



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

2nd Peter 2:1-3

“Satan’s Fifth Column”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] We thank Thee Lord for the warnings of the word of God that before the time point out to us the danger of false teaching, warn us against the false teachers who arise not only from without the true church but even from within the meetings of the saints who professed a belief in Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for giving us warning ahead of time for when we see these things come to pass, we recognize that it is the fulfillment of the Scriptures. And it encourages us in our beliefs that Thou art faithful to give us truth in the word of God.

We pray, Lord, tonight as we consider one of the passages that warn us of the rise of false teachers that we may be responsive and perceptive, that we may understand and also in the light of these warnings conduct ourselves in a way that will bring glory to Jesus Christ. We pray for the churches who profess the name of the Lord Jesus, and we ask, O God, that Thou wilt preserve them from heresy, as Thou dost will. And we pray for the churches represented in this meeting tonight, that Thou wilt preserve each one of them from teaching that dishonors our Lord Jesus Christ, either in doctrine or in ethics. We commit the hour to Thee, we pray that Thou wilt give us guidance, that we may understand. For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Message] We’re continuing our study in 2nd Peter and the subject for tonight is “Satan’s Fifth Column.” And we’re turning to 2nd Peter chapter 2, verse 1 through verse 3.

One of our gravest social problems, if we can believe our newspapers and our periodicals, is medical malpractice. Doctors are disturbed by vast judgments that are won by patients against them and they are particularly disturbed by the rise in premiums that they are having to pay for the policies by which they may be protected. I am sure that some of this is justified, but it’s not my purpose here tonight to pronounce judgment upon the activities of those who are engaged in this kind of investigative work.

Increased costs for medical treatment finally fall upon us and I guess we should be disturbed by that but frankly I haven’t had any occasion to think about suing any doctors who have practiced on me. But I’ve been interested in the fact that this has now made even our comic strips and Rex Morgan has spoken of Dr. Keith Covell’s unpreparedness for the practice of medicine now because Keith, who is a well-to-do fellow with a weakness in stressful situations, must learn to practice defensive medicine and he’s not prepared for that. Well all of this has only an incidental relation to what I want to say tonight, but I did think of it when I thought about the judgment that Peter has to pronounce here upon the apostates. I hope you will not think me old fashioned in stressing the matter. I grant that Peter’s words are a rather lurid description of apostates but there is a deadly danger in false teaching. In fact, it’s a matter of spiritual life and death. And so I don’t want you to charge me with spiritual malpractice by refusing to warn you against the apostasy that faces the Christian church today and that will face us in the future.

It’s evident from the place that is given it in the word of God that the Holy Spirit considers it to be a very solemn matter. There are many, many passages of the word of God that warn us against spiritual malpractice by individuals who professed to be followers of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul has warned us that not only are the churches in peril from men that come in from outside but that we may expect individuals to arise in the midst of the church itself and to seek to lead away disciples after them. It’s something that is very startling, it’s very disturbing, but it’s in the word of God. And therefore we must pay the closest of attention to it.

I’ve not put any outline on the overhead tonight because the outline is very simple. It’s made up of three points: first, the coming of the false teachers in the first verse; and then second, the consequences of their coming in the second verse; and the character of their teaching in verse three. So will you listen now as I read 2nd Peter chapter 2, verse 1 through verse 3, which is the section we want to consider in our study tonight.

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who secretly shall bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their destruction slumbereth not.”

The apostle has just mentioned the dependable witness of the apostles and the prophets in the latter part of chapter 1. That naturally leads him to the mention of the coming of the false teachers. These are individuals who are going to take the truth of God and twist it and make it conform to their preconceived ideas concerning the truth. “They are like the false prophets who are referred to in the Old Testament who are going to speak that which I,” God speaking, “have not commanded them to speak.”

Reminds me of an old story of a young preacher who was preaching and evidently he was full of himself and when he finished his sermon an elderly preacher went up to him, not too convinced that he had been called by God to ministry and not too well educated said to him, “Was you sent or did you just went?” [Laughter] Peter says, “As there have been false prophets among the people there shall be false teachers among you.”

There may be some indication in this change from prophets to teachers that the apostle understands that the day of prophecy has come to an end or is fast coming to an end, and

consequently we may expect false teachers, but not false prophets. It is true that in this present day we do not have any prophets. There is evidence we shall have prophecy in the future but we do not have any prophecy now. So it’s very fitting that he should warn his readers that while there were false prophets in the Old Testament there shall be false teachers in the future.

Prophecy is the communication of new knowledge, knowledge that has come directly from God. That’s why we don’t have any prophets today. If you should hear a man say, “Oh I wish we had some prophets today,” or, “What we need today are some prophets,” generally speaking, when a person says that he means, “It would be wonderful if we should have some godly men who would give the word of God with authority.” But we must not take seriously the term prophet because prophets are not given by God today. We do not have prophets who give us new revelation. We have individuals who teach. So strictly speaking we should not say, “Oh it would be wonderful if we had some prophets today,” or, “We ought to have some prophets today.” The facts are that we do not need any prophets at the present time. We need teachers. We need evangelists. We need pastor-teachers. We need the gifted men that are set forth in Scripture as gifted men for our present day. But prophets, that’s another thing.

So I think it may be interesting, I’m not sure that I could prove this, but I think it’s interesting Peter says just as there were false prophets in the Old Testament times, there shall be false teachers, “Even as there shall be false teachers among you.” Now he states of them that they shall secretly bring in destructive heresies. These false teachers are not described in such great detail that we can be absolutely sure of everything that they say. It would seem from what Peter says here in this 2nd chapter, particularly, that their teaching will be perverse and it will be characterized by both doctrinal and moral error. In other words, they will not have true views concerning the Lord Jesus and the ministry of him. They will not have a true theology, and their spiritual lives will conform to their poor theology. In other words, they will not live godly in past lives in the biblical sense.

There are two ways for us to apostatize. One is to apostatize in doctrine and the other is to apostatize in ethics. And evidently these men are men who not only apostatize in doctrine but they

also apostatize morally. That’s evident from the context of the 2nd chapter. He says that they shall bring in destructive heresies and they shall do it secretly. Now the Greek word that is translated here secretly or if you have the Authorized Version as it was originally, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, that Greek word means to smuggle in. So the references to the bringing in of heresies in an underhanded way, not openly, and that’s characteristic of the false teachers in the Christian church. Very rarely do we ever have a man like Bishop Pike who stands up in the midst of religious assemblies and says, “I do not accept the doctrine of the trinity, we cannot any longer believe in the doctrine of the virgin birth.” Generally speaking, such false teachers couch their teaching in language, often carefully chosen, in order to preserve the aura of respectability and faithfulness to the divine revelation while at the same time moving away from it. So they shall secretly, or privily, or in an underhanded way they shall smuggle in destructive heresies.

I think that this is justification for speaking of these teachers as a kind of fifth column in the Christian church. The expression, “the fifth column,” was said to have been used first in a radio address by the Spanish nationalist general, General Mola, during the Spanish Civil War of 1936 through 1939. And as he was advancing toward Madrid he said that he was coming with four columns of soldiers and that there was a fifth inside the city that would rise up to support him. And out of that has come our expression, “The fifth column.” And the fifth column is a term that we use to refer to any kind of aide or support that is given politically, or militarily, or in other ways in a subversive manner. So the false teachers of whom Peter speaks here are subversives. They are fifth columnists. They are traitors to the truth of God, but they rise up right in the midst of the faithful and pervert the teaching of God. And unfortunately simple people are led astray by them, simple people like you sitting out in the audience right there. Some of you will be misled by them, I know, because I have seen evidence of it. I’m not speaking about everyone of you, I don’t really know everyone of you, I wish I did. But I just know that in an audience like this we’ll have a lot of gullible Christians who will believe almost anything and probably will even financially support these things.

The reason the Glide Memorial Church in San Francisco is prospering today as a purveyor of homosexuality under the guise of Christian profession is because some simpleminded Christians, a generation or so ago, endowed that church so that today it’s supported probably by faithful Christian money given to support the testimony. And the result is now that in that church, in that city, we have the vilest kind of propaganda of so-called spiritual things, and it is supported by the money left by probably some evangelical Christian. So these are very important things. They are very significant. If I could get every one of you to develop a perception in biblical doctrine, and I speak only of Believers Chapel now, it would mean that this local church would probably be preserved to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ much longer than otherwise.

I had a friend with whom I ministered the gospel here in the city of Dallas for a number of years over the radio. Many of you heard him, he was called Brother Hawkins, a very faithful man. He was very instrumental in getting the seminary students opportunities to preach the word out in the country. The first church I ever had in which I preached was out in Eagle Ford to the west of Dallas, right now on the tollway from Dallas to Fort Worth there is a school house off to the left, I think it’s still there, the last time I rode on the toll road. I always look over there and see if it was there. I have some interesting memories about that little church building. That’s where I first started preaching and it was through Brother Hawkins.

Well he was a very interesting man. He was, if you had heard him over the radio, he sounded as if he had come out of the rural areas of the state of Texas and had hardly ever seen a big city like Dallas. But he was very well-educated in theological seminaries, having attending two or three of them. And in addition he had attended Princeton Theological Seminary so he had attended one of the finest seminaries in this country. He had sat under some of the finest teachers but he had a down-to-earth kind of accent that you never would have guessed it.

Furthermore, he’d had a great deal of experience with the ecclesiastical authorities. He had stood for the faith, and finally he had been ousted from his denomination, his Methodist denomination, because of his belief in the truth and his desire to proclaim it and his boldness in his

affirming it in the midst of the ecclesiastical gatherings. He told me once as we were sitting down, getting ready to go on the air, that when he was in theological seminary, and this was not at Princeton, when he was in one of the other theological seminaries he was actually told, and so were the other students, they were actually told by their professors to use the words of Scripture and to use the great terms of Scripture but mean by them the things that they were teaching those young men. So they were taught by their theological professors to be liars in the pulpit. Peter is speaking about just that kind of thing, they shall subversively bring in heresies of destruction.”

When I was in Birmingham, Alabama in the Presbyterian church just after I had been converted there was a change of minister. And Mary and I and several other young couples had been converted through Dr. Barnhouse and we went to see the new minister. We were very interested in what kind of doctrine he would proclaim. And so being full of the faith and full of vitality, just having been converted and not having sunk back into this inertia that I was speaking about, we began to quiz him about his theology. We were happy to discover that he was sound on the person of Christ, at least as far as we could tell, and then we ask him about Premillennialism. I distinctly remember that man saying, “I do not see how anybody can preach if he’s not a Premillennialist.” And it was not more than six months after he was there that he began to attack all the Premillennialists and ultimately tried to oust them from the church.

So you can see, I think that Peter has good insight into the character of preachers and teachers, including me, who secretly shall bring in damnable heresies, destructive heresies. Incidentally, the Greek text at this point means simply, heresies that bring destruction and perdition. That is, teachings that lead a man if he follows them to eternal separation from God. So they are those who secretly bring in destructive heresies, they smuggle them in in a subversive fashion. And furthermore, he says that they even deny the Lord that bought them. Now this is an interesting clause and several of you are here in the audience tonight simply for this reason [Laughter]. It’s amazing how much interest you have in the Bible. These other texts are not really the reason that you are here. This is the reason you are here, you want to hear what Dr. Johnson is going to say

about denying the Lord that bought them because, after all, that has to do with the Calvinistic/Arminian controversy. And that’s the thing that you’re particularly interested. Well I’m not going to disappoint you [Laughter], I’m going to say something about this controversy.

Now I think that there are a couple of things that we need to keep in mind and we want to keep these two points at issue before us. First of all, does this text prove that Jesus Christ died for all men? The issue is the design of the atonement. And then the second question is, what is the form of their denials? Now you’re not as interested in that second question, but I am. You are interested in this first one, does this text prove that Christ died for all men? The issue is the design of the atonement.

Now we want to make very plain the character of the point that is at issue here. We want to try to point out what this text does not relate to and what it does relate to. When we read that, “They deny the Lord that bought them,” this issue of the design of the atonement does not relate to the sufficiency of the satisfaction that Jesus Christ has offered through his blood for all men. Those who believe that Jesus Christ died for all men and those who believe that Jesus Christ died for a definite group of men, the elect, agree that the Lord’s death is sufficient for the sins of all men. A Calvinist who understand his Calvinism and Calvinism, remember, is simply a nickname for the gospel [Laughter], the true Calvinist, the true Calvinist, he affirms just as much as anyone the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ’s death is sufficient for all men. That that death has the value in the sight of God, that is sufficient to pay for the sins of all men. He does not question the sufficiency of the death of Christ. The thing that he questions is the design of the Father in giving the Son to die for the sins of sinners. Did he have in mind the salvation of all or did he have in mind in providing a sacrifice sufficient for all, the salvation of a definite group of his people?

So the Calvinist believes in the sufficiency of the satisfaction for all men. Furthermore, both of these groups believe in the applicability of the satisfaction to each man’s need. That is, that that which Jesus Christ did when he died does meet all of our needs. We agree, we agree with our

Arminian brethren that Christ’s death, the shedding of his blood, is sufficient to meet the need of every man.

Furthermore, we also agree, so therefore the question does not relate to the actual application of the satisfaction. We agree that -- and now I speak of those who may be limited Calvinists as over against those who may be consistent Calvinists -- we agree that on the application of the benefits of the death of Christ that application pertains to the elect, universal redemption. That is, Christ died for everybody. After all its parade of its superior liberality, we believe he died for all man. Our concept of the death of Christ is, therefore, much more liberal than your concept of the death of Christ for all of its parade of its superior liberality fails to extend the benefits of redemption to one single soul beyond than embraced by a definite atonement.

So you see, if you believe, for example, that men are depraved, you believe in election that is unconditional and you believe in grace that is effectual and you believe in the perseverance or eternal security of the saints and you believe that a man cannot be saved apart from the Holy Spirit. But you say, “I believe he died for all men rather than for the elect,” your concept of salvation does not mean that one single person is saved who is not also saved through the Calvinistic interpretation of the atonement.

So the application of the satisfaction is the same under both of these systems. Four Point Calvinists or Five Point Calvinists, it doesn’t make a bit of difference. The same people are going to be in heaven. Now if you are a true consistent Arminian then of course that’s a different matter.

I was speaking last weekend in St. Louis and I had occasion to allude to this question and not in very much detail. In fact, I didn’t even mention the question of definite atonement but I did refer to election and said something about the two views of election. That some people believe that men are elected according to the good pleasure of God and others believe that they’re elected because God looks down through the years and sees who will believe and he chooses those who will believe.

And I commented about that Arminian interpretation of election by forcing faith. And spoke about the other points of Arminianism which are in harmony with it, freedom of the will and various other types of things. One young man came up just about as old as some of these fellows here, he didn’t have a beard like a couple of these fellows did [Laughter] but he was about the same age. And he came up to me and he said, “Well Dr. Johnson I listened pretty carefully to what you were saying and if what you said is true then I guess I am an Arminian.” He was very consistent. He believed all the doctrines of Arminianism, men were not totally depraved, men were not unconditionally elected but conditionally elected. He believed the atonement was for everybody without exception. And he believed, further, that there was no such thing as irresistible grace, we could resist grace, grace was not effectual. We had to cooperate with it. And then he didn’t believe that once we had come to know Christ we were eternally saved. He was very consistent.

This question does not relate to the universal offer and good faith of salvation. The Calvinist, who believes that the atonement was directed toward the elect, believes that God universally offers in good faith salvation. That all are invited to come to believe in Jesus Christ. And that offer is a good faith offer.

And finally this question does not relate to the provision in Christ’s death of benefits for all men. The Calvinists will agree that Jesus Christ in his death accomplished an atonement that has certain ancillary benefits for the whole of the human race. Common grace is related ultimately to the death that Jesus Christ died. There are many blessings that you and I possess which we possess because Jesus Christ came and died for a definite group of people according to the Calvinist view.

What is the question? What is the point at issue? Well now, the point at issue relates to the intention of the Godhead in the gift of the Son. What did God intend when he sent Jesus Christ to do his mediating work? Did he die to make the salvation of all men possible and nothing more? Or did he die to actually and certainly save his elect people, that’s the question. Did he come to make the salvation of all men possible? That, of course, is an atonement that does not save anybody. That is really a limited atonement.

But did he come to make a salvation of all men possible? Or did he come to actually and certainly save his elect people? That is, did he come to save those that he does save? Now the Calvinist believes that we best know what he intended to accomplish by what he had accomplished. And if he has accomplished the salvation of the elect then we may believe that that was his intention.

Now if you can believe that he had an intention that was frustrated then of course you cannot accept that. And I don’t want everyone in this audience to accept my view. I want you to accept the view that the Scriptures teach. And if it is not this view I would not want you to hold it. But I want to tell you what I hold and why I do.

I think also we must say that everyone must admit that there are problems with either view. That is, there are difficult questions that we have with either one of these interpretations. We have to be honest about that. I certainly admit that there are some difficulties with my view. I’m trying to eliminate as many of them as I possibly can through further study and I assure you, this question is something that I study constantly. There are questions that I have about it. So I admit that my viewpoint has some difficulties and I am doing my best to get my opponents to see that their view has some bigger difficulties [Laughter] because it does. It has difficulties.

Now I admit that. I admit that this question is not easy and I think that everyone should admit that. And I think, also, that I should affirm this; that if you happen to believe in a doctrine of universal redemption and you accept most of the other cardinal doctrines of soteriology, for this question pertains to soteriology alone. I don’t follow Calvin in everything, I don’t follow him in his eschatology, I don’t follow him in his ecclesiology. But if you are one who holds to the major doctrines of soteriology that I have mentioned I want you to understand that you and I should be in the closest of fellowship and relationship with one another. And this is not a question over which we should break fellowship. And we should, of course, in an assembly, in a church, have the closest and most intimate and truly Christian relationship of love even though we differ on a point or two like this. So I hope that is fully understood. That if you don’t accept what I say I do not intend in any way to break fellowship with you. I intend occasionally if I know to say a few things with a smile on

my face [Laughter] trying to win you to my view and I hope you will say the same thing to me and that we shall have that kind of relationship.

So now I want to say a word about this word bought because I think that there are some who may think that this word bought overthrows my interpretation. “Denying the Lord that bought them,” does that not say, then, that these false teachers were redeemed? And if these false teachers were redeemed how can I possibly say that Jesus Christ came only to die for the elect? These men obviously are false teachers. They are bringing in heresies of destruction. How could the Lord Jesus buy them? If he bought them then that would be evidence that he came to die for false teachers. Thus, the inevitable conclusion would be that Jesus Christ came to die for all men.

Now I want to say just a word about this word bought. You’ll find it in the New Testament twenty or thirty times. I looked again this afternoon in the concordance of the Greek text and looked up again *agorazo*, I try to keep these things in my mind. Now out of the passages in which *agorazo*, which is translated “buy” here, out of those only about five of them refer to a redemptive situation, the rest of them have to do with the buying of material things, which does not pertain, of course, to the question here.

There are five other references besides this reference in which the redemption, or the buying, is a spiritual thing. Those references are 1st Corinthians chapter 6, and verse 20, “For ye are bought with a price.” And 1st Corinthians chapter 7, and verse 23, in which we have the same thing, “You are bought with a price.” And then in Revelation chapter 5, and verse 9, in which a buying is referred to again and the price of the blood is mentioned. And in chapter 14 of Revelation in verse 3 and in verse 4. And again, in each of these cases a price is mentioned.

Now notice, five times the word buy refers to a spiritual purchase in every case a price is mentioned. No price is mentioned here in 2nd Peter. He says simply, you were bought, “Even denying the Lord that bought them.” Now that is perhaps of some significance. But this is the important thing, in every one of these cases in which the term *agorazo*, or the term buy, is used the purchase was a real purchase that was accomplished. In other words, the bought refers to an actual

purchase of believers. In other word, every time that the buying is mentioned it was a true redemption. A true redemption. You were bought with a price. That is, you were truly redeemed. You were bought with a price, you were truly redeemed. You have been redeemed from every kindred, tongue and nation, truly redeemed and so forth.

Now if that is so, then the interpretation which says that Christ bought everybody also has extreme difficulties here. Because it says these false teachers were truly bought, truly redeemed. Now if these false teachers were truly redeemed then they must have lost their salvation. So, you see, if you really believe that this buying is a true buying, if you believe that “buy” means that they were bought in the biblical sense -- redeemed, that’s the way the word is used in every other case -- then how do you explain that there are now false teachers? You can only affirm by that doctrine that one may be saved and lost. Can they lose their salvation? No, you wouldn’t want to do that. So you must be careful in interpreting that “bought” yourself. “Even denying the Lord that bought them,” did he really buy those false teachers? Were they really redeemed? No, I think you’d want to use another text to defeat me in argument than this one because that one does not suit your interpretation any more than it may, you think, suit mine.

What does Peter mean here? Well there are several ways in which we can understand this text. We can understand this text to mean that this refers simply to the purchase of rights over the creation that were lost by the first man, Adam. After all, when Adam sinned he was the king of the creation. He lost his right to rule. Then when the Lord Jesus came as the last Adam and shed his blood he regained what Adam lost, his right to rule over this whole creation. In other words, he bought this whole creation; materially, physically, and also all involved in it. They became his possession.

Now, it is possible to understand it that way. In fact, F. W. Grant in his commentary on this passage, and Mr. Grant is not a Calvinist. He affirms that that’s what it means. That this is a purchase but it’s not redemption. It’s a purchase of everything accomplished by the last Adam who has gained, now, the right of kingship over the whole of God’s creation. And everybody belongs to

him in that general sense by virtue of what Christ did. Well that makes good sense. It’s possible that that’s what Peter has in mind.

There is another way to understand it. We can understand Peter to be speaking according to the profession of the false teachers. After all, being false teachers who went into a Christian assembly they would have to say that they were Christians. They would have to affirm that they had believed in Christ and that Christ had died in order to accomplish a salvation of which they were partakers. So in order to enter in a fellowship with the saints they would have to affirm that they were Christians. They would have to affirm that they had been redeemed. That, of course, is the affirmation of all the false teachers. You don’t find a man who enters the pulpit and says, “I’m a false teacher, I have not been redeemed but I want to teach you redeemed people things.” They assume that they have been redeemed.

Well it’s possible to understand Peter to be speaking of them in the light of their profession. This has been called the Christian charity view. That is, Peter accepts them at their testimony, denying the Lord that they say has bought them. And that would make good sense. It makes such good sense that a man who is not a Calvinist, Ralph Wardlaw, one of the very fine Four Point Calvinist theologians -- not a consistent Calvinist I should say -- says that that’s easily, the text is easily understood in that way. Professor Wardlaw has said, “But supposing it to be meant (that is, redemption by Christ) the words may be easily explained on the principle of the first in this series of observations that men are spoken of according to professions and appearances and according to the credibility of the profession in the estimate of Christian charity.” So that Professor Wardlaw says, this text is no problem to the Calvinist, the consistent Calvinist, because it can easily understood that Peter is simply accepting these false teachers’ estimate of themselves at their face value, out of Christian charity. So here, again, is another explanation that is consonant with the Calvinistic viewpoint.

It is possible to interpret it in still another way. It is possible to interpret this purchase in the sense of having accomplished a purchase of individuals who belong to the Jewish covenantal nation.

These men were undoubtedly Jewish men. Peter’s heresies that he refers to here have a great deal to do with Old Testament teaching. Probably the individuals were men who were Jewish and who claimed to be a part of Israel, the true believing Israel of the Old Testament, and the great deliverance of Israel was the purchase of them when God had made them his own as he brought them out of the land of Egypt and had welded them into a covenant nation. And it is very possible to interpret it that way.

John Gill and others have interpreted it this way, that they were purchased, they deny the Lord that bought them. That is, he made them a part of the covenant nation of Israel. They partook of that purchase accomplished by God. Now I don’t have time in the meeting tonight to return to Deuteronomy chapter 32 and argue this because we just don’t have time to do it. For those of you who are interested there are eight tapes on this subject, eight hours we spent just a year and a half ago. So, well not even a year and a half ago, about a year ago, right here in this auditorium and we went in great detail into all of these questions that relate to it. I refer you to the tapes.

It is possible to interpret this in a fourth way. It is possible to take this to mean denying the having bought them Lord, or -- that’s what the Greek text says literally -- or who deny that the Lord has bought them. Taking this denial in the sense of indirect discourse and thus understanding it as a denial of an atonement of grace. That is, that they affirmed a works salvation. They deny the Lord that bought them. They deny that the Lord bought them. They preach a doctrine of salvation by works, and so they deny the salvation by grace which relates our salvation to the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ upon the cross at Calvary.

Now you can see from this that there are different ways by which we may understand this text that is supposed to be the downfall of the view that Jesus Christ came to die for a definite group of people. Now personally I am not sure which of these interpretations is the most suitable. I was not fooling at all when I said that I still study this with a great deal of interest. And I can understand, it seems to me, that particularly these first three views may easily explain this particular text. I rest upon the fact that our God is a sovereign God and that he can be best judged as to his purposes by

what he accomplishes. And if it is true that there is, through the work of Jesus Christ, and the testimony of the Holy Spirit and the saving ministry of the Spirit only a certain group out of humanity, if there is only a certain group out of humanity who are saved I must affirm that that was the intention of my sovereign God in the beginning. He intended to save them.

And I find it very difficult to believe the doctrine of universal redemption. That God would have Jesus Christ die for all men but then send the Holy Spirit to deal with the elect. That kind of doctrine for all men which does not help all men, but which is really only hypothetical, I cannot conceive of God doing.

Would God so love the world enough to give the Son to die for all and then not enough to send the Holy Spirit to bring all to faith in Christ? I find that an insurmountable objection. If you can answer that to my satisfaction with a smile on your face, remember, [Laughter], I’ll be interested in what you have to say. But I think that introduces a conflict in the Godhead that I just do not see how we can understand in the light of the Scriptures. We would then have the presence of the trinity working at cross purposes and it does not seem to me that that is a valid approach to the truth.

Now I’ve already spent about twenty more minutes on this question than I intended to. That’s bad. But I do want to deal with that second question. And that second question is, what is the form of the denials of these false teachers? And I affirm that that is more important than that other question. That other question interests me, stirs me up. It stirs up some of my friends, too [Laughter]. They get kind of angry over it every now and then, and I used to get angry over it, too, so I sympathize with them.

But this question, the second one, is really more important. What is the form of their denials as set forth here in these verses? Well there is a practical denial, there is a flouting of the Lord by scandalous conduct, evidently, and then there is a doctrinal denial because there is evident among them defective views of the person of Christ. “They deny the Lord that bought them.” As we go down this second chapter which incidentally is a tremendous chapter of vigorous language. Read it, it’s some of the most vigorous language in the New Testament. There are some phrases and clauses

here that are extremely interesting. Next week we want to deal with “The Angels That Sinned.” Now that’s an interesting thing. But we will discover as we go down through these verses that it’s evident that these false teachers held defective views of the person of Christ, and also they flouted the Lordship of Christ over their lives by their scandalous conduct.

Now we have seen so much of that in evangelicalism and liberalism in the 20th Century that that makes 2nd Peter just about as relevant as any book in the whole of the New Testament. Take the coryphée of liberal theology. The [indistinct] of liberal theology. Professor Paul Tillich, we have discovered now that Professor Tillich is gone, where he has gone we have no certain information [Laughter], but most of us have some good ideas where he is. I’m not saying this, really, in altogether in an attempt to make fun of it altogether, because it’s an extremely serious matter, but there is no indication whatsoever that Professor Tillich was a believer in Jesus. And yet it is doubtful that any man has influenced liberal theology more in the past twenty-five years or so than Paul Tillich. But now that Paul Tillich has gone the truth has come out. And his exploits in the bedrooms with others than his wife have now made him more famous than his theology.

When I made this statement in an audience not too long ago in another city a woman came up to me from a liberal church. She said, “I am amazed to hear what you have said.” And I had the documentation with me so I just showed it to her and told her the books to read. The book of his wife, Hannah, she has a lot of the information and then others too. It’s all down in black and white. She said, “I can hardly believe that, there is hardly a Sunday that goes by that my pastor does not cite Paul Tillich.” I’m amazed.

And then there is Cardinal Danielou. Cardinal Danielou I must admit, I have read a number his things. He’s a French Cardinal, one of the highest ranking cardinals in Roman Catholic Church. He died about a year ago in the room of a French prostitute whom he had been visiting for three months once a week. Danielou’s books are some of the outstanding books on the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament, a subject that I had been interested in for a

long time. And the Cardinal died that way shortly after another Cardinal, another leading churchman, I’ve forgotten whether he was a Bishop or a Cardinal, died in a similar way.

Now we have the story of Billy James Hargis plastered all over *Time* magazine, *Christianity Today*, or newspapers and individuals, no doubt, are saying, “Is he really a Christian after all?” And if you think that it is only the right wing evangelical, the radical right wing, then there was Ray Stanford. And there are others. And just last Saturday or so in the paper, in the light of this, some Dallas pastor said that we are in for others. The facts are that these things about which Peter speaks are just as relevant as 1976 and I want to say to you young men, a lot of young men in this audience who are preachers, that the lessons that we see in the lives of men like Tillich, and the Cardinal, and Billy James Hargis, and others, are lessons that must be kept constantly before you in the ministry to which God has called you.

Now they are men who have blasphemed the faith by the kinds of life that they have lived. And I want to say, and I feel that any preacher of the word must feel the same way, that it is only by the grace of God that we are ever kept from a similar kind of thing. But now, then, there are others who deny the doctrines of the faith, too. There are those who say that the book of Genesis is a collection of Babylonian fairytales. There are individuals who say, and those who have outstanding names such as John Knox, what a name for a theologian except it’s not the John Knox of the 16th Century, but the John Knox of the 20th Century. One of the outstanding Christian theologians, John Knox has denied the true humanity and true deity of the Lord Jesus interpreted according to historic Christian faith. He has spoken of the Lord Jesus, “As the divine Lord who is none other than the human Jesus exalted, his divinity thus being a transformed, a redeemed and redemptive humanity.” Imagine, the Lord Jesus redeemed. What does that say about him? That says that he’s a sinner. That he needed redemption. And this is the view of the Professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York City who taught a number of the men who are in the present time standing in the prominent pulpits of the United States of America in Protestant churches.

There is Maurice Wiles, on the two natures of Jesus Christ he says, “There are no grounds for affirming that the relation of the divine to human in Christ must have been of a different order form that to which man is to be brought.” In other words, we are to be brought to the same kind of relationship that Jesus Christ enjoyed with God, he’s not unique after all, the rest of us have the same kind of thing.

There is F. W. Dillistone who is one of the outstanding students of the atonement in the scholarly, the academic world. Professor Dillistone has written a very influential book called the Christian Understanding of the Atonement. In that book he is particularly incisive in rejecting the traditional association of the death of Christ with ideas of punishment and substitutionary penalties. He affirms that the traditional Christian interpretation of the death of Jesus Christ, that he died as a substitute under the judgment of God for sinners is not the teaching of Christianity. And then what will he say about universalism; everybody is going to be saved. I wish you all sat in the theological classrooms constantly so you would know these names. But these are the great names that our young theologues hear about in the theological institutions in the United States, in Britain, and on the continent. They are names like William Temple, C. H. Dodd, Charles Raven, H. H. Farmer, John Hick, John Bailey, a man whom I heard in Edinburgh, Berdiath, a Russian philosopher, C. F. D. Moule, W. Michaelis, Hans Counk, and so on. All of these men are united, some of them are Protestants, some of them are Catholics, some are Greek orthodox, they are united in their belief that there is no hell. That everybody is ultimately going to be saved.

Universalism is rampant in the highest eclogues in Christian teaching, so-called Christian teaching. I’m not surprised, then, that Peter should say what he says. Nells Feray, if you’re a Methodist and you’ve been living in the Christian church for ten or fifteen years you couldn’t help but have heard somebody refer to Nells Feray. He’s one of the Methodist saints. Professor Feray has said, “God has no permanent problem children.” Now what he means by that is everybody is going to be saved. He has no permanent problem children.

So when Peter says that, “They deny the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift perdition,” he’s speaking right to the issues that face us today.

Now the last verse I’ll say something about next time but I want you to notice as I close that when Peter uses the term perdition he fully believes that there is such a thing as eternal destruction, or eternal punishment. Will you notice the 1st verse, “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in heresies of perdition, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift perdition,” that’s the second time the word is used. And then in verse 3 we read, “And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, (it is not idle,) and their perdition slumbereth not.”

Three times in three verses Peter says that men who are apostates from the truth shall end their time in perdition. Now you can see that Peter was not a believer in universalism. He believed in eternal hellfire. There are people that say it’s terrible to preach hellfire and damnation, that’s usually the association. But in condemning such preaching we are condemning the Apostle Peter himself. It’s a very solemn thing to consider the gospel of Christ, for it has its two roads. One road leads from the gospel to heaven but the other road leads just as inevitably to perdition.

It’s possible that there’s someone in this audience who has not believed in Christ. We warn you, we plead with you, to turn to Jesus Christ who died for sinners. If you have a question in your mind, “Am I one of the elect?” you can settle it right now by turning to Jesus Christ, acknowledging your sins, saying, “Thank you Lord for Christ’s death for sinners. I’m a sinner, it must be for me. I take him as my savior.” You pass from death into life and from darkness into his marvelous light.

And if you sit in the audience and you do not like the idea that Christ should die for the elect and you will not come because you don’t like it, well then of course you’re getting exactly what you want so what complaint have you? May God the Holy Spirit bring you to conviction and may you be brought to conversion.

The blood of Christ is sufficient to cover all..

“Satan’s Fifth Column” by S. Lewis Johnson
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[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]