



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

“The External Means of Redemption's Application”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Today we're turning to 2 Corinthians chapter 5, and our Scripture reading is verse 16 through verse 21. While you are finding 2 Corinthians chapter 5 may I simply remind you and us of the apostle's line of argument in this particular section of 2 Corinthians? He's discussing his own ministry and particularly in chapter 5 beginning at about verse 11 through the end of the chapter, he's dealing with the motives of new covenant ministry and then the message of new covenant ministry and finally the mode of life of those who are giving forth this ministry. In verse 14 and 15 he has said, “For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.” Now that is a mistranslation. This should have been translated, “That if one died for all, then all died.” The same verbal form is found here in both of these occurrences in the clause so, “That if one died for all, then all died,” or in other words, “Christ died for those who died when Christ died,” is Paul's point. And verse 15, “And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.” Beginning at verse 16 the apostle stresses the message that he has been defending and preaching and that he would like for others who stand in a similar place to give forth. So we begin our reading with verse 16, and the apostle says,

“Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. (That lays a bit of a stress on the “ye” and probably should be simply rendered “be reconciled to God) For He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

This, of course, is the foundation for the ministry of reconciliation, the death of Christ, and the imputation of a righteous standing before God by virtue of what he has done. May the Lord bless this reading of his word? Let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Our Heavenly Father, we give Thee thanks, and we give Thee praise this beautiful day for all of the blessings of life, physical blessings, spiritual blessings, all of the things by which we are indebted to Thee. We thank Thee and praise Thee that Thou hast blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ, and Thou hast added to the spiritual blessings the blessings of physical life and all of the things that go to make up our present existence in the flesh. Thou hast surely, marvelously blessed and provided for us, and we give Thee thanks today for those blessings.

We particularly give Thee thanks for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who has offered the sacrifice by which we are enabled to call Thee our Father. So today, as we

think about the first day of the week and the remembrance of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and of the completion of the atoning work, we express to Thee our gratitude.

We pray Thy blessing upon the whole church of Jesus Christ today. Wherever they may be gathered in Thy name, we ask, Lord, that the Holy Spirit may take of the word of reconciliation and through that word of reconciliation reconcile individuals to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Build up, enlarge, increase, edify the whole body, Lord, we pray.

We ask Thy blessing upon the ministry of the chapel, for its elders and for its deacons, for its members and for the friends who are here, we especially pray for them. We ask, Lord, Thy blessing upon them. May Thy hand be upon all of them for spiritual and physical and material good. We especially pray that in the day in which we live we may be by Thy grace enabled to represent faithfully and fruitfully our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We thank Thee to for our country. We pray Thy blessing upon it, upon all of those who are involved in government, not only in Washington, but in Austin and Dallas, all of those ministers of God as Scripture calls them, under whom we live.

We thank Thee too for those who are having trials and difficulties. We remember the words of the New Testament that we must through many tribulations enter into the Kingdom of God. We pray, Lord, that Thou will sustain us through them. And for those Lord who are unable to be with us through illness and sickness and other problems and trials, we especially commit them to Thee. And those who are in the hospital, we remember them. Minister to them; protect and keep them; restore them to health and strength in accordance with Thy will.

Be with us in this meeting. May we have the sense of Thy presence. May the Holy Spirit take of the things of Christ and minister them to our hearts. For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today and the third of our rather short series on The Method of Grace and Divine Redemption is “The External Means of the Application of Redemption.” We have been talking about the principle or the method of grace in our redemption, and we have considered it in the application of redemption looking particularly at 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 30 where the apostle lays great stress upon the fact that grace begins with the Lord God. “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” And then in our second study we looked at the goal of the method of grace in divine redemption contending and seeking to show that that goal was union with Christ, and we looked at John chapter 17 and verse 23. Really not even the whole of the verse, but the opening clauses, “I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.” Ones who read the Bible immediately after reading a few pages of it discover that the Scriptures set forth very plainly that there can be no redemption if there is no conversation between the Lord and us. And that conversation we look at as the ministry of the word of God to us. And in fact that conversation that the Lord God has with us, as expressed in his word, tells us why we have the word of God. And what we want to do today is to take a look at 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 20 and seek to see how the apostle sets forth the word of God as the external means of the application of Christ.

Now these might seem to be very simple truths, and they are very simple truths, as are most of the truths of the Bible for that matter once one begins to study them. But it’s also a very important one and occasionally we forget it. Paul wrote to the Corinthians earlier and in the first epistle to them in the 4th chapter of it and the 15th verse, he said to them, “But though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.” So the apostle looked at the word of God as the external means by which individuals were brought to the

experience of the new birth. So we really are answering the question what place has the word of God in the ministry of divine grace?

In Bunyan’s famous, and justly famous and great allegory, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, you’ll remember Bunyan’s Christian must have help from Evangelist in order that he might reach the wicked gate and the light that shown above it. And so must we have converse with the word of God if we are to experience eternal life, if we are to come to the experience of reconciliation. That’s why the word of God may be called the word of reconciliation. So we’re turning to 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 20 for our study this morning.

Paul writes, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. Now as I mentioned in the introduction to the Scripture reading the apostle has been talking about the motives that moved him in the ministry of the word of God. He said in verse 14,

“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then all died: and that he died for all. (that is, all who died when he died) that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”

In the 19th verse he sets out the ministry of reconciliation. “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” Very simply stated, what Paul says in verse 19 is that there is reconciliation for the world of Jews and Gentiles through the work of the mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now you want to be sure and note, in verse 14 and verse 15 that the apostle states that Christ died for those who died when Christ died. Now if we can remember that we will understand the design of the atoning work of Christ. He says it very plainly and

clearly. It’s one of the amazing things to me that we can read the word of God literally for months and years and if you don't think that you can do it, look at your own reading of Scripture. How many times have you read a text and then discovered months, sometime years later, finally, that you have misunderstood what you have been reading?

Now I know in verse 14 he says, “We thus judge, that if one died for all, then all died.” Now it is obvious that the “all” is not everybody without exception. For then everybody without exception would have died when Christ died and therefore experienced the redemption for he would have stood for them, and they would have all been redeemed. The “all” is the “all,” not of everybody without exception, it’s the “all” of everybody without distinction, that is, Jews and Gentiles as the general context of the New Testament so plainly supports. But we often read without really studying. So he said, “We thus judge, that if one died for all, then all died.” I pointed out in the Scripture reading that the term “died” is precisely the same form, even the same tense, in the original text. “And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them,” to answer the question then, “For whom did Christ died?” Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 answers it very plainly in the simplest of words, little one syllable words, Christ died for those who died when Christ died. Christ died for those who died when Christ died. It’s just as simple as your hand before your face if you just pay attention to it and reflect upon it.

In verse 19 when he says, “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself,” it is obvious that the “world” here is not everybody without exception, but everyone without distinction. The reason that it is obvious that it is not everyone without exception is the clause that follows, “Not imputing their trespasses unto them.” If it were everybody without exception then their trespasses would not be imputed to them. They would all experience divine redemption. And we would have Universalism, Universal salvation. So it’s quite plain if one reads and thinks that the apostle is simply saying Christ died for those who died when Christ died. He’s talking about the people of God.

He’s talking about us as he says through this section, as he, the apostle and those who were with him in his ministry, discourses with the Corinthian church for which he was responsible.

Now it’s very important for us to note that he is not a Universalist, that is, Universal salvation, for if you followed anything about the history of modern theology contemporary theology is convinced of Universalism that is that everyone is going to be saved ultimately. Now even the simplest Bible reader who may not understand Christ died for those who died when Christ died knows enough from the reading of Scripture that the Scripture does say that there is such a thing as a lake of fire. There is such a doctrine as eternal punishment. And there are vast numbers of people who are heading for a Christless eternity. That is set out in Scripture so plainly that it’s impossible to miss it from the reading of the word of God. So obviously individuals who teach that everyone is going to be saved are not basing their doctrine upon the word of God, but upon human reason, not upon divine revelation.

When I was in Europe on one of my last trips a few years ago, well not the last but a few trips back, I was in a little church in Basel, in Switzerland, and a young man came up to me, a relatively young man who was a graduate of one of the German universities, in fact had his PhD in one of the technical parts of the university. I’ve forgotten whether he was a chemical engineer or in electronics. He travels all over the world, travels to the United States, a very intelligent man, a very fine Christian man. And he came up and asked me, the first question I was not surprised at all, he said, “What do you think about *alle Versohnung* (now that means, essentially in German, “the reconciliation of all),” in other words, universal salvation. Now you might think that a person who grew up in an evangelical church, a small evangelical church actually in the city of Basel in Switzerland wouldn’t know a whole lot about *alle Versohnung*, but he was, he was knowledgeable in it, and that was the thing that was troubling him a bit about the salvation of all or universal salvation.

When I was in Portland a few weeks ago I was given a tape by the pastor of the church there in which I was ministering, and we listened to the tape together around his dining room table. And it was a lecture given by a minister in the Anglican church, a very fine believing minister of the Anglican church from the state of New York, and he was giving it in Westminster Theological Seminary. And the tape had been sent to me by a friend for listening to, and it was a very good tape and very instructive tape for me on a rather minor aspect of English theology. And in the midst of it the person who was giving the tape made a statement concerning Armianism that I thought was very interesting. He said, “Armianism is the banana peel on the cliff of Unitarianism.” And what he meant by that was simply that when one begins to believe that the work of the atoning work of Christ is designed for everybody it’s not a far step from believing that everybody is going to be saved. Well I don’t know whether that particular kind of thing works always in theology, but there is such a thing as that, and we have often seen it, that individuals who begin to move from the word of God ultimately move very far from the word of God. The domino theory is illustrative of the experiences of many people, though it is not necessarily something that must transpire.

I rather like to think that while it’s true that Armianism or it may be true that Armianism is the banana peel on the cliff of Unitarianism that it also may be the banana peel on the cliff of Universalism, that is, Universal salvation. So we want to be sure as we read this passage that that’s not what Paul is talking about. He is talking about believers and the ministry that is committed to them because Christ has died for them.

Now, coming to the first part of verse 20, the apostle says, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ.” This is the apostle’s sense of his commission and his office. We are ambassadors. That’s a regular word in Greek and also in the Roman thought of the time for the Emperor’s personal representative. As you well know in the United States we have ambassadors all over this world. Ambassadors are the personal representative of the President, and they’re responsible to bring messages to the communities where they are

ministering and stationed, messages that are precisely the intended message of those that they represent. One of the interesting things about Rome was the fact that they had two kinds of provinces. One kind of province was a province that was ruled by the Senate. The Roman Senate generally ruled over provinces that in which there was peace and tranquility. But when provinces were provinces in which there were difficulties of various kinds, possibilities of rebellions, those provinces were often ruled by the Emperor himself, through his legates.

Now the word that was used in Latin was the word *legatus*, which means a legate. But the Greek word was *presbutos*. It’s the word related to Presbyterian, or elder “presbyter.” Now that is the word that Paul uses here. That is the root of the word when he says, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ.” And in the apostle’s background this word would indicate very plainly that he and others were the personal representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ, and all of the kinds of responsibilities that an ambassador might have find illustration in the ministry of the apostle. Just as he was his personal representative, so the apostle considered himself a personal representative of the Lord Jesus Christ. It’s evident also from Paul’s writings that it was perfectly legitimate to extend this to all who have gifts in the body of Christ, and so in that sense we can think of all of ourselves as being ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our responsibilities are to give the message precisely as it is given in the word of God. It is inexcusable for a Christian to give a false gospel message.

I remember many years ago Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer used to say to the students at Dallas Theological Seminary, “Men preach an accurate gospel.” Those were his precise words, and that was certainly true to the apostle’s teaching. Men and I say to you, men and women, children as well, preach an accurate gospel. It is so easy for us to tamper with the message of the word of God and give our own interpretation of the word of God. No ambassador is given that privilege. He is responsible to tender the message of his chief to those in another country. We are likewise responsible for the message that is

given to us. It is God’s truth. We do not have the right to tamper with it. If we tamper with it, if we change it, if we make it our instead of his, we are thieves with the word of God.

So Paul says, “Now we are ambassadors for Christ.” But notice, it’s for Christ, in other words, he regards himself as a vice gerent, that is, a deputy of the Lord Jesus Christ. He represents him as the Lord himself represented himself as a messenger of the Father and said, “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me,” so we say, “My doctrine is not mine. It is the doctrine of him that has sent me.” So often when you are preaching, or when you are teaching, or when you are witnessing, or when I am doing the same, we, as long as we are preaching and speaking and witnessing and explaining what is written in the word of God, when there is rejection, it is not rejection of you or me, it is rejection of the one whom we are representing. That is what our Lord stated. That is what the apostle’s state. That is what the Scriptures state.

Paul speaks of gospel preaching as being the appointed means for the reconciling and saving of God’s people. What is implied in this? Well, if it is true that we are ministers of reconciliation, then there is a problem between God and men. Implied in this is the defection and fall of man. If there is no war with heaven, what need is there of ambassadors of peace. So the very fact that the ministry is a ministry of reconciliation, and that is our ministry, implies that there is a rebellion on the part of men against heaven.

This is a singular grace of God, if you think about it, that he has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation and the objects of our reconciliation are men, not angels. You might think that since angels are beings with greater glory and greater power than men, it would seem that the ministry of reconciliation would be first of all to angels. For remember God created countless angels. Some of them the Scriptures call elect angels, and then some are non-elect angels. The non-elect angels have fallen but there is no

ministry of reconciliation for non-elect angels. The ministry of reconciliation is for men. That in itself is an exhibition of the grace of God for men.

And then when you add to that the fact that God woos us, beseeches us, beseeches us who as people have apostatized from truth and rebelled against him, one can certainly see the amazing grace of God in ministry to us, and Oh the great dignity of gospel ministry that we have the right to stand as a legate of the king and minister his word. You could have no higher privilege than that. That is why I do not in the slightest envy some of the great successful wealthy men. Oh every now and then I say, “It might be nice to ride in a Mercedes or a BMW or something like that,” but a moment of serious reflection convinces me that I have a task that is far greater, far more enjoyable, far more wonderful in the light of the things that really matter than men who are consumed only with the affairs of this life.

Now, could anything be more wonderful, my Christian friend, than being an ambassador in the behalf of Jesus Christ? That’s what he’s called us to be. He’s called us to represent him. He’s called us to be his ministers. Nothing could be greater than that. It’s not surprising that Mr. Spurgeon used to say, “If God has called you to minister the word of God, don’t stoop to become a king.” This is the privilege of every believer as well. You can minister for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now Paul goes on to talk about the one who does the work. He says, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us.” What and whence or from where is this efficacy of preaching to reconciliation men? What is it that causes men to say, “Men and brethren what shall we do?” when the word of God is proclaimed to them? What is it that causes individuals to fall before the face of God and cry out for forgiveness? Is it the word alone?

Well there are some people who think that there is a power in the word alone to bring salvation to individuals. And certain texts of Scripture isolated from the whole of the teaching of the New Testament might lead to that impression for we do have texts

like, “My word shall not return unto me void.” But those texts must be understood in the light of all of the words of the word of God. So far as the word of God itself alone is concerned, well Paul says, “It’s the foolishness of preaching.” That’s what the world thinks about preaching, the foolishness of preaching.” The word by itself is nothing more than a message that has no authority in itself at all. In fact, one might say, “Well is the authority in the word and Paul?” No, Paul says it’s not in us. If you’ll turn back just a page, he’s talking about the ministry of the word of God, and he says in verse 3 of 2 Corinthians 4, “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” In other words, without the help of someone else, men are blind even when the word of God is preached to them. Further he says,

“We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”

In other words, the authority and power of the preaching of the ministry of the word of God does not lie in the word alone, nor does it lie in the apostle and the word. It lies ultimately in the Lord God himself who uses his word. We should never separate the word from the spirit. The word by itself cannot save. The spirit, if one lays stress upon the spirit alone, the chances are you’ll be involved in the excesses that characterize the ministry of so many who talk about the spirit, but whose spiritual experiences are not wedded to the words of Scripture. No Christian experiences a valid experience which is not wedded to the truths of the word of God. If someone has an experience that cannot

be found in harmony with the word of God, it’s not a Christian experience. But when the word and the spirit combine then we have that which is fruitful and usable by the Lord God. One of the old Puritans used to like to say that, “Ministers are like trumpets, soundless until breath is breathed into them.” And so we are soundless if the Holy Spirit does not use the word of God which we preach there will be no fruit. Paul says, “We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you through us.” So the important thing is that God does the work through those apostolic legates and other ambassadors of the Lord Jesus.

And finally he makes his appeal in the last clause of verse 20, “Be reconciled to God.” This is the great concernment, as the Puritans say, the great concernment of ministers of reconciliation. What does it mean to be reconciled? Well let me put it as simply as I can put it. It may be put simpler, but this is as simply as I can put it. It means the work of Christ which takes us from the position and attitude of enmity to the position and attitude of amity, from enmity to amity. Now let me explain further, for someone may not understand enmity, amity particularly amity. We don't always use that word. It means to move from the place of rebellion, the position of rebellion and hostility and the attitude of hostility to the position and attitude of friendship with God. It means to move from being a rebel to a friend. That’s simply the ministry of reconciliation. It is the work of Jesus Christ by which believers are brought to the position of friendship with God from the position of hostility to God. It is a finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ because it is finished the foundation having been laid in the work of the cross. Paul explains all of this so plainly and clearly in 2 great chapters aside from this one, Romans chapter 5 and Ephesians chapter 2.

Now I’d like to point out that this is both an objective and a subjective work probably. Some like to overstress one at the expense of the other. I think both are probably involved. But nevertheless the point at emphasis in this chapter is surely upon the hostility of men and the transformation of them from hostility to friendship. Look at

verse 19, “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself.” In other words, it is individuals who are the object of the work of God. We are hostile naturally. We are rebellious naturally. That’s the way we are born, hostile to the Lord God. That incidentally is why your little baby was born crying with his fists, or her fists, clenched. It was a message to you right from the beginning. You’re going to have a problem. And not only that, but furthermore the world is going to have a problem with them. That’s God’s way of giving us a message. I know they’re cute. They’re helpless, but wait until they can fend for themselves a little bit, then they will not be so helpless and mothers and fathers will get those furrows in their brows as they think about, “What in the world are we going to do about them?” So God has his way of instructing us. The problem is with us.

Now, I’d like to point out that this position is received by faith. In fact, the apostle in Romans chapter 5 in verse 11 states that plainly. He says, “And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation.” So it’s something that we receive. It’s something that Christ has done. It’s something that we receive as a gift from God, reconciliation, the position of friendship and the attitude of friendship to God. Christ did not come in order that God might love us, but because God loved us. That’s why he came. God wanted to reconcile his people. You can see this right in the Bible from the 3rd chapter on. After Adam and Eve have disobeyed God and God comes down into the garden in the cool of the evening, what do they do? They are looking for God. They want to be delivered. So they rush out to him, fall down before him, confess their sin and beg for forgiveness. No, they ran and hid in the bushes of the garden, having covered themselves with fig leaves. Of all of the leaves to cover themselves with, fig leaves are the worst. If you’ve ever seen any fig leaves I would hate to have any near my body because they’re a prickly kind of leaf. Just look at the underside of them. But anyway, that’s the figure of man’s seeking to cover his hostility, rebellion and particularly his disobedience to the Lord God.

In the New Testament Jesus tells the parable of reconciliation. It’s the parable of the prodigals’ son. It’s really, as others have called it, the parable of the father’s heart because it reveals the fact that it is God who is the author and initiator of reconciliation. And the prodigal who goes off into the far country wastes his substance in riotous living, finally comes to himself and coming to himself, comes back to the father, and when the father sees him down the way he immediately runs to him, falls upon his neck, and incidentally, as you remember in the story the prodigal is made up a little speech that he’s going to give to his father. He’s going to tell him how he’s disobeyed him in all of the things that characterize that and before he can even get it all out, the father has smothered him with his kisses and has called for others to come and give him the best robe and to bring him back to the position of sonship in his house. It’s Jesus Christ’s picture of God’s love for individuals who come back to him. It’s the parable of divine reconciliation. “Yet, a great way off, he saw me, ran to meet me as I came, as I was my father loved me, loved me in my sin and shame,” we sometimes sing.

Now finally note the marvel of this. This is something that is so marvelous to me. In fact, it’s the astonishing mercy of God. Mercy for such distinguished apostates because after all remember we had a representative in the Garden of Eden who stood for every one of us, and our federal head disobeyed the Lord God, and we fell in him. We are the inheritors of the apostasy of our head, Adam the first. But God has shown mercy to these apostates; rather than to angels, he’s shown mercy to us, to men, not angels. Why would God throw away golden vessels to save earthen pot churns? But that’s what the Scriptures set forth, the work of God as in a figure. In other words, he passes by the angels. They are excluded. He receives men, Oh stupendous mercy of God. Don’t ask me to explain why God does that. It’s part of his plan. It’s part of his divine revelation. We will one day understand, and we will recognize that this is the magnificent wisdom and power and glory of our sovereign God.

We’re children. It’s just like trying to teach your children things that have to do with adult life. You cannot do it. And so, we are children, but listen to be a child is a marvelous thing, to be a child in a family. We look at a child and we say, “Isn’t it nice to be a child?” No worries, everything taken care of, no financial worries, no worries of clothing, shelter, no worries really of any kind, oh to be a child. Well my Christian friend, that’s what you are. You’re a child. And just as an earthly father cares for his children, so the heavenly Father cares for his. That’s why we have family. That’s why a father. That’s why we have a mother. These are God’s ways of telling us what spiritual things are really like. They’re the ultimate things, freely, holy, finally reconciliation, all wrath gone, the implications of it, if we are righteous by the reconciling word of God, then how inexcusable to continue in our enmity. After the blessing of the milder attributes of God, such as his mercy and his goodness and his love and his grace to which we are exposed now, then if we refuse the exercise of those milder and marvelous attributes of God, one day we shall be exposed to the severer attributes of God, his justice and his righteousness. Oh my friend in the audience, flee to Christ while there is opportunity and believe in him.

May I conclude by just pointing out, our society is largely a society of enmity today? What are the evidences? Why there’s very little conviction of sin which is necessary for repentance and which is necessary for reconciliation. There is no serious treating with the Lord God. In the secret places of our lives, how often do we get down upon our knees and pour out our hearts before God in thanksgiving and in supplication? And if the believers so rarely are doing this, and listen, there is every indication that believers in the evangelical church are not doing a great deal of this, then what about the world?

Hosea when he was speaking to backsliding Israel, he said to them in the 14th chapter, “Take with you words and come into the presence of the Lord and confess your sins that you might be turned by him into the relationship again that means fruitful service.” There is very little drawing nigh to him by the saints and furthermore there is

very little indication of the attitude that we ought to have toward the other saints, as one of the Puritans also said, "What at peace with the Father, that's our profession and at war with the children?" That's a fatal mistake to think that we are truly reconciled to God when we have no love whatsoever to God's children. If we are reconciled to the Father, we surely shall have the kind of attitude that we ought to have towards the Father's children.

May I give you a word of exhortation as I close? You, in effect, are the ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ today, the apostles have gone on. They have left us their message, and we are responsible for the giving of it. We are a ministry of life unto life and a ministry of death unto death. So be serious, be tender, be exemplary, in other words, in your life, have your life stand behind the message that you claim to give. Leo Tolstoy is one that we all know about, wrote some marvelous books. That Russian was truly a great master of literature, but he was a man who knew how to speak but did not know how to live himself. His wife said, after his death in a biography of him recently published, that he was magnificent in analyzing the condition of men, but he had no understanding whatsoever of his own family. And then his daughter said of him, "My father loved the whole world, but he did not love his children." He was a man who had a great profession but no true possession of the realities of a Christian existence though he wrote a lot about religious things. It's so possible for us as evangelicals to have a marvelous confession of our faith in Christ, but when it comes to the reality of it. It's sadly lacking. For those of you who are the friends of Christ, I urge you to admire, to stand amazed at this mercy of God, to labor, to be an instrument for the reconciliation of others, and to be comforted in the midst of your afflictions by the knowledge that you have been reconciled to God.

You know the other day I saw something in the paper that, I don't remember whether I mentioned it in this particular session or whether it was on Wednesday night, but in the Journal a few days ago, November the 21st to be exact, one of the articles in it

was devoted to the promotion of religion by advertisers in splashy and secular styles.

That’s become the custom. In other words, we promote religion in the same way that we promote the products that we use in our everyday life.

The Reverend George Martin, Executive Director of the Episcopal Ad Project in Minneapolis, and let me hasten to say, for any Episcopalians who may be listening, I know that there are many godly Episcopalians who would be very unhappy over this, but he was the Executive Director of the Episcopal Ad Project in Minneapolis, and one of the projects print ads, according to the Journal, says, “The Episcopal church welcomes you regardless of race, creed, color, or the number of times you’ve been born.” In other words, it doesn't really make a bit of difference whether you’ve had any spiritual experience at all be one of us. We can make great professions, but there is no reality. He at least admits there’s no reality, but he doesn't see any need for any reality at all.

John Flavel said, “For the comfort of those of you who are genuine Christians, as nothing can comfort a man that must go to hell, at last so nothing should deject a man that shall through many troubles at last reach heaven.” It is true. Nothing can possibly comfort the man who must leave this life and enter into a Christless eternity, but nothing can ultimately deject us if we have the confidence that we belong to him.

If you’re here this morning and you’ve never believed in Christ, we invite you to receive the gift of reconciliation through the saving cross of the Lord Jesus Christ where the sins of sinners have been born. Come to Christ. Believe in him. Trust in him. And rejoice in and admire and be amazed at the grace of God that has been shown to you individually. May we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Father, we are amazed, astonished and do not, of course, ultimately, understand why such mercy has been shown to us and not to angels. That Thou hast past by the fallen angels and Thou hast spoken to fallen men is a marvel to us, a perplexing mystery. But we thank Thee for the grace shown to us that we thank Thee for

the reality of the knowledge of Christ. Oh, God may we truly come to know him more deeply, more perfectly, more fruitfully. We pray Lord for those who may be in our audience who have never yet believed in Christ. If it should please Thee Lord may at this very moment there be some in this audience who are saying to Thee, “Father, I know I’m a sinner. I know I’ve been rebellious and hostile, but I lay down my weapons of warfare. I receive as a free gift the reconciliation provided by the Lord Jesus Christ...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]