning the salvation in Christ, truths concerning the gospel. These are the types of truths that do the most damage.

I’ve often told the story about two women that were listening to Dr. Barnhouse in a church in Philadelphia and he had been speaking that morning on the world, the flesh and the devil, one of his favorite topics. And he was distinguishing the types of sins that were worldly sins and fleshly sins and devilish sins. And he made a great deal over the fact that a lot of people were in the dark about this and attributed to Satan things that were not really attributable to him. And as the message closed and two ladies were walking out, elderly ladies, one turned to the other and said, “That was a very disturbing sermon that Donald preached this morning.” The other one said, “Why?” “Well,” she said, “The devil has always been such a comfort to me.” [Laughter]

Paul calls this apostate teaching the doctrines that come from demons, and then he further defines. He says, “Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.” He refers here to the false teachers, and they are the agents of the demons. And so when a man propounds truths that are contrary to the doctrines of the word of

God, those doctrines come from the demons, and he himself is an agent of them. So, he speaks of the hypocrisy of men that speak lies. And the reason he speaks of hypocrisy is because, as you well know, these men love to deceive through their insincere utterances, but they speak with pious phrases and use biblical terms.

Now I have a number of terms in this particular article that come directly from Professor van Buren, and there all biblical terms. He talks about Messianism. He talks about Israel. He talks about the church. He talks about Easter and all of the things with which we are familiar, but he speaks in theological double talk, so far as the truths of the word of God are concerned. They talk piously, but they are immoral. And Paul says they have “their conscience seared with a hot iron.” Incidentally, that word is the word from which we get a very common medical term in English, cauterized. They are branded, cauterized with a hot iron. In other words, they have been brought to the place where they have been so branded that they speak what is error as if it is truth. As Paul says in Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 19, I hope you remember what he says in Ephesians chapter 4:19, but I just for the moment have forgotten. That’s the second time I have forgotten in the last year. [Laughter] And I, unfortunately, both times I did it in this meeting. [Laughter] “Who being past feeling,” “past feeling,” I was just kidding you. I’ve forgotten one more time. [Laughter] It was in nineteen thirty-eight. [Laughter]

Now, then having spoken about this the apostle talks about the – I have to be careful tonight, incidentally. My wife is here tonight, and many of you know she’s been very ill and I am just delighted that she feels well enough to be here. But it means that I’m not going to be able to speak as forthrightly as I have been. I have to be more careful – Verse 3, the apostle says, “Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats.” So here the apostle speaks of the content of the apostasy. Now you can see that in the local situation of which Paul was speaking here, the teaching of these self condemned errorists is referred to, and they had two points. One concerned marriage, they forbade marriage, and second, they commanded to abstain from certain foods. So,

it's evident they were Ascetics. That was characteristic of them. That was the type of false teaching that the apostle contended with. They thought of matter as evil, and so I won't go into all of that. We talked about that considerably in the first and second message of this series.

So they thought of matter as evil, and so the apostle will go on to say that matter is very good. He won't say much about marriage, but I'm sure that he thought that marriage was good too. But he specifically deals with the question of the foods. He writes, “Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created.” Incidentally, there are some commentators who think that little “which” in verse 3, “Which God hath created,” refers both to the foods and to marriage. As if marriage is created and so are foods created, that's a possible interpretation, and perhaps in this sense we can say Paul does refer to both. But I think that's more unlikely. He seems to center his attention upon the foods because I say they were Ascetics and evidently, laid a great deal of stress on the things that people ate. So they had a great number of taboos that they brought before the simple believers.

Now Paul states, concerning the foods that God has created them, “to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.” He adds these words, “By them who believe and know the truth,” because only believers can give true thanksgiving for food. Now there are people who do give thanks for food, and they are not believers. But they cannot really give true thanks for food because in all of our thanksgiving for food that thanksgiving to be a true expression of thanksgiving must proceed out of faith and be directed toward the glory of God, just like good works. The world does a great deal in good works, many good works. There are many philanthropists. There are many men judged outwardly who look a great deal better than a number of the Christians, but unfortunately the world is not able to judge the inner man. A work is good before God only if it proceeds out of a heart of true trust in him and if that work is directed toward the glory of God, so that the same work maybe for one a work that glorifies God, but for

the other a work that glorifies man. But we are unable to make the judgment. Only God can do that.

Now Paul says that God has created food, “To be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth,” because they can truly give thanks for their daily provision from God. Now he goes on to say, “For,” to explain why God has created them to be received with thanksgiving, “For every creation of God is good.” That means that all of the things that are in this creation of ours are good and specifically the things to eat. Now this includes without question hot rolls, [Laughter] barbeque, and even pizza. However, I am not at all sure it includes turnips. [Laughter] Now that’s a comment of a southern theologian. [Laughter] Some of the northern theologians who’ve discussed this matter in great depth have wanted to eliminate okra, [Laughter] and I’m almost willing to go along with them about okra. But my wife is here, and she loves okra, so we include okra. [Laughter]

Every creation of God is good. Now what the apostle is saying is that all of the things that we eat are good, and these distinctions that the errorists are making are not justified from the standpoint of the word of God. Now, of course, what Paul has in mind is Genesis chapter 1 and verse 31, for at the conclusion of that chapter the author of this Book of Genesis has said, “And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.” There is a great deal more at stake here than we realize. One of the commentators on the Book of 1 Timothy has said that, “At stake here is a whole conception of God. Is God a grudging kind of God who gives us a creation from which we can only partake of certain things, or is he a lavish God who has bestowed his goods upon the human race in an expansive way?” And of course, Paul would stand for the second. “Every creation of God is good and nothing is to be tabooed.” That’s the way Moffett renders that adjective which is translated here “refused.” “Nothing is to be tabooed if it be received with thanksgiving,” if it be received as something from God. Now this, of course, does not mean that we may

carry to extreme the partaking of the things that God has made. There are certain things in the word of God that are set forth very plainly and clearly, and what Paul says here is also to be governed by the things that he says there. We're not to overeat, to become gluttons. But the things that God has given us in the creation are good, and they are to be received, and we should be delivered from the tabooism of legalism with reference to these things. And he adds in verse 5, “For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.”

I've wondered a little bit about this statement, “It is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.” The word here may be a reference to the teaching of the word of God. It's sanctified by the word of God in the sense that God has told us in the word of God that this food is of his making and creation and he has given it to us. He's provided it for us and therefore it has his blessing upon it when we partake of it. It's set apart by the teaching of the word of God. God himself stands behind the goodness of his creation. That may be what is referred to here, or on the other hand, since, and I'll say something very technical for the benefit of a few of you here who are reading Greek. I'm not talking about the males only. There are some females in the audience who are Greek scholars. If you look at the Greek text, you will find that the expression for “It is sanctified through the word of God in prayer,” there is one preposition for the word of God and prayer, which suggests that they are probably to be taken somewhat closely together. And if that is true, and if we are to take the word of God and prayer somewhat closely together here it must then refer to the use of Scripture in prayer, and then would refer to our saying grace at the table. “For it is sanctified through the word of God and prayer.”

Now this would be one of the scriptural reasons, one only, because in the Bible, in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, the practice of giving thanks before you partake of food is found, but this would be one of the New Testament passages that justifies the Christian practice of saying grace at every meal. Eating and drinking for Christians are not secular activities. They are activities that are done under God. So they're not secular. They're sacred. So eating and drinking are sacred to the Christian set

apart by the word of God in prayer. And you remember how often evidently the Lord Jesus whenever he took food, he gave thanks, blessed it, and so here.

At this point the apostle turns to discuss with Timothy the conduct that is in harmony with godliness. “If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things,” that’s what I’m doing right now, and the sisters too. “If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, unto which thou hast attained.” Incidentally, in the Authorized Version we do not have any article before faith there, which would be confusing in the light of what I’ve said. We wouldn’t know what is referred to, but probably if you have another translation, you’ll notice the article is present. In the Greek text it is in the words of “the faith.”

So Timothy’s responsibility is turned to now. Timothy was a young apostolic legate. We know that he labored for a length of time in Ephesus. He was a man who had been brought to faith by the Apostle Paul and his preaching, and Paul refers to him here as a deacon, a good ministry of Jesus Christ. There the term deacon does not have the meaning of church officer, but it means simply servant. You will be a good servant of Jesus Christ if you, “put the brethren in remembrance of,” the fact that apostasy shall arise in the latter times. “Men shall depart from the faith.” So you can see that part of being a good teacher of holy Scripture is to warn the saints about apostasy. And one, according to Paul, if he is a good ministry will warn the saints about it.

Now, notice he says you will be a good ministry if you warn them. But he adds, “Nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.” In other words, the faith and the doctrine are Timothy’s spiritual nourishment which makes it possible for him to warn about apostasy. I like the way the apostle writes verse 6 when he uses the term “put in remembrance.” It’s a word that in Greek means something like “to suggest.” And I think the reason that this mild word is used is because Timothy was a young man, and consequently in his case it probably required a little bit of

mildness in suggesting to the brethren, many of whom may have been Christians for a much longer time than he, reminding them of the apostasy. So Timothy, if you're going to be a good ministry you've got to suggest these things to the brethren, but they will only be properly suggested if they arise out of a life in which we have nourishment in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine which you have followed. Again you see this great stress in Paul's words to young Timothy on the doctrines, the faith. I've said it so many times; I won't say it anymore, but once. It is so important that we be built up in the faith, the doctrines.

And then he warns him from the negative side, “Refuse profane and old wives' fables.” I wish I knew specifically what that was. I'm going to offer a suggestion. It's only a suggestion. It has no scriptural warrant. It's just purely something that arose in my mind. Have you ever noticed how grandmothers warn children by taboo kind of statements which they learned when they were little children too, which usually don't have a whole lot of truth behind them at all? Have you ever noticed that? Oh come on, I know you have. [Laughter] Well I just think that perhaps that's what he's talking about when he says “Old wives fables,” “Refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.”

So the apostle after exhorting Timothy concerning the doctrine now tells him that he must engage himself in ethical practices. Exercise is an athletic word. It refers to strenuous exertion. Dogma, true dogma issues in a discipline to life, and that is what he has in mind. “Exercise yourself unto godliness,” and just as our athletes now are making every effort to make that Olympic team, and some of them even after years of effort don't make it. I listened; I must confess I was touched exceedingly by Marty Liquori's four years of trying to make the Olympic team, four years work. This is his last opportunity, undoubtedly. He made it as a youngster when he was about sixteen, missed it a couple of times for various reasons. One of our premier runners, and now he's trained four years

for it and then was affected by an injury and missed it. What an exercise for an objective. Paul says, “Exercise yourself.” It is the word from which we get gymnasium.

“Exercise yourself to godliness,” Timothy. Christian life is not something you live easily you know. It requires discipline, and these dogmas that we learn in classes like this, these dogmas are to become the structure around which we build a disciplined Christian life. “Exercise yourself unto godliness,” refuse all of these things that hinder. Why? “For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”

And that leads me now to this last statement in verse 9 and 10. Paul, when he says, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance,” I think is referring to the preceding statements. “Bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things.” That’s a faithful saying. And it’s worthy of all acceptance. And Christians, it’s exceedingly important that as a Christian we, by Thy grace of God seek to live a disciplined Christian life.

Well that leads us now to the statement, “For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach,” or perhaps we both labor and strive, “Because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.” This text has been given a number of different interpretations. We could pass by it with just word or two except that most of you in the audience know that I am a Calvinist. Now Arminians have their favorite texts. Calvinists have their favorite texts. Arminians have their problem texts; in fact, they have whole problem books. [Laughter] But Calvinists have their problem texts, of course. If everything was just simple and plain, well we wouldn't have to have a Bible class like this. So we must face the problems, and we must acknowledge at times that we don't understand a particular text, but we do understand a number of texts that teach positively this and so we follow what the texts of Scripture which plainly teach something teach, and we count on the Holy Spirit to give us guidance on those that we don't yet understand. That’s the way we learn the Scriptures.

“The Savior of All Men, Especially of Those Who Believe” by S. Lewis Johnson
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When I first became a Christian, one of the things that Dr. Barnhouse told me and which has helped me through the years was that simple little thing, that when you read the word of God, don't stop over every problem that you find, but continue to read. Lay aside, make notes about some things that trouble you, but if you'll keep reading you'll discover that most of your problems will be solved. But new ones will come, keep reading. Keep studying. And your problems, generally speaking, continue to fade as you read the word of God.

Now I'm not leading up to saying I don't want to say anything about this text because I do. The text says that, “We trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.” Now of course we know that the term “save” may mean to save in a spiritual sense, or it may mean to save in a physical sense. It may mean to save with soteriological connotations, or it may mean to save with non-soteriological connotations. We all know that. There are many passages in the Old Testament with the Hebrew word, “yasha” as well as the Greek word “sozo” in which these meanings abound. There is no argument among the Arminians or Calvinists over this point.

Let's assume for the sake of discussion that this means to save in the spiritual sense. And so, we're going to offer a few interpretations that are based on that, taking the word to mean spiritual salvation, salvation from the penalty of sin, for example. Some look at this text and have said, “You see Universalism is right after all because the Bible says here, does it not, ‘We trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, Savior of all men, specially those who believe.’” They're not left out. [Laughter] Now the text says that, does it not? “Savior of all men,” well why the “specially?” You see you laughed when I said specially those that believe. That would be unnecessary. If it meant Savior of all men there's no need to add specially those that believe. And the very fact that you laughed proves that you sensed that interpretation was wrong, aside from the fact that you know in many passages of the word of God we are plainly taught that not everybody

is going to be saved. So let's drop that. That's a very popular view with modern theologians today.

Well could this not mean that he's the Savior of all kinds of men? Distributive salvation, well again, Savior of all kinds of men, young, old, male, female, kings, peasants, but then specially of those that believe? They all believe under that interpretation because you've already limited it to a certain believing group. Savior of all kinds of men, I don't think that's suitable for this text, although that interpretation is suitable in other passages of the New Testament. It doesn't seem to suit the text here to me.

Well now, here is a favorite interpretation of evangelicals. Savior of all men if, if out of their free will, out of their free will they respond, but if they don't they resist God's loving mercy and frustrate him and are lost. So they would translate it, Savior of all men if they want to be, specially of those that believe.

Now let me say in case there are any free willers still in the audience. It is not orthodox doctrine at all. You think I'm giving you something that is believed by a narrow little group of people who have odd views. Do you not know that the reformation stood firm on the bondage of the human will? Do you not know that the Lutheran side of the reformation stood firmly on that and the Calvinistic side of the reformation stood firmly on that? Don't you know that evangelicalism in its historic roots in the reformation constantly proclaimed the bondage of the human will and that the will was affected by sin and men could not believe of themselves? Don't you realize that? Now I hope most of you do in Believers Chapel by now. If you don't, don't follow me. Read Luther. Read Calvin. Read the rest of the reformers. And read their descendents. Read *Sound Theology Today*.

God cannot be frustrated. If God can be frustrated, he's not God. That's the error of van Buren. That's exactly what Professor van Buren says. He says in his interpretation of the Abrahamic Covenant, he says that, “God has compromised his own freedom,” and he adds that, “human history has operated outside the divine sovereignty.” That's the

kind of teaching that men who are not Christians at all follow because that kind of teaching does not understand how sinful we really are.

Well we don't accept that. But does it not then mean he's the Savior of all men potentially, but actually of the believers, potentially of all, effectually of the believers? Now would you look at the text? It doesn't say he's the potential Savior of all men. It says he is the Savior of all men, “is” the savior, not “potentially is”, “is” the Savior of all men. Now any interpretation of this text that avoids this clear statement that he is in some sense the Savior of all men must be wrong because it says he is the Savior of all men.

Now there are some people who like to escape the idea that God has distinguished in his grace by saying he's potentially the Savior of all, effectually of believers, but then I ask, “Well where did the faith come from?” Well if you study the Bible you'll have to discover, you'll have to see that faith comes as a gift of God. Then why doesn't he give faith to everybody? We cannot escape the distinguishing grace of God. Why should we want to escape it? Why not just rejoice in it and say hallelujah? Praise the Lord.

And if you're here in the audience and you have not yet come to faith, you don't know whether you are going to be given the gift of faith or not. You can come to Christ, believe on his name, rejoice with the rest of us. But if you don't want to come, then you have no excuse. You're getting exactly what you want aren't you?

So, I cannot accept any of these interpretations. I therefore must think that this term save has its non-soteriological sense, and that what it means here is preserver of all men, specially of those that believe, or perhaps deliverer, if you like. In the Old Testament in Psalm 36 and verse 6, the Psalmist writes, using the Hebrew word, the equivalent of this Greek word, he says, “Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; Thy judgments are a great deep: O LORD, Thou preservest man and beast.” “Thou savest man and beast,” literally, preservation. So he's the Savior of all men in the sense that he

preserves the life of all men, but specially is his heart set upon the faithful. So he saves all, but specially does his saving work encompass his own sons and daughters.

Now will you look at verse 16 of chapter 4 of 1 Timothy? We have an interesting occurrence of the verb here. Paul says, “Take heed to yourself, (Timothy) and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself,” now wait a minute, wait a minute. Can a man save himself by taking heed to himself and taking heed to the doctrine and continuing in them? Is that the way you get saved? No, that’s not the way you get saved? You get saved by believing the gospel message concerning the Lord Jesus. Of course that leads to perseverance in life, but you don’t get saved by doing things, but my friend, if you take heed to yourself and to the doctrine of the word of God and if you continue in them you will preserve yourself from the false teachers and their attacks.

And furthermore you will preserve those that hear you too. That’s just what I’m trying to do with you tonight, so build you up in the faith that you won’t fall prey to the false teachers. You see the word save here means to deliver right here in this very context. Not save spiritually, in the sense of from the penalty of sin, but preserve from the effects of the teaching of the false teachers. By the way that expression the living God is a term which in the New Testament relates him as creator to all men. In Acts chapter 14, verse 15. So the apostle then has exhorted young Timothy to stay in the faith, look out for the apostasy. We’ve believed in a God who is the preserver of all men but his heart is especially turned toward those who have believed in him. It’s a great thing, a tremendous thing to know that the love of God has been set upon us. Isn’t it? Come on, isn’t it? Good, thank you, well that makes my heart warm.

Times up. We’ll have to stop. Let’s close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for the expression of the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord, and we praise Thee for all that we have through him. We know

“The Savior of All Men, Especially of Those Who Believe” by S. Lewis Johnson
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Lord that when we come to difficult texts it's hard for us who are simple human beings whose minds are still in need of the illuminated power of the Holy Spirit to understand, but we pray that as we read and study the Scriptures Thou wilt continue to give us understanding and enable us to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]