



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Romans 3:21-26

“The Salvation, Assurance and Safety of the Redeemed”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of turning again to Thy word for the light that it throws upon our lives and upon the plans and purposes which Thou hast for mankind. And we thank Thee for the truth which is revealed within it concerning Jesus Christ, our Lord and savior, the love gift which Thou hast given to us and for us. And we pray tonight as we consider Thy word again that the Holy Spirit whom Jesus Christ has sent as the paraclete, the comforter. That he may teach us and instruct us in the things that concern the one who has loved us and given himself for us.

We commit the class to Thee tonight and pray for spiritual blessing for each one of us through the magnification of the Son of God. In whose name we ask it. Amen.

[Message] Now last week I was gone and we did not have a class and so just for the sake of a few minutes of review let me remind you of the place to which we have come. We began with a study of revelation. Pointing out that God has spoken, and he has spoken in a two volume book. Volume one, his revelation in nature which tells us that he is a supreme being. We can see his divinity and his eternal power in nature about us on a night like this that becomes especially noticeable when we think about tornados and hurricanes and storms.

And then in volume two God has spoken to us in his word. And it is in his word that we learn of his grace. We do not learn of his grace in nature, we learn of his power. But here we learn of his grace, which has been extended to us who are, according to the word of God, out of touch, out of fellowship, independent, or sinners. And it is through God's grace that we come to know him aright.

Then we studied the eternal Trinity and tried to point out from the Scriptures that the God whom the Bible presents is one god but he subsists in three persons; Father, Son, and Spirit. The first person of the Trinity is the person of the Trinity who initiates, or plans his program of redemption. It is the second person who is the executive of that plan. And he comes and carries out the will of God upon the earth which is supremely headed up and centered in the saving work of death and resurrection. And it is the work of the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, to administrate God's salvation. And so it is he who takes of the things of the word of God, these truths, and brings them home to our hearts through the preaching and teaching of the word of God.

So there is one God who subsists in three persons. It is this God that the Scripture reveals. Then we studied the Garden of Eden and the fall of man. And we saw that God placed man in the Garden of Eden and he gave him one simple, little test in order to give him every opportunity to obey and every hindrance to disobedience. But we saw in Genesis 3 that man sinned. The woman fell prey to the tempter and Adam, with his eyes wide open, deliberately harkened to the voice of his wife and that has been done since those days, too. But he harkened to the voice of his wife and sinned.

And as a result of Adam's sin, death came to the whole human race. As Paul stated in Romans chapter 5, and verse 12, “For this cause as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men, because all sinned.” Adam was our representative head, he stood for us. And when he sinned the human race fell in him. This is revealed in God's word.

Now that might seem as if God is very unfair and unjust, but he has by means of the coming redeemer, Jesus Christ, given us great and glorious promises which we would not have had, so far as we know, had man not sinned. And so now man is able, through the saving work of Jesus Christ, to reach a state that he did not have before the fall. And so while God accounts that we all have sinned he offers to all men the salvation which glorifies them ultimately in his presence.

Now we saw that God passed judgment upon man and that man's judgment was that he should be born spiritually dead, separated from God. We all are born spiritually dead. That's why we do the things that we do. That's why earth is as it is. That is the reason why our age has become the age of violence, for example. It is because we now have a manifestation of what is really in the hearts of men and we can explain the things that are happening by the divine judgment on human nature. And it is really the key and the clue to an understanding of human history.

So we saw, then, that man fell and man has been under judgment ever since. But in that fall a promise was given of redemption. And so in the next study we studied the divine philosophy of the ages and we tried to point out as we traced the messianic or the promises concerning the messiah, for messianic means simply “concerning the messiah”, the king who would come to save and then ultimately rule. We traced those messianic promises down through the Old Testament beginning with Genesis chapter 3, and verse 15, where God had said to the woman that her seed would ultimately crush the head of the serpent who was the tool of Satan. And that there would finally come a climactic struggle in which while the seed of the woman would have his heel crushed, a wound that is not mortal, he would nevertheless crush the head of the serpent and victory shall be gained by the human race.

Now we saw that as we went down through the Old Testament looking at the promises in Genesis chapter 3, and then in Genesis chapter 9, and the promises to Noah in Genesis chapter 12, and the promises to Abraham in Genesis chapter 49, and the

promise to Jacob. And then, ultimately, the promises regarding the birth in Bethlehem, the birth of a virgin. We did not study many of these promises, of course. We did not, for example, study the promise in Daniel which stated that at a certain period of time, four hundred and eighty-three years, this prince would come and there make his entrance as God’s king, which Jesus Christ did at the appointed time, at the precise chronological time, when he made his triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem.

But we ultimately, we traced this divine philosophy of the ages and pointed out that it was God’s purpose through the redeemer to provide a way for man to stand just before God even though he partakes of the effects of the fall. And so God, in wonderful grace, through this plan has made known to us his grace. Which we could never have known were it not for the fact that man sinned. And so it is part of the self revelation of God to give us this plan of salvation.

Then last time in our last study we studied the crises of history, the First Advent of Jesus Christ. And we looked at his birth by the virgin. We looked at his baptism in which he was inaugurated into his messianic or kingly office. We considered briefly his temptation in which he successfully overcame Satan at that point. You can see that the serpent’s head was in danger as a result of the temptation. There he won the victory and demonstrated that he is morally qualified to be the messiah. We did not trace all of the events of our Lord’s life but I did allude to the transfiguration, the agony. And then we looked briefly at the death when he cried out, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” For there he was the sin offering and as a result of that wonderful sin offering the serpent’s head was crushed, for it is sin, in sin, that Satan is able to gain control over men.

So having removed sin he defeated the serpent at the cross, and as a result of that the writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews can say that he, because he wished to redeem men, took part of flesh and blood that he might destroy or nullify him that had the power of death, that is the devil. And deliver those who through fear of death were all their

lifetime subject to bondage. And that is what has happened in God's plan. And the evidence of it is the resurrection, for when Jesus Christ was placed in the tomb on Friday evening and then on Sunday morning arose triumphant from the grave it was God's way of saying, “I have accepted what he has done. He has paid the price, it is satisfactory to me, and all who believe into him become one with him by faith, they partake of his destiny. You have partaken of Adam's destiny because you are men, but there has now come a second man, the last Adam, and I am offering to men the opportunity to come to be in this last Adam.” And by the simple act of faith, when we believe, when we accept this message, we become part of the last Adam and share his destiny. Just as we shared the destiny of the first Adam, sin, death, so we share, by God's grace, the destiny of the last Adam which is resurrection, ascension, and ultimate glorification.

Now that is a wonderful plan of redemption. And that is God's message to men. Now of course, that does not close the story of Jesus Christ because we are no living in the inter-advent age. That is, the age between the cross and the coming to the earth. We, of course, later on I think I shall allude to a coming in the air which precedes this, but the important thing is that this is the age in which we have the church. Now the church is an agency whereby God is getting out his message concerning his Son Jesus Christ. But we are living in this inter-advent age, between the First Advent and the Second Advent.

Now that brings us up to tonight. And tonight the subject is the Salvation, The Assurance and the Safety of the Redeemed. In other words, I want to talk about you for a little while. That is, you who have believed in Jesus Christ. Now I'm going to ask you, if you will, to turn with me, first of all, to Romans chapter 3 in your Bibles. Romans chapter 3 and in my edition of the King James Version that is page eleven hundred and ninety-four. And it is just after the Book of Acts. Acts, Romans, 1st Corinthians, Romans chapter 3.

Now Romans is one of the great epistles of the New Testament and I want to tell you just a little secrete, I don't want to waste much time on this. But this is the first book

that I really studied. When I was in the insurance business in Birmingham, Alabama and began to get interested by the grace of God in spiritual things, my wife was already a Christian, someone told me that Romans was a book that a man would like because it is logical, and clear, and coherent. And of course all men are logical, clear, and coherent [Laughter]. And if they are not they surely think so anyway [Laughter] so let the women keep silence in the churches [Laughter]. That’s what my wife tells me at home.

Whenever she says something I don’t like I say, “Let the women keep silence in the churches.” She says, “It’s not in church now and I’m free to say anything I like.” [Laughter] So you can say what you like here.

But anyway, I thought well, if Romans is logical, clear, and coherent that’s the book for me. And so I began to study Romans and while I’m not very logical, and clear, and coherent and Paul is, nevertheless I must say that as far as I was concerned that book, this book, helped me more than anything else in my Christian life. In fact, the first thing I did when I was still in the insurance business was buy a commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. And every night when I got home because, you see, I didn’t work hard in the day time and so at night I was - I wasn’t tired like some of you men are. And I took my Epistle to the Romans and I read chapter 1, and then I read ten pages in this book, it was about five hundred and fifty pages long as I remember. And so I would study the - read the chapter and study the ten pages in which certain sections of the 1st chapter were expounded. The next night I would come home and I would read chapter 1 again and read the next ten pages in the book. And the next night I would read chapter 1 again in Romans, and then read the next ten pages. And then so on until we got to chapter 2 and I did this all the way through the book.

And then when I finished my study of Romans I liked it so much that I thought the next thing to do was to go buy another commentary on Romans. And so having a good guide in Birmingham, Alabama I bought for my second commentary another very good commentary and I started again. Reading one chapter in Romans and then reading

five or ten pages in this commentary. Then the chapter in Romans again, and so on through the book. Well when I finished I knew some Bible doctrine because this book has been called the little Bible. And it's a marvelous presentation of the plan of salvation because Paul begins with man's sin, moves into man's justification, man's or believer's sanctification, and then believer's glorification. So he traces the whole history of man and when he reaches the 9th chapter he turns to the Jewish readers and says, “Now perhaps you are wondering why you have been left out,” and he explains Jewish unbelief and yet at the same time the Jewish glorious future that the Bible holds for them in 9, 10, and 11. And then after he has presented salvation for the gentile and the Jew as presented in the word in chapter 12 he says, “Now in the light of these glorious mercies this is the way we ought to live.” So, you see, it's a very logical, clear, and coherent book. I suggest that some of you men go home and read it. That is, one chapter a night. Get yourself a good commentary, you'll be helped by it. Or if you haven't that, get a Schofield Bible. There is a good little commentary right at the bottom of these pages.

Now that's the introduction to Romans 3, verse 21. So look now at verse 21, and this is what we read. You see, Paul has talked about sin and man is guilty, gentile and Jew. What are you going to do about man? How are we going to extricate man from this difficulty? How can man be just with God? Well now, here's the answer to the question, “But now the righteousness, (or the justice,) of God without the law, (that I, apart from the Old Testament law, apart from keeping the Ten Commandments,) without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith in, (I would have translated this,) by faith in Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.”

Did you notice that? Let me read that over again, that's a marvelous statement. This transformed Martin Luther's life and resulted in the entire Lutheran denomination and

really in the Protestant Reformation. The truth contained in that one little verse, verse 22, the essence of this has changed Western civilization more than any other truth that ever came to it. Notice, “The righteousness of God which is by faith in Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.” In other words, every man who believes receives the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Now think of that, that means that if we believe in Jesus Christ we receive the righteousness of God. Now that’s tremendous. Our responsibility is to believe in Jesus Christ. The moment we do we have the righteousness of God. Not the righteousness of man, the righteousness of God. Now that’s the gospel. That’s why Paul went everywhere preaching as he did, because this comes from God. That the moment we believe in Jesus Christ we have the righteousness of God. That means we can stand in God’s presence even though we are sinners, even though we are by nature separated from him.

Now Paul says, “For there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Now to explain further he says, “Being justified.” Now we must stop for a moment and say a word about justified and also I want to say a word about the word in verse 15 which is propitiation.

Now sometimes when we read the Bible we run across words that puzzle us and actually keep us from understanding what the Bible really means. Justify is a word that has special sense in the Bible. Justify does not mean made righteous. It means to declare righteous. It really means to be right with God, though a sinner. In other words, when I am justified before God I am not made righteous, I am declared righteous. It’s as if I were standing before a court and the judge sees me before his bench and he pronounces me righteous. It means to pronounce righteous, to declare righteous. Not to make righteous. That’s why the justified can, the next day, commit a sin. They are justified but they still have the old nature. They have a legal standing before God because of what Jesus Christ has done.

Now of course, since the justified have been justified their lives will reflect, ultimately, this change in their status. But they are not made righteous yet. We shall be made righteous when Jesus Christ comes or when we pass into his presence. But we are not righteous yet.

So to justify means to declare righteous, but propitiation is a little more difficult. Now we are not used to using the word propitiation but propitiation means satisfaction. So let's read it that way. Now it's good, I say, to make these words simple but don't forget these words, they are great words and ultimately you will be delighted whenever you run across the word propitiate because it will conjure up such wonderful associations with you. But sometimes big words can lead us astray and that's why I wanted to define those words.

I read a story some time ago of a firm that wrote Washington and one of the agencies for information about the use of a certain chemical in their pipes. And the agency that wrote back wrote back in such technical language to this firm that had asked for information that they couldn't understand it at all. But as they read it it seemed to say, “It's perfectly all right to use the chemical.” And so one member of the firm replied to the government and said he appreciated very much that fine, technical letter and they were proceeding to the use of the chemical at once. And in Washington when they got the letter they realized that their language, their jargon, had confused the firm and so they immediately called Western Union and sent a telegram and said, in plain language, “Don't use that chemical, it [unintelligible] [Laughter].”

Now, my definition of propitiation is not precisely that kind but satisfaction is what it means. So let's read it now, verse 24,

“Being declared righteous, (being declared righteous,) freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth a satisfaction, (a satisfaction. That is, a satisfaction of God's just requirements of men,) a satisfaction through faith in his

blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, (that is, that God might be just,) and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

Now let's just take two or three of these words and say something about them so that we will get the picture that here is man, sinful, under divine condemnation, but through Jesus Christ man when he believes becomes the possessor of the righteousness of God, being justified freely. Did you notice that, by the way? Freely, that means that we do not become justified by the works that we do. It is the opinion of many still that the way to get to heaven is to do good works; to be a good man, to join the church, to put money in the collection plate, to be sure and sign the pledge, to be a good citizen in the community, to have a good education, to be a cultured gentleman, and so on. All types of ideas which do not have any connection whatsoever with God's plan of redemption.

He says we are justified freely. That means without a cause. It means without a charge. It means for nothing. It means we cannot save ourselves, or to put it in Paul's words elsewhere, “For by grace are ye saved through faith.” Not through joining the church, through faith. Not through baptism, through faith. Not through sitting through the Lord's table, but through faith. “For by grace are ye saved through faith,” and that not of yourselves. It doesn't come from you. It is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast. There will be no boasters in heaven.

If were to get to heaven and you were to boast about it how you deserve to be in heaven because of all of your good works the first thing that would happen to you would be that the angels would toss you over the walls. Now there are no walls there, you know, but I'm just speaking figuratively.

So when Paul states that we are justified freely he means freely. As a matter of fact, that word which is the Greek particle *dorean* is translated “without a cause” in John chapter 15, in verse 25, where the Lord Jesus says, “For they hated me without a cause.”

And it's the Greek adverb *dorean* which means freely. Gift-wise, *dorea* was a gift. And so *dorean*, being justified gift-wise, as a free gift. Now of course this offends the self righteousness of man. He naturally thinks that he should gain heaven by his merits. And so if you think that you have some merit you will be offended by the fact that Paul says we are justified without a cause. That God is not interested in your good works. They do not have any standing before him whatsoever so far as your basic relationship to him is concerned. And those with good works come short just as those without any good works whatsoever. Everybody must become a Christian the same way.

So justified freely, now as if to stress that he says, “By his grace.” Grace. Many years ago in teaching children to get over the idea of grace which is God's favor to those who deserve the very opposite, that's what grace is, in order to get it over to children I used to say, “Grace, G-R-A-C-E, put it on the board.” I wouldn't do that with you because you're so intelligent. But G-R-A-C-E. G for God, R for riches, A for at, C for Christ's, and E for expense, God's riches at Christ's expense. Grace, that is something that has come to us freely.

So justified freely by his grace, through the redemption. Now don't think that God is a kind of person who turns his head when something evil takes place. He's not a kind of God who looks sin in the sense that there is not an ultimate reckoning. Now I know in the Book of Acts it says he over looks sin but that, of course, meant for a time in the Old Testament period. But he's not a person who says, “Okay, I'm soft hearted, I'll forget your sin.” He doesn't do that. Every sin that man has every committed must be paid for, that's his law. That's his universal law. Therefore, because of that and because we are all under God's judgment he must send someone to take that judgment upon him, upon himself. And that is what Jesus Christ has done. And so he has borne the judgment of every one of us. And when he cried out, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me,” he was bearing that judgment, that entire judgment.

Now God, therefore, is righteous in giving us everlasting life, for our debts have been paid. Now, when we owe money, some of you may have had that experience, if you pay your debts there's a wonderful feeling of relief, isn't it? You feel you can lift your head up. And the same thing is true in the spiritual sphere. Jesus Christ has paid all of our debts, God says.

And the moment we take him by faith all of our past, all of our present, all of our future disobedience was taken by Christ. Now isn't that wonderful? Do you know that means that if you're a Christian, if you've really believed in Jesus Christ that your past is wiped out? Your present is covered. Your future is also cared for. He has died for your sins past, present, and future. As a matter of fact, all of your sins, when he died, were future, that is all of yours. And they were borne by him there. So the moment that you believe in Jesus Christ a clean slate with God. Righteousness is given to you as a positive attribute. So you can step right into the presence of God in heaven and say, “I belong here, look at my bank account it says, Lewis Johnson is imputed. How much money you got in the bank? Well here it is.” The righteousness of God.

So I don't have to slink into heaven. I don't have to sneak in as if someone might see me and see that I didn't really belong. They're expecting me up there. And they're expecting every believer in Christ. Because our credits are there. Jesus Christ has paid it all. Now that's what he means when he says, “Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” It's a great salvation.

Now some of you are looking at me as if you wonder if it's really true. Is it really this way? Well it is. I assure you, it is. This is the grace of God. This is why the apostles were so excited with the message that they proclaimed. Now remember it comes from God, it's not something I thought up. I would never have thought it up this way. You know what I would have said? You've got to do such and such good works in order to get to heaven. You've got to be a good person. Now of course, no one has ever discovered how much good works is necessary to get to heaven because there's no way

of knowing. As a matter of fact, the Bible says you have to be perfect. And if you look at yourself I think you'll discover that you probably are not going to make it. Most of you in this room.

Now to explain it further Paul says, by the way would anyone like to say that you're sure you can make it? Before you speak up I'd like to remind you that it is Job who says, "I am vile." It is Isaiah who says, "I am undone," the great prophet of the holiness of God. It is Jeremiah, the great weeping prophet, who said, "I am black in the sight of God." It is the Apostle Peter who says, "Depart from me for I am a sinful man, oh Lord." The leader of the apostles. And it is the Apostle Paul who says that, "I am the chief of sinners." Now would anyone in the room like to get up and make a little confession of your righteousness in the light of the prophets and the apostles' confession of their sin? No, you wouldn't. I'm sure you wouldn't. So, you see, this is a message that is for all men, even the best of men.

Now one last thing before we move on, did you notice that 25th verse says, "Whom God hath set forth to be a satisfaction." God is righteous, he is holy, he must punish sin, so how is his righteous and holy nature satisfied? Well, Jesus Christ hangs on the cross and God, as the great judge of the universe, judges him for you, for us. Jesus Christ for you, Jesus Christ for me, and the Lord Jesus bears the depth of sins punishment and judgment and condemnation.

So God has set forth him to be a satisfaction through faith in his blood. It was his blood that was shed and it is by faith or by trust in what was done that we stand in that position of righteousness with God satisfied. He says, "Remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just." You see, God must be just. This is the great problem of the universe. The great problem of the universe, by the way, is not primarily how to get you, an unjust person, to God. But the great problem of the universe, more than that, is how to get a just God into relationship with you, an unjust person.

And so by Jesus Christ's work, God is just because he suffers and he is the justifier because it is he who provided the way whereby he might be just and you might be justified. Now isn't that wonderful? You have a need for someone to take your sins. You couldn't justify yourself so God did it. God gave his Son.

Now it's often said that God gave Jesus Christ in order that he might love us. Now that is not true. God gave Jesus Christ because he loved us. He never stopped loving us in our sin. And because he wanted us as his children he gave his son. And then, at the cross, the judgment of God was meted out upon him so that he was just. But through this he is now free in his love to extend to all who will believe the free offer of everlasting life. And it's a salvation that is not a salvation that is unjust, but it's just. We're saved not only by grace, it is the grace that gave Jesus Christ. But we are saved righteously, through righteousness. And it is a just salvation that we have because Jesus Christ has borne our judgment.

Now, that's a tremendous passage and you'll never stop studying that as long as you are a Christian. That's one of Paul's great sections about justification. Now I wish we had time to talk a whole lot about it. I just want to conclude with this one thing. Do not think for one moment that God is a kind of God that you must implore in order that he may be merciful to you. That you must cajole that he might be gracious to you. He's not the kind of God that you have to beseech, that he may show you favor. He's not that kind of God at all. He's not the kind of God that you have to wail before and ask him to accept you. He's not the kind of God that you must so plead with that he will not execute his blow of judgment upon you. All he wants is for you to just simply believe that that blow of judgment has been meted out upon Jesus Christ. And the moment you believe that, the moment you say, "Thank you Lord for giving Jesus Christ to die for me," the moment that you are satisfied with what God is satisfied that moment is the moment of faith and the moment of your justification.

Now you don't have to join the church in order to become a Christian though, of course, Christians do fellowship with other believers. You do not have to be baptized in order to become a Christian though, of course, those who have believed in Jesus Christ will be baptized in testimony to what has happened to them. All that is required is that you believe.

Tonight, if you were in this audience, in this room, and you had not yet believed, right where you are, in your heart you might believe in Jesus Christ. And you, who are unrighteous, become righteous right where you are. The receptor of the righteousness of God.

I've said that a number of times, by the way, in Bible classes and people have told me sometimes months later, “You know, when you said that in the class that's when I did it for the first time.” And you don't have to do it but once. So all we have to do is to simply believe God and thank him concerning Jesus Christ. That's what New Testament Christianity is. Or that's what Christianity is.

Now I said that tonight we were going to talk also about the assurance and the security of the redeemed. Now very quickly I want to say just a few words about the assurance of the redeemed. In other words, how can I know that I am a Christian? And how can I be sure that I have life right now?

Some time ago, in fact it was three years ago to be exact, I reread the article in the newspaper that I was in the East in Pennsylvania and I was reading one of the Washington papers, I think it was *The Washington Post*, I never liked to read that paper but sometimes when I get around Washington that's the paper that seems to be on the news stands and I have to read that liberal sheet. Now I didn't want to say anything about politics so just expunge that from the records.

But anyway, I read an interesting story in the Washington Post in June of 1964. It was about a fireman. He was off duty and he went by the firehouse in order to have a cup of coffee with his friends. And they'd been reading the morning paper and he

walked in, his name was Richard G. Shaw, and they, as he walked in, they said, “Hey, is this you?” And they pointed to an article in the newspaper. And the article went on to say that in New York a certain man by the name of Diamond, an author, had died and they had been looking for a Richard G. Shaw. And the lawyer had put an advertisement in the paper to the effect that if he was really the Richard G. Shaw that was the recipient of this bequest from Mr. Diamond’s will that he could, if he could identify himself, inherit two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Now he had been dead for several months and this man had had a quarter of a million dollars but he didn’t know it. It was legally his. He was living in a fifty-seven dollar a month apartment in New York City, working as a fireman, and on the side had a job as a taxi driver. He had a wife and two children. So, you see, he was living as a poor man but at the same time he had a quarter of a million dollars.

Now a lot of Christians are just like that. They have believed in Jesus Christ and they have everlasting life. But it seems difficult for them to really become sure of it and to rejoice in the fact that they have salvation. So very quickly now I want to show you how you can be sure.

So first of all, will you turn with me to 1st John chapter 7. Did I say 1st John chapter 7? Isn’t that interesting? That book only has five chapters and so I imagine you’d have a difficult time finding it [Laughter]. 1st John chapter 3, verse 7 through verse 14. Now I want you to notice that here in 1st John chapter 3 we have the first way we can know that we have everlasting life. It is an evidential reason. It exists or it consists in works. Works do not procure salvation for us, but works may become the evidence that we possess salvation.

Now here he speaks specifically of love. Notice verse 7, 1st John 3, have you found it now?

“Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.”

Now mind you, that does not mean, “Does not commit and act of sin.” That’s very obviously not the meaning because Peter, for example, of whom our Lord said he was clean on account of his word, he denied the Lord. When it says, “Does not commit sin,” it means, “Does not go on committing sin.” Does not make sin a habit of his life, it’s in the present tense in the original. “Whosoever is born of God doth not go on committing sin.”

“For his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, (or he cannot go on sinning,) because he is born of God.” In other words, when we are declared righteous by God something else happens; as a matter of fact, some people have counted these things. Over thirty things happen to us the moment we believe in Christ, isn’t that amazing? You know, just for example, just for illustration, now we have somebody sitting on the front row here in the first seat and I know he’s already a Christian but let’s suppose that he came in and he was not a Christian tonight. And just a moment ago when I said this, “You believed in Jesus Christ, you look the same.” He came in and said he was tired tonight so he’s not looking at his best, and he looks the same. But in this one moment in which he said, “Thank you Lord, for dying for me,” over thirty things happened to him. Number one, the righteousness of God became his. His sins were forgiven. He became a child of God. He became of son of God, possessed of all the rights of a son who is an heir. He became an heir of God. He was reconciled to God. And so on down the line. Over thirty things happened to him, you didn’t see a thing, he looks the same. But nevertheless, all of those things have happened.

So now when we read here, “And he cannot go on sinning because he is born of God,” you’ll notice he is also at this moment born of God and he has become a child of God. He has been, to use the technical term, he has been regenerated. That’s amazing.

Now let’s continue, verse 10,

“In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.”

The first way we can know that we belong to Jesus Christ is by our works. One of those that he singles out is we don’t make a habit of sin in our lives. And also we love the brethren. That means that we like to be with Christians. There’s something about the believer that causes our heart to go out to them because Jesus Christ’s heart goes out to them. So that is an evidential reason, that’s something that you can see outwardly. But that’s not the only way we can know that we are believers in Jesus Christ and that we have life. There is also an internal reason and I want you now to turn with me if you will to Romans chapter 8, verse 16. Internal, the witness of the Holy Spirit, Romans chapter 8, and verse 16. Have you found it? I have not yet, so can you wait just a minute. Romans 8, verse 16. Now Paul is writing and he says, “The Spirit himself, (the Spirit is a he, that’s a mistranslation,) the Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”

In other words, the moment that we believe in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit comes to take up his dwelling in us. The third person of the Trinity, because the second person

of the Trinity has died for us comes to dwell within us. That’s another one of those things that happen. This man, in our illustration, has had the tremendous change, these great things have happened to him, and one of the things now is that the Holy Spirit comes to indwell him. Now he will make himself known. And one of the things that he will give you is the assurance from the word of God that you really do belong to Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God.

So we can know from our works, we can know from the witness in the spirit of our hearts. It comes as the Spirit convinces us of the truthfulness of God’s words. And then there is a final reason, external, the word of God. These are all related, of course. The word of God, you can remember that, they all begin with a W; works, witness of the Holy Spirit, the word of God.

Will you turn back to 1st John chapter 5? 1st John chapter 5, and verse 13. Now this verse is not going to seem as clear at first as it really is because the last clause of that verse, “And that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God,” is not in the text in this way at this point. So I’m going to read it as it is. “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.”

Now, in my Bible text here I have brackets around the remainder of those words in that verse because they are not genuine. I know that because I read the Greek text. But let me read it again as it should be read and notice the meaning, “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God,” in other words, John is writing his epistle to believers and he says, “I have written these things to you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that you may know that you have eternal life.” By the way, he doesn’t say that you may think that you have eternal life, that you may hope that you have eternal life, that you may expect ultimately to have eternal life, but that you may know that you have eternal life now. And how do we know? From these things that are written in God’s word.

Notice the 9th verse,

“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself, (that’s the Holy Spirit,) he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.”

That’s the record. And when we believe that record we have this life that he’s speaking about. So by the blood of Christ we know that we are safe. Christ has borne our judgment. By the word of God we know that we have this life, we are secure, because Jesus Christ has paid the penalty for us. So the basis of our salvation is the blood, the basis of our assurance of salvation is the word of God. God cannot lie.

You know, there are some interesting words in the New Testament about this because the New Testament is a book of assurance and certainty. For example, it states that, “By him all that believe are justified.” It says, “He that hath the Son, hath life.” Roland Hill used to say, “Hath, H-A-T-H, that spells got it.” [Laughter] You know, “He that hath the Son, hath life.” And then here, “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.”

I was led to the Lord by Donald Grey Barnhouse and I’ve already referred to him before in our studies but I’ll refer to him once more. Dr. Barnhouse was preaching in France and he knew French and he preached in French, and he was preaching in a French speaking area, I’ve forgotten whether it was France or whether it was in Belgium French speaking area, but anyway he was speaking and he spoke on the assurance on the believer, how he could know that he has everlasting life. And he said, “I know that I have eternal life. I know it.” And he said when he finished his message the next morning in his hotel a man came and knocked on his door. And this man was an agitator in the Belgium army. And he said, “Dr. Barnhouse, may I have a word with you?” Dr.

Barnhouse said, “Yes, come in.” He said, “Yesterday I heard you preach and I heard you say, ‘I know that I have eternal life.’” Now he said, “Dr. Barnhouse, if you had said, ‘I think I have eternal life or I hope I have eternal life, or someday I have assurance that I shall have eternal life,’ that would not have disturbed me. But, sir, to say you know you have everlasting life your assurance frightens me.” Dr. Barnhouse looked at him and he said, “Are you married?” He said, “Yes sir.” He said, “Your assurance frightens me.” [Laughter] He said, “What do you mean sir?” He said, “Well you say that you are married,” he said, “If you said I hope I’m married, or I think I’m married, or I hope after I’ve lived with my wife for twenty-five years we shall be married I wouldn’t have been disturbed. But for you to say you know you are married, that you are married, your assurance frightens me.” “Oh, but Dr. Barnhouse it’s not the same thing,” he said.

Now I’m going to stop for just a minute. Remember on the continent it is the mayor who performs the marriage ceremony, makes it legal. You may, of course, go into the church afterwards and have a ceremony but it is the mayor who performs the ceremony. When I was in Brussels a few years back we saw one of those ceremonies performed down on the square in the city. And then afterwards they would go to a church for a wedding by the priest but, this was a Roman Catholic marriage, but the legality of it depends upon the mayor performing it. And that is true of many of the continental countries.

So he said, “Your assurance frightens me.” He said, “How do you know that it was the mayor that married you? It might have been the janitor.” He said, “Oh but sir, I’m really quite sure it was the mayor.” And he said, “Further more, how do you know that that document which he gave you is not a forged document?” He said, “Sir, if he was the janitor would you be married?” And he said, “No sir, I wouldn’t be married.” Dr. Barnhouse said, “You see, you’ve based your assurance of your salvation on the identity of the mayor and the validity of the document.” And he said, “I base my salvation upon

the identity of the Son of God who died for me and the validity of the word of God.”

And then he read verse 9 of chapter 5 to him,

“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, (this is the document,) that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

So, the validity of the document and the identity of the Son of God who died for us. Now, just one more verse before we stop. The doctrine of the assurance of salvation which I've just spoken to you about briefly is the doctrine that says we have eternal life now. The doctrine of the security of the believer is the doctrine that says that we are safe now and safe forever. So I'm just going to turn to one passage and point out three real quick things in the next minute. It's in John chapter 10, some of you know this verse. If you don't know it you should know it because it's a great verse. All the verses in the Bible are great, aren't they?

Notice now, John chapter 10, and verse 27. Now Jesus says, “My sheep hear my voice.” You know, if there is something down within you that just gets a little warm when you hear the word of God, that may be the sign that you may belong to the Lord. You're one of the sheep. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” The two marks about the Lord's sheep, you know what they are? The mark of the ear, they hear his voice. And the mark of the feet, they follow him. Those are the two things that characterize the Christian. He hears the word of God and he follows Jesus Christ. He may follow brokenly, he may stumble, he may wander off, but these are the two basic things that characterize it.

Now, verse 28, “And I give unto them eternal life.” Oh wait, I misread that, “I give unto them three months life.” No, that’s not right, is it? No I’m going to read it theologically, “I give unto them life until they sin.” No. “I give unto them eternal life and they shall not perish unless they sin.” Or, “They shall not perish unless they apostatize.” Or, “They shall not perish unless they quit believing.” No, did you notice that word? Never. Never. In the Greek this is the strongest way that you can make a negative statement. We call it in Greek, the technical term, take this home and quote it to someone, they’ll be impressed with your learning. What we have in John 10:28 is an illustration of the subjunctive of emphatic negation. Subjunctive of emphatic negation. Let me translate it as it should be translated, I think, “And I give unto them eternal life and they shall by no means ever, by no means ever, perish. They shall never perish. Never. Never.” Now if you believed in Jesus Christ and you receive life and then you lost your salvation, Jesus Christ would be a liar. You could say, “He said you would never perish but it happened.” That’s impossible. That means when we believe in Jesus Christ we have everlasting life. Does that mean once saved always saved? Yes. That’s what it means.

Let me close with just a simple story. Maybe you’ll have a question in a moment. There was a banker in Scotland who went to a little church where they preached the gospel one night and he was converted. He was a prominent man in the city. When he went to the bank, it was a small town, they had already found out about it, one of the men came over to him and said, “Understand you went to the little gospel preaching place and you were converted.” He said, “Yes.” “I suppose now you believe once saved, always saved?” He said, “Yes, I do.” He said, “Well I guess now you can go out and live just as you like.” And he said, “That’s right.” But he said, “Since I’ve been converted I’ve got different likes.” And that’s true. You see, when we are converted we are given a new nature and we don’t want to displease the one who has loved us and given him himself for us.

Well times up, we must stop.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the wonderful privilege of studying the word of God. We thank Thee for the salvation which has come to us by grace. For the assurance of life which comes from the word, from the witness of the Spirit, and from the evidence of works in our lives. And we thank Thee for the assurance of eternal security, not only safety now but safety forever because of Jesus Christ's great promise. Be with us as we part. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

Now if you have a question I'll be glad to try to answer them for you. Yes ma'am.

[Question from audience]

[Johnson] Well now, of course, there is a verse in Galatians chapter 5 which speaks about falling from grace. It's the only verse in the New Testament, by the way, that uses that term, fall from grace. And it's in Galatians chapter 5, and verse 4. But grace is not salvation. Grace is a method of salvation. Or grace is the principle of salvation. So a Christian may fall from grace, but he may not fall from salvation.

Now the reason, of course, for this is people have misunderstood that verse. But you see, Paul was talking to Galatian Christians who were in danger of going back to legalism. One of the characteristics of the Jewish requirements from the Old Testament, remember, was that the Jewish man had to be circumcised. And that marked him out as a member of the covenant. And so in this particular situation someone had come in among these Galatian churches and had said, “It's not only necessary to believe in order to be a Christian, but one must also be circumcised.” And so Paul wrote Galatians in order to point out that we are saved by grace. That is, by the free gift of God. If it depends upon some religious right it's no longer grace. It's a work. So he said, “You Galatians, if you

try to be justified by believing in Christ plus being circumcised, you have fallen from the grace method of salvation.” Not from salvation, if you genuinely believe, but you’ve fallen from the grace method. You see? So that’s what that means.

Now of course, there are some that believe, many churches believe that if you believe in Jesus Christ it’s possible afterwards to apostatize or to sin in such a terrible way that you can lose your salvation. Of course, the fact that people believe that doesn’t mean it’s right. I think that as human reasoning, of course, because the Bible is very plain. That if we believe in Jesus Christ and we believe that he has done all necessary to save us then we have to believe in eternal security.

In fact, last night I had a woman call me about 10 o’clock and she was very much disturbed over this very question. She believed in eternal security but someone had, or she had been reading something, about this and she wondered, she asked me the question, “Can anyone really be a Christian and not believe in eternal security?” I tried to point out to her, “Yes, there are people who have genuinely believed in Christ but who have never really been taught as they should have been taught that once you believe you are a Christian.” But she said, “I cannot understand how anyone can do that because if Jesus Christ bore all of our sins -- past, present, and future -- as he did...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]