

Saviour God. God, the living God

Part 1

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[00:00:01] I'd like to read some verses, please, from the First Epistle of Timothy.

First of all, 1 Timothy 1, verse 1.

Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ, who is our hope.

And then chapter 2, verse 1.

I exhort therefore that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men, [00:01:08] for kings and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty.

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time.

We're on to, I am ordained a preacher and an apostle, I speak the truth in Christ and, why not, a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity. [00:02:08] And then chapter 3, verse 15.

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Then chapter 4, verse 10.

For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.

[00:03:20] God will bless his precious word to our souls, we're quite sure.

I want to pick up in two expressions which are found in these verses.

One is, Saviour God, God our Saviour.

And the other is, the living God.

The character of God comes out in many ways in this first epistle of Timothy, but I want particularly for some minutes to focus on these two aspects. [00:04:06] God known as Saviour and God known as a living God, a God that's known in living part. Yesterday our brother, in connection with instructing the believers in Africa, referred to Colossians chapter 1 where we have the two distinct ministries of the apostle Paul brought out. He's a minister of the gospel or a minister of the glad tidings which he says is preached to the whole creation under heaven. And then he also says that he is a minister of the assembly or a minister of the church to complete or to fill up the word of God. So there in Colossians 1 we have these two distinct ministries. Ministry of the glad tidings, God out, without bounds, Africa, India, America, Europe, to the whole creation under heaven.

[00:05:02] Paul, in the particular teaching that was committed to him to instruct the believers and to build up the assembly, he was minister in a very special way, the minister of the assembly. The one to whom special revelations were given and which were passed down to us in inspired words in our New Testament epistles. And I think what we have here, I don't want to make any hard and fast distinction, but the idea of a saviour God and the idea of a living God can be tied in with these two thoughts. A saviour God, a God who will have all men to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth in its widest possible aspect. And then for those who are believers, the thought of the living God, the living God active in the house of God, the house of God which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. So first of all, saviour God. It's a wonderful thing, beloved, to know God in the character of saviour through our Lord Jesus Christ. [00:06:08] He was not always known in such a way.

In the Old Testament, it was rather as a lawgiver.

It was rather as one who made demands which, as we know, the children of Israel could not meet. Even before Moses had come down from the mountain, with the tables of the law written by the finger of God, the Israelites had transgressed. They'd made the golden calf. They'd gone astray. In a sense, they'd apostatised. And that has been man's history right through from the very beginning, all having sinned and come short of the glory of God. [00:07:08] But in Christianity, with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, God has been revealed to us. God has taken that place as a saviour God, as one who saves. And the question for us this afternoon is, do we know God in that character? Do we know anything of this wonderful salvation?

We just paused in our own souls, in our own thoughts, and supposing, at this instance, we had to go into God's presence.

If we were immediately in the presence of God, how would we view him? How would he view us?

[00:08:02] Would we be sinners, still in our sins? Would we have misgivings? Would we have concerns?

Would we realise our guilt? Would we realise our unworthiness? Would we see that we had no ground to stand before him, that we must be judged and condemned and punished? Or could we look up into his face without concern and say, thank God, he's a saviour God.

Thank God, as I come before you now, I'm not looking to myself as to my standing, I'm looking to thy

son, I'm looking to the Lord Jesus. He's the one who stood in my place, he's the one who underwent the judgement, he's the one who was the mediator, the one who comes between me and God, the one who bore my sins. [00:09:04] Because that's the essence of Christianity, that's the only way of salvation, that's how we have a standing before God.

And it's good for each one of us to test our hearts and just suppose, not that we should die tonight, if we were to die tonight we'd need to be prepared, but just suppose that at this precise moment in time we were right in the presence of God.

How do we stand? Do we know him as a saviour God? It's not sufficient to come together in assembly to hear the word of God to have a Christian upbringing. [00:10:04] This is not the essence of the matter. My plane was somewhat delayed on Friday night and I wandered about the airport in Belfast a little bit and went to the newsagents or the bookshop and one of the best sellers there, I don't quite remember the man's name, but it's a blockbuster writer, he sold millions. And in the foreword to one of his books he says, I was brought up in a very puritanical sect called the Plymouth Brethren and they didn't have any statues or pictures on the wall, they just met in a plane room. And he did not believe in God. He was writing a book about the medieval church, this was what the novel was all about, it's possible to write a book about the church and not believe in God. An atheist. [00:11:10] Solemn. Solemn thought that those in similar circumstances to ourselves with the truth before them can be in a situation where they do not even believe in God.

I think of another instance and it's always a very solemn one to me. When I was a bit younger the Beatles were in vogue and one of their albums I think was Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. And it had a photo montage of all the different heads and pictures of people on the sleeve. In those days it was records and sleeves, it wasn't CDs. I don't know what today. [00:12:04] And in the midst of all these pictures, John, Paul, George, Ringo and various others, there was a picture of another man, Alistair Crowley, a leading satanist of the 20th century, beginning of the 20th century. Someone who profoundly influenced the drug subculture, profoundly influenced the modern rock music and advanced satanism and that line of things.

And that was someone with tremendous influence for evil in this world, who was the son of a ministering brother and who sat on the benches of a meeting room.

[00:13:08] It's not sufficient to know the truth. It's not sufficient to hear the truth. We need to practice the truth. We need to know God as saviour. We need to know him as a living reality. We need to trust in his son, the one mediator between God and man. Just one other instance, and it's a sad one. Back in Belfast, from time to time there are a series of gospel meetings conducted and in the last few weeks a tent, a canvas tent has gone up. One of the preachers known to me, it's been wet, miserable weather, mind you, for a gospel tent campaign, but there are those who have a concern for souls and they're seeking to get out to reach the people. [00:14:04] I happened to ask someone who this preacher was preaching alongside, because there were two preachers, and he said, oh, you know, it's that brother from Oman. You heard about his son a few years ago, you know. And I said, yes, I had heard about his son. Fine dad, overdosed on drugs in his flat in Belfast. What an awful thing for a Christian parent, for someone who preaches the gospel to others, to have to go and recover the remains of a son.

Who's left this scene without giving any indication, humanly speaking, without giving any indication outwardly, that he knows anything of God's salvation, that he knows anything of God as saviour. Yes,

witherbound.

[00:15:16] Witherbound.

We have to say that we're privileged here. We have the word of God in our hand.

We have the prayers of God's people.

We have the working, the strivings of the Holy Spirit.

And yet, that is not sufficient if we have not closed in with Christ for salvation for ourselves.

[00:16:01] Again, I say, Paul could say, God, our saviour, thank God through grace, he's my saviour, but is he your saviour?

As the gospel hymn says, O that my saviour were your saviour too. For you he is calling. He's calling for you. There were those in Christ's time, and it says of them, it says, we've eaten and drunk, we've been eating and drinking in your presence, and you've taught in our streets. So near, and yet so far, because he says to those same people, depart from me.

I think we should just read the words in Luke's gospel, chapter 13, just to underline them. [00:17:02] Verse 25 of Luke 13.

When once the master of the house has risen up, and hath shut to the door.

We don't know when that may happen.

We don't know when Christ may return.

We know his coming is near, he says, I come quickly, but we don't know when.

We don't know when in the particular individual's history, God by his spirit, no longer works. [00:18:04] When once the master of the house has risen up, and hath shut to the door, do you begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us. Ah, it's too late then.

He shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence you are.

Then shall you begin to say, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. These are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. For our instruction and for our warning, verse 27, but he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence you are.

Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.

[00:19:10] God is a savior God.

In fact, it said that he is, in chapter 4, it says that he's the savior of all men, especially of those that believe. It doesn't mean there that all men are going to be saved. He's the preserver of all men, and he's particularly the preserver of those that believe. That's God's superintendence. That's God's

sovereignty.

That's God's supremacy.

It's absolutely staggering to our brains or to our imaginations that God controls all circumstances throughout human history.

And yet, man has that free will, man has that rebellious will.

[00:20:07] Man is doing what he wills, what he wants to do, setting himself against God. And yet, God is supreme in his own universe, and he's in overall control of every single human life, of every single event.

There's not a spiral falls to the ground without his knowledge. The Lord Jesus has the keys of death and of hell. Keys speak of control. He's got that control.

And this first epistle of Timothy speaks of God as a creator God.

Speaks of him as omnipotent in his power, omniscient in his knowledge. [00:21:02] He's the king eternal. He's immortal. And he's incorruptible, he's invisible, he's the only God. And to him our honor and glory to the ages of the ages. And so, if we have life and breath, if we're preserved here even in our natural lives, it's the grace of God, it's the goodness of God. And that applies to all men. He's the preserver of all men.

We're here for as long as God permits us to be here.

And then we're gone.

He's the preserver of all men. Savior in that sense, preserver, but specially of those that believe. It's a wonderful thing as a believer to know that God has a particular interest in you and in me. [00:22:03] Okay, it's general. It applies to the world.

But there's a contrast. In John 17, there's a contrast. The Lord says there, I pray not for the world. But he prays for those, the men whom God has given me. There are those who are given in John 17 as the love gift of the father to the son, and they're distinguished from the world. Here the believer is distinguished from the unbeliever, and yet God is preserving both. He's the preserver of all men.

But specially of those that believe. Whatever our circumstances as believers, we have this assurance that God has a particular interest in us. And if there's any here today that don't know God as a Savior God, [00:23:01] well, he's preserved your life here in this world up until this moment. And once more, he gives you the opportunity to come close to him and receive his son for salvation, and receive the blessings that come through that. So there's that general sense in which he's a preserver of all men. But I want more particularly to speak about salvation as it comes to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. And in that sense, he's the Savior God. We read in chapter 1 that Paul writes by the commandment of God our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul was commanded to write something because God desired to make known his character. God is wishing to make himself known, and he's making himself known as a Savior God. [00:24:03] And it

says that he desires, chapter 2, these prayers, supplications are made for kings and for all in authority. And then it goes on to say, God our Savior desires.

He will have all men to be saved. He desires all men to be saved. To come to the knowledge of the truth. Listen, God has provided a Savior.

There's a mediator.

The Lord Jesus Christ gave himself a ransom for all.

The bearing of that word is such that those who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Now, of course, it doesn't mean that all men will be saved. Sadly, at the judgment of the great white throne, the dead will be raised and they'll be judged.

[00:25:06] And those whose names are not found written in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire. And that hell of punishment, that eternal place of torment, we're told that it was prepared for the devil and his angels. And yet, men are going to be found therein.

Let's be quite clear about this.

Not all men are going to be saved.

We can speak about God's love, but God is also a righteous God.

And our idea of God must come from the scriptures. We mustn't adopt this wishy-washy idea of God that everything's going to be all right in the end and he's kind and he's benevolent and he's soft and it'll work out okay. [00:26:02] Sin is an outrage on God's majesty.

God is righteous.

Sin has to be dealt with.

It needs to be atoned for. And if we do not have a savior, if we do not have a mediator, if there's not one that comes into our place, well then, most assuredly, we will be judged and we will be condemned. But the desire, the disposition of God towards us is that he desires all men should be saved. On God's part, he's provided a savior. He's a mediator between God and men. It says he's given himself a ransom for all. Just like in Romans, it says that he's a mercy seeker. Christ is a mercy seeker. He's a meeting place. His blood has been shed. The blood in the Old Testament, when the animal, the great day of atonement, when the animal was slain, the blood was taken into the sanctuary and it was sprinkled on and before the mercy seeker. [00:27:11] And that's a picture of the work of Christ, of what he has done. His blood has been shed. It has value before God. And on that basis, God can call us to come to him.

And he's doing that here. And he's doing that now. He's a savior God.

And I think if we realized more of this character of God, if we could align ourselves with God's desire, it would make missionaries of us. We'd go out to others. We'd seek to reach others for Christ. Here or in the foreign fields or wherever it would be.

God is a savior God. Do you know him as savior?

Have you trusted him in your inmost heart? [00:28:04] Perhaps.

Perhaps you have.

Perhaps in the simplicity, the quietness of your own room. You've asked God to be your savior. You've asked the Lord Jesus. To be yours.

You've thanked him for dying for your sins. Well. If you've done that. Word of God says that. If you believe.

Well, then you're saved.

Well, then you're saved.

Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life.

In Romans, if we confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead. We shall be saved.

[00:29:03] Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord. Shall be saved.

It's simple.

It's not a complicated matter. It's not a matter of working for salvation. Trying to earn it.

Won't do.

To do the best we can or to attend the preaching of the word. Go to church or be good to our neighbors. All these things come short. It was necessary that Christ should come and shed his blood. Be a ransom for all. In order that it could be testified. In order that the testimony could be rendered. That it could be preached. Perhaps you do know the Lord Jesus and you've never actually mentioned it to anyone. Well, you know, those of us here. In this room.

Even in a private way. Would be very glad to hear of any that have trusted Christ. And would seek to help you. [00:30:01] Pray for you. Encourage you. Build you up in the faith. And that leads me on to the second point in what we're dealing with this afternoon. And that's the thought of a living God. I remember reading years ago something in William Kelly. He said, a dead church does not suit a living God.

God is a great reality.

But we need to know it in our own lives. We need to know God working in living power. Changing our life.

Christianity is not in word, it's in deed.

There's power.

It's the church of the living God which is the pillar and ground of the truth. And so, some things that Paul deals with here in writing to Timothy is. [00:31:06] Question of doctrine. Or teaching.

Not time just to look at all the verses. But in numerous places here. It stresses the importance of.

Good teaching or sound teaching. And we find that the faith.

The teaching.

Is something which is known in the house of God. It's important.

Another thing that is stressed in connection with the. Thought of a living God is. Manner of life.

We need to conduct ourselves in a certain way. The verse that we read in chapter 3 verse 15. We know how to behave. One should know how to behave oneself. We need to know.

How to behave.

[00:32:01] And we need to know. How to behave.

And we need to know. How to behave.

And we need to know. How to behave oneself. We need to know.

How to behave.

In the house of God. And of course that doesn't mean. That we know that there's a certain behavior. Which should characterize us. When we come together in an assembly. Or in a meeting room. The house of God has been formed by. The spirit of God.

The spirit of the living God. Coming down to dwell here. On this earth.

The Lord Jesus was once here. He was here in a.

Material way.

In a concrete way.

In a body.

Flesh and blood.

Humanity.

Even in resurrection. He could say to the disciples. Handle me and see.

For a spirit.

[00:33:02] Hath not flesh and bones. But he's no longer here. He's gone back to heaven. And I will pray the father. And he will send you another comforter. Send one of the same character as himself. And we know in the day of Pentecost. There was a sign of a rushing mighty wind. And the Holy Spirit. A person in the Godhead. Came to take up his dwelling on earth. Now he dwells in the believers. He dwells in us individually. And he dwells in us collectively. In the assembly.

On an individual basis. It's important to know that. Wherever we go.

We take the Holy Spirit with us. Whatever we do.

Whatever we watch.

The Holy Spirit is there. Whatever we say.

[00:34:02] And it is.

The Spirit of God.

And it is.

The Holy Spirit.

Therefore our lives need to be. Characterized by godliness. Or by piety.

As it says in verse 16. The mystery of godliness. Is great.

It goes on to detail. How it's produced in our lives. It's a solemn challenge. To our hearts.

As to our truthfulness. As to our integrity. As to our separation. As to the extent.

We're overcoming sin in our own lives. Outwardly.

Perhaps we're not.

Doing things that.

People are taking exception to. But where are we in our thoughts. In our minds.

We know a Savior God. Thank God if we do. [00:35:02] Well then.

That same God becomes known to us. As a living God.

A God that lives and works in our lives. On the individual level. And collectively.

In the assembly.

In what sense is he. The living God.

In the assembly.

Well. We come together for worship. And in John.

Chapter 4.

In connection with the woman of Samaria. The Lord says.

If thou knewest the gift of God. And he that.

Speaks unto you.

You would have asked of him. And he would have given you living water. And then he goes on to say. That the water that I shall give you. Shall be in you a well of water. Bubbling up.

Unto eternal life.

Bubbling up unto its source in God. In the Father.

[00:36:02] And in the Son.

So. If we experience a living God's power. If we experience God as a living God. It should be manifested. In our worship.

And in our response to God. When we come together. There should be that power of attraction to Christ. There should be that outflow. There should be that overflow of our hearts. And praise and thanksgiving. To the Father.

And the Son.

I wonder to what extent. That's a reality to us. When we come together. We know the sisters. Keep silent in the assembly. We know also that.

Participation.

In the worship.

In the supper.

In prayer and thanksgiving. It's not dependent on gift. A matter of gift may come in. When it comes to ministry. [00:37:02] But in regard to.

Our response Godwards. In regard to our worship. It's not dependent on gift. It's dependent on the outflow. And the overflow of our hearts. To the living God.

So I think that's one aspect. We desire to see.

God and living power. Directing our hearts. Back to God.

In worship.

There's the matter of the prayer meeting. Do we come to the prayer meeting? We're needy individuals. We're in a needy world. Others have needs.

Many that we can pray for. Supplication and prayers. And intercessions.

Giving them thanks. To be made for all men. There's not limit there. Starts with kings.

And those in authority. [00:38:02] And it's that we may lead a quiet. And peaceable life. In all godliness and honesty. And then it's in order. That the gospel may go out. But the point I want to reach is. If God is a living God. Are we waiting for him to answer our prayers? Or is it just words that sort of go up. Because it's a Tuesday night. Or a Monday night.

Or whatever day of the week it might be. And we've got that responsibility. To go to the prayer meeting. So we go.

We're not to be robots. We're not to be automatons. God is a living God. If he's a living God. He's a God that can act. That's able to act. And a God.

Therefore.

That can answer prayer. [00:39:02] This is a challenge for us. Challenge individually. To see if God will answer a prayer in our lives. One thing very attractive about mature Christian believers. There are certain believers. You're not wrong in their presence. Until you realize that they have power with God. That there's a reality about the faith. That there's a knowledge. That there's a closeness. It says that we're to watch. Onto prayer.

Not just to pray.

But to watch.

Watch out for God to answer. He may say yes.

He may say no.

He may say wait.

The answer may not be quite what we expect. But surely.

We want.

To be in a condition of soul. [00:40:02] Where we realize that God is living. That if God is living. He's active.

That he can answer prayer. In this epistle.

Where it speaks of the house of God. The living God.

It says that the spirit speaks expressly. The latter days and so on. Beloved we need to look for the spirit of God. To act.

To speak in our midst. To bring home to us. The word of God in power. To convict.

To convince.

To edify.

To build up.

To encourage.

To warm our hearts. To challenge things in our lives. Which are not consistent with the truth. Spirit speaking.

When we come together. We come together in dependence on the Lord. We come together in dependence. By his spirit we seek to leave room. [00:41:02] For God to act in our midst. By his spirit.

Do we know the reality of this in power? The Corinthians did. Because of a non-believer. Come into their midst. He was forced.

He was confronted by the expression of the truth. Was so powerful.

That he fell down and he confessed. That God was in them of the truth. And so.

It should be our desire to see God. Active.

In our midst.

The living God.

Even in the outgoing of the gospel. To see results.

To see lives changed. To see souls saved. Beloved.

Let's begin with ourselves. In the week that lies ahead. Let's challenge ourselves tonight. Savior God.

A living God.

Tomorrow morning.

[00:42:04] Is the living God going to be a reality in my life today? What change can be made? May God help us.

In regard to these things. Because we need his strengthening. Amen.