



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Basic Bible Doctrine, John 3:14-15; Galatians 3:10-14

"Work of Christ as Priest, Part I"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Let's look to the Lord in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we come to Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and we give Thee thanks and praise for the goodness that Thou hast manifested to us in so many ways. We thank Thee for the insight that Thou hast given to us in the things of the Lord Jesus Christ and we praise Thee that we're able to know the truth by virtue of the illumination of the Holy Spirit. We thank Thee that we do not have to wander around in the no man's land of a knowledgeless kind of understanding of divine things, but we are able to know that we know Thee.

We praise Thee and give Thee thanks for the Lord Jesus Christ and for the atonement that he has accomplished. And as we study it over the next two or three weeks, his priestly ministry, may we come to a deeper understanding and a deeper appreciation of all that it means for the Son of God to shed his blood for the redemption of human sin. We pray in his' name. Amen.

[Message] Tonight our subject is, "The Work of Christ as Priest", first study entitled "The Necessity of the Atonement." Then next week it will be "The Work of Christ as

Priest: The Nature of the Atonement" and the following week it will be "The Work of Christ as Priest (our third study): The Design of the Atonement." So this is the first of three studies on the work of Jesus Christ as Priest.

Now I'd like to turn to two passages in the Bible for our Scripture reading tonight. The first in the Gospel of John, verses 14 and 15; John chapter 3, verses 14 and 15. And here in the great chapter containing the interview with Nicodemus, we read, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

And the important word is the word "must." Not "shall be", but "must" the Son of man be lifted up. There is a necessity bound up in the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The second passage is Galatians chapter 3, verse 10 through verse 14; Galatians chapter 3, verse 10 through verse 14. And here we have a passage that has to do with the atonement, primarily with the nature of the atonement, but I want to read it because we will refer to it later in our study tonight. Galatians 3, verse 10, the apostle writes, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them'. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, 'The just shall live by faith'. And the law is not of faith: but, the man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, 'Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree': That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

Last week, in the first of our studies on the work of Christ, in which we dealt with the work of Christ as Prophet, we pointed out that Calvin was the first to recognize the important distinction of the offices of Jesus Christ, and to gather his discussion of the mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus around them. He was the first to point out that our Lord was Prophet, Priest, and King and then in his discussion of Soteriology, use those

divisions for his own structure in the presentation of the Soteriology of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pointed out, too, that this was not simply a Calvinistic methodology, but that the Lutherans also followed Calvin in this. And, in fact, I think it's fair to say that in general, orthodox scholars have been very much attracted to the work of Christ as Prophet, the work of Christ as Priest, the work of Christ as King, as being an effective way to set forth the Soteriology of the Son of God.

The prophet is one who represents God with men. The priest is one who represents men with God and the king rules over men for God. All three of these offices: prophet, priest and king, are Messianic offices and that is illustrated by the fact that each of the offices: the prophet, the priest, and the king, were offices in which those who entered into that office were anointed with oil. And, you know that the term *mashach* means "anointed"; the word from which we get Messiah. So they are all Messianic figures all anointed with oil as they entered into their office.

We said that the subject of prophet was very, very important, because it touched on some contemporary aberrations from the faith. Such as the Mormons who do not understand what the Bible teaches about a prophet and, therefore, they are confused in their theology not being Christian at all.

Well, the same thing is true of the work of Christ as a priest. It is an important subject because it touches the contemporary life of the church. The problems in connection with the priestly ministry of the Lord Jesus touch liberal Soteriology. Put another way, touch the Soteriology of liberal theologians and, if we understand our Lord's work as priest, we can understand the ways in which liberals do not follow the teaching of the word of God.

For example, one of the theories by which men have sought to explain the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ is the moral influence theory of the atonement. And by this theory, it is perceived by the men who hold it, that the suffering of Jesus Christ was

designed to subdue the alienation of men by an exhibition of his self-sacrificing love. In other words, Jesus Christ came simply to influence men like the mystical theory.

It's primarily subjective. Reconciliation is conceived of as a change of attitude that God effects in man. Not a change of attitude toward man on the part of God, but a different feeling that men obtain when they look at the cross of Christ and seeing the love that he has manifested in the giving of himself, they are changed by that love into a life of piety and a life of following the Lord Jesus Christ. So that his death is an exemplary death as the Socinians taught for these two theories the Socinian and the moral influence theory are very close together. The cross is exemplary. The cross is designed to exercise a moral influence upon us, but it's not the place where Jesus Christ died under the penalty of sin as our substitute.

Now among the theologians and philosophers who have held to this theory in some form or another are: Abelard, the famous medieval theologian; Socinus; Immanuel Kant; Horace Bushnell; Richel, the famous German theologian; F. D. Maurice, a well known British Theologian; Walter Rauschenbusch, one of the best known of the liberals of the 19th Century; and in our present day, Martin Luther King; yes, Martin Luther King. Martin Luther King held to a moral influence theory of the atonement. That is why Martin Luther King, so far as Soteriology was concerned, was unsound in the faith.

Now there is another kind of theory that men often appeal to as biblical and that is the governmental theory, which was set forth by a well known learned lawyer in the 17th Century, Hugo Grotius. In Grotius' theory, and it has its modern advocates today among the Arminians, the atonement is here interpreted as an exhibition of the righteousness of God, not the satisfaction of the holiness of God. God forgives men simply on the basis of his forbearance if we will just acknowledge his righteousness. Christ's death is not a payment for human sin, but it's a tribute to the sanctity of the divine government. All that Jesus Christ did was to manifest the fact that God is a holy God.

But what he actually did does not bear a direct relationship to what God required by virtue of his holiness.

Now this theory has been held by some men who in many ways were quite sound. Ralph Wardlaw, one of the congregational theologians whose theology was a theology that Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, President of Dallas Seminary, liked very much. And you will find it quoted often in Dr. Chafer's theology. He did not hold Wardlaw's views on this point; I hasten to point out, because Dr. Chafer was sound on the necessity of the atonement and on its expiatory and propitiatory nature. But nevertheless, Wardlaw's three volume theology is a well known theology and a highly regarded one in many ways. But he held to this erratical view of the atonement of Jesus Christ.

John Miley, one of the greatest of the Arminian theologians, has held to this theory. Not all Arminians hold to this theory so I'm not trying to attack the Arminians, aren't you surprised? I'm not trying to attack the Arminians in this respect. But what I'm merely saying is this that what we need when we study something like the priestly work of the Lord Jesus Christ is to understand what the Bible says about it for then we shall be much better able to understand what Christianity truly is.

Well, we turn now to Jesus Christ's ministry as the Priest of God and we're going to deal tonight with "The Necessity of the Atonement." And in our outline, Roman One: "The Priestly Office of Christ"; capital "A": "The Scriptural Office of Priest." The office of priest and of the priesthood itself is most fully developed in the New Testament in the Epistle to the Hebrews. In the Old Testament we find it developed in the Books of Exodus and Leviticus, primarily; although there is a great deal in the Old Testament about the priest, of course. But we're looking at the scriptural office of a priest.

Now at the bottom of the idea of priesthood is this: "Men have no liberty of access to God. We are unable of ourselves to approach God." The reason for this is that we are sinners and God is a holy God. That is the reason why almost all orthodox theologians believe that when a man gets down upon his knees and prays to God, apart from the

Christian faith, apart from the acknowledgement of the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, God does not hear that prayer. Man does not have access to God except through our Lord Jesus Christ. He needs a priest. He, because he is a sinner, stands under the judgment of God.

The Bible says of the Lord God as he looks at man, now the prophet Habakkuk speaking says, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity." So at the bottom of the idea of priesthood is this, "Men have no liberty of access to God because they are sinners." Therefore, the whole idea of priesthood is designed to act as the means by which sinful men may have access to God. In the scriptural office of priest, in the looking at it from the standpoint of the Old Testament priest, these ideas were present in priesthood. First of all, the priest was a mediator. That is, as I mentioned in the introduction, he represents men with God. So he is a mediator. He stands between men and God, but he stands on the side of men with God.

He also, because he's a priest and because it's necessary for a sacrifice to be offered, he offered sacrifices. And then also, having offered the sacrifice, he made intercession on the basis of the sacrifices that he offered. He offered sacrifices for certain people and then having offered the sacrifices, he engaged in intercessory work for those for whom he offered the sacrifice. So the three ideas of: mediation, sacrifice, and intercession, are the three primary ideas developed in the Old Testament picture of the priest.

On the Day of Atonement, you will remember, that it was specifically stated that the high priest alone was able to enter into the holiest of all. The priests of the Old Testament, even though God recognized them as mediators, the ordinary priest could not enter into the tabernacle into the holy place. Only the high priest could on the Day of Atonement, one day out of the year. This was designed to teach that there was no access to God on the part of men. In that 16th chapter in the 2nd verse of the Book of Leviticus,

it is specifically stated that men were not to draw near to the Lord God, only the high priest in certain garments on that one day out of the year.

Now if you read the Bible, you gain the impression then that no one had access to God except that high priest on that one day out of the year. But, you see he was a representative man; he stood for the whole of the nation. And so, those who were believers in him had access, representation.

Now in the New Testament, we have further definition and description of the priestly office and I would like for you to turn now to Hebrews chapter 5, verse 1 and following, where the writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews contrasts the priesthood of Jesus Christ with the priests of the Old Testament. Hebrews chapter 5 and verse 1, the writer says, he's just said that we have a great high priest who's passed into the heavens. Well, that's the introduction to the qualifications for the office of high priest, "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin."

Now you can see the idea of mediation because he offers both gifts and sacrifices for sins and he is taken from among men and ordained for men. So being ordained for men; he is the mediator; he is the representative; he offers gifts and sacrifices, so sacrifice. Later on in the 7th chapter and the 25th verse, the author will say, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing that he ever liveth to make intercession for them." So the idea then of mediation, of sacrifice, and of intercession, these are the things that characterize the Old Testament priest.

Now the functions of the priest then have to do with mediation, sacrifices, and intercession. If we had time, we could turn to Hebrews chapter 2, verse 17 and verse 18 and then the entire 7th chapter of the Epistle of the Hebrews is an unfolding of the nature and the function of the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is a priest not after the order of Aaron, but after the order of Melchizedek. He is an eternal priest.

Now let me say a word about the validity of the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, of course, to be valid, the author says here that he should be appointed of God. He should have certain qualifications. And, of course, to be a truly eternal priest, one who can really do us some good, he must be not only a human being, but he must be a divine being. Well, let's notice what he says further in Hebrews chapter 5. He says, "Now every priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for he himself also is compassed with infirmity. (Now he's talking here about the priests of the Old Testament and how they themselves being compassed with infirmity being infirm men are able to enter in sympathetically with the experiences of the men for whom they serve as priest. You gain the impression then that the qualification for priesthood includes a compassion, an ability to enter into the experiences of those for whom the priests serve. Now we read on, verse 3,) And by reason of this he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins. (Because they are sinners, too, he must be able to offer for sin. And then in the 4th verse he says,) And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron."

In other words, no one could become a priest of his own will. He could not say, in Israel, "I think I would like to be a priest. I would like to serve the people of God by being a priest." That was impossible. In the first place, he had to be of a certain tribe. But, fundamentally, he had to be chosen by God and he chose a certain tribe. He chose the tribe of Levi.

In Exodus chapter 28, and verse 1, we read these words, and these are the words in which the author is thinking about when he says that a priest must be appointed of God. In Exodus 28 and verse 1, the writers says, "And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's

sons.” Now notice this is a word addressed by the Lord God to Moses and he says to Moses, "You take to yourself Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, in order that he may minister unto me in the priest's office." So Aaron and his sons were appointed by God to serve in the priest's office.

Now that is set forth here so that the priest to be a priest who qualifies, he must be appointed by God. He must have the qualifications of sympathy and empathy with the people and he must also, in this case, in the reality, he must be an eternal priest in order that he may serve his people eternally. What good would it be for us to have a priest who was a temporal priest? He could help us as long as he lived, but when he died, what then? So what we need is an eternal priest. We need one of that order.

Now notice what the author says in verse 5, "So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him (glorified him), 'Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten Thee' As he saith also in another place, 'Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek'." So the writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews says, "Now a priest must be appointed of God." Aaron was appointed of God as priest. Jesus Christ also was appointed as Priest. The Bible says, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee." That qualifies him for eternal life since he's the Son of God. And the next verse is a citation from Psalm 110 in which he is said to be, "A priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek"; a priest for ever.

Now what kind of priest was Melchizedek? Well, in the 7th chapter, the writer will say, he was a priest who didn't have beginning of days or end of life, he didn't have a father, he didn't have a mother. He didn't have a genealogy like the rest of those people in the Book of Genesis. So he is presented in the Book of Genesis as an eternal priest. Only in this way could any man be illustrative of the eternity of the Lord Jesus Christ. So he is appointed by God by these texts of holy Scripture. His qualifications, was he a person who could sympathize with us? Well, look at the 7th verse,

"Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And having become perfected, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."

He entered into all of the experiences of human life even struggling in the Garden of Gethsemane with the will of God. Came out victorious, never once failing, and thus, by virtue of the perfection of his obedience through the sufferings of it, though a Son, he learned what it is to truly obey and through that experience came to understand all of the trials and struggles of every single believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is fully qualified as a priest. As far as his order is concerned, well the text says, "Being made perfect he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him. Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchizedek." So he exercises the functions of mediation, but an eternal relationship is established between the sons of the priest, or those for whom he ministers, and the God to whom the priest ministers, he offers the sacrifice, which is the sacrifice of the cross of Calvary, and now he lives forever to intercede for those for whom he has died.

His sacrifice is a nonrepeatable sacrifice the author of the Epistle of the Hebrews will point out, because having been made there is no further need for a sacrifice. It is therefore, efficacious for eternal life. Now you can see from this that the Old Testament set forth a picture of the priest, which our Lord Jesus has fulfilled perfectly in his ministry and also in the teaching of holy Scripture.

One thing that I think that we need to point out here is that the Lord Jesus Christ, by virtue of the fact that he is the fulfillment of the Old Testament high priest, is our only Priest. Now the fact that he is our only Priest follows from the nature and design of his office. No man, except the Lord Jesus Christ, has in his own person, the liberty of access to God. No other person is able to approach God, by virtue of his own inherent

qualifications, being the infinitely righteous and holy Son of God. No other sacrifice than his could take away sin. It's only through him that God is propitious to sinful men.

Now the Old Testament priests were priests who were not really priests except typically. They could never have served men as priests were it not for the fact that they were simply typical priests, illustrative. Sometimes among Protestants, preachers are called priests. Now ministers of the gospel are not priests. I even remember when I was going through Theological Seminary, I heard one of the graduates of our Theological Seminary say in Chapel, to the men in Chapel, "Men, we are priests of God." And he meant that in the context of "We must do certain things for the people who are committed into our care."

Now that is very heretical doctrine. Among Protestants when any class of ministers are called priests that word is a substitute for the word "presbyter", for which it is constantly interchanged. In fact, the English word "priest" is a word that is derived from the Greek word "presbyter." Now "presbyter" means simply an elder. That's what the priest means, that term, it meant simply an elder. In Greek it was *presbyteros*. In Latin it was *presbyter*. In Spanish it was *presbytero*. In French it was *prêtre*. In Anglo-Saxon it was *pr ost*. In Dutch and German it was *priester* and in Danish, something like that which I cannot pronounce. So it's "Praest", which I don't know whether they pronounce that in Danish as *Praest* or not, but I know the Danes talk so much in their throat that when they talk with a tie on, the tie goes like this [Laughter]. At least that's the way it seemed to me.

But at any rate, the word "priest" is a term derived from *presbyteros*. It means elder. But now by usage, it has come to refer among that large religious organization with which we are acquainted; it's come to refer to a minister who is called a priest. And he's called a priest because he mediates between God and the people, and because he assumes to offer propitiatory sacrifices. He offers bread and wine as a sacrifice. And, furthermore, in absolution, he effectually and authoritatively claims to intercede, rendering

the sacrifice for sin effectual in its application to individuals. He claims to have the power to forgive sin. So "priest" in that context means something entirely different from what it originally meant. Priests meant simply an elder.

But as I say, in that large religious organization, they are sacrificers, they presume to be mediators between God and men, they offer up the real body and blood of Jesus Christ to God as an expiation for the sins of the people, they bind and no man can loose, and when they loose, no man can bind. This is the highest power that any person could ever assume over his fellow men and when it is recognized, it reduces people to the state of most absolute subjection. No greater benefit was rendered to the Western world by the Reformation than the destruction of the claim of that large religious organization that only a certain class of individuals were priests. And the fact that in the Reformation there was recovered the universal priesthood of all believers in that we have a freedom of access to God now that we could never have had under that system.

Incidentally, in connection with that, it was shown by the Reformers that the word "priest" was never applied to men as ministers in the New Testament. No priestly function was ever attributed to a Christian minister in the New Testament. All believers are priest in the sense in which men are priests under the gospel. The other doctrine is derogatory to the honor of Jesus Christ because it suggests that his mediatorial work was really a failure and it was necessary for others to engage in mediatorial work after he finished his. This doctrine contradicts the intimate convictions of the people of God of all ages who are taught through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the word that they have access to the Lord God.

Now let's consider the necessity of this work of atonement. Perhaps it would be helpful to begin this section by just describing or defining a few terms, which we will be using in our next study or so. Atonement, "atonement" is a word that in the Authorized Version occurs only once in Romans chapter 5 and verse 11. It is mistranslated there. That word translated "atonement" in the Authorized Version in Romans 5:11, is really the

word, which ordinarily is translated, "reconciliation", and it should be translated "reconciliation" there.

It's somewhat of an ambiguous word, "atonement", because it is used both for the effect of the work of Jesus Christ and also for the means of reconciliation. In other words, we say the atonement is what Christ accomplished, but we also say by atonement, reconciliation has been accomplished between men and God. It's not comprehensive enough because the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ goes beyond the reconciliation. Atonement originally came from some old Middle English words, "at onement." So that to have an atonement was to have a work by which men were brought to a unity or union with the Lord God: atonement.

Now, unfortunately, it has come to be used in theology so widely that it is a general term now that refers to all of the Soteriological work of Jesus Christ. That is, all of the work that he does in salvation, so that people talk about the doctrine of the atonement. Now we will use it in that sense, but nevertheless we want you to realize that it does not occur in the New Testament.

Atonement occurs often in the Old Testament because the word in the Old Testament, which is translated to atone or an atonement, is a word that means to cover. And in the Old Testament sins were not put away finally, but they were covered by the blood of Jesus Christ. And so atonement was proper. But in the New Testament, it does not appear in our English version properly, but in that one place and there, I say properly, it doesn't appear properly at all, but it appears in the English version only once and there improperly, Romans 5:11. But since it's so commonly used, we'll use it. But I want you to understand that when we use the term "atonement", we mean simply what Christ accomplished in his death. So don't write me a letter and say, "The word doesn't occur but once in the New Testament and there it's a mistranslation." I already know that.

Now if you have some further light you want to give on the subject, that's fine. I'll read your letters. But I've had people write me little notes like that even after I've said

this and remind me that it doesn't occur in the New Testament but once and there it's a mistranslation.

Another word that we need to keep in mind is the word "satisfaction." This is an old word for the work of the Lord Jesus Christ and salvation. It refers to how he meets the demands of a holy God in the sacrifice of the cross at Calvary. We say he rendered satisfaction to God's holiness. That is, he suffered under the judgment of God's holiness and satisfied the claims. Satisfaction, this is an old word used in theology; it's a very good word. It really is a good rendering of the word "propitiation", satisfaction.

Vicarious, most of us know what vicarious means, but there may be someone who does not. Vicarious means simply substitutionary. The Pope makes himself out to be the Vicar of Christ. He means by that that he is Christ's representative here on the earth. That, of course, is a false claim, unsubstantiated by Scripture, but nevertheless that's what he claims: vicarious substitutionary. So we say the vicarious substitution of Christ, the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ.

Two other words: expiation and propitiation. These are really correlative terms. Expiation refers to the payment of the price for sin. So we say sin is expiated. Propitiation refers to the satisfaction of God's holiness. So we say sin is expiated, God is propitiated. God is satisfied by the expiatory sacrifice of the Lord Jesus in which he pours out his blood under the judgment of God. Guilt is expiated by the satisfaction Christ rendered to the Lord God. That rendered or made God propitious toward men so that he now, consistent with his nature of holiness and justice, may forgive sins since his holiness and justice have been satisfied by the death of Jesus Christ.

Now the Lord Jesus saves us as a Priest. He saves us as a sacrifice and he saves us as Redeemer. It's rather interesting that the Christian Church historically never formulated a decision by a council concerning the doctrine of the atonement. They did concerning other facts of the Christian life. As you know, the person of Christ was the subject of a Councilia decision. The atonement, surprisingly, never was formulated in a Councilia

decision so that we might have a general statement of the kind of atonement Jesus Christ accomplished.

Consequently, since early days, there have been different theories to explain what Christ accomplished in his atoning work. All of these theories are attempts to explain the mystery of one of our Lord's little words and that little word is the little word, "must." Listen, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness; even so must the Son of man be lifted up." Why must he? Why he must be lifted up? The Scriptures say he must be lifted up. Why? "It became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Why did it become him? Why must he die? The Lord Jesus, on the Emmaus Road, said to those two disciples, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have written: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things." Why ought he to have suffered those things? Why was it necessary for him to suffer those things? So when we talk about the necessity of the atonement, we are talking about why Jesus Christ had to die.

Reform theology, excluding Calvin and Beza and Zanchius, reformed theologians who differed slight here, they taught the relative necessity of the atonement of Jesus Christ, relative in the sense that God decreed that he should die on the cross as an atonement, so he had to die because of God's decree. Reformed theologians, generally, have taught the absolute necessity of the atonement. That is, since God is holy and since he is just, and since man has sinned, there is an absolute necessity that Jesus Christ die if men are to be saved. Not simply a relative necessity because of the decree of God, but an absolute necessity, as this is the only way by which men might have been saved.

Some theologians like to argue, "Could God have saved us in some other way?" Some have contended there must have been some other way. They've never been able to arrive at a reasonable "some other way", and since God is an infinitely perfect being and has decided upon this way, it seems to me that it's safer to say this is the best way. And

perhaps safe to say it's the only way. At least Reform theologians in general have taken that interpretation, but Calvin and Beza did not. Zanchius, another Reform theologian, also did not.

Some of the other branches of Christian theology have also had the relative necessity viewpoint. Some have said there were no necessity at all, but then, of course, they are far from the teaching of the word of God. These other two views are within the family of the faithful.

And I'd like to suggest in the time that we have remaining three reasons why the atonement of Jesus Christ is necessary. Capital "A" here under Roman Two: "From the Holiness of God." Now we've talked about this and I don't think there's need for us to expound this in great detail: "From the Holiness of God." In Exodus chapter 30 and verse 34 and verse 7, we have a little phrase that I think expresses the idea quite accurately.

We read in Exodus 34:7,

"The LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, 'The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.'"

"He will by no means clear the guilty." That expresses the necessity of the atonement. Psalm 5, verses 4 and 6, expresses the hatred that God has for sin and sinners. Then Habakkuk 1:13, I've already cited and in Romans 3:25 and 26, in one of the great passages of the Bible that we'll have to refer to later on, we read there, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth a propitiation through faith in his blood, in order that God might be both just, and the justifier of those who are of the faith of the Lord Jesus." So first of all, the atonement is necessary by virtue of the holiness of God. The fact of sin, which brings upon all sinners the curse of the divine law, make it absolutely essential, if men are to be

saved, that there be an atonement made for them. That is, that their sins be paid for in the blood of a substitute.

Charles Simeon, once said, "Has God provided an offering for me, that I may lay my sins on His head? Then, God willing, I will not bear them on my soul one moment longer." That's the spirit of a person who recognizes his debt, his inability to pay it, and also his desire to receive the forgiveness of sins through a substitute.

Now a second reason for the necessity of the atonement is from the fact of bondage to Satan. Now this is simply an aspect of the preceding, but there are texts that spell this out in some detail. In Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 10, the writer of the Epistle says,

"For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." (Notice it became him, necessity. And then that is spelled out in verses 14 and 15 of Hebrews 2,) Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

So the texts put together say, "He had to die and he had to die in order to deliver men from the bondage to the devil, and to death, the power of death." That, incidentally, is one of the fundamental bases of the classic theory of the atonement. That's the first theory of the atonement taught in the Bible. Did you know that? It's taught in Genesis chapter 3 and verse 15. And in that verse, we have the atonement set forward, first of all, as related to the work of Satan, specifically. God said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He shall bruise your head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." That was a prophecy of the coming of the seed of

the woman and of the fact that he would win a victory over the serpent. The serpent would wound his heel in the cross, but he would crush the serpent's head, a fatal wound, and thus, gain the ultimate victory.

The apostle speaks in Colossians chapter 2, the writer of this epistle, in Hebrews chapter 2, of this struggle between Satan and the Lord Jesus Christ or the triune God in the atonement. John speaks of it in 1 John chapter 3 and verse 8 and says, "The Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" so that this idea of deliverance from the bondage of sin and Satan is bound up in the necessity of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now finally, the necessity of the atonement is clear from the fact of Christ's death. And I'd like for you to put Galatians 2:21 as the passage; I forgot to put that down right following the term "death." Let's see if I can do it now, Galatians 2:21 and I'd like for you to turn to that passage. It's a very important passage, Galatians chapter 2 and verse 21. The Apostle Paul here speaks of justification and, in the course of his argument, coming to the 21st verse of chapter 2, the last verse of chapter 2, he says, "I do not make void the grace of God (by saying a man is justified in the method that I've been setting forth): for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

Now that's a very important text. The apostle says, "If righteousness should come by the law, then Christ's death is a death that occurred in vain." If it were possible for us to get to heaven on the basis of what we do, then why does Jesus Christ have to die? But we know that Jesus Christ had to die. So the fact that he had to die makes it very evident that his death is absolutely essential for our salvation. The amazing greatness of the second person of the eternal Trinity, the amazing greatness as the Son of God coming down here and offering this sacrifice, argues for the necessity of the atoning work.

Otherwise, what has happened? I've often said this, others have said it too, the cross of Jesus Christ would be the greatest blunder that this universe has ever seen for the only holy and righteous person dies on the cross at the hands of wicked Romans. It

would be the greatest blunder that the universe has ever seen and the one who commits the blunder would be God himself. Now we know, of course, God does not commit blunders and, therefore, the amazing sacrifice of the Son of God argues for the necessity of the atonement. Otherwise, his death is most painfully irrelevant. It's a wanton sacrifice to the bare point of the will of God, and has no significance, no rational whatsoever.

Now people raise objections to the necessity of the atonement. One of them is this, "It makes God inferior to man." In spite of the fact that the Bible says, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?" It became him. "Of necessity he must offer a sacrifice", Hebrews chapter 8, verse 3 says. Chapter 9, verse 22 and verse 23 says, "It was necessary that the realities of the things which are pictured by those types and symbols must be cleansed by better blood than the blood of the animals of the Old Testament." In spite of all of that, there are people who say, claiming to follow biblical teaching, "It makes God inferior to man."

Man freely forgives. We forgive. This brother up here makes some remark to me that is designed to wound me and I have the grace to forgive him. But God, he can't forgive unless a sacrifice is offered. "Man is more charitable than God", they say. That's the way a lot of people think. They don't see the necessity for the sacrifice of Christ at all. Why cannot God just forgive? We just forgive. Yes, that's right. We just forgive, but he's the holy judge of the earth. He's absolutely holy and pure. We're not.

This ignores the fact that God did not have to redeem. It makes out God to be a stern judge with no love. He didn't have to redeem us, but he did. And he didn't have to do it by sacrificing himself, but that's exactly what he did. Our triune God, not only did what he didn't have to do, but he did it at infinite cost to himself. So to say, "It makes God inferior to man", is not to understand even human life as well as divine.

Take a judge who stands behind a desk to offer his decisions on matters at law in our society. He may be a kind, loving kind of individual when he's not sitting behind the desk. His son may kick him in the leg and his father may say, "Oh, son, I forgive you for

that.” He may steal money from him and say, "I'll forgive you for that." But when he sits behind the desk, we don't want a judge like that. We want one who judges righteously. We don't want one who just forgives at a whim or because he has a soft heart because we might suffer. We want someone to do that which is right and in God's universe, he does that which is right. There would be no universe at all of any order whatsoever. Everything would be total chaos if we did not have a God who was just and righteous.

And then there are some who say, "Well, this kind of atoning work or this kind of work means that we have seism in the Trinity." That is, we have the Father working at one purpose and the Son working at another purpose. That's a monstrous idea. What they try to say is, "God is stern and foreboding, but the Son is loving and kind." And so the Father demands the death of the pitiful Savior who interposed. How foolish! How foolish can one be! How far from Scripture teaching can you get?

What does the Bible teach? Why, the Bible teaches that the entire triune God cooperated freely for the salvation of man in beautiful harmony. The Father planned, the Son executed, the Holy Spirit applies or administrates the saving work. The Father elected the children of God. The Son dies for the children of God. The Holy Spirit applies that salvation to the children of God. There is a beautiful perfection and harmony in the work of the three persons of the Trinity. This inter-Trinitarian economy of salvation is as harmonious as it is possible for a plan to be. There is no seism in the Trinity. All is operating according to the plan of the ages and our redemption is the wonderful object of the work of God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. And because we are sinners, there could be no possibility of our having eternal life, the forgiveness of sins, justification apart from that atonement, that shedding of the precious blood on Calvary's cross.

If you're here tonight and you have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are lost. You are heading for a Christless eternity. But the atoning work has been accomplished and it is preached to all, to you come believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Receive as a free gift the salvation that he offers and you shall have the forgiveness of sins, the assurance of eternal life, and an eternal priest who ever lives to make intercession for us to guarantee that what he did on Calvary's cross will be carried out in the case of every individual. Now isn't that wonderful? Our salvation rests on the faithfulness of this divine Son. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these wonderful truths of the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. We know we are insufficient for the preaching of...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]