



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Various

John Bunyan Lecture VII

TRANSCRIPT

[Introduction of Dr. Johnson] One of the things that Brother Ward said yesterday about, we don't like to chase after great men. We don't worship people. But at the same time, there are certain kinds of people that I really, really love. And the people that I love the most are the people that love the gospel of Jesus Christ. And if you've heard Dr. S. Lewis Johnson preach once or twice or a hundred times, you know that he is a man who loves the gospel of Jesus Christ and loves to make sure you know the gospel of Jesus Christ. And so far as I'm concerned, that is the highest compliment that can be paid to a preacher, and I intend it to be that way. We're glad to have Dr. Johnson with us again.

[Johnson Lecture] Well, I want to say it's a privilege to be here, and I am grateful for the opportunity. When you reach the age that I have reached, and you look back over your life, you realize the many ways in which you have not done what you thought you might do, or be what you thought you might be.

The Lord leads us all in rather different ways, of course. But I'm delighted with the fact that my path has come through the Bunyan Conference and the opportunity to hear some of the men that I've heard. I told Elder D. J. Ward yesterday that I don't think I will ever forget the text

that he preached on last year, Luke chapter 8 verse 27, our Lord crossed the lake and met a certain man. Remember that? A certain man. And this man was a man who was demon possessed. I remember that. And he wore no clothes, and I remember what he had to say about that. I'll not forget that. And then particularly, he dwelt in the tombs. That brings back all of my thoughts concerning the nature of my end. He dwelt in the tombs.

And then last night, I told him last night that I won't forget that text about the two blind men, and Jesus had compassion on them. So, I'm grateful for the Bunyan Conference. I'm grateful for Elder Ward and the others I've had the opportunity to hear. And I'm particularly grateful, too, to John Reisinger himself because some years ago, probably was thirty, thirty-five years ago, I had an engagement to go over to New Albany, Mississippi and preach in a southern Baptist church in which the pastor was a young man who as a high school boy I had had an opportunity to influence in Bible exposition at a camp. His name is Wayne Neal. We gave him the name Wap. I don't know why. I think maybe he looked a little Italian. And that was what in those days fifty years ago you could hear that expression.

At any rate, he invited me over to his church, and after the first message, I suddenly came down with the flu. I'd brought some tapes along. Someone had given me the tapes, or I had gotten the tapes. And at any rate, I was in the bed for about three days. And the tapes were the five points of Calvinism by John Reisinger.

Now, I had been struggling with this. I had been struggling particularly because I was at Dallas Seminary. I had been there for many years as professor of New Testament and then later as professor of systematic theology. And I was an Amyraldian. I didn't know what an Amyraldian was, but that's what I was. But I was struggling with the fifth point because I knew that it probably would mean my position as an instructor at that institution and that it would mean a change of fellowship. The fellowship that I was in, the Christian brethren, would not want me around very much. And I listened to those five tapes, at least the five points of Calvinism. I don't

remember how many tapes there were. I'd been thinking through these things, and I want to express my public appreciation to John, if I did not do it last year, for the clarity of the presentation of the five points of Calvinism. I don't remember, to be perfectly honest with you, whether that was a turning point or not, but it was something I never forgot. I can remember lying in that bed listening to the five points of Calvinism and rejoicing in the clarity with which he set forth that doctrine.

Incidentally, the pastor of the church lost his position as the pastor of the church a year or two later for the same reason. Fortunately for him, he has inherited a little money, so he doesn't have to worry about whether the brethren are going to support him or not. That's a great benefit, you know. It's a great benefit. And many of the things that we sometimes are afraid to say because of these feelings of total change of our life that might take place are helped if we know that the Lord stands behind us. And anyway, he has stood out, still preaching sovereign grace of God and supporting himself in doing it.

So, in many ways I'm thankful and grateful for this particular conference, the Bunyan Conference. Elder Ward gave me one of these. I thought it was a whole sheet, but he says it's only about forty by forty. But I'm going to take that back to Dallas. I don't want to wet this with perspiration this morning. I'm going to take it there, and if they invite me again to preach in the chapel, which they do occasionally, I want to pull it out. It came from the Bunyan Conference. Thank you D. J.

I've been asked to speak on several passages that have to do with definite atonement or problems connected with it. And I want you to turn with me to 2 Peter chapter 3, and I want to deal with the passage, the 9th verse and the statement that Peter makes there. But I'd like to read the nine verses, say a few words about them and then discuss that particular text because as John Newton himself said, "This text is a bone that Calvinists do not often like to pick because of its

difficulty." "A hard bone," he called it. I think it's very easy. I think you will think it's very easy when we finish today. But he thought it was a hard bone, so it deserves consideration.

The apostle writes in verse 1,

"Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word (That's interesting, by the same word), are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

Now, I believe that the atonement was definite, particular. If we say we are particular redemptionists, to my mind I'm saying the same thing. I believe in the five points of Calvinism. We often, if we take that position, if that's really what we believe, we're immediately faced with all of the kinds of questions that our Arminian friends are so deft in offering. So, let me just say very briefly why I think the atonement of Jesus Christ is definite before we look specifically at that verse.

First of all, the statements of Scripture are of that character. The language of conditionality, the language of potentiality, the language of possibility is not found with reference to the atonement.

Second, the argument from definite expressions, so beautifully set out in A. Hodge's *Christian Theology*, the expressions of Scripture are definite. He died for the church. He redeemed a people.

Thirdly, the argument from the nature of the atonement. Many of my friends say the question is settled there, and I agree. It would be settled there, but we have lots of other reasons also. The nature of the atonement, the atoning work of Jesus Christ is a penal substitutionary, by a sacrifice, work. It is penal – Christ died and bore the penalty of those for whom he died. It is, of course, a satisfaction, that is, he propitiated the Father, satisfied his justice of holiness. And it is a substitution.

Now, D. J. made that point so well last night. He died for us, for a particular people. And if he died for a particular people, then my friend, what judgment can heaven bring against those for whom Christ has died? What judgment? Heaven can bring no judgment against the one for whom Christ has died. So if we believe in substitution, then we must be believers in a definite atonement, a particular redemption. There is no way out of that.

Now, if you want to abandon substitution, I have friends who've abandoned substitution. They like other forms of the atonement. They're attracted to a moral form of the atonement – moral influence. Some are attracted to the governmental theory. Many Arminians, by thinking about this, find themselves forced into a governmental theory of the atonement.

If you take for example and read Clark Pinnock's writings, Pinnock claims he began as a Calvinist, as a dispensationalist. The dispensationalists didn't recognize him as a dispensationalist. The Calvinists, I don't know how they recognized him in his earlier days, but he says he began that way. He has written that; I'm not repeating anything that someone may

have said about him; it's what he wrote. But in his later writings, he says that he had found that substitution is a problem for him. And so he's been thinking about, and then he describes in rough form, the governmental theory of the atonement, that is, that Jesus Christ did not die specifically for the sins of those who are the redeemed. But in his work, by suffering as he did, we know that God does punish sin. The governmental theory is a favorite retreat of the Arminians. But if the atonement is a penal, substitutionary atonement, then you must be one of us. You must be.

Fourth, there is an argument from the priesthood of Christ, after all, the work of the high priest was the work of sacrifice and intercession for a particular people, wasn't it? What Aaron and the other high priests did was to offer sacrifices for the Israelites, didn't they? Did they offer them for the Moabites or the Amalakites? They were for Israel. They were a particular people. And he made intercession for those for whom he offered sacrifice.

Our Lord in heaven makes intercession for those for whom he has sacrificed. He says he doesn't pray for the world. He prays for us. Those for whom he sacrifices, he prays. He doesn't pray for others. We wouldn't have to go farther than that. He cannot offer for those for whom he doesn't intercede. What is his intercession? It's the presentation of his offering.

Fifth, one of the finest of the arguments and one of the simplest is the *argumentum a minori ad maius*. I don't expect you to repeat that, of course. We do this in theological seminary so that students' eyes will say – he's smart. The rabbis call this the qal wahomer argument – light and heavy. It's the argument from the less to the greater. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" If he died for us, then he will give us everything. That's the greatest gift. Everything else follows. If he offered a sacrifice for us then, will he give us conviction of sin? Will he give us repentance? Will he give us all of the other things? Will he give us faith? Of course. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all

things?" So if you believe he has given himself up for you, the greatest work of all, all these other lesser things, like faith, repentance, and so on, they have to come.

Sixth. Are you persuaded yet? The argument from the results the atonement has accomplished, that is, the harmonization of the design of the atonement and the end. The limited result necessitates for an unfrustratable deity, a limited intent. It seems obvious. Of course, if you have a God who can be frustrated, that argument does not carry weight with you. But your problem's not the atonement, your problem is with the kind of God that you have. The necessary harmony of the inter-trinitarian economy of salvation, I learned that from John Murray, the Westminster Seminary.

The inter-trinitarian economy of salvation. Think about that. You know what that means? That means the Father works toward one end. The Son works toward the same end. The Spirit works toward the same end. The Father elects. The Spirit gives faith to the elect. The Son dies for, well, with the intent of saving everybody? No, of course not. We don't have a dissonance in the Trinity. We do not have the persons of the Trinity working toward different goals. They have the same design – the elect, the elect, the elect. The Father doesn't elect the non-elect. He elects the elect. The Spirit brings to faith the elect. The Son of God dies with the intent of saving the elect. He offers for the elect. I know you're persuaded by now.

There is the argument from the representative nature of Jesus Christ's death. It'd be interesting to talk about a number of the passages, of course, where our Lord is set forth as the covenantal head of his people, and when he offers himself, he offers for them.

Thomas Goodwin, if you ever get an opportunity to read Thomas Goodwin, you must do it. Sometimes a little difficult, but Goodwin was a remarkable man. He quaintly puts it this way: "There are but two men standing before God, Adam and Christ, and these two have all other men hanging at their girdles." I like that expression "hanging at their girdles." Our Lord has a big girdle, all of the elect hanging there.

The argument from special divine love or the fact that the Scripture represents God's love as distinguishing. The Son doesn't pray for all. The Son doesn't give the Spirit to all. That's important, too. John 14:16 and 17. He has withheld the gospel from countless myriads throughout the world, both in Old and New Testament times. Difficult to understand, but nevertheless, true. And true for a sovereign God.

Last year I mentioned the tenth of these arguments in a message on Revelation chapter 5, verses 1 through 10 or 11. And in verse 9 and 10, we read of the singing of the new song by the twenty-four elders and the living creatures. "They sang a new song, saying: 'You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for you were slain, and you have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation.'"

Now I'm reading a text, this is the New King James Bible that I'm reading from. There's a question about the rendering of these verses, verses 10 and 11 because it's a textual problem in the Greek text. So you may have it slightly different. But nevertheless, the point doesn't depend on that. The text says, "You have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation." Now if the atonement or redemption was universal, he would have simply said, You have redeemed every tribe, tongue, people and nation. But it's "out of". The construction in the original text is a partitive construction. It's some out of them. Some translations translate it that way – some from have been redeemed. That's number ten.

So I think if I were to be asked about this question, and someone were to give me a little time, that's what I would want to say. I would want to expound these passages in order to demonstrate that those who believe in a definite atonement have the testimony of the word of God in support of their claims. And they have many, many, I think, unanswerable arguments. We have a sound ground for our faith.

And of course, for those who have been by the grace of God brought to the understanding of this, you know that there is something within your heart that God has implanted there – the



confidence, the conviction that comes from the Holy Spirit that this is the word of God. It's the testimony of the Holy Spirit. And I think, I don't say this in any kind of way like a braggart, but it's one of those things I think that God has given to me, that there is a conviction within my heart that this is the teaching of the inspired word of God supported by reasonable arguments through the exposition of the words of holy Scripture.

Now 2 Peter chapter 3 and verse 9 poses a bit of a problem. I know it's a problem because I have people from time to time asking me about 2 Peter 3:9. They will say, I heard everything you say, but what about 2 Peter 3:9? They do this about many passages, of course, but this is just one that frequently is given.

In December of 1995, a little over a year ago, the radio broadcast that Believers Chapel offers, which are tapes that through the years I have given over the local station there, it's still going and so they go back and play expositions of books of the Bible. I received a call over the telephone from a lady, Carolyn Palmer; Martha will remember Carolyn Palmer. And she said she had listened to the radio broadcast, and she wrote me a letter of appreciation for the ministry. And in the conversation with me over the telephone, for when I got the letter, it was a lengthy letter in which she mentioned she had been originally a member of The First Presbyterian Church of Dallas and I had, when I came to Dallas to go to the Theological Seminary, I transferred my membership from a Presbyterian church in Birmingham, Alabama to First Presbyterian Church where I was for several years going through the Theological Seminary. So it interested me. And in the letter she had said that she had been there, for many years a member of that church, but in more recent times had been attending charismatic churches. But she said I feel they are a bit too much interested in my money. And I responded by calling her on the telephone and thanking her for the letter and telling her that I would be happy sometime to talk to her about her problem because in her letter she went on to say that she had been listening to our broadcasts, and she had appreciated very much the doctrine of sovereign grace, but she found 2 Peter 3:9 to be a problem.

And the text, as you know, is this rather famous text, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering to us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

So, what about it, Peter? What do you mean? "Not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

Well, Peter is talking, as you know, about the claims of the mockers. They are individuals who did not evidently believe the promises concerning the coming of our Lord. And what followed was a natural kind of thing, the doctrine of uniformity, that people do not believe that there is such a thing as a climax of the coming of Jesus Christ in the future. It's easy to see how some form of doctrine of the doctrine of uniformity like evolution should develop. Non-intervention of God should obviously be part of the doctrine.

So Peter wrestles with that a bit. He deals with the claims of the mockers, and he says essentially the mockers have forgotten two things. He says, of course, they say, "Where is the promise of His coming?" Everything has remained the same. "But this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water." Peter says you've forgotten that there was a disturbance of the whole creation. You've forgotten the flood. Not only that, not only have you forgotten the flood, but you've forgotten the fire that's coming, because he goes on to say, "But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

So these individuals have forgotten the flood. They've forgotten the fire. We can account for the time since the promise. God has been carrying out his purposes. This neglect of the flood and this neglect of the fire, and incidentally, Peter says it's a willful neglect of the flood. "Willfully," that's the meaning of that Greek adverb translated properly, I think, in the NIV and the RSV. And it's by that same word, that same word of God that the fire is also to come.

Now Peter says I'd like for you to remember a couple of things. In the 8th verse he says I would like for you to remember a relationship that exists, "But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

Now I think many of us need that. We need that with reference to the second coming of Christ because we inevitably, at least speaking out of my own personal experience, we inevitably fall into the pattern of things in which we push the coming of our Lord aside. Everything is where this is the year 1997 now, 1997, and so it's natural for us to not pay much attention to the fact that this age may be coming to an end soon, some form of end. So, we need to remember the fact that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years is as one day.

This text, incidentally, is no refutation of a thousand year kingdom, nor does it support a year-day theory of creation or of prophecy. He's just making the statement. One day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years is as one day with the Lord. Time makes no difference to the promiser in the sense and in the way it does with us.

One day with him is like a thousand years with us. He can crowd everything into one day if he wished. One thousand years with him is as one day with us. The promises are just as certain as if God made them day before yesterday. If he made them day before yesterday to us, we would pay far more attention, wouldn't we? Well, that's time with the Lord. It's as if he made them day before yesterday. Only two days since Jesus said, "I will come again" in the thinking of God. And even that is too long for him.

But now, the climax is the 9th verse, and he wants these believers, not only to remember a relationship, but to remember a specific reason, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

Now any, any (I don't know whether I'm pronouncing that correctly or not. I'm a southerner, you know. Any, I don't say "ahny", any) Any cannot be understood of every

individual since he's willing for some to perish. Romans chapter 9 tells us that. The Scriptures tell us that. He is willing for some to perish. That's very plain. So that raises a problem for me. That's just an old exegetical problem. I might throw this out to students in a class on the exegesis of 1st and 2nd Peter.

He is not willing that any should perish, but they have perished. Have they? Well, depends on how you define "any." Any, let's put it this way, any believers. See, "any" may be any unbelievers as any believers. There's a big difference. "Not willing that any should perish" But if it's unbelievers, I would have a problem. Romans chapter 9, verse 22, many passages, of course, but Romans chapter 9 verse 22 comes to mind. Do you know why it comes to mind? Cause I put it in my notes. [Laughter] What if God. "What if God, wanting to show His wrath and make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction." So he is willing for some to perish, in fact, for many. So "any", "any" must not be a reference to unbelievers. Any must be a reference to believers, isn't that true? Well, of course. If you just think about it, it must be a reference to believers.

Now, let's then take a more careful look. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to us." Longsuffering, I don't know, the Authorized Version says "to us-ward," doesn't it? Again, the Greek texts differ a little bit. Some of them have "to you", some "to us." It doesn't make any difference because the you are defined here as the us in the context. So, "to us-ward."

But furthermore, the "us-ward" is defined by the words that Peter has used in this chapter. What has he called them? First verse, "beloved". "Beloved, I now write to you." Beloved. Verse 8, "But, beloved, do not forget this one thing." There's a whole lot of difference between people who are beloved by God and people who are not. We know, of course, the difference. The difference is essentially the difference between life and death. So, he is longsuffering to us-ward, no willing that any. Any what? Any of us.

Now you know it's important in reading the Bible, to read it carefully, isn't it? It's important in anything to read things carefully. I have former students that I taught years ago whom I did not teach as well as I think I could have taught them now. And they're writing books now. And I read the books, and I say, I'm responsible partially for that, of course, he's had thirty or forty years since to change his mind. But nevertheless. Now John mentioned Carl Hope this morning. He's a former student of mine, too, and he likes the book. And in fact, I was the examiner for his thesis, which relates to the material in this book.

But I have a student, a former student, whose now professor at a Christian institution, and he has some comments on this very text because he's written a book on it. He says, of course, it's wrong to take the Calvinistic viewpoint. He says God does not desire that any man perish, whether it be in the days before the blood or today. That's his position. He does not desire that anyone should perish. But yet the texts of Scripture make it very plain that if we have a sovereign God as my friend I'm sure would confess that he has, that God has determined in his infinite will that some do perish. Of course, we would do thing differently. We're human. We're fallible. But he has determined in his will that some shall perish. And I'm sure ultimately we will find good reason. I accept the fact and know that they're good reasons standing behind it even if I'm unable to persuade all of my friends about it. Not willing that any should perish.

I said it was important to be accurate in interpretation. I was looking around for a little story that might illustrate this about a year ago when I spoke on this topic in response to Carolyn Palmer's letter to me. Shortly after, I was invited by the chapel to speak again, because I've resigned from the regular ministry there, though Martha and I still attend. And they occasionally ask me to preach, and I took that as the opportunity to answer the question in a message.

So I was just looking around for something that might illustrate the fact that we need to pay attention to Scripture, careful interpretation. We need to know what hermeneutics is, the science of interpretation. Jim Packer calls that hermen eutics, Mr. Herman Eutics. His last name

is Eutics, his first name is Herman. No, he's having a little fun at the expense of us who are not as learned as Jim Packer. But hermeneutics is a term derived from the Greek word hermeneo, which means to interpret. And so, hermeneutics is interpretation, the science of interpretation. It means simply to be accurate in reading the word of God.

A stranger entered the building and asked a boy standing in the lobby, 'Can you tell me where Mr. Smith lives?' And the lad smiled and said, 'Yes, I can tell you, and I'll show you. Come over the elevator with me.' They went six flights up. When they got out of the elevator, the boy pointed to a room. He said, 'Dr. Smith lives there, or Mr. Smith lives there.' So the man went over and knocked on the door repeatedly, and there was no answer. Finally, he commented, he's not here. The boy said, 'Oh no, sir. He's not there. He was downstairs waiting for you in the lobby, but you asked where he lived. That's where he is lives.' [Laughter]

Now, it is important, you know, to pay attention to what Scripture says.

There was a want ad. It said: Secretary wants job. No bad habits. Willing to learn. [Laughter] One has to be careful there.

While I was thumbing through looking for something that might cause you to smile, I ran across the account of a lady who was trying to impress those at the party. 'My family's ancestry is very old,' she said. 'It dates back to the days of King John of England.' And then she turned to a lady who was sitting quietly in the corner, and she asked rather condescendingly, 'How old is your family, my dear?' 'Well,' said the woman with a quiet smile, 'I can't really say. All our family records were lost in the flood.' [Laughter]

Well, anyway. The point I'm making is that we need to be accurate.

Now when Peter says, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to us," or to you, that "us", that "you", is defined by the context. And the context makes it plain – he's talking to the beloved. He doesn't say it once, he says it twice, just so you will get it. He is talking about the beloved. He's not willing that any, what?

Any of the beloved should perish, but that all of the beloved should come to repentance. That's one of the greatest texts that you can find. Instead of being a problem, something we stumble over, it's something we rest upon and rejoice in. He is not willing that any of us, any of his elect, should perish but that all of us should come to repentance.

Now this word "come to" is an interesting word, too.

I don't know how long I'm supposed to preach. How long am I supposed to preach?

[Comment audience member indistinct]

[Johnson] Well, I can't follow E. J. and John, but I have one or two other points I would like to make.

"Should have room for repentance." That word is a word that really means just precisely that, "to have room for," to make room for. That all should have room for. Translated "come to" – room for repentance. It's the Greek verb *pereo*, which means essentially that, to come to in the sense of to have room for, make room for.

Sunday in Fred's church, I preached on the dying thief who came to faith. You remember, he heard our Lord say the first of our Lord's sayings, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." And then after our Lord had spoken to him, he had the great privilege of hearing all of the others that our Lord also said.

But that first one, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." What was our Lord saying? Was he saying that all of the authorities should be forgiven, because all of the authorities were not forgiven. That would raise questions, wouldn't it? Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.

In the first place, is ignorance ground for forgiveness. Ignorance is not ground for forgiveness. Drive down the highway eighty miles an hour, and you're pulled over by a motor

cop. And he reminds you that the speed limit was sixty-five or seventy. And you say, But I didn't know that. That won't go. I tried that one time myself. [Laughter] It does not go. I was not going eighty-five at the time, but I was going forty-five or so in a thirty-five mile zone going to the seminary, so anxious to teach a class. It was good. I had another illustration for my students. But anyway, I was pulled over, and that was the first thing I said to him, I didn't know that the speed limit here was thirty-five. Well, I don't even remember whether he smiled or not. But I do remember I got the ticket. It's the last one I've had for now, and I hope I don't have another one. But anyway, ignorance is not excuse.

What was our Lord really praying? Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing. No, he was praying, actually he was praying for a time of grace. Make room for them. Father, forgive them. Ignorance is no ground of forgiveness, but ignorance is justifiable ground for a delay in the execution of the necessary judgment. That's what our Lord was praying. He was praying, Father, release them. As a matter of fact, the word *aphiemi*, which is the Greek word that commonly means to forgive in the New Testament, is a term that's translated in the New Testament in more than one place as "let go", "release". Of course, when we're forgiven, we're released from the penalty of our sins, but our release may be in other ways as well.

So, forgive them. If you don't believe that, I'll just have you turn to a couple of passages. Acts chapter 5 and verse 38, we read these words, "And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone." That's the word, let them alone. Let alone, the word is translated here. Father, let them alone for they do not know what they are doing.

Let's try one other place, John 11 verse 48. John 11 verse 48, here we read, "If we let Him alone like this." That's the word commonly translated forgive, but it means to release, to let him alone. "If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him." When our Lord was hanging upon that cross and said, "Father, forgive," he said it in the sense of "let them alone", give them an opportunity for repentance. Give the church an opportunity, the whole of the



believing body that shall come along. This was a prayer for the Aroniuses. It was a prayer for the Augustines. It was a prayer for the Luthers, and for the Calvins, and for the Reisingers, and the Wards, and the Johnsons, and all of the others down through the years. Judgment should have been in the strictest sense exercised then on the whole race for the crucifixion of the Messiah. But, Father, forgive them, release them, for they don't know what they're doing. And we're living in this age that has been won by the prayer of our Lord upon Calvary's cross.

Father, forgive them for they do not know what they're doing. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any," any of us. In fact, the previous verse make it plain, "Beloved, don't forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us (beloved ones), not willing that any (of us beloved ones) should perish but that all (of us beloved ones, everyone of them), should come to repentance," (everyone who has been elected). Everyone who has been elected will be given faith. Everyone who is elected and given faith will be saved. Every single one of them shall reach the presence of the Father in heaven for eternity. That's precisely what he's saying.

You know, people often think that when you talk like this, what you're doing is really picking pages out of the Bible and making them serve your own purpose. And sometimes that's done. I must confess, sometimes I've done that, and I'm ashamed of that. And sometimes I did it and did not realize what I was doing.

Robert L. Dabney was one of the great southern theologians. There've been several of them, Robert L. Dabney, two from South Carolina, James Henley Thornwell, and Gerardo is another one. Those southern Presbyterian theologians stood for the truth in the nineteenth century. One of them was Dabney, perhaps the greatest of them, although I like Thornwell, particularly. His works are available. One can read them, marvelous gift with the word. I

remember him particularly because he chewed tobacco. It's kind of like remembering Spurgeon and his stogie. But Thornwell liked to chew tobacco. In those days, that evidently could pass for outstanding Christianity. He was at one time the president of the University of South Carolina, then was professor in the Columbia Theological Seminary, which is now the Seminary of the Southern Presbyterian Church and now the PCUSA.

Dabney, in commenting on this says, "Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends.' But the greater includes the less, whence it follows, that if God the Father and Christ cherished for a given soul the definite electing love which was strong enough to pay for him the sacrifice of Calvary, it is not credible that this love would then refuse the less costly gifts of effectual calling and sustaining grace."

See the same argument as "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." "Greater love hath no man than this," our Lord said, "that a man lay down his life for his friends." But there is a greater love than that, unless with that laying down of life all the lesser gifts necessarily follow. That's qal wahomer. This is the very argument of Romans 5:10 and 8:31 to the end that we minced about.

So, I think my time is up.

The believers' response to the coming of our Lord is set forth very plainly here. He says in verse 2: We are to be mindful of the words spoken by the holy prophets. In verse 12 through verse 14 and the text that follows he says that we are to look for the day that is coming, the day of God, because the heavens will be dissolved in fire, the elements shall melt with fervent heat. That word means to expectantly look.

And for the unbelievers, well, the lesson is very plain, that only those who have come to repentance may look favorably to the future. Salvation is what they need. And Peter writes in verse 15, "And consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation – as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you," suggesting to us that as

long as that end has not yet come, the opportunity to be saved is there. The perils of being lost are awful. And any preacher worth his salt would want at this time to appeal to his audience to give themselves by God's sovereign grace to Jesus Christ for salvation.

Let me close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the clarity of the word of God and we ask that Thou would give us diligence as we read and ponder the word. Enable us to realize that the study of the Scriptures is not a simple task that we can master in an offhand kind of way. Enable us through the implantation of the love of the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit to give ourselves to reading the word and pondering the word and thus, growing in the knowledge of him who gave himself for us. We pray in his name. Amen.

[Comment from audience member] Number fifty-five.

[Johnson] Sorry, I didn't get a chance to use this. I've got it.

[Comment from audience member] I like some contemporary choruses, but I also like the great hymns, don't you? It seems to me that Dr. Johnson is like wine – he just gets better and sweeter the older he gets. I didn't hear that and don't want to hear it. We have about six or seven minutes, if you have any questions that you would like to direct to Dr. Johnson what he said. Remember the microphone is up here, and you have to come up here. So, are there any questions that you would like to direct to Dr. Johnson? Yeah, here's one coming. Mr. Morris, from Burlington, North Carolina.

[Question from audience member] We actually live in Haw River. [Indistinct] What was that again? [Indistinct] Yes, there's another one of those literalists. Thank you, Mrs. Johnson. With regard to 2 Peter 3 and the contextual matter, significantly those who are beloved are also spoken of as those to whom the second epistle is addressed, and when you look at who the addressees are of the first epistle, it's significant that they are elect strangers of the dispersion. So that I think certainly commends more what you said. I wanted to ask, though, with regard to some men who would adhere to a position of sovereign grace, they would believe in unconditional election and particular redemption, they've taken a view of 2nd Peter 3 that would relate the passage more to the universal offer of the gospel. I think John Murray would do that. What would you say in regard to them? Would you use the contextual argument with them as well as with those who would be of an Arminian background?

[Johnson] Well, I really didn't know that John Murray takes that particular position because Mr. Murray was an outstanding theologian whom I have appreciated very much, have learned from him, not only the inter-trinitarian economy of salvation, but other things as well. I would still use that contextual argument. And knowing John Murray, I'm surprised that that's not what he would use, too. So I, not having read that, I wouldn't know how to answer it fully. But Mr. Murray's commentary on Romans, the two volumes that he wrote, are remarkable for not simply the theology but the exegesis as well. The careful exegesis, the careful grammatical, historical exegesis. And as a matter of fact, though his views prophetically differed from mine, his exposition and exegesis of Romans 11, I cannot find anything in that chapter with which I disagree. He even acknowledges a future of ethnic Israel, which I happen to believe in. So, I would pay attention to what he has to say, but I still would use my argument. I think my argument is sufficient. It's true to the context. It follows in the flow of the argument of chapter 3. And we don't need to go anywhere else. We have Peter saying that right in context.

[Comment from audience member] John Murray's one of the few writers who will ever raise the obvious objections to what he is saying. He doesn't wait for you to raise them. He raises them himself. He's probably one of the most honest, clearest writers that I think you'll ever read. Alright, anybody else have a question?

[Question from audience member] In 1 Timothy 2, we have a similar usage in chapter 2, verse 4, "he desires all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." The context here is a little bit more difficult. Could you expound on that? Is it all men without distinction or exception? And then how that relates with Romans chapter 5 and the use of the word many there.

[Johnson] Well, on the spur of the moment, I don't know whether I could know exactly what you're speaking about, about the word "many" there. Obviously, the term "many" is always to be defined by the context. And in 1 Timothy chapter 2, (John, may I have that Bible right there underneath? It's, yeah, that'll be fine, the one with the sheet on top of it.

[Comment] Shroud.

[Johnson] It's not a sheet, he's told me it's not a sheet.) But, the 1st Timothy passage in context, this was one, incidentally, I had thought maybe my second message would be on, but I decided to go to 1 Timothy 4:10 tomorrow and deal with that. But this one, in the light of the context in which Paul says, "Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, kings, all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and perseverance." So the context suggests all kinds of men right in the beginning. So I rather take verse 4 to have that sense. Tomorrow, I

will make reference to John Stott's recent commentary on the pastoral epistles, in which he deals with that passage as well as the one in chapter 4 verse 10, taking an Amyraldian position essentially, though he doesn't call it that. But I would go with a more standard interpretation of 1 Timothy 2, that this has reference to all men without exception.

[Comment from the same audience member indistinct] In Romans 5 in verse 19, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners," we know that all.

[Johnson] Yeah. Now, that raises a much longer question, and Tom Wells has discussed that in his little book on the savior. What is the name of that, do you know? A Price for a People. And that raises a rather technical question because it has to do with the sense of Isaiah chapter 53 especially and the sense of many. And he has a rather, I think, a fairly convincing argument. I wouldn't necessarily follow everything that he says, but it's a fairly convincing argument that the "many" is the many of one class and in the light of the context of Isaiah 53, for which the term "many" is derived by the Apostle Paul in several contexts. He is relying on that passage, Isaiah chapter 53. So I would take it in the limited sense, not in the sense of all, but all of a certain group within other groups. That's a little complicated, and I think one would have to sit down and look at all of the passages and first of all decide that the use of the term many is derived in the New Testament from Isaiah 53.

[Comment from audience member] Okay, by the way, if you take a chart on Romans 5, and begin in verse 15 and go through verse 19 and take every time the word many and every time the word all, and it almost sounds like Paul just doesn't want to use the same word a couple of times. But it's a masterful argument. And when he says "many", it seems he means more than one, one man's disobedience and a whole lot more than one were made guilty. But the many

were made guilty is really all, and so in the next verse, he'll say all. And it's all who are represented by the representative. And whatever happens to the one who is the representative, must of necessity happen to all he represents. And he represents many, meaning more than one, and in the case of Adam, he represents all men without exception. But in the case of Christ, he represents only those who have been given to him by the Father. So the alls and the many are not co-extensive, and it's a masterful, masterful argument. And the NIV has a horrible footnote on it.