

The Living God, Our Savior

"For to this end we labor and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of them that believe" (1 Tim. 5:1).

"To this end" signifies aim; goal. Phrased here, that meaning is clear. *"To the end"* to which we labor and strive is to be blessed in the life which is to come, the consequence of exercising ourselves unto godliness. We can confidently look forward to that life to come because we have set our hope on the *"living God."*

The statement Paul made about God being the Savior of all men has been a stumbling block to the true Calvinist for his doctrine denies that. The third of his five tenets of faith is "limited atonement," which is Calvin's premise was that Christ did not die for the non-elect. This is the way the Philadelphia Confession of faith puts it: "neither are any others redeemed by Christ, or effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified and saved but the elect" (p. 20). This concept is built upon two false premises: 1) God has willed to happen whatever happens and it is impossible for man to act in anyway contrary to that decree; and, 2) it is impossible for man to act in anyway to bring about salvation.

The Bible affirms, on the other hand, that Christ died for all. So states Jesus: *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but might have everlasting life" (Jn. 3:16).* From Titus comes this assurance: *"The grace of God hath appeared bringing salvation to all men ..." (Titus 2:11).* These passages are sufficiently clear but the Calvinist explains that the *"all"* and *"whosoever"* speaks only of the *"elect."* Because none (according to the Calvinist) can resist God, the Calvinist concludes everyone whom Christ wills to be saved will be saved.

But if John 3:16 and Titus are troubling verses to Calvinists, 1 Corinthians 8:12 is even more so. To *"strong"* brethren (as they regarded themselves) who chose enter into an idol's temple and eat meat sacrificed to that idol, asserting he could do so in good conscience, Paul reminded such an one that his actions might cause a weaker brother to do the same; but not in good conscience. *"For if a man see thee who hast knowledge sitting in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak be emboldened to eat things sacrificed to idols? For through thy knowledge he that is weak perisheth, the brother for whose sake Christ died."* One word and one phrase stands out:

"perisheth" and "for whom Christ died." Here is an example of one who was lost but Christ had died for that man that he might be saved.

And so we ponder the passage before us: *"God is the Savior of all men, especially of them that believe."* The significance is that prospectively Christ can save all, for He died for all. He would have *"all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth"* (1 Tim. 2:4). He *"is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Pet. 3:9). God's invitation, *"Come to me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye shall find rest unto your souls,"* coupled with his last great invitation, *"And the Spirit and the bride say come, and he that heareth, let him say come, and he that is athirst, let him come, he that will, and let him take of the water of life freely,"* shows God offers salvation to all (Mt. 11:28f; Rev. 22:18). God can extend an invitation to all because his Son died for all.

Yet, all are not saved -- for not all will accept the Lord's invitation. Therein lies the significance of the phrase, *"God is the Savior ... especially to them that believe."* Prospectively, all can be saved because Christ died for them, but God is IN FACT the Savior of those who believe. Remember, there are two wills in salvation: God's will and man's will and God saves no man contrary to either will!

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