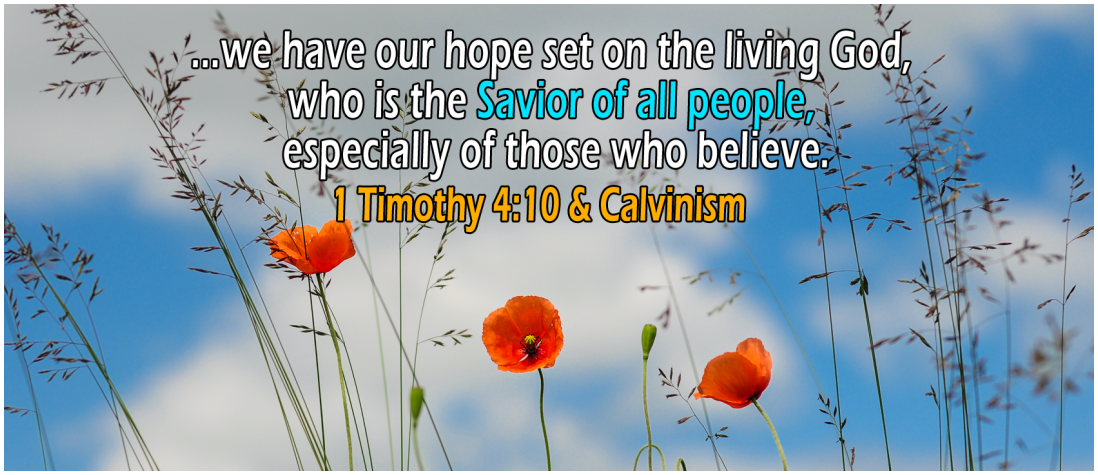
1 Timothy 4:10, 'Savior of all men'

Published: Wednesday 9th of April 2014 12:57 by Simon Wartanian
URL: https://www.thecalvinist.net/post/1-Timothy-4:10-Savior-Of-All-Men



1 Timothy 4:10

> *For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the* ***Savior of all people****,* ***especially of those who believe****.* (1 Timothy 4:10, ESV)

(For a recent defense see here.)

Many non-Calvinist take this verse to mean that God is trying to save all people. But, one wonders why isn't He able to complete this 'plan' of His and the answer of course is that man doesn't choose God, which we agree with, but not the part that God isn't able to fulfill His desire, because the Son paid the ransom for all whom the Father gave Him (Jn 17; Eph 5:25; Jn 6:37-40).

But still we need to deal with this verse, if we believe that the Bible is inspired there should be a consistency running through it. There are no 'Arminian' or 'Calvinist' verses, there are only God inspired verses.

First we need to look how the word 'Savior' is used in this context. The word '**soter'** (σωτήρ, G4990) has the meaning of 'savior, deliverer, preserver'[7] it occurs 24 times in the New Testament mostly in the sense of personal Savior (Lk 2:11; Jn 4:42; Act 5:31; Tit 2:13; 2Pe 2:20 etc...). But it is important to note the context. I'm going to argue that it means **soter** as in the sense of a *preserver, deliverer*.

Let's take a look at 1 Timothy 4. First we see in the first paragraph of 1 Timothy 4, in verses 1 through 5 Paul warns Timothy against false teachers who will teach doctrines of demons, who will lead many astray, who will forbid marriage and require abstinence from (certain) foods. Food which is given by God and made holy by His word and prayer and should be received with thanksgiving. We see here that Paul is warning Timothy against those who want to forbid certain foods (perhaps some Jews who want to follow the Torah concerning ceremonially clean foods, or some other group which I am not aware of). Here we see clearly that Paul is talking about regular life (marriage, food) and not discussing things concerning salvation of the lost with Timothy or how God has saved them from His wrath, though salvation from wrath is mentioned in verses 10b and perhaps in 16.

In the next portion of 1 Timothy 4, specifically in verses 6 through 10, Paul tells Timothy to keep this teaching, that he should not follow the false teaching, and have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Next Paul tells him that bodily training is good, but godliness is much better because it has value for this current life, but also the life to come. This is good (v9). Next we come to our 'problem' verse. In verse 10 we're told that God " is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe." What does that mean? Does it mean that He wants to save everyone from His righteous wrath? Why doesn't He then? If that is so, why does the last part of the verse says "**especially of those who believe"** and what does that mean?

We saw that the context of 1 Timothy 4 is (mostly) concerned with physical life. Things like food and marriage. Then we come to verse 10 and some of our brothers want to get the idea that God really wants to save everyone, but they don't

freely choose Him, they just won't come to Him, although He has given them grace. But that is not the idea here. As I have argued above the word **soter** can be used in the sense of a ***preserver*** or ***deliverer.*** And it is best to understand the phrase "Savior of all people" to refer to the idea that God is the one who gives food to the wicked and the just, He is the one who gives us our jobs, our promotions, He is the one who brings us up and throws us down, he cares for the wicked and just, His mercy is over all His creation (Mt 5:45; Phil 4:19; 1Sm 2:6-8, Ps 145:9, etc…).

The last phrase is very interesting, "**especially of those who believe".** The Greek word for *especially* in the Greek is the word **malista** (μάλιστα, G3122) which means "especially, chiefly, most of all, above all.[8]" Well, if our non-Calvinist brothers and sisters want to assert that God tries to save everyone or wants to save everyone in what way is He *especially* saving those who believe then? It seems very clear to me, that in the first part of verse 10 "Savior of all people" means that He preserves and cares for the wicked as well as the redeemed, and that is made clear by the last part of verse 10 by saying that He's the Savior "**especially of those who believe".** He not only cares for His elect as well as the reprobate, but He saves His elect in a special manner too. He saves them freely from His righteous wrath which justly falls on the wicked. The same wicked people who enjoyed God's perseverance and mercy in their earthly life.

I think I've said enough. The commentaries below will say things in a better way than I could. Take a look.

Commentaries

Bob Utley in **You Can Understand the Bible** said:[1]

> **"who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers"** The title "savior" is used quite often in the Pastoral Letters (cf. 1 Tim. 1:1; 2:3; 2 Tim. 1:10; Titus 1:3-4; 2:10-13; 3:4,6). In earlier chapters of 1 Timothy it is used of God as the Redeemer, potentially, of all mankind (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4,6; Luke 2:11; John 1:29; 4:42; Rom. 5:18-19; 2 Pet. 3:9). See full note at 2 Tim. 1:10. Possibly because of the little phrase "especially of believers" (where one would theologically expect "only") it may be used in its OT sense of Elohim, who is "protector" or "provider" of all life on earth (cf. Matt. 5:45; Acts 17:28).

A short comment is made by RC Sproul in the **ESV Reformation Bible:[2]**

> 4:10 **Savior of all people.** The general call to repentance and salvation is extended to all people (Matt. 11:28). See "Definite Redemption" at John 10:15.
>
> **especially of those who believe.** Salvation is God's gift, in particular to those who trust in His provision in Christ (Matt. 22:14; Rom. 8:30).

The **ESV Study Bible** explains:[3]

> **1 Tim. 4:10 to this end.** The goal of Paul's labors is that people attain "godliness" (v. 8) and its eternal "value." **Toil and strive** is typical of Paul's description of gospel ministry (cf. 5:17; Rom. 16:6, 12; 1 Cor. 15:10; 16:16; Gal. 4:11; Eph. 4:28). The statement that God is the **Savior of all people, especially of those who believe** could seem to teach universalism, that every person will eventually go to heaven. However, the rest of Scripture clearly denies this idea (see note on 1 Tim. 2:4). There are several other possible explanations for this phrase: (1) It means that Christ died for all people, but only those who believe in him are saved. (2) It means he is offered to all people, though not all receive him. (3) It means "the Savior of all people, namely, those who believe" (a different translation of Gk. malista, based on extrabiblical examples). (4) It means "the helper of all people," taking Greek *Sōtēr*, "Savior," to refer not to forgiveness of sins but to God's common grace by which God helps and protects people in need. (5) It means "the Savior of all kinds of people, not Jews only but both Jews and Greeks." In any case, the emphasis is on God's care for the unsaved world, and in the flow of the letter Paul is stressing once more (cf. 2:3–5) that God's will that people would be saved is the basis of the universal mission (cf. Matt. 28:19–20). On God as "Savior," see note on 2 Tim. 1:8–10.

The **ESV MacArthur Study Bible** provides a commentary about this verse:[4]

> **1 Tim. 4:10 hope.** Believers are saved in hope and live and serve in light of that hope of eternal life (Titus 1:2; 3:7; *see note on Rom. 5:2*). Working to the point of exhaustion and suffering rejection and persecution are acceptable because believers understand they are doing God's work—which is the work of salvation. That makes it worth all of the sacrifices (Phil. 1:12–18, 27–30; 2:17; Col. 1:24–25; 2 Tim. 1:6–12; 2:3–4, 9–10; 4:5–8). **the Savior of all people,**

especially of those who believe. Paul is obviously not teaching universalism, that all people will be saved in the spiritual and eternal sense, since the rest of Scripture clearly teaches that God will not save everyone. Most will reject him and spend eternity in hell (Matt. 25:41, 46; Rev. 20:11–15). Yet, the Greek word translated “especially” must mean that all people enjoy God’s salvation in some way like those who believe enjoy his salvation. The simple explanation is that God is the Savior of all people, only in a temporal sense, while of believers in an eternal sense. Paul’s point is that while God graciously delivers believers from sin’s condemnation and penalty because he was their substitute (2 Cor. 5:21), all people experience some earthly benefits from the goodness of God. Those benefits are: 1) common grace—a term that describes God’s goodness shown to all mankind universally (Ps. 145:9) in restraining sin (Rom. 2:15) and judgment (Rom. 2:3–6), maintaining order in society through government (Rom. 13:1–5), enabling man to appreciate beauty and goodness (Ps. 50:2), and showering him with temporal blessings (Matt. 5:45; Acts 14:15–17; 17:25); 2) compassion—the broken-hearted, loving pity that God shows to undeserving, unregenerate sinners (Ex. 34:6, 7; Ps. 86:5; Dan. 9:9; Matt. 23:37; Luke 19:41–44; cf. Isa. 16:11–13; Jer. 48:35–37); 3) admonition to repent—God constantly warns sinners of their fate, demonstrating the heart of a compassionate Creator who has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 18:30–32; 33:11); and 4) the gospel invitation—salvation in Christ is indiscriminately offered to all (Matt. 11:28–29; 22:2–14; John 6:35–40; Rev. 22:17; cf. John 5:39–40). God is, by nature, a saving God. That is, he finds no pleasure in the death of sinners. His saving character is revealed even in how he deals with those who will never believe, but only in these four temporal ways. *See notes on 1 Tim. 2:6.*

The **HCSB Study Bible** explains:[5]

The statement that Jesus is the **Savior of everyone, especially of those who believe** may seem to teach universalism, the belief that every person will eventually go to heaven regardless of whether they accept Christ. But the rest of Scripture clearly denies this idea. The Greek word translated here as "especially" expresses the sense of "particularly." The point is not that Jesus saves everybody and then saves believers even more. Rather, Jesus is the Savior for all—all who believe. Further, "everyone" pictures the trans-national scope of the gospel. Thus Christ is the "Savior" of people from every race and nation.

HCSB Study Bible Word Study:

soter

Greek Pronunciation	[soh TAYR]
HCSB Translation	Savior
Uses in 1 Timothy	3
Uses in the NT	24
Focus passage	1 Timothy 4:10

Outside the NT, the title *soter* (*savior, deliverer*) was applied to deserving men, leading officials, rulers, or deities (e.g., of Roman emperors Julius Caesar, Nero, and Vespasian). The term had connotations of "*protector*," "*deliverer*," "*preserver*," or "*savior*." In the NT, *soter* refers exclusively to Jesus Christ and to God the Father, with a focus on their saving, delivering character as expressed through their actions. As *Savior*, Christ grants repentance and forgiveness of sin (Ac 5:31), protects and saves the church (Eph 5:23), will come again to deliver His people from this world (Php 3:20), has made possible the outpouring of the Spirit (Titus 3:6), has abolished death (2Tim 1:10), and has authority in His kingdom (2Pe 1:11). God is "the *Savior* of everyone, especially of those who believe" (1Tim 4:10), and "wants everyone to be saved" (1Tim 2:4). He manifested His love in His saving acts toward the church (Titus 3:4), He poured out the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:6), and He deserves praise and adoration (Jd 25).

What **Matthew Henry** said about 1 Timothy 4:8-10:[6]

II. The encouragement which we have to proceed in the ways of godliness, and to exercise ourselves to it, notwithstanding the difficulties and discouragements that we meet with in it. He had said (v. 8) *that it is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life* which now is. But the question is, Will the profit balance the loss? For, if it will not, it is not profit. Yes, we are sure it will. Here is another of Paul's faithful sayings, worthy of all acceptation--that all our labours and losses in the service of God and the work of religion will be abundantly recompensed, so that though we lose for Christ we shall not lose by him. *Therefore we labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God*, v. 10. Observe,

1. Godly people must labour and expect reproach; they must do well, and yet expect at the same time to suffer ill: toil and trouble are to be expected by us in this world, not only as men, but as saints.

2. Those who labour and suffer reproach in the service of God and the work of religion may depend upon the living God that they shall not lose by it. Let this encourage them, *We trust in the living God.* The consideration of this, that the God who has undertaken to be our pay-master is the living God, who does himself live for ever and is the fountain of life to all who serve him, should encourage us in all our services and in all our sufferings for him, especially considering that he is the *Saviour of all men*. (1.) By his providences he protects the persons, and prolongs the lives, of the children of men. (2.) He has a general good-will to the eternal salvation of all men thus far that he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. He desires not the death of sinners; he is thus far the Saviour of all men that none are left in the same desperate condition that fallen angels are in. Now, if he be thus the Saviour of all men, we may hence infer that much more he will be the rewarder of those who seek and serve him; if he has such a good-will for all his creatures, much more will he provide well for those who are new creatures, who are born again. He is the Saviour of all men, but *especially of those that believe;* and the salvation he has in store for those that believe is sufficient to recompense them for all their services and sufferings. Here we see, [1.] The life of a Christian is a life of labour and suffering: *We labour and suffer*. [2.] The best we can expect to suffer in the present life is reproach for our well-doing, for our work of faith and labour of love. [3.] True Christians trust in the living God; for cursed is the man that trusts in man, or in any but the living God; and those that trust in him shall never be ashamed. *Trust in him at all times.* [4.] God is the general Saviour of all men, as he has put them into a salvable state; but he is in a particular manner the Saviour of true believers; there is then a general and a special redemption.

Conclusion

The word "**savior**" (soter) does not mean savior from the wrath of God in this context, but as in savior of daily life. Savior as providing our daily needs for the elect and non-elect alike. Just like the Lord Jesus taught in Matthew 5:45. But to those who believe He's the Savior who delivers us from the wrath to come and brings us together to the One we've ran from.

This content is taken from this document

[1] Bob Utley, You Can Understand the Bible: Study Guide Commentary Series (NT). Taken from the Bible software The Word. See “Resources.”

[2] R.C. Sproul, The Reformation Study Bible ESV 2005, Ligonier Ministries. Taken from the free online version at BibleGateway

[3] ESV Study Bible, 2008 (Crossway). Taken from the Online Version at www.esvbible.org

[4] John MacArthur, The MacArthur Study Bible 2010, Crossway. Taken from the online version at www.esvbible.org

[5] HCSB (Holman Christian Standard Bible®) Study Bible 2010, Holman Bible Publishers. Taken from the online version at www.mystudybible.com

[6] Matthew Henry, Whole Bible Commentary, taken from the Bible software The Word. See “Resources.”

[7] http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/Lexicon/Lexicon.cfm?strongs=G4990&t=NASB

[8] http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/Lexicon/Lexicon.cfm?strongs=G3122&t=NASB