



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Suffering Savior, 2 Peter 2:1

"The Design of the Atonement: For Whom Did Christ Die? – VIII"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Now, tonight we want to talk about some passages that are said to teach that some for whom Christ died may perish. Now, these are the claims of those who believe in universal atonement. The argument from passages said to teach that some for whom Christ died may perish. Now, you can see if there are passages in the Bible that some for whom Christ died may perish, then we cannot have a definite atonement. We cannot have a particular atonement. For particular atonement teaching claims that those for whom Christ died are infallibly saved. Are there passages then that teach that some for whom Christ died may perish?

One of the great passages that we will deal with, our last passage tonight, which I will just read for a Scripture reading, is 2 Peter chapter 2, verse 1. "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who secretly shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." This is one of the passages, for example, that is supposed to teach that those for whom Christ died may perish. One of the other passages, two of the other passages, they are very closely related, are 1 Corinthians chapter 8, and verse 11; and Romans chapter 14, and verse 15. So let's turn to these passages. 1 Corinthians chapter 8, verse 11, the parallel being Romans chapter 14, verse

15. I'll read both of these, they are very closely related, and you will recognize their relationship one to another. Both of them are in chapters in which the Apostle Paul writes about things offered to idols, and discusses the question of indifferent matters in relationship to the Christian life.

1 Corinthians chapter 8, in verse 11, "And through Thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish," now the weak brother is the one who has the tender conscience and is disturbed over the liberty of the strong brother. The strong Christian is the one who knows his liberty. The weak brother is the legalist, who has scruples, and so Paul says, "And through Thy knowledge," because you exercise your liberty, "shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?" Now, this seems immediately to suggest the fact that it is possible for someone to die for whom Christ died. Now, if it's possible for someone to perish for whom Christ died, then of course, we couldn't hold our doctrine of definite atonement.

Let's turn over to Romans chapter 14, in verse 15, a similar text, Paul writes, "But if thy brother be grieved with thy food, now walkest thou not in love. Destroy not him with thy food, for whom Christ died." "Destroy not him with Thy food for whom Christ died." Now, this passage, too, seems to suggest that it is possible to be destroyed for whom Christ died. So let's consider these passages as the first of the passages that are said to teach that some for whom Christ died may perish.

There are two things that I want to say first of all about 1 Corinthians 8:11 and Romans 14:15. The first thing is this, these passages if they are not taken as warnings to secure the perseverance of the elect, which happens to be the way in which I take them, that they are warnings to secure the perseverance of the elect. If they are not taken as warnings to secure the perseverance of the elect, they may also be used to overthrow the doctrine of eternal security as well. I think it should be evident to you that if it is possible for someone who is a brother, for whom Christ has died to be destroyed, then of course, we could not hold not only to definite atonement, but we could not hold to the eternal

security of the believer as well. Shedd speaks of this passage as "supposition for the sake of argument of something that does not and cannot happen."

Now, that's the first thing I want to point out, that we must be very careful that in our seeking to overthrow one doctrine we do not overthrow another one which may even be more clearly taught by the Bible. I don't think many in this room would have any question but that the doctrine of eternal security is taught most plainly in the New Testament, but in our anxiety to overthrow the doctrine of definite atonement; we may also overthrow our belief in eternal security. So we must be careful in approaching a passage such as this.

The second thing I want to say about these texts is this; they are best taken, in my opinion, as means, divine means, to secure the perseverance of the saints. Now, in chapter 14 in verse 15, Paul has said, "Destroy not him with thy food, for whom Christ died." It seems to me that these passages in the light of the context, and in the light of the whole of the New Testament, are warning passages. They are warning passages addressed to believers in order that they may be the means to secure the perseverance of the saints. Now, often times in the New Testament warnings are given us, which are not in themselves to be understood as involving necessarily what is stated in the text as really happening, but they are warnings designed to be the means by which we are kept in the path of faith. This is true of an individual who has a son. I may hold my little boy on the tenth story of the top floor of a building as we look out over the side down at the sidewalk, and I may say to him, "Now, don't you dare step out over that side, or you will be killed." All the while holding on to him with all my life to keep him from doing that.

Now, my admonition to him is not designed to suggest that that may happen, with my holding on to him as I am, but rather to warn him, so that my admonition may be the means of his learning what he needs to learn, and thus avoid that possibility. There are many things in the New Testament, not only in connection with this doctrine, which are admonitions designed to be means to secure the end which God has determined in his

purpose will be accomplished. But God's ends and purposes are designed to be secured through purposed and designed means.

That's why we pray. That's why we have such a thing as prayer. Now, those of you who studied the doctrine of prayer with me a couple of years ago, when we talked about the theology of prayer, or John Calvin at the throne of grace, you may remember that I tried to point out that one of the purposes of prayer is that it might be the means to the accomplishment of the predetermined goals that God is going to accomplish. But he has predestinated that certain things should be accomplished. Not apart from means, but by means. And so, here this is one of these admonitory passages which are designed to secure God's ends. But nevertheless he does say, "Destroy not him with thy food, for whom Christ died."

Charles Hodge, I think has some very, very significant words on this, and I'm going to take the liberty of reading a rather long statement by Professor Hodge who was professor of systematic theology at Princeton Theological Seminary for many years, and this comes from his exposition of 1 Corinthians chapter 8. It expresses about as beautifully as I think could be expressed what I think this passage teaches. This is what he says, "The language of Paul in this verse seems to assume that those may perish though Christ died for them. It belongs, therefore, to the same category as those numerous passages which make the same assumption with regard to the elect. If the latter are consistent with the certainty of the salvation of all the elect, then this passage is consistent with the certainty of the salvation for whom those specifically died. It was absolutely certain that none of Paul's companions in shipwreck was on that occasion to lose his life, because the salvation of the whole company had been predicted and promised. And yet, the Apostle said that if the sailors were allowed to take away the boats, those left on board could not be saved. This appeal secured the accomplishment of the promise."

Now, I want to stop right here and I want to turn over to the passage that Hodge refers to which he does not expound, because I think it is an excellent passage to illustrate the point. He only alludes to it, it's found in Acts chapter 27, and the two verses are verse 22 and verse 31. Now, you know this is Paul's great missionary journey to Rome, and this is Luke's account of the storm along the way. Now, while you're finding Acts chapter 27 and verse 21 let me just read a few verses in the preceding context.

"But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive. (And then verse 18) And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; and the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship. And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away. But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. (Now, notice that promise, there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but only of the ship. Now, this of course, he says has come to him from God.) For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee."

Now, I think that if were to take the attitude that we often take to the doctrine of the election, then we would say, well if God has promised that Paul is going to have all of those who are sailing with him, and not one is to be lost, let's just see in what marvelous ways we might be preserved by the hand of God. And so, some of us might dive in and try to stay under water ten minutes in order to see just how possible it may be for God to perform this miracle. Someone else may say, "I'm going to stand on the side of the ship, and you hit me over the head with the anchor, and let me fall in unconscious, and let's

see how God's going to save me. So we could think of all the peculiar ways in which we might want to see how God performs his promise that not one person is going to be left, but it is evident that Paul doesn't take that attitude, because in the 31st verse, he stands up in the midst of them, in the midst of their difficulties, and he says to the Centurion and to the soldiers, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." In other words, everybody is going to be saved, but the Apostle also exhorts them at a particular point, that they better not get out of that ship, because the salvation that God has promised in a salvation within the ship, and not outside the ship. So the warning is perfectly consistent with the determined end that not one is going to be lost. Because you see, in God's eternal purpose, the warning, which Paul gives in verse 31, is predetermined as a means to the securing of the predetermined goal set forth in verse 22. So the means is just as much a part of the will of God, as is the ultimate goal.

Now, let me continue with what Professor Hodge says. He said, "It was absolutely certain that none of Paul's companions in shipwreck was to lose his life, because the salvation of the whole company had been predicted and promised. And yet, the apostle said that if the sailors were allowed to take away the boats, those left on board could not be saved. This appeal secured the accomplishment of the promise. So God's telling the elect that if they apostatize, they shall perish, prevents their apostasy. And in like manner, the Bible teaching that those for whom Christ died shall perish, if they violate their conscience, prevents their transgressing or brings them to repentance. God's purposes embrace the means as well as the end. If the means fail, the end will fail. He secured the end by securing the means. It is just as certain that those for whom Christ died shall be saved as that the elect shall be saved. Yet in both cases, the event is spoken of as conditional. There is not only a possibility, but an absolute certainty of their perishing if they fall. But this is precisely what God has promised to prevent."

"This passage, therefore, is perfectly consistent with those numerous passages that teach that Christ's death secures the salvation of all those who were given to him in the

covenant of redemption. There is, however, a sense in which it is scriptural to say that Christ died for all men." Now, Professor Hodge goes on to point out some things that we have already referred to previously, I will read them again just for the sake of review. "This is very different from saying that he died equally for all men, or that his death had no other reference to those that are saved than it had to those who were lost. To die for one is to die for his benefit. As Christ's death has benefited the whole world, prolonged the probation of men, secured them innumerable blessings, provided righteousness sufficient and suitable for all. It might be said that he died for all, and in reference to this obvious truth, the language of the apostle. Should any prefer this interpretation, may be understood, why should we destroy one for whose benefit Christ laid down his life." He's simply saying, if you don't like the first interpretation, the second will do.

Now, I like the first one, and I accept the first one myself. A second passage, one which I think is more difficult. In fact, I want to say very honestly with you, if I could completely satisfy my mind about these two second passages that I'm going to refer to, I would have no difficulties of an intellectual or spiritual character about the doctrine of definite atonement at all. But I must confess that these next two texts do puzzle me a great deal.

Now, I don't think that they're sufficient against the total weight of the evidence, not only of what I have set forth so far, and the positive evidence I want to set forth on the other side, both scriptural and theologically for definite atonement next week, to cause me to abandon my view. But I do confess that I find a difficulty with these texts that we are going to look at. And you don't have to come up afterwards and say to me, "Well, I don't understand that, it seems to me that that's very difficult to square with your theory." I already know that. I already know that, and I am still studying these passages, and I think that I am learning a little something about them gradually, but I still say that they do trouble me a little bit.

I want to be perfectly honest with you. I don't want to be like the preacher, when he comes to a weak point, reads his little note that he's written in the margin, "Shout here, point weak." [Laughter] So I am not going to try to do that with you. I want you to know right at the beginning that I find these texts difficult to explain. I also want to soften the impact of that by saying this, that I do not think that we evangelicals are willing to admit to often, there are many doctrines that we all hold with a great deal of assurance, that also have some difficult texts which on the face of these texts seem to argue against doctrines that we have little doubt about.

For example, I imagine that everyone in this room would say to me that "I have no doubt whatsoever that we are saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." I don't think any of you would have any objection to a statement like that. In fact I think you all will say that I will stake my life upon that doctrine. But that doctrine itself has some texts in the New Testament that seem to teach otherwise on the face of these verses. Now, for example, just to give you a simple illustration, it is one of our Lord's brothers who says, "Faith without works is dead." And many a person has had difficulty with the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith, from that text in James chapter 2, verse 14 and verse 26. Faith without works is dead.

Now, you know that because when you speak to someone who is for example, a member of the Church of Christ and you quote Ephesians 2:8-9 to them, they immediately come back with James chapter 2, verse 14 and verse 26. So if you have any friend who is a member of the Church of Christ, you better be prepared from James chapter 2, before you talk about salvation with them. Now, also there isn't a person in this room, I'm sure, who wouldn't say, "I believe it's unnecessary to be baptized in water to be saved." But are there not some texts in the New Testament that seem to suggest that we need to be baptized in water in order to be saved? Why of course there are. There are passages such as Mark chapter 16, Acts chapter 2, Acts chapter 22, Romans chapter 6, 1 Peter chapter 3, Ephesians chapter 5, Titus chapter 3. There are about seven passages, which



on the face of the reading of them, in the light of the doctrine of water baptism, might suggest that it might be necessary for one in order to be saved, to be baptized in water.

Now, some of you a long time ago were in classes in which I gave a series of messages on the doctrine of the church, and I made what some of my friends think is a very radical statement. Because they think that the doctrine of the local church is something that is not clearly in the New Testament, that its organization is not very clearly taught, and that we have a wide freedom with reference to the doctrine of the local church. And I made a statement, which I made out of my own study of the New Testament. I made the statement that the doctrine of the local church in the New Testament is plainer, and clearer, and so plain and so clear, that there are fewer texts that may be brought against that doctrine and though to teach contrary to that doctrine, that there are in connection with the doctrine of salvation.

And I know people raised their eyebrows and said, "That can hardly be true." About six months later I was reading, and a theologian who was writing a theology of the church, and he made a statement. He said, "It's amazing that we have not studied the doctrine of the local church as we should, and it's amazing that people can say that the doctrine of the local church is unclear in the New Testament. It is clearer than the doctrine of salvation. I thought that was a very interesting thing, and it confirmed what I had from my own study of the New Testament come to believe. So I am saying this in order to say to you, the fact that we have texts that on the face of them, at the casual reading of them, may seem to contradict a doctrine that we hold, which we believe is taught widely by the New Testament. That should not cause us to abandon our doctrine, but rather cause us to study these texts more intimately, more fully, more deeply; always remembering to keep our minds open because it may be that we have misunderstood the New Testament. So I say before we look at these texts that it may be that I have misunderstood the New Testament, I hope I shall be taught properly by the Holy Spirit and by you.

Now, my first passage is Hebrews chapter 10, in verse 29. This passage is very similar to the passage in 1 Corinthians chapter 8, verse 11, because it appears to say that there are certain lost people that are sanctified by the blood of the covenant. How could they be sanctified if he did not die for them? So we have a little problem. Let's read the text first, its Hebrews chapter 10, and let me read beginning with verse 26.

"For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment (Let me say here, it is evident that this punishment that is sorer than physical death must be spiritual death. So we cannot be thinking in this context of a Christian believer who has backslidden. He could not be subject to sorer punishment than physical death, being stoned to death), Of how much sorer a punishment suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people."

Now, that word judge, by the way, means to vindicate. He will vindicate his people by judging his apostles, that's what that means. Finally, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Now our problem is that little cause with which he was sanctified, here are some people who are obviously apostates, who are subject to a sorer judgment than physical judgment. It must a spiritual judgment, eternal judgment, and yet it is said that the blood of the covenant is that which has sanctified them. Now, what can that mean? Well, let's stop and think about the of the Epistle to the Hebrews for just a moment. Why did the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews? Well, he wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews to warn professing believers against apostasy and the failure to persevere. Now, we do not, of course, in an hour like this have time to argue this point. I merely

want to read a couple of texts to show you the basis for my statement that it is written to warn professing believers against apostasy and failure to persevere in the faith.

In chapter 3, in verse 1, the apostle, or the author, whoever he may be, writes, "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." Now, he addressed them as holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, but he warns them in the 12th verse against apostasy. Verse 12 says, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing." And the word depart here is the word from which we get apostasy, *apostatai*, in apostatizing "from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." These warnings are designed to bring a believer to perseverance in the faith and deliver him from apostasy.

Chapter 4, verse 14 says, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." But in the next context, he warns them and the climax of the warning is in Hebrews chapter 6, in verse 6. "And have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." And then coming to our passage in chapter 10, he said in the 23rd verse, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised ;)" There is the profession again, but he warns them that if they go on sinning willfully after they have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, and they are subject to a sorer punishment than physical death.

Now, the second thing that I want to say about this is that this passage cannot by the term sanctified refer to salvation. If this referred to salvation, if this meant, "who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant with which he was saved," sanctified in the sense of saved, then of course we couldn't say that

saints do not lose their salvation, we would then be believing, we would then have to teach that it was possible for a person to be saved and lost, because whatever we may say about these individuals, the judgment that comes upon them is the judgment of the lost. So we must be careful not to say that this means, "hath counted the blood of the covenant, by which he was sanctified," that is saved, because then we fall into the trap of believing that a person can be saved and lost. And lest you doubt that notice that last clause of that warning. It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. And that text in its context of the Old Testament is a reference to the unbelievers falling into the hand of God.

Third thing that we want to say about this text, the term sanctified must then refer to Jewish privilege. A consequence of the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises and the inauguration of the new covenant, by which the privileged position of Israel was confirmed. Do you remember that the addressees of the Epistle to the Hebrews are Jewish Christians? Now, the proof that they are Jewish Christians is that the author, when he argues with them, appeal to the Old Testament Scriptures. If they had been Gentile believers who had been brought into the faith, they of course would have come from an environment in which they did not pay any attention to the word of God at all, the Scriptures. So if they were turning around and going back to their old life, then and appeal to the Scriptures would have no effect on them, because they would not regard the Scriptures as being authoritative.

The very fact that they're leaving shows that they don't regard the Scriptures as authoritative. So you cannot appeal to Scriptures to people who did not accept the authority of Scripture and who by their actions had demonstrated it. But if they were Jewish professing believers, and were turning from their profession of Christianity back into their Judaism, why the Jews acknowledge the authority of the Scriptures. They could still be applied from the Scriptures, because they still acknowledged that. They only are saying, by their apostasy, we don't think Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the promises,

which we revere and respect in the Scriptures. So then the sanctification that is referred to here is, in my opinion, a consequence of the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises and the fulfillment of the new covenant by which the privileged position of Israel was confirmed. For in the Old Testament the very Scriptures that the Jewish people honored and respected, taught that God made certain promises to Abraham, that those promises were confirmed to Isaac and Jacob, were elaborated upon in the Davidic covenant, and were finally elaborated and expanded further and given their redemptive foundation in the new covenant by which it was said that someone would come and provide forgiveness of sins.

Now, when the Lord Jesus came on the night of the last Passover and the first Lord's Supper, he took the cup in his hand, and he said, "This is the new covenant in my blood which is shed for many for the remission of sins." He inaugurated the new covenant that was promised in the Old Testament. The Abrahamic promises reached their climax and fulfillment, not in their effects, but in the theological foundation of it, when the blood was shed on Calvary's cross. Therefore, any Hebrew professing believer, being part of the nation to whom the promises were made, stands in privileged position. He stands as a sanctified individual, because he belongs to the nation to whom the promises were made.

Now, I want to show you that this is not simply something that this author taught. I want you to turn with me to Romans chapter 11, where the Apostle Paul teaches the same things. Now of course, if you think the Apostle Paul wrote Hebrews, then you should say to me, "Why, that's not surprising that he should say something over in one of the other books that he wrote." But if Paul did not write Hebrews, then this is Paul's testimony and that testimony there is the testimony of another New Testament writer. In chapter 11, and verse 16 Paul is talking about Jews and Gentiles, and he is talking about the way God has worked through the Jews, how he is now working through the Gentiles, how through the Gentiles he producing jealousy among the Jews, that the Jews may turn

to Jesus Christ and through their turning, there may be great world-wide Gentile salvation such as we have never seen. Which he describes as such a thing as life from the dead in verse 15. Now then, in verse 16, he says, "For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches."

Now, he uses two illustrations. He uses the illustration of the root of a tree and the branches, and he is referring to the father, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That is evident from verse 28, where he says, "As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes," he's speaking to the Gentiles, "but as touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sakes." So what Paul says about the Jewish nation is that they are holy, they are sanctified. Now, he doesn't mean they are saved. He means they stand in privileged position and relationship, because the promises were made to them. It is their own olive tree into which you Gentiles have been grafted.

Now, you thought perhaps you were saved because you were Gentiles. You thought that perhaps since you are Gentiles and the Jews have rejected Christ, you stand on a little higher level than they. "Stop minding high things, but fear" Paul says. It's their own olive tree, they were the natural branches. Because of their unbelief they were cut off. You are an unnatural branch. Now, anyone who knows anything about horticulture knows you don't take an uncultivated scion and graft it into a cultivated stock. You don't do that, you do the opposite. You take a cultivated scion and graft it into an uncultivated stock. But the unnatural thing has been done that you might be saved.

You stand in a very tenuous position you Gentiles. This is Israel's own olive tree, and the fact that you were cut off of that wild olive and grafted in contrary to nature why that just shows how much easier it is for God in the future to take the natural branches and graft them back into their own olive tree. Now, Israel is Holy. They are the recipient of the promises. They stand in privileged relationship. Paul also uses the same term in 1 Corinthians 7:14 of the child of believing parents. Now, a child of a believing parent, if we have two people married, husband and wife, one of them is a Christian, the children

are called in 1 Corinthians 7:14, holy, sanctified, not saved, but holy or sanctified. That is, they stand in privileged relationship.

Now, it is my opinion that that is what we have here in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 29. The Hebrew professing believers were Jewish professors, so this sanctified, this holy relationship would be theirs. Now, if it should be contended by some that the usage of *hagiaz* in Hebrews, I ought not to introduce these objections to my own interpretation, but I am trying to anticipate some things you might say to me if you are a Bible student. If you are not a Bible student, then I could just pass this by, and show you with my interpretation, but then it wouldn't be long before you would catch up, and you would say, "Dr. Johnson didn't consider that." But I have considered it.

Now, if it should be contended that that the usage of *hagiaz* in Hebrews is only of sanctification, then it's likely that the author only speaks of them according to their profession. That is, they're not really sanctified, but that's what they're saying they are. And so the author out of Christian charity takes them at their word. Just in the New Testament, Paul addresses his letters to the Saints which are at Colossi. He takes them at their word. He doesn't guarantee by saying saints at Colossi, that everyone in the church at Colossi was saved. He simply takes them at their profession, but if you will look up those words, the use of that term in the Epistle to the Hebrews, I think you will discover that it does not always, in its usage refer to saving sanctification. So my interpretation, I think then, rests fairly secure. In these ways then it might be said of lost men, that they had been sanctified, especially if they were Jewish professing believers.

Now, we come to 2 Peter chapter 2, verse 1. You thought I was going to skip it again didn't you. 2 Peter chapter 2, verse 1; this is without question the most difficult passage for the believer in definite atonement to explain. If I could explain this text, two things would happen immediately. If I could explain it so that it convinced everybody, two things would immediately happen. Number one, I would be absolutely certain of the doctrine of definite atonement, and I would say to you that it is just as certain as the

doctrine of salvation. The second thing that would happen would be that I would be recognized as one of the greatest theologians in the western world. [Laughter] If I could convince all of the people who have studied this text that my interpretation of it is correct, I would be that kind of theologian.

Now, of course neither of these things is going to come to pass tonight. This is a very difficult passage. I confess it is difficult. I will be studying it after I leave here tonight. For the sake of simplicity, I am going to mention three views. There really are four or five that ought to be mentioned, but I am going to single out three views that have been taken of this passage. Let's read it again, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who secretly shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction."

Now, you can see the problem is this. We say the Bible teaches, if we look at this from definite atonement, the Bible teaches that all those for whom Christ died shall be saved. For he died for the elect. But does not this text say that there are some men who are false teachers, and deny the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. Does this not seem to plainly teach that there are people who have been bought by the Lord who shall perish? Now, that's the question. Here are the views. The common view of this, taken by those who hold to a definite atonement is what I have referred to just a moment ago. It called the Christian charity view. That is, that Peter speaks according to the profession of the false teachers.

He does not say that they have been bought. In the first place, it's doubtful that Peter would know or could no. No man can know about whether another person has been bought or not. But they have said, because they are false teacher, they have said, of course, that they belong to God. That's the foundation upon which they teach, but they are false teachers, he says. They deny the Lord; deny the Lord that they say has bought them among others. So these who take this view say that Peter is just accepting them at



their own testimony. That's what they claimed. He's not affirming that, however, of them.

Now, we do have in the New Testament passages that are like that, just as I mentioned a minute ago. Just to give you another illustration, in Hebrews chapter 13, and verse 24, the author of this epistle, when he writes to the Hebrews believers at the 13th chapter, the 24th verse he says, "Greet all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints." Now, that would seem to imply that he regard that group of believers or prophesying believers as saints, but yet in the epistle he warns against the possibility of apostasy. He has called them saints, yet at the same time he has given admonitions which are addressed to the possibility that they may not be saints. So the fact that they're called saints means only that the author has accepted them at their own testimony.

Now in 2 Chronicles chapter 28, in verse 23. In speaking of one of the king's of Israel, it is stated that the gods of Damascus smote him. Now, of course, the gods of Damascus didn't spite the king, but the kings said that the gods of Damascus smote him. And so the Bible accepts the statement at face value, at his own testimony. Now, this interpretation is an interpretation which surely makes a great deal of sense. And in fact, one of the most interesting things about this interpretation to me is that Professor Ralph Wardlaw, who has written a systematic theology of some significance, it was the one that Dr. Chafer likes, I think, more than any other systematic theology, because it represents Dr. Chafer's interpretation of the New Testament in many places. I can remember him refrain to Wardlaw, who was British Congregational minister. And extolling the virtues of his rather solid systematic theology in three large volumes. Now Wardlaw was a four point Calvinist. That is, he was a Calvinist, a mild Calvinist, but was not consistent in his views. He did not hold to a definite atonement. He held to a universal atonement, but also held to total depravity, irresistible grace, and unconditional election, and the perseverance of the saints.

Now, I want to read you what Professor Wardlaw says about this interpretation of this text. He says, "In support of this, "that is God the providential deliverer of Israel, "it has been urged that in the passage no mention is made of the blood or death of Christ, as is usually done when redemption by Christ is meant, but supposing it to be meant, the words may easily be explained on the principle of the first in this series of observations." He had made an observation about how the New Testament writers accepted men at their testimony. "That men are spoken of according to professions and appearances. And according the credibility of the profession, in the estimate of Christian charity was originally made."

Now, here is a man who did not hold to definite atonement, who acknowledges that this text may be easily explained in that way. And not just a journeyman student of the Scriptures but an outstanding Christian theologian. He goes on to say, "We may in confirmation of this compare the passage with two others of the same writer which show the style on which he was wont on such subjects to express himself." He refers to two other passages in second Peter which look at the thing in the same way. "The former passage clearly refers to profession, to what the person has professed of his faith in the atonement and of his sense and confidence of pardon. And the later passage is the more likely to be of parallel import to the text under comment from its relating to the same description of persons." Then on a page or two before this, Wardlaw points out that "if the New Testament writers had written specifically about the real condition of their readers, then of course there could be no way to which admonitions to vigilance, and diligence, and self-examination and prayer, and perseverance could be given to the saints, if the apostles knew who were saved and who were not saved."

Furthermore, Wardlaw went on to say, "It would put an end to the exercise of the judgment of Christian charity and the reception into the fellowship of the church of those who profess the faith. There would be necessity in receiving members into the church, to receive Christian charity and accept them at their testimony." If it were possible for us to

know, so the apostles like anyone else accepted men at their testimony, at the face value of what they said about themselves. So when we read here, according to this view, they deny they Lord that bought has bought them, but it becomes evident about the things that are said about them in this passage, that they are not truly bought, though they said they were bought. Now, if we can accept that interpretation, then this passage provides us with no problem at all.

There is a second interpretation that has been offered. I am indebted to Mr. Howard Pryor for mentioning this to me, because I had not read FW Grant in his numerical Bible. But "he says that Christ has bought them. He does not say redeemed." I am reading what Mr. Grant has said. "He has no thought of redeemed people here. Christ has bought everything, the whole world is his. With all that is in it, not merely as the creator, but as the one who has paid an infinite price to get it back as it were, to himself. But purchase is not redemption. This involves a right over the teachers." And what he would be saying simply was that he has denied the Lord who bought them in the sense that they all belong to him by virtue of what he has accomplished through Jesus Christ. That is a possible interpretation. I am myself not too impressed with it at this point. I would like to study it a little further.

I want to mention a third, somewhat related to this view is the view of some of the old commentators such as John Gill. These commentators have pointed out that this expression, "denying the Lord that bought them" is an expression that goes back to Deuteronomy chapter 32. I want you to take your Old Testament and turn with me to Deuteronomy chapter 32, In Deuteronomy chapter 32, and verse 6, this is the song of Moses, and he is giving the history of the nation Israel, and he in a sense is giving a history of the nation Israel before it is accomplished in its entirety. He will trace it all the way through Israel's appropriation by God unto himself as a covenant people, and he will trace it all down to the end of the Messianic days when the land and the people shall be

brought back from captivity and shall become the Lord's again, days to which we are approaching.

In the 6th verse as he begins to speak about Israel's past, he talks about their selection. He says, "Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? Is not he thy Father that hath bought thee?" Now notice, he has bought thee, no price is mentioned. No price of any blood, no reference to redemption. As a matter of fact it says, "Hath he not made thee, and established thee?" "Hath he not bought thee?" "Hath he not made thee?" "Hath he not established thee?" In other words, he's referring to the official beginnings of the nation, in the way in which God has selected them out of the body of people, and formed them into a theocratic Jewish people by election and by redemptive calling out of Egypt. Now, that is a temporal deliverance by which he brought them out of Egypt into the Promised Land.

Now, all Jewish people belong to Israel, and all Jewish people have been bought in that sense. They are part of the theocratic people of God. Now, this is something that never changes, for it is their olive tree remember? Now, then having said that, what we are saying them, according to this view is that God acquired Israel out of Egypt that she might become a covenant nation. Paul, remember, talks about the great blessings that belong to Israel. They had the covenants, and the promises and the fathers, the giving of the law, and those Messianic promises and especially they had Jesus Christ in Romans chapter 9. So the buying refers to a temporal deliverance in which the false teachers were professedly apart, by means of which they became the property of Jehovah.

Now, before I close I want to point out to two or three things that are most important interesting and which show that this can hardly mean denying the Lord that redeemed them or paid the price for them, but must be something along this line. The first place, the word for buy here is the word for by here is the word, agoradso. Agora was the marketplace, to agoradso someone was to go to the marketplace and pay for them to make them your own to purchase them. Exagaroadso is the same word with the

ex- which means out of, which means to purchase out of. Now the striking thing about this word bought, and its noun derivatives is that although it is used about twenty times in the Old Testament Greek translation of the Hebrew text it is never used to render any, wither of the two great redemptive words of the Old Testament. It is never used to render the word Ga'al which means redeemed. Never used to render the word padah which means to ransom. So this word is a word that is not associated with redemption or ransom. In the text that we saw, it was associated with making, and creating, and acquiring as one's own.

The second things, in the New Testament this word is used thirty times. It is never used in a Soteriological context. It may be used, say our Lord uses a parable about purchasing a field in order to get the treasure in the field, but in a Soteriological context, it is never used in a Soteriological context without the price or its equivalent being stated or made explicit in the context. Now, there is no price mentioned here in 2 Peter chapter 2, verse 1. We read for example, in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, in verse 20, "For ye are bought with a price," Or we read in the 7th chapter, "you were bought with a price," or in the other places, five out of six times in which it occurs in a redemptive context, it has the price. This is the only place in the New Testament where it is used without a price being referred to, that's most interesting. This would be the lone exception if it referred to a redemptive purchase.

Third fact, in these five occurrences, the context clearly shows that the ones bought are believers, there is no justification whatsoever from the usage of words to distinguish between agoradso and ex agoradso. Ex agoradso is the word that is used in Galatians 3:13, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," but there is no reason whatsoever to distinguish between ex agoradso and agoradso. They both refer to the purchase of believers. That cannot be true of these. They are not believers. So in these five occurrences the context clearly shows that the ones bought are believers. There is no exegetical basis for this distinction.

Finally, the word is always used in a context in which the buy in takes place in reality. Now, you see the other interpretation demands that we say men are bought, the price is paid for them, but they don't really become the Lord's unless they exercise faith. And that accounts for how all may be bought, but only some saved. That is contrary to the usage of that term. It is never used of anything but a purchase that is in reality a purchase. And further, it's only used of believers. Now, if we say the false teachers are believers, then that throws the context into contradiction with other doctrines to some of them, since my time is up. If we were to take the verb to refer to spiritual redemption, the Christian charity view is the likely one. The Apostle Peter takes them at their profession, if not then Peter refers simply to the profession of the Jewish false teachers who had made claim to belong to the covenant nation brought out of Egypt by the temporal deliverance of the Exodus. For some, as Moses, it was real. For others, as the mixed multitude, it was not real. There seems no reason to accept the doctrine of universal atonement from this text. It just does not teach it. If anything, it stands on the side of a definite atonement.

Now, I say, I have not settled that question completely, but next time we're going to talk about the positive arguments theologically for definite atonement and the biblical arguments for definite atonement. I really ought to spend eight more times on this. There's that much material. But I guess if we have satisfactorily answered most of the difficulties, then one time on the positive points will, I believe, be enough. So we'll start next time that consistency demands that the sacrifice and intercession of the high priest be co-extensive. That the objects of election and redemption are necessarily the same that definite atonement follows from the nature of the atonement, that the advocates of general and indefinite atonement cannot believe that Christ purchased the faith of believers. We will talk about the exegesis of Romans 8:31-39. We shall point out that those for whom Christ died have themselves died in Christ, according to the statements of

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Scripture. We will also look at the argument from John 10. And we hope to do all of that in sixty minutes. Let's close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for Thy word...

**[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]**