



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Various

“William Ames and the Unanswered *Marrow of Theology* Part I” TRANSCRIPT

[Introduction of Dr. Johnson] We're glad to have Dr. Johnson with us again. I became acquainted with him by tape long, long before I ever met him in person. He's one of the few professors who can also clearly preach. And he can preach. There's people you meet and you love them as a person, not necessarily agree with what they say, and then there's other people you love what they say but you're just not sure about them [Laughter], Dr. Johnson's the kind of a guy that you love him and you can just listen to him and watch him smile and you get grace, I think, but you also love what he says because he teaches the truth of the grace of God. And we've really learned to love him, my wife and I. He's one of my wife's favorite preachers and he's one of my favorite preachers as well. And we're so glad you're able to come, hope you can come a lot more years.

[Johnson Lecture] That was quite an introduction. There are two people who like my smile; Martha and John. [Laughter] I am feeling the difficulties of old age these days, I used to look out at the other Bible teachers and friends in Christian circles and see them grow old and wonder how it would be when I was old, and I am now old and now I know. [Laughter] And so I

cannot do what I used to do and it's in some ways it's a little disturbing, in another way it's very good. You know that you're on the way to heaven.

There's a book that I wanted to say something about because it's up here. It's William Ames's *Marrow of Theology*. *Medulla Theologica* was the Latin title. And it's been reprinted by Baker and it is a shining example of puritan theology in the 17th Century. I think any of you in this particular auditorium would enjoy very much spending some time reading in the *Marrow of Theology*. As I will say later at a particular point, Ames's influence was extremely wide, not only among the puritans but among others who were alive and ministering particularly in his day and then afterwards as well. In fact, probably some of the influential men of the theological world have considered William Ames the most influential of the puritans after William Perkins. William Perkins, who was the architect of Elizabethan Puritanism, was the teacher of William Ames and so you can see the progression in Perkins and Ames. And then Johannes Cocceius was the people of Ames and so you have Perkins, and then Ames, and then Cocceius, you have a marvelous line of believing theological theologians. But the *Marrow of Theology* is very simple reading. In fact, I re-read it. Some parts I hadn't read. I read it recently and enjoyed it again very much. I will say something about Ames at a particular point in the message because what I'm leading up to is something that he said.

Now for today in the first of the messages that I am privileged to give you, I want to turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 11 through verse 15. You know, preachers are like other human beings as well in spite of what you might think. [Laughter] They like to be complimented. They may not admit it, but they do like to be complimented and then they pay attention to your compliments because they are going to be saying things after you compliment them, if you do compliment them. And so they're very careful about paying attention to what you say. Now I'm an old man, I'm not bothered by compliments like I used to be but I still acknowledge. When I get a compliment I pay attention to it and I received recently the finest compliment I think I've

ever received. A man wrote to me and said he'd been listening to the tapes of the ministry and he mentioned two or three other Bible teachers that he liked but he said, “For pure attention to the text, you're the best.”

Now I just sort of leaned back and reveled [Laughter] on that compliment: for pure attention to the text. Now I don't know whether he understood what he was saying or not [Laughter] but a person who gets up with the text before him and preaches, that's just the greatest to ever give someone; pure attention to the text. So what we're going to try to do is to give some attention to the text. I'm not sure it'll be pure attention, but 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 11 through verse 15. And then the second message that I'm giving we'll continue and do verse 16 through verse 19.

For those of you who are familiar with this particular passage, and I'm sure that many of you are, you understand right at the beginning that what I'm going to be talking about is definite atonement from the text, which I think is important for us as well. So 2 Corinthians 5:11-15,

“Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well-known to God; and also trust are well-known to your consciences. For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity to boast on our behalf, that ye may have an answer for those who boast in appearance, and not in heart. For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God: or if we are of sound mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ compels us, (this is the New King James Version, you are familiar, of course, with ‘constrains us’,) the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if one died for all, then all died; and he died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for him who died for them and rose again.”

I would like for someone if possible to give me a glass of water to put up here. Ah, the best of all service. [Laughter] This is the final stanza of Paul's great hymn of the ministry, as

you probably know. It's concerned with, as he says, “The glorious gospel of Jesus Christ and the vicissitudes of its preachers.” And here we have the heart of it all. It's a passage, as you can tell when you read through it that is concerned with paradoxes and the apostle is setting forth the number of these paradoxes. And I won't go into details with them, but that's essentially what he's trying to do. He's talking about the paradoxes that exist in trying to make the points that will ultimately lead up to the statement of verse 14 and verse 15.

We have a number of things that are suggested by this. One of the things, I think, that's suggested by is the fact that the word of God itself is that which is preeminent - thank you my dear, you're a great wife [Laughter], couldn't live without her, couldn't live as well without her. But the passage I mentioned is a passage of paradoxes. It also is a passage that I think illustrates the significance of knowing Scripture and no one could be more emphatic about this than the man who stands behind the pulpit as an evangelical who reads and ponders the Scriptures and knows that the Bible is that tool which the Lord used to bring us to the knowledge of himself. Moody once said, “I never saw a useful Christian who was not a student of the Bible. If a man neglects the Bible he may pray and ask God to use him in his work, but God cannot make use of him for there's not much for the Holy Ghost to work upon.” Matthew Henry said, “We shall not only be called into account for the truth we know and did not apply, but also for truth we might have known but did not.” That's a threatening statement, isn't it. Patrick Henry near death said, pathetically I think, “Here is a book, the Bible, worth more than all others that were ever printed, yet it is my misfortune never to have found time to read.” An honest statement.

So the Bible, and here is the text. The apostle has just referred to his desire to be pleasing to the Lord, for he must when within the house - now he's been telling us in the first part of this chapter that he lives in a house. You'll notice that in verse 1 and following, “For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed we have a building from God.” So the apostle has referred to it. He's in the house within the house and he faces also, he says, an examination at the

bema, the judgment seat of Christ, verse 10, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”

So here in the body facing the judgment seat in the light of the solemn event that death is coming, he must stand before the bema, before the Lord, he discusses his motives in ministry. Now I'll just mention a couple of them, say very little about them, and then deal with the third which he sets forth before us in verse 14 and verse 15. He talks about the fear of the Lord first as the first motive, “Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.” Always in reading the Bible notice the little words more than the big words if you want to pay attention to the text, those little words “therefore”. Every exegete who is an exegete knows that these are the important words: therefore, on account of this, because. All of those things enable us to follow the thought of the author. So the apostle says, “Knowing, therefore,” that's a reference to verse 10 and the bema seat. And full awareness of that he seeks to persuade men of his integrity because it had come under question. So the first motive is the fear of the Lord. And then in verse 12 and verse 13 he tells us that there is a second motive that concerns him and that's the favor of the Corinthians. He wants them to appreciate why he's doing what he's doing and so he says, “For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity to boast on our behalf, that you may have an answer to those who boast in appearance and not in heart.” And of course he's thinking about the false apostles, and the false teachers, and you see some evidence of the apostle's selflessness here in the fact that he doesn't go after them in any other way than just this.

So in verse 12 and 13 then, the second motive: the favor of the Corinthians. He wants their favor. The apostles like others had been accused of fanaticism, I won't look up those passages for you, but it's rather characteristic of all of the saints of God that they are regarded by others if they are faithful to the word of God as being a little bit off here or there. In the Old Testament Hosea writes, “The Prophet is a fool, the man of the Spirit is mad,” this is what they

were saying about them. The Pope had a compliment for Luther, he said he ought to be in bedlam. And they charged the Wesley's with madness. They drew from the Wesley's the retort, “Fools and madmen, let us be, yet as our sure trust in thee,” which of course is an attitude that we all who preach and teach the word of God would like to have but find it very difficult to really have it.

Now after mentioning these two motives there in verse 14 and verse 15 the apostle comes to the third and significant motive and that, of course, is the love of Christ. I'll read it again because I want you to be sure to have it in your mind. Verse 14 and verse 15, “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if one died for all, then all died; and he died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for him who died for them and rose again.” The little word “for” that begins verse 14 explains his madness for their benefit. “For the love of Christ constrains us, compels us,” and this, of course, is the thing that leads him to this fundamental statement of Christian doctrine, “The love of Christ constrains us because we judge thus: that if one died for all, then all died.”

All the New Testament writers so far as I know find the love of Jesus Christ concentrated and focused in his death. This is the thing that stirs them. It's the greatest achievement of our Lord. He was the recipient, of course, of the resurrection but his greatest achievement is his death upon Calvary's cross. Now the apostle, having said, “For the love of Christ compels us,” or constrains us, is going to explain further what he understands by that and also its significance. The love of Christ: now if we need to be careful in the exegesis of a text to watch the little words, we also need to be careful that we understand the grammar of the text. The love of Christ, just think about that for a moment. Is that love for Christ or is that Christ's love for us?

Now grammarians who study the grammar of the New Testament, they know that you have to make a decision about “of Christ”. Is that an objective genitive in which case it is, “Love for Christ.” Or is it subjective genitive in which case it is, “Christ's love for us.” Now all the

difference in the world is made by the analysis of the text. We don't have any specific statement that says this is a subjective genitive; that is, Christ's love for me. But I think if you will look at what follows you will see that that's the sense the apostle makes of this, its Christ's love for me. For he says, “For the love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge that if one died for all, then all died.” So it was his love for us.

So we say then, “The love of Christ,” it's not our love for him, it's his love for us. Now there are texts in which the other is found so we're not suggesting the other is not a biblical thought, it is a biblical thought. But Paul's point here is clearly, “It's Christ's love for me that compels him, that constrains him.” So, “For the love of Christ constrains me,” he says “us” because it's all of us, let's say us who belong to the family of God. “The love of Christ compels us,” not our love for him, his love for us compels us.

The word “compels” is a word that's found in several places in the New Testament, in one particular place in Philippians chapter 1, and verse 23, you can give it the sense of to him one in on both sides. It's like a mountain stream coming down a mountain that is governed in its path by the wall of stone or land on the side, so that the stream cannot do anything but follow that path. Someone has translated that passage, “Hems us in on both sides.” Well that's what Paul is saying, the love of Christ forces us, Christ's love for us forces us to judge if one died for all, then all died.

So the love of Christ: this is the reason his love is so constraining. You might as, “What is it that is so constraining, compelling about the love of Christ?” Well the apostle let's us know, he says, “The love of Christ constrains us, it compels us, because we judge that if one died for all, then all died.” This is the reason his love is so constraining. From the premise for our benefit the only legitimate conclusion would be, hence or therefore, all remained alive. Now this all comes down to the meaning of a little Greek preposition. As a number of you have had Greek and so you will be able to follow better than some, but I need to explain it a bit. Uper is the Greek

preposition that means “on behalf of”, it can be substitutionary and can be translated “in the place of”, “for” in that sense, or it has other forces. Somewhat similar, but nevertheless not exactly in the place of. It basically means for the benefit of but the benefit must be explained by the context. So, “One died uper all.” The question is, is this in place of or is this for the benefit of?

Well now, let’s just say Christ died for us in the sense that he died for the benefit of us. That’s possible. Could we then say, therefore, we all died? We couldn’t say that. For the benefit of us you could say, “Therefore we all remain alive,” that would be the benefit of us, or some other benefit, but the context might suggest. But you cannot say, “Christ died for the benefit of us, therefore all died,” without adding your own interpretation to this text.

Now the apostle says, “Christ died for all, therefore all died.” It’s obvious that he’s taking this as a substitutionary uper. Christ died in the place of all for all in that sense, they therefore died in their substitute, therefore all died. It’s very plain if you just think about it. That’s what we’re trying to do, we’re trying to keep our finger on the text. It’s not for the benefit of, it’s in the place of, it has to be. You cannot say, “Therefore all died,” unless you say the death of Christ was our death. We are so united to him that when he died, he died, we died with him. It’s extremely important. I think that’s the difference between a truly substitutionary death and another kind of death that may benefit us in particular ways but it’s not a substitutionary death. It’s not the death that we die. So we have a representative substitute. That’s very plain. He’s a representative substitute as the apostle puts it, “We judge thus: that if one died in the place of all, then,” incidentally, those little words also are important, those little conjunctions. “Then”, ara, “Then therefore,” is the meaning of it, “Therefore, all died.” I kind of like this, you know, because for thirty-five or forty years that’s what I did, was to teach New Testament exegesis and so it’s so important to see these things. “Therefore all died,” a representative substitute. So if we were to render this simply for our benefit, the only legitimate conclusion would be: all remained a



live, they didn't die. He died for our benefit so we didn't have to die. But if we say he died in our place then we died when he died and his death becomes our death.

Now it's obvious, of course, if we read the Scriptures that when we say, “His death is ours,” that's not everybody. Not everybody died with Christ. In other words, the substitution is particular. It's for some, it's not for all. The apostle is talking about those who belong to him so Christ died, therefore we died. He died for us, his death is our death, *uper pantos*.

Now he says, “For all,” *uper pantos*, “On behalf of all.” We'll talk about all for a minute because that needs some analysis also. It's very plain. It's not hazy, it's all very plain. But one does have to do a little thinking. A Martha break [Laughter], they are gifts of God too. So, “Therefore all died,” now verse 14 says one died for all. That if one died for all then all died, and in verse 15 - I need to stop on verse 14 for a little bit more. [Laughter] There are many different attempts to avoid what the apostle is saying. I cannot say all that I would like to say, when do we have to stop, at 12:00? [Laughter]

[Comment from audience member]

[Johnson] C.K. Barrett has written a very fine commentary on 1 Corinthians. He was a British scholar, his books were well read, they still read, they are very worthwhile. He finds it very difficult to interpret that text as I have interpreted and I know why, because his theology is a stumbling block. He does as much as he possibly can to avoid it. He says “On behalf of” thus means as a representative and he adds, “It should be noted that Paul does not say, ‘All were as good as dead.’” Well I agree, he didn't say that. Well all were regarded as if they were dead, I agree with him there too, he didn't say that. Or all did not need to die because one died in their place, well he didn't really specifically say that. That Paul does not say, “All were as good as dead,” or, “All were regarded as if they were dead,” or, “All did not need to die because one died

in their place.” Now this is interesting, see, he’s brought himself to the point where he’s avoiding what that text really says, so he says, “Neither representation, nor substitution, therefore says exactly what Paul says.” Now he hasn’t proved that, that’s his statement, “Neither representation or substitution,” and he hasn’t told us the difference between representation and substitution in his mind, either. Says exactly what Paul means to say. “Perhaps it’s best to be content with the statement,” now this is a beautiful exegetical dodge [Laughter], what’s so beautiful about it so obvious, “Perhaps it’s best to be content with the statement that on account of the death of Christ all became potentially dead.” He’s added the adverb potentially, “All became potentially dead; dead in the sense about to be described in the next verse.” Well actually, the verse he’s talking about has already described the way and it’s not potential. I’d only say this to Professor Barrett, it should be noted that Paul did not say either of the things that he suggests might be thought to be said by him. What he said was, “Then all died.” That’s it. “Then all died when Christ died.”

Now Professor Barrett’s an excellent commentator. I read his commentaries, I have most of the ones he’s written in my library. I get a lot of help here and there from him. I didn’t get any help there. [Laughter] One died for all, then all died. He was a substitute, he was a representative. Call him a representative substitute, if you like, I just call him substitution, that’s precisely what he did for us. Now what’s the consequence of it? Then all died. The very fact that he died for all infers his deity. How could anyone die for all as the substitute for them if he were not the divine Son of God? He died for all and all died in him. And Paul’s inference, “Therefore,” ala is the adverb, “Therefore all died,” is valid. What did he do? He discharged the penal obligations that we all, the all, have before God. That’s precisely - he discharged our penal obligations. What a wonderful blessing it must be to be in the all, he had discharged our penal obligations. This is the amnesty of immeasurable mercy. I think I found that somewhere as an expression. I liked it so much I forgot who said it [laughter] and - but it’s so great. Amnesty of immeasurable mercy, when he died we died with him.

Now we're faced with a problem with the "all". We either have universal salvation, that is the all is everyone without exception, or everyone, that is the all with out distinction. Jews and gentiles. After all, the apostle was a Jew, the apostles were Jews. This was big at that time: Jew, gentile. Two kinds of people, Jews, gentiles. He died for all. Everyone without distinction. Christ died for all who died when he died, that's essentially what he says. Christ died for all who died when he died. In other words, the death of our Lord is numerically won; he died, all die in him. All with out distinction.

John Murray, many of you know has some things that I might cite for you at this point, Mr. Murray says, "Unless we believe in the final restoration of mankind, we cannot have an unlimited atonement. On the premise that some perish eternally, we shut up the one of two alternatives, the limited efficacy or a limited extent. Every true Christian who has Christ in his heart knows that he's not going to talk about a limited efficacy. The efficacy of the death of the Son of God is sufficient for all, ever. This is a limited extent. There is no such thing," Mr. Murray says, "As an unlimited atonement." Isn't this a great passage?

Now I said I was going to say something about William Ames and in fact I gave Fred a title with William Ames essentially and then I began to think about it and then thinking about the fact that I got that compliment, "For pure attention to the text," [Laughter] I better say something about a text rather than center attention on William Ames. William Ames was born in 1576, an Englishman. He went to Christ's College at Cambridge, also associated with the men that I cited previously as his mentors. And finally he was forced out of England for the faith, I don't want to go into details. He went to the Netherlands and over there made quite a name for himself. I was so impressed with Ames that when Martha and I were visiting while I was there in Amsterdam on the borders of Amsterdam at Tyndale Theological Seminary teaching a course and on the weekend he didn't have anything to do and I said, "Let's go up to Franeker," because Franeker in the northern Friesland is where Ames talked for a number of years. And so we went up to the

little theological seminary, walked in it, looked around, saw the pictures of people like Johannes Cocceius and others that those men highly regarded. So I was into Ames and the thing about Ames that was so great to me was the fact not that he wrote the *Marrow of Theology*, you can run through the *Marrow of Theology* and what I'm going to say he says but he doesn't lay any attention upon it, it's just a line or so in the *Marrow*. But what he otherwise said was something that is so significant for the atoning work of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ.

Incidentally, Ames was a factor behind the scenes at the Synod of Dort. The delegate - he was not a delegate but he was an Englishman who was there in support of those who held his views and so he acted behind the scenes, highly regarded, gave advice to the others who were involved in the debates at the Synod of Dort. So he was a man who was highly regarded. Now he was a puritan and he was a Calvinist, he was a student of Perkins, a starch opponent of Arminianism. And on the design of the death of Christ he framed a brief syllogism. Now this is - that was 1576, he died 1633, when he framed it from that time to now, three hundred and fifty or seventy-five years later, so far as I know, no one has ever answered this syllogism. It's an unanswerable argument, for me. Now maybe you will come up with one and I'll pat you on the back and you can write your theological treatise on it. That'd be good, you'll probably get a Ph.D. somewhere. [Laughter] But so far as I know, it has never been answered. His little syllogism - incidentally he was known as a giant killer in debate, never debate Ames because you'll be killed in the debate. It was said of him, “Other theologians have slain their thousands, but Ames is tens of thousands.” [Laughter] Suggestive of David. This is the syllogism, be sure and write it down, *Quibus applicato, sed non omnibus applicato, ergo nicomnibus intenditur*. [Laughter] Isn't that convincing? This is the translation - I took eight years of Latin, I have to use it occasionally. [Laughter] Think of all those years I spent in high school and college. I didn't realize I was reading Latin in order to cite it to you, but here it is, “For whom it was intended,” we're talking about the death of Christ, “For whom it was intended, to them it is

applied, but not to all is it applied.” Isn’t that evident down through the centuries? The many people who have rejected the gospel message it has not been applied to them. “Therefore,” Ames says, “Not to all is it intended.” If it’s intended by a sovereign deity, it will come to pass. But it’s obvious it was not because it has not come to pass in the case of the multitudes. So for whom it is intended, to them it is applied, but not to all is it applied. Therefore, not to all is it intended.”

This little thought, this little syllogism or piece of verse, set the bounds of the entire discussion on the design of the death of Christ, grounding the matter in the sovereign power of God who cannot be baffled or beaten by a man in the certain accomplishment of his intentions.

I will tell you, when I found that, that just kind of put the capstone on everything. I thank God that I was forced to leave the theological seminary in which I was taught and where I had taught for thirty years, because you always have a question, “Have I overlooked something.” And I know I did not overlook anything. If one is a devotee, a believer, rests his theology upon a definite atonement as I do, then you must take the consequences. That’s all there is to it. “The extent of the atonement,” John Williamson said, “is set by the intent of the atonement.”

I was having a theological discussion a few years back and in the course of the discussion one of the men, a man whom I respect very much in so many ways maybe one of the best of the New Testament scholars. He is one of the best, maybe the best. Doug Moo is another great one, he’s not the man I’m thinking about. This man said in our discussion when this came up, he said, “Well that’s about the intent of the atonement, that’s another manner.” Now I thought about that. What is it that God has done that he didn’t intend to do? [Laughter] I don’t know of any things that he did not intend to do. Everything that he has ever done he intended to do. Can you just imagine the throne of God and something happens and he says, “Oh, I didn’t intend to do that.” [Laughter] I’d like to correct that. When we talk about intent we’re talking about something that pertains to God’s nature. This is what he intended to do. He’s that kind of God. He does only

what he intends to do. I don't. I intend to do a lot of things and don't do them for various reasons but with God, it's different.

So Christ died for all who died when he died. Or Christ died for the all who died when he died. Those are Charles Hodge's words I think. I have Hodge's exact words, they're something specifically like that, but it's the same essential idea. Christ died for those who died when died Christ. John MacArthur had a little difficulty with definite atonement, but finally was persuaded and that was something that meant a lot to him according to his testimony, Hodge's statement that Christ died for the all who died when Christ died, and that's good.

He says in verse 15 - I didn't find out when I was to stop, when am I to stop?

[Answer from audience member]

[Johnson] I mean officially.

[Answer from the same audience member]

[Johnson] 10 o'clock?

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] Let me conclude. I'm not sure, I better not presume too much. [Laughter] He says in verse 15, and I'll just conclude with this. This is just great, you know, I just enjoy going over this so much. “He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” The “who live” are the same as the “all”. He died when Christ died, all died. Those who live are the all who died when Christ did. The

approximate design of his death is to expiate our sin and propitiate God, and its ultimate design is our life for him. For fellowship, for righteousness, and as Paul says in the epistle of good works, Titus, for good works. Understanding the nature of the death, then, we do not live for ourselves, we live for him.

Well I think I'm supposed to stop, although I'm not sure about that so I want to stop here. And in the next hour I'll pick this up here at Verse 16 and talk about reconciliation and about the same thing. And also about what Paul means when he says, “Reconciling the world to himself.” So let me bow in a word of prayer with you as we close our meeting.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for the opportunity to look at this marvelous text concerning the death of Christ. We commit our time to Thee and that which has been said to Thee for purification by the Holy Spirit in the minds and hearts of us. That we may rest upon him who died for us. We pray in his name. Amen.

[Johnson] Now when was I supposed to stop?

[Response from audience member] You're right no schedule, you're fine

[Johnson] Oh, okay.

[Comment from audience member] I wonder if when I get old I'll be smart. Man [Laughter], that was marvelous, that was just marvelous. We are going to - by the way, I - when I was in the process of conversion to the doctrines of grace, the atonement question like most of us it was the last straw. I remember struggling over it and I had read nothing outside of the Bible, I'd read nothing on either side of the issues, and somebody told me that you need to read Albert

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Barnes on the atonement because his was the best defense of universal atonement. And so I said I'd read it. And I got it and I remember he hung a lot of his argument on that passage for universal atonement. And I remember distinctly putting the book down and saying, “I don't see it, I'm a Calvinist.”

**[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]**