



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Galatians 2:15-21

'The Necessity of Christ's Death, part V'

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Next Sunday through Wednesday following, Mr. Ross Rainey will be conducting a Bible conference here. Some of you may remember that he was here last year for a similar period of time. Ross is an old friend, former student of mine at Dallas Seminary, many years ago, has been, since he left the seminary, a Bible teacher. He has been an itinerant Bible teacher for all of the time, but has also, from time to time, at least twice, stayed in one place for a number of years, while still doing itinerant ministry. He is the editor of *Focus Magazine*, a Christian magazine, small Christian magazine with a relatively small circulation, but with high quality material in it. I occasionally write for it. [Laughter] Seriously, Ross is one of the finest Christian men that I know. I remember him a student. He was a very diligent student. He is a godly man.

His father, his uncle all have been preachers. His father's now with the Lord. I've made reference to him before in messages. And the characteristic thing about Ross has been his faithfulness in his service. And one thing I like about him, and I don't think I'll ever forget, is his correspondence on the paper that he's had printed, he has put, 'A servant of Jesus Christ,' that's all, just, 'A servant of Jesus Christ,' which I think will give you some idea of the way in which Ross regards his own ministry. I'm sure that you will enjoy his ministry. We hope that you will be here next Sunday to hear him. I'm going to

be here too, and then Monday through Wednesday following. The messages he's giving are on the Psalms, various Psalms. And they will be announced, if they're not in the bulletin today, I didn't notice. Are the topics in the bulletin today? Well, they will be in the bulletin for next week. But we encourage you to come. I know you will enjoy the time, and if you get a chance to meet Ross and Lillian, his wife, who will be here with him. I know that that will be something that you will want to do and remember.

We are looking at the last of our series of messages on, 'The Necessity of Christ's Death,' and for the Scripture reading we're turning to Galatians chapter 2 and verse 15 through verse 21, and while you are finding this passage, let me just say a couple of sentences by way of locating this within the context of the book. You remember that Galatians, in the first two chapters the apostle speaks of his apostleship, defends it to some extent, then begins his discussion of the Doctrine of Justification by Faith, which he develops in chapters 3 and 4, and then concludes with some material concerning ethical response to the message in the last two chapters.

But in chapter 2, he records this interesting incident that occurred in Antioch when Peter was there and when the men from James in Jerusalem came. Peter, who had abandoned his separateness of eating with only the Jews, now since the individuals from James have come begins to, as Paul says, separate himself from them. And the apostle accuses him of hypocrisy. He says the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy with a result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. So when he, Paul, saw that they were not straight forward about the truth of the gospel, before the whole congregation, he rebuked Peter and said to him, as the 14th verse puts it, 'If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles,' that's what he was doing until the men from Jerusalem came, 'And not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles,' now by your activities, 'to live like Jews?' In other words, if you were right originally, you're wrong now. If you are wrong now, you were right then.

Peter unfortunately, is on the horns of a dilemma and he is wrong in both ways. Well having said that, the apostle goes on to write in verse 15, incidentally, these words may have been addressed to Peter then, we’re not absolutely sure about it because the 1st verse of chapter 3 begins, 'You foolish Galatians,' as if turning from Peter to the Galatians, the apostle says some things to him. But that is a rather doubtful interpretation, and we’ll have to leave it as being questionable. At any rate, the 15th verse reads, 'We are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles; nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh will be justified.'

Do you get the impression reading that verse that Paul is repeating himself? Well actually he is. Three times he states in the one verse that we’re not justified by the works of the law, three times in one verse. 'Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh will be justified.'

Three times he states the point, evidently he found in his own ministry that that was something rather difficult for individuals to recognize and believe. And it surely is, because it’s the same problem that exists today, since it’s endemic in human nature, we tend to think that we can earn merit by the things that we do before God. Verse 17, 'But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be!' Now do you find that text rather difficult to understand? Well join the crowd because that happens to be, perhaps, the most difficult verse in Galatians to understand. The words are simple. The thought is difficult. I’m not sure I can unravel it because students of the epistle have debated it more than centuries. But we’ll offer a tentative interpretation in a moment.

'For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor. For through the Law I (Emphasis in the original text, I.) died to the Law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and delivered Himself up for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.'

We lay a little bit of stress on verse 21 as background for the message in a moment. Let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are thankful to Thee for the word of God, and we thank Thee for the apostle's faithful commitment to the proclamation of the message of justification by faith to the Gentiles, to whom Thou didst calling. We thank Thee, Lord, for the goodness in giving us the apostle's words and enabling us to understand them through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

We pray that in our meeting today the spirit may be our teacher, and that we may understand truly the things that the apostle has desired to communicate. We thank Thee for this day. We thank Thee for the beauty of it, and we rejoice, Lord, in all of the blessings of common grace which are our portion as those who have been created by Thee.

We thank Thee for the whole church of Jesus Christ and pray Thy blessing upon the entire body, each individual, though the Holy Spirit, continue to build them up in the faith in order that we, children that we are, may grow to maturity in the things of the Lord.

We look forward to the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and that significant completed stage in the ministry that Thou are giving to us through the spirit as he teaches and sanctifies and blesses the whole church.

We pray Thy blessing on our country. We ask Thy blessing upon the president today in the critical days in which we live. Guide, Lord, the United States of America in such a way that we may be free to proclaim the gospel and may also be preserved from evil.

We pray for Believers Chapel, its elders, and its deacons, and the members and friends and the visitors who are here with us today, each one of them. And Lord, particularly, we remember today those who have requested our prayers, some who are having severe trials, some who also are sick and ill and have need of physical ministry. Through those who minister to them, bless them. Give healing in accordance with Thy will. And for those who have particularly requested our prayers, we pray, oh God, strengthen them, encourage them, and sustain them by Thy grace and by Thy presence. Supply the needs that exist in each individual case.

We pray for the outreach, the ministry of the word of God through the radio, through the television, through the written page from, not only the chapel, but from other places where the word of God according to Scripture goes forth.

May our meeting, as we sing, glorify him who loved us and gave himself for us, and in whom, and through whom, we pray. Amen.

[Message] One of the interesting things about preaching the same message at 11:00 that I do at 8:30 is the different way in which I feel as I give these messages. Sometimes, though I confess, much more rarely, I feel as if the Lord is with me, and the message is one that went over well. And then when I come to 11:00 and the 2nd chapter, things don't go so well. Generally speaking, it's better because I think that being a speaker I'm a little bit more familiar with the material since I've gone over it again just so shortly before. Well, at 8:30 this morning what I intended to say to those who were there, to my mind, did not go over too well. Not that it was material that was distasteful, but I just wasn't able to present it too well. I do hope that, as a result of a second try, that

we’ll do just a little bit better, but this, for those of you who have found the subject of the necessity of Christ’s death a little difficult to handle, this is the last of our series of five messages on that topic.

The passage that we’re looking at contains the verse that I would like to say a little bit more about, the 21st verse, and that really is the basis of the title, 'The Necessity of Christ’s Death.' The passage itself has to do with what Luther called the Article of a Standing or Falling Church. He was referring to justification by faith. And it was that important for Luther, that is if a church proclaimed the Doctrine of Justification by Faith and faithfully proclaimed it, and continued to proclaim it, then that church would be a church that would stand. But if a church abandoned the Doctrine of Justification by Faith, and we might add apart from the works of the law, then that church would, ultimately, fall. That does not mean, of course, that it would not continue to exist, but that it would fail and fall as a useful tool in the hands of the Lord. One of the greatest of modern theologians, who still is living, though has retired from his teaching ministry, has said that the Doctrine of Justification by Faith touches man’s life at its heart, at the point of its relation to God. In other words, in order to understand God and in order to enter into a relationship with him, it’s necessary for us to understand that we are justified, not by works, but by faith, that is faith in what someone else has done in our behalf, the Lord Jesus and his cross work.

Jim Packer, who has been a speaker here and is well known in the evangelical world, has commented that the Doctrine of Justification by Faith is like Atlas. It bears a whole world on its shoulders, the entire evangelical knowledge of God the Savior. In other words, if we were really to work out the Doctrine of Justification by Faith we would comprehend the essence of the Christian faith. Luther also said, incidentally, in his own characteristic way, for he was famous for saying what was on his mind, sometimes he, no doubt, should have not said some of the things that he said because he was a rather coarse man in some ways, but nevertheless, he would say what was on his heart, and he

said with reference to justification by Faith that, 'It was the principle article of all Christian doctrine, wherein the knowledge of all godliness consisted. Most necessary, it is, therefore, that we should know this article well, teach it unto others,' and then this is characteristic of Luther, 'and beat it into their heads continually.' [Laughter] 'For it is very tender so it is soon hurt.' So what I'm trying to do is to beat it into your heads continually, and I think if Luther had a chance to examine our congregation, he would say, 'They are like mine were.' Because it's true of human nature, every one of us naturally rebels against spiritual truth. It's not adapted to us. We're sinners. And because we are sinners and because we, therefore, in our minds, have a touch of blindness, even after we've been converted, but before clearly, and because our wills are rebels, rebellious against God and our emotions are corrupt, when the things of God come to us we react negatively to them. That is the way in which we respond to truth. That's what Scripture says from its beginning to its end.

Justification rests upon the atonement, that is, it's by virtue of what Christ did that we can preach a justification by faith. For example, in the epistle to the Romans, when the apostle, in his great chapter on justification by faith, Romans chapter 3, he states that we are, 'justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God displayed publically as propitiation by His blood, through faith.' Well that's what we've been talking about. We've been talking about the satisfaction, the propitiation, the way by which God has satisfied the holiness and righteousness of God by offering himself up as a sacrifice, and so doing satisfying God's righteousness bearing the penalty and freeing God to do for us what he and his love and mercy would like to do for sinners. So justification that great doctrine we proclaim, a man may be justified, not by what he does, he cannot be justified by what he does, but he can be justified by faith in what Christ has done for him. That rests upon what Christ has accomplished in the atonement, the satisfaction of the divine justice, intended and accomplished by his vicarious death.

Now the apostle alludes to that right here in verses 19 through 21 when he says,

'For through the Law I, and my representative, died to the Law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and delivered Himself up for me. I don't nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, or works, then Christ died needlessly.'

Lying back of these verses is the atonement and the satisfaction, Paul puts it more in the language of union with our representative, the Lord Jesus, but nevertheless, in that clause, 'Who loved me and delivered Himself up for me,' is what we say is the satisfaction that Christ has offered to the Lord God in heaven.

Now we've been centering attention upon the necessity of Christ's death in satisfaction since it's often denied. We've tried to introduce in our expositions some of the objections that have been raised by contemporary theologians, and by some ancient theologians, and their theories are still believed, in one way or another, by modern theologians and modern preachers because preachers represent, generally speaking, the kind of theology that they have been taught in their training. For example, we mentioned that some deny the distributive justice of God. That is, they deny that God will not clear the guilty. They just deny that. They do not attempt to beat around the bush. They just say, 'God's justice does not need satisfaction.' They also, occasionally, will say the idea that the Son of God expiated sin and propitiated the Father suggests that there is a seism, that's the way you pronounce it, seism in the Trinity. That is, the Father is demanding satisfaction, demanding that a penalty be paid, the Son, on the other hand, is offering that which satisfies the Father, so they seem to be working at cross purposes. And so we have a God in heaven who is not merciful, but who is demanding, and the second person who is merciful and offering, so we have a seism in the Trinity, it is stated, or it is claimed.

Then we have some who just say there’s no such thing as a biblical concept of punishment, and to contend that Christ is punished for our sins is simply not biblical teaching. Well we pointed to a number of texts, did not point to all, of course, because it’s all through the Scriptures, that indicate that punishment is a biblical concept. Then we referred to the Moral Influence Theory of the Atonement last Sunday, in which, and this is very common among people who would be called liberal in their Christian theology and in their Christian profession, many of our professing Christian churches would follow a Moral Influence Theory of the Atonement, although they might not express it technically, that is, that Christ’s death was intended to produce a moral impression upon sinners leading to their spiritual reformation by virtue of the impression of the suffering death of the Lord upon their hearts and minds, that they would be moved to spiritual reformation. But by their understanding, Christ does not pay the required penalty for sin. And we talked about objections to that theory too that, in the first place, it’s not taught anywhere in Scripture itself, although whatever there is of good in it, that is that the death of Christ is a touching death, is contained in the Orthodox Theory.

Today I’d like to make reference to the Governmental Theory of the Atonement and just say a few things with reference to it because the Governmental Theory of the Atonement is an atonement that can be traced at least to the 16th century and Hugo Grotius, of the Netherlands, a very intelligent man. He was a Dutch jurist and statesman. His work on the atonement on Christ’s ministry has had a wide influence. Grotius contended that God’s justice is not vindicatory, but simply, governmentally rectitude based upon a benevolent regard for the well being of his subjects, that God deals with us out of his benevolent attitude toward us. He’s not demanding a satisfaction of his holy law. The law, as a matter of fact, is the product of God’s will, and since it’s the product of God’s will, it’s relaxable. God may change his will with regard to that. God has the sovereign right to pardon. He is God, and he can pardon, and pardon on terms other than the full payment of that which is required, by his holiness and righteousness. Governmental

Rectitude determines God to condition pardon upon an imposing example of suffering, and Christ’s death is not the payment of a penalty but an imposing example of suffering and death. What he is seeking to do in it is to make the point that sin cannot be indulged in with impunity. That is, that if you sin, you may expect to suffer something by reason of your sin, but not the full penalty, as if God is a holy God and demands that there be an atonement sacrifice by which the penalty is paid in full, as Orthodox believers have believed. Therefore Christ’s sufferings were not punishment, but an example of a determination to punish here after. It was not really punishment, but just an indication of what God intended to do. The sufferings were not designed to satisfaction divine justice in the being of God, but to give the public moral mind, a sin deterring motive, so that as we looked at Christ, we would be deterred from sin, but not according to Scripture, presented with a Savior, a representative Savior, who suffers for us and in our stead, as our substitute bearing what we deserved to the full.

Many Arminians have embraced the Governmental Theory. Many of them have embraced it openly. Grotius was one of the leaders in the beginning of what we know as Arminianism, and as a result of that, Arminianism has been attracted to the Governmental Theory because it has no place for penal substitution. And an Arminian would not like substitution because substitution suggests that Christ is our substitute and bore our penalty for us, and then there is no way for those, for whom he substituted, to have to suffer anything else. So we would have either on the one hand, Universalism, in which everybody is saved, but since that’s so obviously contrary to the texts of Scripture, the other alternative is, those for whom he substituted must therefore be a limited number and they can never be brought into judgment again.

But an Arminian doesn’t like that because he doesn’t like the atonement of Christ to be intended for a limited number, the elect, the people of God. So, by Governmental Theory, he is able to try to bridge the gap of these two alternatives and say Christ has given us a great example of the fact that God intends to reward sin with some kind of

disfavor and punishment, and if we believe in Christ, we shall be saved, but Christ did not substitute for a particular people. So you can see that this would be a very suitable kind of doctrine for those who do not believe in the fact that Christ died to pay the penalty for the people of God as their substitute bearing, to the full, all of their judgment so they have no further judgment to experience themselves.

Now we’re not going to deal with all of the implications of that because that would, of course, take us into a number of other things. But I want you to see that, from our study, that according to Scripture, the death of Christ is necessary, and also that, in the expression of the necessity of it, it is set forth as a substitutionary death. And if it is, then the Governmental Theory of the Atonement cannot stand.

So let’s take a look now at our passage. We’ll go through it rather briefly. If you’re interested in more detail, you can look up the Galatians series of messages given not too many years ago. I haven’t learned much since then about Galatians that I would want to change, so if you want to know what I think about it, and that’s not necessarily what Paul thinks, you understand, but if you want to know what I think about it, why, get the tape on Galatians 2:15 through 21. Let me just briefly go through it, and we’ll say a little bit more about what is suggested by verse 21 particularly. This is a passage in the context of the great confrontation between Peter and Paul, and Peter had been in Antioch, and evidently had been living like the Gentiles, had not been following the prescriptions that Judaism had laid upon the Jews with regarding the eating of meats, and meats sacrificed to idols, and other things and particularly also that in Judaism of the time, a Jewish man was not suppose to sit down at a meal with Gentiles.

And Peter, because of his conviction, apparently, that he was no longer under such laws had been eating with the Gentiles, but when some men came from James in Jerusalem, the apostle began to compromise, act, play the hypocrite, and as a result, began to withdraw from the gentiles and separate himself from them. The apostle says in the 12th verse, 'For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with

the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.'

Now you can just imagine if you've ever been in any kind of church disturbance, of church fight, that that was something of significance. He feared the, 'party of the circumcision.' Now you might say he feared because he might not be invited to the apostles Bible conference next spring in Jerusalem, but it was much more than that. He knew that these things caused a great deal of difficulty among the believers, and these men had come from James, the heart of a much deeper attraction and attachment to the Law of Moses. And so, 'When they came he began to withdraw, hold himself aloof,' from the Gentiles because he feared these men who came from James. And furthermore, because Peter was a leader, the rest of the Jews joined with him in hypocrisy. Paul states, 'With the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their dissimulation. So, Barnabas, that good and noble man, that son of consolation, is himself carried away by it, which indicates to us, of course, that a good man can make errors spiritually as anyone else.

So when Paul saw that they were not straight forward about the truth of the gospel and the question of how a person should be justified comes into question, by Peter's actions, and Barnabas' and others, he determined that he must do something about it, and we, even though we may not realize it, we are deeply indebted to the Apostle Paul, that he stood up at this point for the truth. He was like an Athanasius with Arius. He was like a Luther and a Calvin with the apostasy and departure of their day. And like others down through the years, who at a point of time, had stood for truth when it was very distasteful, personally, for them to do it.

So he stood up in the meeting before them all, and he gave to Peter a judgment from which Peter, obviously, could not extricate himself. 'If you, a Jew, live like the Gentiles,' as you were, 'and not like the Jews, how is it now that you,' by your actions of separating yourselves from the Gentiles suggest to them that they must live like that too, 'compel the Gentiles to live like Jews.' So, you're a Jew. You were living like the

Gentiles. And now, you’re a Jew, living like the Jews. So, as I said in the Scripture reading, either you were right then, Peter, or you’re right now, but at any case if you’re right now, you were wrong then, if you were right then, you are wrong now. So Peter cannot extricate himself from the inconsistency of the situation. This must have been a very traumatic thing in the local church when Paul arose and confronted Peter to his face, and accused him of departure from the truth of God. And mind you, this is long after Peter had made his great confession, and long after the Lord Jesus had spoken to him as the representative of the apostles, that whosoever sins, they remit, would be remitted, and whosoever sins were retained they would be retained. And Peter had carried on a ministry to this point, and no doubt an effective ministry. But it illustrated the fact that even apostles may err and thus those of us who teach the word of God, those of you who teach the word of God, need to be even more humble in your teaching of the word.

Now these words that follow may have been addressed to Peter, as I mentioned, but we’re not certain about that. We won’t make any point over it. One thing does come clear, that the apostle in these words that follow deals with the ancient question that Job asked so many hundreds of years before this, 'I know it is so over truth, but how should man be just with God?' Verse 16 states,

'Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.'

What does it mean to be justified? Well Scripture says that justification is the act by which God declares us righteous. When we are justified we are not made righteous, we are declared righteous. It’s the work of sanctification following justification to bring us into conformity to our Lord. The process of making us righteous, never completed as

long as we are in the flesh. Luther once said, '*Simul Justus et Peccator*,' 'At the same time just, and a sinner.' So as long as we are in the flesh, we are sinners. He was right. James even calls us that in his epistle. But at the same time, we are just by the declaration of God. That's our legal standing, our forensic standing. So to be justified is to be declared righteous.

We don't have time to defend that. Again, you can find that, if you're interested, in some of the other ministry of the chapel, by not only me, but by others. So justification is by Christ alone, that is he's the external cause by what he did on the cross. That's why we say, *solo Christo*, 'By Christ alone.' It's by the gospel alone, that's the instrumental cause from the divine side, it's through the gospel, through the Good News concerning the satisfaction Christ has rendered. By grace alone, that's the internal inciting cause from God, it's through grace. It's by grace alone, *sola gratia* as we often hear preachers put it. So that it's to be declared righteous.

The negative religion of the man in the street is we are not justified by faith, we are justified by the things that we do. Paul in his three-fold statement, 'We are not justified by the works of the law,' repeating it three times, emphasizes the fact, it's not what we do by which we are justified, not anything, not simply good works, but even good, and these are just good works, but different kinds, good sacramental works. That is, baptism, the Lord's Supper, things that we are called upon in the word of God to do. The ordinances, they do not justify either. When we have been justified, then we observe the ordinances. We don't observe ordinances to be justified. So, justification then, as Paul repeats it three times in order to make the point to rule out confusion, and the confusion is necessary because we are blind. This is an astonishing testimony it seems to me, to the darkness of the human heart that Paul has to, in one verse, three times state it. We're not justified by the works of the law. Now if you were a believer there and you understood things, you might want to raise your hand and say, 'Paul let's go on to something else. You've made that point.' But the fact that he made it as he did and it's

contained in Scripture suggests to me it’s the kind of point we need. We need to know we’re not justified by the works of the law. So it means to be declared righteous through what Christ has done in our place.

The old puritan used to say, 'Justified means just as if I'd never sinned.' We could add, since we, at least I was taught, when I studied the catechisms, that sins were composed of two kinds of sin, sins of omission, sins of commission. Just as if I'd never sinned, includes sins of omission, as well as, sins of commission. So actually if I were the old puritan I would say, 'Justified means just as if I had never sinned and just as if I had done everything right,' in order to make the point. But if you understood sins of omission and sins of commission it's perfectly alright to say, 'Just as if I'd never sinned,' because that means you have done everything you should have done, and everything that you did that you were not suppose to do, that's been forgiven too.

William Cunningham said, 'The righteousness of God is that righteousness of God which God's righteousness requires him to require.' And by justification and the grace of God, there stands to the account of S. Lewis Johnson, Jr. righteousness of God. Isn't that marvelous? The righteousness of God. So when he looks at my righteousness, and as the great judge of the universe, he can say, 'No charge can be brought against him, acquitted.' Not only acquitted, but innocent of any charges, Christ has borne the penalty for me. That's what it means to be justified. Well, you know, about ten years ago, we had all these little signs on the bumpers, 'We have found it.' Well we have found it. We've really found it, justification by faith through the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ who acted as our representative.

Now the apostle deals with the question, 'Does faith justification make Christ the minister of sin?' And he declares no, that's not true, the fact that he disregards the law of the clean and unclean meats and seeks justification in Christ does not mean that Christ promotes sin. He cannot deal with this in detail. He accepts the premise, and denies the conclusion, as is characteristic of him when he uses the expression, 'God forbid.' And

then in verse 19 through verse 21, he talks about his own experience, introducing it by a, 'For.' 'For I,' emphatic in the great text, 'For I though the law, died to the law that I might live to God.' 'I died,' Peter's acting as if he's still alive because he's putting himself under legal prescriptions, or things like them, and he's acting as if he's still alive. The law was designed by God to bring us to death, to the realization of our death, of course. It's very much like a glass of water which you might have in a room for days and days, and all of the dust of the room and all of the impurities in the room that have gathered there have gradually settled to the bottom of the glass, and the glass looks absolutely pure and clean. You might want to take it up and drink it. But if you take a clean instrument, like a spoon that's just been made clean and stir it, the dust on the bottom begins to move up through the water, and even possibly some stench might arise from the water, and you discover that the water was not clean at all.

Now what caused it? Was the clean spoon the cause? No, the clean spoon just stirred up what was there. That's what the law does. The law in one of its offices, if we set ourselves before it will act just like a clean spoon for its holy, just and good, and it will point out all of the wickedness, the stench that is in the human heart. That's one of the legitimate uses of the law and one of the still legitimate uses of the law for the unrighteous as Paul states in 1 Timothy. So when a person wants to go back to the law it's like saying, 'I've come out of the graveyard, but I want to go back now to the graveyard and get back in the tomb.' Paul says, 'I through law died to law that I might live to God.'

He expresses it even more significantly in verse 20 by pointing to the representative union. 'I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God,' not, 'the faith of the Son of God,' we're never told in Scripture that we live by Christ's faith. Our faith is in him, in the sense that we rest upon him to do what the Scriptures say he will do in our hearts. 'Who loved me and delivered Himself up for me.'

Now you can see from this that his death was voluntary, 'He delivered Himself up for me.' 'He delivered Himself up.' It's voluntary. It's penal for he delivered Himself up, he handed himself over for judgment, and it's substitutionary. It's for me. That's the heart of the satisfaction. That's what Christ does, and furthermore, Paul says, it's definite. He did it for me, for me. He looks at it as being something done for him, specifically.

Now someone at this point might say, 'Well, Paul you ignore the grace of God's gift of the law, for righteousness.' You can see how someone who did not understand would say, 'Paul God gave us the law, and that was a gift of grace.' Well in one sense we could say that. It was a gift of grace. It was a gift of grace that we have that marvelous insight into the nature and being of God, the Ten Commandments. But the use to which they are put is something else. They never were intended to be the means of salvation. But it is a marvelous work of grace that we have the Ten Commandments, and we should appreciate them as a revelation of the righteousness character of God. Paul, you ignore the grace of God's gift of the law, but they would add, for righteousness.

So, Paul answers that implicit objection, he says, 'Look, my doctrine does, 'not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.' Actually Paul says, 'You make Christ's death a needless event.' This is a remarkable statement. It's one of the great statements of the necessity of the death of Christ because we know that Christ did die and here we see it's absolutely essential for justification by faith and the deliverance of us from our sins. Think of that. Then Christ died needlessly, my friend, if it's possible for us to be saved by what we do, why did Christ die? What's the need for him to die? He died needlessly. The whole passion of Christ has little significance in the light of what it would have otherwise. Needless, that word is a word, incidentally, rendered in the New Testament 'without a cause,' as many people know. So he died without a cause.

One of the German commentators in a word gazette's *Order Evangelium* has said, 'His death was worthless. It was baseless. It was senseless.' Myron, one of the older

commentators, on Galatians said, 'The death of Christ would have been an act of extravagance, if one could be justified by what he does.' Even the New English Bible translates it, 'Christ died for nothing.' Professor Berkouwer puts it this way, 'If it were really true that Christ’s death was not necessary for salvation and that one could be justified by the works of the law, then God would be guilty of throwing himself away.' What’s the point? He would throw himself away, the second person of the Trinity giving himself to that great act of the cross in which he satisfies the holiness and justice of God in an atoning act that even the most spiritual of us could not fully understand. It’s all of no significance. God threw himself away, if we could be justified by righteousness. It’s to deny the nature of God and to deny the mission of Jesus Christ. Mr. Stott says, 'It wouldn’t be a noble thing, it would be an ignoble thing if Christ suffered under those consequences. I like the way one of my old teachers used to put it. He used to say, 'If righteousness could be ours, by the Mosaic Law, by what we do, then the greatest blunder in the history of the universe was the cross of Jesus Christ, and God allowed it. So when Paul says, 'If righteousness were by the law,' Christ died without a cause.

Well I think you can see from this that the Governmental Theory of the Atonement does not really fit the facts of Revelation embraced by the Socinians, many Arminians, and for many whom, in many ways, we would regard within the family of the faithful. Governmental rectitude, for the subject’s wellbeing, was that which moved God, according to this theory. The law is relaxable. He has a sovereign right to pardon by imposing an example of suffering, he can say, 'I do not require a full and total payment of all of your debt, but I will accept something less.'

As I mentioned last week, something like the nations money center banks now, dealing with the debt of Mexico, and Brazil, and Argentina, and the third world countries, this vast amount of debt that has been piled up that our banks are supposed to have from these countries and now, JP Morgan company, together with the government and other agencies, are trying to work out some way by which they can cancel those debts for fifty

percent, approximately, of their value. That would be exactly what we have here, in the sense that this kind of theory is called *akeptiladio*; that is, it’s acceptable to God to do it this way, although it’s not a full payment. In other words, God accepts that which is less than righteousness and justice requires. He relaxes his law. Look, my Christian friend, if God could do that then he could relax all of his requirements. He could relax from fifty percent to twenty-five percent, and there’s not a thing in the world that can keep the JP Morgan Company and Mexico and Brazil and Argentina, if the others all agree to it, to make it ten percent, pay ten percent.

They always say if you owe money to the bank, and if you owe enough money to the bank, you control the bank. Well if that could be done, you can see a God who relaxes his justice, in other words, does not exercise that which is essential to his being is a changeable God, a mutable God, not an infinite God, not an eternal God, not really a God at all. But we won’t think about things like that. So it fails. Only a bona fide punishment can be an example, or proof, of intent to punish. This ignores God’s essential justice, resolves virtue into love. Love is a virtue, but it’s one of the attributes of God and not all. If everything becomes love, what happens to all of the other attributes of God, his mercy, his justice, his holiness, his righteousness, etcetera, the whole list of them? Calvary without punishment is no example of the intent of God to punish sin. The same sovereign, arbitrary compelling justice which requires less than its dues, as I say, can compel contentment with no suffering at all.

There’s an ancient story which some of the theologians tell about a man by the name of Zaleucus who was the ruler of a certain territory, and he propounded a law which was to the effect that an adulterer should have his eyes put out. And one of the first convicted of adultery was his own son. So he solved the question by putting out one of his eyes, and one of his son’s eyes. And obviously what he has done, he has sacrificed justice to his love, and not his self, and his love to justice because obviously if one eye of a ruler and one eye of the son are put out, no one has been blinded. Two eyes have

been put out, but the eyes of two different people. So I say he preferred to sacrifice justice to himself rather than himself to justice. That’s what any theory that permits a holy or righteous God in heaven to contend, through Scripture, that he forgives sins on any other ground than a complete payment, fully, of all that is due the Lord God by our sin. And my Christian friend, I must confess to you I could have no assurance of the forgiveness of my sins, and the ultimate solution of that question, if I did not know that Jesus Christ had paid that debt to the full.

So Mr. Grotius, you can have your theory. I don’t like it. And Abelard, you can have your theory, and I don’t like it. And Anselm, there are things about your theory that I don’t like either, but you’re on the mark on some of the points of Christian theory. Paul, I love yours because it satisfies the need of the human heart to know that our debt has been paid by what Christ has done. Now if you were to say to me, 'Well if he’s paid the debt of everybody, then why doesn’t everybody go free?' Well for the simple reason that God, in his intent that Christ pay the penalty for the sins of sinners and make a payment sufficient for the sins of all, directed toward his people, he also intended, part of his intent, was that that atonement should become available to the people of God through the instrumentality of faith. That was part of his intent. That it should be ours by faith.

Sorry. I have to stop. Time is up. One must believe. The fact that there is bread sitting on a table doesn’t mean that my hunger is assuaged. The fact that last year enough grain was produced to feed the whole of that world -- if that were true, I don’t know whether it is or not, it may be, those people up in the Midwest can really grow corn and wheat and so on, let’s say that enough is grown to feed the whole world -- that does not mean that there are not a lot of people dying by starvation. For the simple reason, that the provision must be appropriated. An undrawn deposit means that a person has not paid the debt. If I were to say to you, there is an infinite amount of money in the First Republic Bank, well that would be a dangerous thing, I don’t know of any bank in this part of the country in which I would want to put an infinite amount of money, in fact

almost in this country, but maybe over there in North Carolina where they have some sensible people. Let’s say it’s in First Wachovia Bank in Charlotte, a sensible bank. It’s there, and it should be said that this money is available for those who have debts. Well if a creditor came up to you and said, ‘Where’s your money?’ ‘It’s on deposit at First Wachovia.’ It doesn’t pay a debt. It doesn’t pay a debt to have money on deposit. One must present it, payment.

So you, the atonement has been made for sinners, sufficient for sin, come to Christ through God’s intent that the atonement be received through faith, receive it as a free gift. Believe in him and be saved. May God help you to come. Sorry to keep you over. No football games, nothing to do but sit in front of the fire this evening, and reflect on God’s marvelous grace and justification by faith. Come to Christ, trust him, and rest on what he’s done. And know, by virtue of the fact, that he’s paid that penalty in full. Your debts paid. You’re free. Enjoy your forgiveness of sins. Let’s stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we give Thee thanks and praise for the goodness that Thou hast shown to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. How merciful it was, Lord, that Thou shouldst intend, desire, plan and purpose that a substitution should, and could, be made. And not only that, that Thou didst provide the substitute, which we could not provide, and not only that, but in love and mercy Thou, the eternal God, has become...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]