

The Salvation Of All Men

(1 Timothy 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)

A Doctrinal Study
On The Extent Of The Atonement

Gary D. Long

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Agape Chapel Ministries
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Preface

The purpose of this doctrinal tract is to set forth, in a readable outline form, a positive polemic for the doctrine of definite atonement — a doctrine which the author is firmly convinced glorifies the triune Jehovah to whom salvation belongs.

An outline method is used to assist the reader in his study of three theologically controversial verses in the Pastoral Epistles on the "salvation of all men." The outlines which follow were originally prepared as separate theological tracts in conjunction with an exposition of 1 Timothy and Titus at Grace Reformed Fellowship in 1974-1975. The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance received from William Hendriksen's *Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles* — an excellent work by one of the foremost, if not the foremost, sovereign grace, New Testament commentators in our generation.

1 Timothy 2:4

AN OUTLINE OF THE THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS CONCERNING 1 TIMOTHY 2:4: "WHO [I.E., GOD OUR SAVIOUR] WILL [THELO] HAVE ALL [PANTASI] MEN TO BE SAVED, AND TO COME UNTO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH."

THE THEOLOGICAL PROBLEM IN 1 TIMOTHY 2:4. There is a twofold theological problem in this verse: the first aspect of the problem pertains to the will of God: the second aspect of the problem pertains to the universal term "all" as it relates to the salvation of men (i.e., the extent of the atonement). Does God desire to save all mankind absolutely; that is, each and every individual? Or does God desire to save all mankind relatively; that is, all men without distinction of race, nationality, or social position, not all men without exception? Within Protestantism there are three basic theological interpretations of this verse: the Arminian, the modified or four-point Calvinist and the historic or five-point Calvinist interpretations.

I. THE ARMINIAN INTERPRETATION

A. "Will" [*thelo*]. God wants (desires) all men without exception to be saved. However in the case of some His will is resisted through obstinate unbelief because man has a free will and God will not force His will upon man. If he did, man would not be free; he would be a robot. Therefore, God only elects those who He foresees will choose Him in time; that is, when they hear and respond to the gospel. Man can respond to the gospel because he has a free will — free to choose good or evil because Christ merited this grace or ability for him and all mankind without exception when He died upon the cross. Consequently, no one can blame God for dying in unbelief and being condemned to hell. The responsibility lies solely with man: he could have chosen to be saved if he had so desired to choose Christ.

B. Objections

1. Logical: If God wants (desires) all men to be saved absolutely; that is without exception, then why does He not save them since none "of the inhabitants of the earth . . . can stay His hand, or say unto Him, 'What doest Thou'" (Dan. 4:35)?

2. Theological: God's will as desire [*thelo*] proceeds from His inclination (nature), God's will as decree [*bouloma*] is based upon His counsel and deliberation. (In reference to salvation, His counsel and deliberation took place in "eternity past" between the triune Godhead in the covenant or counsel of redemption.) Can God decree something contrary to His inclination or nature? No, humanly speaking, God chooses (i.e., decrees) in harmony with His Holy nature. And is not true that what God's soul "desireth [*thelo*], even that He doeth" (Job 23:13)? In summary, if God desires [*thelo*] to save all mankind absolutely, then each and every individual will be saved, for what He desires to do He does. The Arminian interpretation, therefore, says too much.. It leads to universal salvation, which is expressly contrary to Scripture and the doctrine of eternal punishment.

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Also, the Arminian concept of God's foreknowledge (which is understood to mean foresight) limits God and the certainty that His plan of salvation will be accomplished because His will (according to Arminianism) can be frustrated by obstinate unbelief. This negates the clearly taught attribute of God which makes Him God, "omnipotence", Rev. 19:6

3. Biblical: The term "all men" taken by itself is capable of an absolute meaning but the context of 1 Tim. 2 does not support it. That "all" or "all men" do not always mean all and every man that were, are, or shall be, may be made apparent by nearly 500 instances found in Scripture. "Paul definitely mentions 'groups' or 'classes' of men; kings (v.2), those in high position (v.2) etc., the Gentiles (v.7). He is thinking of rulers and (by implication) subjects, of Gentiles and (again by implication) Jews, and he is urging Timothy to see to it that in [the] public worship [at Ephesus] not a single group be omitted" (William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*).

C. Conclusion: The Arminian interpretation is not logical or theological or biblical. The expression "all men," as used here, means all men without distinction, men from every rank and class, tribe and nation (cf. Rev. 5:9). The term "all men" does NOT refer to all men without exception. The term is to be understood relatively. Why? Because there can be no metaphysical disjunction in God's will as desiring and His will as decreeing. Both aspects of His will are in perfect harmony with each other.

II. THE MODIFIED OR FOUR-POINT CALVINIST INTERPRETATION

A. It is God's will [thelo] to save all men. Therefore, Christ died for all mankind without exception, placing them into a savable position. They can be saved upon the condition of faith. But, since none can believe because of being totally depraved, God out of His loving mercy and free grace, sovereignly decreed [boulomai] to elect some of mankind to be saved. This universal provision of salvation, made

particular in application by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit and through the means of faith, makes all men responsible to believe and permits the free offer of the gospel to be genuinely made without preaching "tongue-in-cheek."

B. Objections

1. Logical: If a modified Calvinist (who holds to universal redemption) believes that saving faith is a gift of God and that Christ's death was indeed a substitutionary death — a penal-satisfaction for man's sins (i.e., a satisfaction of the retributive justice of God) — then how can he logically escape universal salvation — Faith is not a work, and the retributive justice of God has been satisfied on behalf of those for whom Christ died. If they be all mankind without exception, then all must be saved; otherwise, Christ has failed to accomplish the design of His Father's mission; that is, unless man's sins are punished twice (on Christ at Calvary and again on the unbeliever in hell). It should also be observed that "all" [*pantas*] in this verse must be understood as absolute or relative. It cannot be both. That God can save all without exception (not considering His decree) no one denies; and that He desires to save "all men," it is here affirmed. Therefore, if "all men" here refers to each and every individual, they will be saved (because, as stated in objections to the Arminian interpretation, the will of God as desire cannot be contrary to the will of God as decree). But, if God desires to save all men without exception, as the modified Calvinist teaches, then it is either true that: (1) God fails in His purpose; or (2) each and every individual will be saved. POINT: "all" in this verse must be understood in a relative sense as it is, (according to John Owen, as mentioned before), some 500 times elsewhere in Scripture (e.g., see John 3:26; Acts 19:10; 1 Cor. 9:22; II Cor. 3:2; Col. 3:11, etc.)

young women, young men — of all classes, even slaves. (See the biblical objection to the Arminian interpretation above.)

V. A SUMMARY PARAPHRASE OF TITUS 2:11 ACCORDING TO THE ABOVE FOUR THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS.

- A. The Universalist Interpretation: "The grace of God has appeared merely to assist all men in helping them to restore themselves to full favor with God."
- B. The Arminian Interpretation: "The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all mankind without exception if they will only receive it by an exercise of their free will."
- C. The Modified or Four-Point Calvinist Interpretation: "The grace of God has appeared, providing salvation to all mankind without exception upon the condition that each one believes in Christ."
- D. The Historic or Five-Point Calvinist Interpretation: "The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men without distinction of age, sex, or social standing."

VI. A PARAPHRASE OF TITUS 2:11-12a: "The saving grace of God has appeared in the person and work of Christ. Indeed, it brings salvation (lit., is salvation for) to all classes of men without distinction of age, sex, or social standing. And one of the primary purposes of God's saving grace is to teach all of us to whom salvation has appeared (been manifested) to deny ungodliness and worldly desires.

GOD'S SAVING GRACE IN CHRIST EITHER BRINGS SALVATION TO ALL FOR WHOM IT IS INTENDED OR IT DOES NOT. IT EITHER PROVISIONALLY OR ACTUALLY SAVES, HYPOTHETICALLY OR CERTAINLY SAVES. BOTH CANNOT BE TRUE. IF IT IS THE FORMER, NO ONE WILL BE SAVED, IF IT IS THE LATTER, SOME OF ALL MANKIND WILL BE CERTAINLY SAVED (I.E., ALL MANKIND WITHOUT DISTINCTION OF AGE, SEX, OR SOCIAL STANDING), FOR THE GRACE OF GOD HAS APPEARED, BRINGING SALVATION TO ALL MEN!"

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Arminian interpretation above and the biblical proof for the Historic Calvinist interpretation below.)

(3) Biblical. (See the biblical objection to the Arminian interpretation above.)

IV. THE HISTORIC OR FIVE-POINT CALVINIST INTERPRETATION.

A. This interpretation is correct. The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men without distinction of age, sex, or social standing. The term "all men," in this context, does not mean each and every individual, rather it "describes individual classes, or various ranks of life. And this is not a little emphatic, that the grace of God that let itself down even to the race of slaves; for, since God does not despise men of the lowest and most degraded condition, it would be highly unreasonable that we should be negligent and slothful to embrace his goodness" (Calvin's Commentary on Titus 2:1). The grace of God is special and distinguishing, designed only for those chosen to be holy and without blame in Christ "before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4). Christ's redemption is particular not universal, definite not indefinite, actual not hypothetical.

B. Proof.

(1) Logical. (See the logical objections to the above views and the logical proof for the Historic Calvinist Interpretation on I Timothy 2:4.)

(2) Theological. (See the logical objections to the above views and the theological proof for this interpretation on I Timothy 2:4. Also see the writer's book on Definite Atonement which is to be published in the Fall of 1975.)

(3) Biblical. The strongest biblical proof is the context. Who are "all men"? All mankind without exception, or all mankind without distinction? Each and every individual, or some out of every rank and class of mankind, which includes older men, older women,

2. Theological: "All" must be theologically understood in a relative sense. It is the same will which God wills [*thelo*] all men to be saved (I Tim. 2:4) that He exercises upon those whom He wills [*thelo*] to harden (Rom. 9:18). God's desires [*thelo*] will come to pass (cf. Job 23:13; Ps. 132:13,14). Note that it is also God's desire that the same "all men" who are to be saved are "to come unto the knowledge of the truth"; that is, to genuine repentance and faith (see II Tim. 2:25 where this same phrase is again used by Paul).

3. Biblical: (I refer you back to the third objection to the Arminian interpretation). The term "all men" is to be understood in a relative sense here as in v.1. Relatively speaking, then, salvation is universal; that is, it is not limited to any one group or class of mankind. "Churches must not think that prayers must be made for subjects, not for rulers; for Jews, not for Gentiles. No, it is the intention of God our Savior that 'all men without distinction of race, rank, or nationality' be saved. . . God desires ALL men — men from EVERY rank and station, tribe and nation — to be saved. . . For (there is but) one God, and (there is but) one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (v.5)" [Hendriksen].

C. Conclusion: The modified Calvinist interpretation is not logical or theological or biblical. The verse does not say that "God desires to provide salvation for all men without exception." The text says that God desires "all men to be saved" and that God desires that the same "all men" are "to come unto the knowledge of the truth." POINT: God will have no more to be saved in this verse than He will have come unto the knowledge of the truth. Those who, out of all classes and ranks of men, come unto this saving knowledge (cf. II Tim. 2:25) ultimately prove to be none other than God's elect — "Even us, whom He hath called, not from among the Jews only, but "also from among the Gentiles" (Rom. 9:24).

III. THE HISTORIC OR 5-POINT CALVINIST INTERPRETATION

A. God wills [*thelo*] to save all men without distinction. He does this by bringing them unto a saving knowledge of the truth through the "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself as a [substitutionary] ransom [*antilitron*] for all mankind without distinction [i.e., all men regardless of rank, station, race, or nationality], to be testified in due season" (1 Tim. 2:5,6). "Not during the old dispensation but only during the new can the mystery be fully revealed that ALL MEN, Gentiles as well as Jews, are now on an equal footing; that is, that the Gentiles have become 'fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel'" [Hendriksen].

B. Proof

1. Logical: Historic Calvinists use the theological term "condition of faith" in a different sense than Calvinistic universalists; that is, Christ did not die for any upon condition, IF THEY DO BELIEVE, but He died for all God's elect THAT THEY BELIEVE and believing have eternal life. Because saving faith itself is among the principal effects and fruits of the death of Christ, salvation is bestowed conditionally only as viewed by the lost sinner. For him to experience salvation he must believe, but saving faith, which is the condition for man, is also absolutely procured by Christ. Otherwise, if faith is not procured for believers, then their salvation is not all of grace. When the believer grows in grace and sees that the condition of faith has been procured by Christ, then should he not cry out, "O Lord, why me"?

2. Theological: (same objections to the two previous theological interpretations.) The special and particular design of God's love and Christ's atonement for the elect DOES NOT hinder the free offer of the gospel to all mankind. It is God and God alone who knows the identity of the elect before they are called out of

social standing. Hence, no one can derive, from the particular group or caste to which he belongs, a reason for not living a Christian life" (Hendriksen).

III. THE MODIFIED OR FOUR-POINT CALVINIST INTERPRETATION.

A. The grace of God has appeared, providing salvation to all mankind without exception upon the condition that each one believes in Christ. The benefits of Christ's redemption are universally provided for all mankind, but they are only applied by the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit to God's elect upon the condition of faith.

B. Objections.

(1) Logical. There is no theological disagreement within orthodox Christianity that the grace of God, in this verse, refers to God's saving grace through Christ (although the Arminians, in practice, interpret it to mean enabling grace). The modified Calvinists say that this verse teaches a provisional universal redemption (indefinite atonement) for all mankind without exception, to be applied upon the condition of faith. Consequently they interpret "all men" in an absolute sense. (See the logical objection to this interpretation of this term in the Arminian interpretation above.)

(2) Theological. It may be asked: "If the grace of God brings salvation to each and every individual, then why are not all of them saved"? The answer given is that saving faith is the condition for salvation, but only the elect are enabled to believe by the Holy Spirit, not the non-elect. But, if "all men" means "all men," like the universal redemptionist says, why are not all men saved? The verse does not say that the grace of God provides salvation to all men upon the condition that they believe. It says that the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men. The issue, then, centers upon the meaning of the term "all men." The context alone must decide the biblical meaning of the term. (See the biblical objection to the

each and every individual to receive the saving benefits of Christ's atonement when they hear and believe the gospel by the exercise of their own free will. God's saving grace is truly universal for all men, but it may be effectually resisted by the obstinacy of man's sinful heart.

B. Objections.

(1) Logical. It makes little difference whether "the grace of God bringing salvation to all men" refers to the bestowal of salvation upon each and every person if they will receive it, or if it means the preaching of the gospel to all mankind without exception. "In either case it is impossible to make 'all men' mean 'every individual on the globe without exception'" (William Hendriksen, "Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles"). Strictly speaking, the Arminian interpretation views the grace of God in this verse as enabling grace, not saving grace.

(2) Theological. The term "all men" must be theologically understood in a relative sense like in 1 Timothy 2:4 (cf. **Notes on this verse**). Furthermore, it is not true that God's grace, in Christ, brings salvation to all mankind absolutely. Myriads have lived and died and have never heard of Christ, let alone heard and rejected the gospel

(3) Biblical. "The context makes the meaning very clear. Male or female, old or young, rich or poor: all are guilty before God, and from them all God gathers his people. Aged men, aged women, young women, young(er) men, and even slaves (see verses 1-10) should live consecrated lives, for the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to men of all these various groups or classes. 'All men' here in verse 11 = 'us' in verse 12. Grace did not bypass the aged because they are aged, nor women because they are women, nor slaves because they are merely slaves, etc. It dawned upon all, regardless of age, sex, or

darkness into light. It is not for the ambassadors of Christ to try and determine who they are before God the Holy Spirit quickens them unto faith and repentance. The concern of the ambassadors of Christ is to be obedient and faithful to their commission to "Go. . . therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them [those saved out of every nation, not each and every one in every nation], in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). In summary, I believe, and the historic confessions of the Church state that God's will, both as desire and decree, will come to pass and that the key to understanding such passages as Ezekiel 18:23,32 and 33:11 is that GOD DOES NOT DELIGHT OR TAKE PLEASURE in willing "the death of the wicked," but He does desire and ordain their condemnation, does He not (Jude 4)? But why? to "make His power known" and magnify His justice while enduring "with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" (Rom. 9:22). "even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.", (Matt. 11:26).

3. Biblical: (see the biblical objections to the previous two theological interpretations). The context is in harmony with the doctrine of a particular redemption, a definite atonement. The context and other salvation passages in the Scripture are harmonious. The atonement is not indefinite; it is universal in a relative sense. It is limited only in its application, but unlimited in its efficacy.

C. Conclusion: (see the conclusions to the previous two theological interpretations).

Those whom God desires to save, He will save. And those whom God saves are all men without distinction from all nations, not all men without exception and all nations.

IV. A SUMMARY PARAPHRASE OF I TIMOTHY 2:4, ACCORDING TO THE THREE THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS.

- A. The Arminian Interpretation: "God wants all men without exception by their own free will to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."
- B. The Modified or 4-Point Calvinist Interpretation: "God desires to save all men without exception and to bring them to the knowledge of the truth upon the condition of faith, since Christ's atonement was universal and placed each and every individual in a savable position."
- C. The Historic or 5-Point Calvinist Interpretation: "God desires, in harmony with His eternal decree, to save all men without distinction (i.e., without respect to rank, station, race, or nationality) and bring them to the knowledge of the truth."

CHRIST DIED A SUBSTITUTIONARY-RANSOM FOR SINNERS. HE DID THIS EITHER PROVISIONALLY OR ACTUALLY, HYPOTHETICALLY OR CERTAINLY. IF PROVISIONALLY OR HYPOTHETICALLY, THEN NO ONE WILL BE SAVED IF SALVATION IS ALL OF GRACE AND NOT OF WORKS: IF ACTUALLY OR CERTAINLY, THEN SOME OF ALL MANKIND WILL BE SAVED IF SALVATION IS ALL OF GRACE AND NOT OF WORKS. "GOD FORBID THAT I SHOULD GLORY, SAVE IN THE CROSS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST", (Gal. 6:14)

I Timothy 4:10

AN OUTLINE OF THE THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS CONCERNING I TIMOTHY 4:10: "WE TRUST IN THE LIVING GOD, WHO IS THE SAVIOUR OF ALL MEN, SPECIALLY OF THOSE THAT BELIEVE."

I. SOTERIOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS.

A. Universal Salvation.

1. God is the Saviour of all man in the sense that ultimately He actually saves each and every human being who has lived or will on the earth.
2. Objection. This view is contrary to all biblical teaching. Not all men are saved in the full, spiritual sense. Moreover, if this were true, why

THE THEOLOGICAL PROBLEM IN TITUS 2:11. Does this verse actually teach that the saving grace of God has appeared (been manifested) to each and every member of the human race (all mankind without exception), or to all classes of mankind without distinction (i.e., all men without distinction of age, sex, or social position)? As a result of this problem, two related questions arise: first, has or does God's saving grace really appear to all men without exception or all men without distinction; second, does this verse support universal redemption (indefinite atonement) or particular redemption (definite atonement)?

I. THE UNIVERSALIST INTERPRETATION.

A. The grace of God has appeared merely to assist all men in helping them to restore themselves to full favor with God because external evil influences have caused them to come into varying degrees of disfavor. Man is innately good. There is no hell or eternal punishment. All mankind will live in eternal bliss and favor with God.

B. Objection. No orthodox believer holds this interpretation simply because universal salvation has absolutely no biblical foundation

II. THE ARMINIAN INTERPRETATION.

A. The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all mankind without exception it they will only receive it. Through the merits of Christ's death, God's grace enables

Principles of grammar strongly favor the NASB translation because of word order. (In the Greek text "salvation" is positioned next to the phrase "to all men," whereas the passive verb "has appeared" is the first word in the verse, occurring before the phrase "the grace of God" and is complete with or and the following phrase "to all men." Therefore, it is best to connect the phrase "to all men" with "salvation" (like the NASB) not with "has appeared" (like the A.V.). The purpose of the predicate adjective is to present an additional explanatory statement concerning the grace of God which actually becomes the main point in the sentence. Hence, the nuance of verse 11 is this: "The grace of God has appeared; indeed, it brings salvation to all men." And the connection between verse 11 and 12 is this: "The grace of God has appeared, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires..."

deliverance which extends to all men without exception. (Cf. Ps. 36:6; 145:9; Matt. 5:45; Luke 6:35; Acts 17:25, 28.) Moreover, God also causes His gospel of salvation to be earnestly proclaimed to all men without distinction; that is, to men from every race and nation (Matt. 28:19). Truly the kindness (providence or common grace) of God extends to all. But even the circle of those to whom the message of salvation is proclaimed is wider than those who receive it by a true saving faith.

B. Conclusion. A paraphrase of what Paul is teaching in 1 Timothy 4:10 is this: "We have our hope set on the living God, and in this hope we shall not be disappointed, for not only is He a kind God, hence the Saviour (i.e., preserver or deliverer in a providential, non-soteriological sense) of all men, showering blessings upon them, but He is, in a very special sense, the Saviour (in a soteriological sense) of those who by faith embrace Him and His promise, for to them He imparts salvation, everlasting life in all its fullness.

THE LIVING GOD IS THE PROVIDENTIAL PRESERVER OF ALL MEN; BUT HE IS ESPECIALLY SO FOR BELIEVERS, FOR HE NOT ONLY PHYSICALLY AND TEMPORALLY DELIVERS THEM, BUT HE ALSO SPIRITUALLY AND ETERNALLY SAVES THEM.

Titus 2:11

AN OUTLINE OF THE THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS CONCERNING TITUS 2:11: "FOR THE GRACE OF GOD THAT BRINGETH SALVATION *HATH APPEARED TO ALL MEN" (A.V.) — "FOR THE GRACE OF GOD HAS APPEARED, ³BRINGING SALVATION TO ALL MEN" (NASB).

³ *The A.V. (KJV) translation connects the phrase "to all men" with the verb "has appeared," rather than the substantival adjective "salvation." In gender, "salvation" agrees with "grace" and, since it is used substantively as a predicate adjective, the connecting verb is understood, i.e., "the grace of God . . . bringing salvation (lit., is salvation for) to all men."

would Paul have added, "specially of those who believe"? The last phrase of this verse would make no sense.

B. Free Will Salvation.

1. God wants (desires) all men without exception by their own free will to be saved (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4). However, in the case of some, His will can be and is effectually resisted through obstinate unbelief, because man has a free will and God will not force His will upon man. As a result, God's foreknowledge is understood to mean foresight; that is, God foresees who will believe and chooses them to be saved (cf. Notes on 1 Tim. 2:4).

2. Objection. The text in 1 Timothy 4:10 does not say that God wants (desires) to save, but that He actually saves: He is actually the Saviour (in some sense) of all men. Also, resisting the divine will — in the absolute sense — is impossible. Likewise, it is impossible for God's foreknowledge to be limited (even voluntarily or by man's faith). Otherwise God would not be God! (Cf. Acts 13:48; Eph. 1:11; 2:8-9; Phil. 1:29.) Furthermore, the biblical meaning of "foreknowledge," when used of God, does not mean mere foresight, but an everlasting, intimate relationship stemming from an eternal electing love (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; Eph. 1:4-5; 1 Pet. 1:2).

C. Modified Free Will Salvation.

1. God is able (has provided) salvation for all men without exception upon the condition of faith. But all can not (will not) be saved, only those who exercise faith; that is, only the elect

II. NONSOTERIOLOGICAL-SOTERIOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION (FREE GRACE SALVATION).

are actually saved: the non-elect are only provisionally or hypothetically saved (placed in a salvable position) but are never actually saved.

2. Objection. While it is true that only those who believe will be saved, this interpretation of the text dodges the issue. The verse does not say that the living God is **able** to save, but **has provided** salvation for all men without exception. It says, "He **is** the Saviour of all men." But "all men have not faith" (II Thess. 3:2) because saving faith is a gift from God; is it not (Phil. 1:29; II Thess. 2:13)? If faith is a gift from God, why does not God give saving faith to all men without exception? Does one's ability to believe lie within his own will (cf. John 1:13; 6:44; Jas. 1:18), or solely within the sovereign grace and good pleasure of God? (Cf. Matt. 11:25-27; John 6:63; Eph. 1:11; II Tim. 1:9)

D. Distributive Salvation.

1. God **actually** bestows salvation — in the full, evangelical sense of the term — on **all kinds (classes) of men**. He gives to all of them everlasting life; that is, He gives everlasting life to all kinds (classes) of men. "All" is a relative rather than an absolute term.

2. Objection. Although it is true that God does desire that prayers be made on behalf of the salvation of all kinds (classes) of people (cf. Rom. 9:24; I Tim. 2:1-2, 4; Rev. 5:9; 7:9), this truth does not fit the context here because of the final phrase, "specially of those that believe."

A. This is the correct interpretation. It is found by making a thorough study of the term "Saviour" (in both its noun and verb forms) in the context of the chapter, the epistle, the New Testament and the Old Testament.² The final phrase "specially of those that believe" clearly indicates that the term is here given a twofold application. Of all men God is the Saviour, but of some men, namely, believers, He is the Saviour in a deeper, more glorious sense than He is of others. This clearly implies that when He is called the Saviour of all men, this cannot mean that He imparts to all everlasting life, as He does to believers. The term "Saviour," then, must have a meaning, which we today generally do not immediately attach to it. And that is exactly the cause of the difficulty. Often in the Old Testament, the term meant "to deliver — (verbal form) or deliverer (nominal form)" — both with reference to men and God (cf. Judg. 3:9; II Kings 13:5; Neh. 9:27; Ps. 25:5; 106:21). Also, in the New Testament, reference is made to the Old Testament where God delivered Israel from the oppression of Pharaoh for He had been the Saviour of all, but specially those who believed. With the latter, and with them alone, He was "well pleased" (I Cor. 10:5). All leave Egypt; not all enter Canaan." POINT: In both the Old and New Testaments the term "Saviour" is often used to speak of God's providential preservation or

¹ The verb form of "Saviour" is used in I Timothy 4:16. Unless salvation is by works and not by grace, it must be translated "preserve" or "deliver" in verse 16. And this makes sense in context. For Paul is saying to Timothy: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto thy doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt save thyself (i.e., preserve or deliver thyself from those who depart from the faith and teach false doctrine as described in the first part of the chapter), and them that hear thee." Furthermore, the term "living God" is used elsewhere in conjunction with His providence (cf. Acts 14:15).

² Cf. Hendriksen.