



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

TRANSCRIPT

“Is Substitution Immoral?, or the Nature of the Work of Redemption”

So let's begin with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for the privilege, which is before us again. We thank Thee for the word of God and for the life that it gives us as we ponder the things that really matter. We pray that our studies this afternoon, the theology of the New Testament and of the word of God, may help us with our Christian life. Enable us Lord also to so understand the truth that we may be able to communicate it with more clarity to others. And so we commit this class to Thee for Thy blessing upon each one of us for Jesus sake. Amen.

[Message] Our subject for tonight is “Is Substitution Immoral? or the Nature of the Work of Redemption.” And if you have been following us in the outline as we have moved along, you will notice that really the important part of this title is the latter part and not the first part because we have been studying Christology and Soteriology, or the doctrine of Christ and the doctrine of salvation. And we want to stress the latter. And we have moved from the subject of salvation and who was Jesus Christ, discussing the perversions of that doctrine of our Lord. We have discussed the covenants, the offices

and what has Christ done or his sufferings and type. And then we last time discussed his suffering in history.

And so it is natural for us now tonight to consider the nature of the work, which he did when he suffered in history. And of course, his sufferings in history are his suffering both of life, death, and after death but primarily our stress has been upon his sufferings in his death because this is the heart of his redeeming work.

So let’s read a passage in the Bible tonight for our Scripture reading. And I’m asking you if you will to turn to Galatians chapter 3 and will you listen as I read the beginning of verse 7 through verse 14. Galatians chapter 3, verse 7 through verse 14. And here the Apostle Paul writes,

“Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” (Now, notice the next verse particularly.) “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.”

All genuine Christians believe that salvation is the work of God. Jonah put it this way, “Salvation is of the Lord.” Furthermore, all genuine Christians believe this work of salvation, which is God’s work, is accomplished through the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ. He himself said, “The son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many.” And then all genuine Christians believe that the

saving work of Jesus Christ, which is initiated by God the Father, is made available to us on the term or terms of faith. The just shall live by faith. To him that worketh not but believeth on him to justify the ungodly his faith is counted for righteousness.

Now if that is true we can say salvation of God. It is through Jesus Christ or by Jesus Christ and it is ours on the basis of faith -- by means of faith. Thomas Aquinas was very for sure of these essentials when he said, “Three things are necessary for the salvation of man: to know what he ought to believe, to know what he ought to desire and to know what he ought to do. But a man might know what he ought to believe, what he ought to desire, and what he ought to do and not be a genuine Christian.” The essentials of the Christian faith are that it is a work of God, that it is a work accomplished by Jesus Christ whose death upon the cross, and that this work is available to us on the terms of faith.

Now we’ll talk about the terms of salvation later on and we’ll discuss all the different terms that have been suggested, such as good works. Repentance in the wrong sense, baptism and other things, but the terms are faith. Now not all Christians are able to defend the nature of the atonement. It’s vicarious and representative character. There are many very sincere Christians who possess the moral of Christianity who have never heard of Ansell. In fact, if you mention Ansell, they might say, “What’s that a new virus.” That, of course, does not mean that they’re not good Christians. It does as a rule mean they’re not so able to present the Christian faith to others if they do not understand the faith that they possess. So it is important for us to understand the nature of the saving work of Jesus Christ and be able to explain why Jesus Christ died as our substitute. And to be able to answer at least the outstanding objections that have been layed against the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ.

Thomas Jefferson, many feel, was a great president. I will not pass judgment upon him as a president, but he was very, very far from being a Christian. In fact, he was a deadly enemy of true Christianity. Let me just give you one citation from Jefferson, “But

the greatest of all the reformers of the depraved religion of his own country was Jesus of Nazareth abstracting what is really his from the rubbish and which it is buried, that of course is the gospel; Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, easily distinguished by its luster from the jost of his biographers and as separable from that as the diamond from the dung hill.” In other words, the words of our Lord are likened to the diamond. Things that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John contribute are likened to the dunghill.

“We have the outlines of a system of the most sublime morality, which has ever fallen from the lips of man. The establishment of the innocent and genuine character of this benevolent morality and the rescuing from the amputation of imposture which has resulted from artificial systems invented by ultra-Christian sects, is a most desirable object.” And Thomas Jefferson had a footnote at that point about the ultra-Christian sects and this is what he says -- these are what he calls these ultra-Christians sects, “The immaculate conception of Jesus.” Now he understands so little of Christianity that he has mixed up the doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary with the virgin birth of Christ. And he has put them together. No Christian ever spoke of the immaculate conception of Jesus. His deification, he doesn’t accept that. The creation of the world by him, he doesn’t accept that. His miraculous powers, he doesn’t accept those. His resurrection and visible ascension, he doesn’t accept those. His corporeal presence in the Eucharist, the Trinity, original sin, atonement, regeneration, election, orders of the hierarchy, etc. In other words, practically everything that is significant in Christianity he abandoned.

Now this is the man, by the way, that some think was a great man. I do not. But how would you defend your Christianity against a man like Jefferson? Do you think you would be able to stand up and explain with clarity and with significance why you believe the doctrines; what he rejects out of hand as being ultra-Christian? And he means by that that they are not worthy of our belief. Well let’s see in a few moments if we can at least

see why we believe -- if we do -- why Jesus Christ died as the substitute or as a satisfaction.

Now, Roman I in our outline: The theological signification of the satisfaction of Christ, and by satisfaction, that is a theological term and I’ve used it on purpose -- because I want, as I’ve been saying all along, for you as a class to get accustomed to theological terms. Satisfaction is a term that refers to the substitutionary theory of the atonement. That Jesus Christ died as a penal substitute. That is that he died as a substitute under the penalty of sin imposed by the great lawgiver of this universe, God the Father. So when we speak of the satisfaction of Christ, we mean that work which he performed when he shed his blood by which he satisfied the claims of the one who is the judge of the universe. So the satisfaction of Christ is the work that he did on the cross, the theological signification of the satisfaction of Christ.

Now this doctrine of the satisfaction of Christ is not just a reform teaching. It is reform teaching. It is Lutheran teaching. It is the teaching of the Methodists. It is even the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. So what we’re talking about is something that is common to Christendom, the doctrine that Jesus Christ, when he died, satisfied the claims of a holy God.

Now, Capital A, this work of Jesus Christ has three directions, and that’s why I made up these words. This work of Jesus Christ in satisfaction is directed toward me. And so it is sinner-ward in one of its emphasis. That’s the meaning of that word. Sinner-ward, Capital A: Christ has met the demands of the law against the sinner, God-ward. Christ has met the demands of the justice of God. In other words, his work was directed not only toward me but his work was directed toward God. And finally, law-ward. Christ has met the demands of the law of God.

Now let’s talk for just a few moments about these three things. First of all, sinner-ward, Christ has met the demands of the law against the sinner. The divine person, Jesus Christ, has paid the whole debt and his work is that of an obedient eternal son. And the

superior efficacy of the work of Jesus Christ, as over against the death of any other person in the universe is related to the superior dignity of Jesus Christ. In other words, the work of Jesus Christ has its significance because of who he is. No one man could die for other men. Not even an innocent man -- if we may presume a man to be innocent. Not even an innocent man could die for all men. But Jesus Christ, because of the superior dignity of his person, when he dies, his death has significance in the counsel of God that striketh out to include all of those for whom he came to die.

Now I want you to read with me Hebrews chapter 9, verse 13 and 14. So will you turn to this passage? And I want you to see from this that the Bible recognizes that the superior efficacy of the work of Jesus Christ is related to his superior dignity as a person. Hebrews chapter 9, verse 13 and verse 14, this is what we read, “For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” In other words, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ has superior merit because of who he is, and the power by whom he made his sacrifice. So Christ has met the demands of the law against the sinner. The law said the soul that sinneth, it shall die. Jesus Christ as a substitute has met that. He has died under the judgment of the law and his work has superior efficacy because of who he is.

Capital B: God-ward, Christ has met the demands of the justice of God.

Now these three things are related -- I’m sure you can see -- but here what we have in mind is this, the justice of God is his moral excellence. It is his moral excellence that requires him to punish sin and reward righteousness. And Jesus Christ has come to meet the justice of God, its demands. For God’s justice required the death of the sinner. The wages of sin is death. And so Jesus Christ has come and has met the demands of the justice of God. Let’s turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 21. 2 Corinthians 5:21, Paul writes, “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.” He has made him to be sin for us. In other words, Jesus Christ took our place, became sin for us, bore the judgment of God upon that sin because of the righteous requirements of the nature of God and he has borne them to the full. And so Jesus Christ has met the demands of the justice of God.

Law-ward, Capital C, Christ has met the demand of the law of God.

Now the term law is more comprehensive than the term, justice, since the law not only demands our punishment when we break it but it also demands that we keep it perfectly. And Jesus Christ has not only come to bear the judgment of a broken law but he has also come to keep the law perfectly, so that he has met the demands of the law of God and in his life and in his death we have the perfect obedience that completely satisfies the requirements of the law of God. So the theological significance of the satisfaction of Christ, to sum it up, is simply this; that Jesus Christ has met all of the demands of the law, all of the demands of a holy God against the sinner, and consequently has satisfied the holy claims that God had against men.

Now let’s move on to Roman II: The scriptural demonstration of the satisfaction of Christ, and I’m going to follow Charles Hodge here in setting this forth in a three fold way. First of all, Capital A, Christ saves us as our priest. And will you turn with me to Hebrews chapter 10, verses 1 through 18? Hebrews chapter 10, verses 1 through 18. And I’m going to read through this entire section but I want you to notice these things as we read along. I want you to notice, first of all, that the author of the epistle of the Hebrews is setting forth our Lord as the antitype of all of the sacrifices of the Old Testament. He is saying that these sacrifices find their ultimate in our Lord’s sacrifice for us.

Furthermore, he says that this sacrifice that Jesus Christ offered supercedes all those sacrifices -- that they could never really take away sin but his really takes away sin. And furthermore, he will say near the end of this chapter that if we refuse this sacrifice we perish forever. But now, listen beginning with verse 1,

“For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come -- in the volume of the book it is written of me -- to do thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.”

Jesus Christ as the great mediating priest has offered the one sacrifice that forever takes away sin. So Jesus Christ saves us as our priest offering the sacrifice that is final. There is no need for any further sacrifice. For example, when a church offers a sacrifice - - regardless of how long its historical associations may go into the past -- that is not in

accordance with the teaching of the word of God. One sacrifice and one sacrifice forever has closed the picture with reverence to the sins of believers. Jesus Christ has offered that once and for all sacrifice. If, for example, we were to say, there’s another sacrifice for sin we would be saying, in effect, that Jesus Christ did not do enough. It is necessary to do more. So if we should believe that in our church on Sunday there is further sacrifice, we are simply saying theologically, though we may not realize it, Jesus Christ did not do enough. But Hebrews says he saved us as a priest with a once and for all sacrifice. Secondly, Capital B, Christ saves us as sacrifice. Turn with me to Ephesians chapter 5, verse 2. Ephesians chapter 5, verse 2, Paul writes in verse 1, “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children”

Now notice this. Watch the term sacrifice. “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.” In the ancient world, there was a general admission that sacrifices were intended to satisfy God by the expiation of guilt. That is when the offering was offered; it was intended to be something that would please God because sin was paid for. The guilt was expiated by the sacrifice, and that pleased God because he as a holy God required the death of that which has offended him.

Now the Hebrews understood them, that is, the offerings of the Old Testament could be expiatory sacrifices. They were not mere forms of worship. They were not intended to be parallel to the number that the choir sings on Sunday morning. They were not intended to be parallel to the garments that the preacher might wear in the pulpit. They were not intended to be parallel to any type of ritual that might be said in the church. Those offerings of the Old Testament were understood by the Hebrews to have expiatory significance.

Now, of course, if they read the Old Testament correctly, they would know that those offerings did not really take away sin. There was a once and for all sacrifice to come. But they understood in the offering of the animals there was an intent in the Old

Testament economy to set forth that expiation comes by offering. Payment for sin comes by the shedding of blood. And so when we read that Jesus Christ is a sacrifice, we are to understand by this that his death is the means for the expiation of guilt. It is the means for the satisfaction of that guilt and it is pleasing to a holy God who himself has, of course, provided the sacrifice.

Now in the Old Testament in Leviticus chapter 17, verse 11. You need not turn there because some of you might not even know that Leviticus is the -- let’s see -- Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, the third book of the Bible. But this is what we read in that verse. I’m trying to sting you into turning, you see. Leviticus chapter 17, verse 11 reads this way, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.” And without shedding of blood is no remission, the author of the epistle of the Hebrews said. It is the blood that maketh an atonement of the soul. So in the Old Testament then -- when you mention the term sacrifice, the thought of expiation was inevitably involved. Sacrifice means death, the pouring out of blood, which covers sin, which pays for sin.

Now that’s the teaching of the Old Testament. It is also, of course, brought over into the New Testament. Turn with me to Isaiah chapter 53 and let’s read three verses there that some of us studied in a little detail not long ago. Isaiah chapter 53, verse 4 through 6 and I want you to notice here that the sinfulness is looked at as guilt, which is transferable. Isaiah chapter 53, verse 4 and, of course, the prophet is writing of the Messiah, the servant of Jehovah who is to come. This is what he says, “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” And there you see the servant of

Jehovah as the sacrifice who takes the iniquity of us all upon himself and he expiates that guilt. He pays for that guilt by the blood of his sacrifice.

There are some who say that it is inconsistent for us to think of a loving God and yet at the same time of a God who demands satisfaction. That these two seem to be opposed. That we either must have a God who is loving and who receives all on the basis of his love regardless of their relationship to Jesus Christ. Or we have the idea of a God who is an angry God who is a kind of cruel God who delights in the punishment of those who have disobeyed him. And we are frequently told, in particular, by many of our contemporary theologians that the idea of a loving God and a God who demands satisfaction, these things are utterly opposite to one another, oppose to one another. And we could never hope to bring them into harmony. This inconsistency between the love of God and expiation of sin, which modern writers and preachers so much insist upon, is not received.

It is evident by men who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. They saw no problem whatsoever with a loving God, on the one hand, and a God who was holy and demanded that sin be punished because, you see, they saw ultimately that the love of this God was that which brought about the sacrifice, which became the basis of the salvation of all who would believe. And so while God requires the death of man who sins, it is this God who provides the remedy through our Lord Jesus Christ. And his law is upheld because he requires judgment but his love freed because it is he who provides the remedy. So there is no opposition whatsoever between the love of God and the justice of God. And when the Psalmist celebrates this, he said mercy and truth are next together. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other. And that has happened in the death of Jesus Christ because God’s justice in the punishment of sin was seen in the death of the substitute. And God’s love is seen in the gift of this substitute who is to expiate the sins. So we have a loving God but at the same time we have a holy and a righteous God.

Now, finally, Capital C: Christ saves us as our Redeemer. Since the evils of man’s apostasy are so many it’s not surprising that the work of our Lord as redeemer should be very very -- and I did not put the different put the different aspects of this redemption on the board -- but I’m going to quickly set forth five things that our Lord did as redeemer. First of all, he redeemed us from the penalty of the law. Galatians chapter 3, verse 13, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.”

Now I’m going to ask you if you will to turn with me to Galatians chapter 3 and let’s notice a few things that occur in this passage. Now some of you were here when I gave this illustration and you, of course, just have to bear with me as I give it again but some of you were not. One of the well-known theologians of the past generation was a man by the name of Dr. J. Oliver Buswell. At one time he was president of Wheaton College.

Many years ago he was conducting a Bible class in New York City and he was talking about substitution. And in the midst of this class -- near the end of it when he came to this subject -- a man stood up or raised his hand and said, “Dr. Buswell would you mind if I illustrated the point that you’re trying to make?” He was a rather elderly man. And so Dr. Buswell said, “Yes.” And he came forward, and as the class was sitting there, he asked the class to turn with him to Galatians 3. And they did. And while they were turning he drew a picture of a sword on the board, which I cannot do. What is it something like that? Does that look like a sword? [Laughter] Anyway he said [ more laughter] -- anyway he said, “Now that’s the sword of Damocles and if you remember the story of Damocles, Damocles was accordia of King Dionysus of Syracuse, and he was always complaining the fact that kings had life easy but that slaves did not. And the king got rather peeved with the fact that he kept complaining so he decided that he was going to teach him a lesson. So he had a group of people come together in the banquet room of the king’s palace. And then he called Damocles in and he said, ‘Damocles I’m going to

make you the guest of honor and I want you to sit in the king’s seat or the throne.’ And so Damocles came in to sit on the king’s throne and he looked up and he discovered that there was a heavy sword hanging by a thread above him. And, of course, the king wanted to let him know what the existence or what the life of a king was really like.”

Well this elderly man drew a picture of the sword of Damocles and he said that that’s how we stood underneath the curse. And he read verse 13 of Galatians, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” And just before that he had read, “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.” And he then -- as he spoke about this under the curse -- he put the us on the board like this and he put opposite the Greek word hupo, which means under. And he said that little preposition describes our condition under the judgment of God. 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.”

Now that is our responsibility before God. We are responsible to keep the law perfectly. So he said, and he was correct, of course. So we are under a curse. That’s where we stand. Then he turned to verse 13 and he said, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us,” and he said you know that word which is translated for is the Greek preposition huper which means “over.”

So, in effect, Jesus Christ -- I really should have put this the other way -- above us would come Jesus Christ -- the Greek preposition huper which means literally “over us.” Christ had redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse over us or for us. So Jesus Christ has come in, he pointed out, between the sword, which represents judgment, and us who were under it. So that when the judgment falls it does not fall upon us, it falls upon Jesus Christ. And then he said notice the preposition at the beginning of verse 13, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law,” and he said that little word from is the preposition ek, which means out from. So that we, as a result of what Christ has done really now, are out from under the sword entirely. We are out

from under. So the three prepositions really tell the story of substitutionary atonement. We were under the judgment of God.

Jesus Christ has come in over us, dying for us so that now we are out from the judgment of the law. Or to put it like this: [points to board] This is the judgment. This is we. But Jesus Christ has come in over the judgment so that we now are out from the judgment and free. And he said that is the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ and he sat down. And Dr. Buswell told the class that the man who had just given them that illustration was Professor A. T. Robertson, the greatest Southern Baptist New Testament professor of his day, who had written some very large and significant great grammars. He was a very old man but it was he who expressed the fact that through the saving work of Jesus Christ we have been delivered from the curse of the law. Furthermore, Jesus Christ saves us not only from the penalty of the law but he redeems us from the obligation to satisfy the requirements of the law. Christ has done that for us. He redeems us from the power of sin. He redeems us from the power of Satan. And his redemption is ultimately from all evil.

Now this doctrine of vicarious or substitutionary satisfaction is a doctrine that is universal among those who are Christians. It is confirmed by the universal religious experience of those who have put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

Now I’d like to illustrate the fact that this doctrine that Jesus Christ has died for us as our substitute, is Christian doctrine by referring to some of the Christian hymns. Charles Wesley was an Arminian. He has given us some great hymns. He represents one side of the Christian spectrum, the Arminian side. Augustus Cuppleavy, another great hymn writer, was a Calvinist. He represents the other side of the great Christian spectrum, but they agree in the fact that the doctrine of Jesus Christ’s death is a substitutionary doctrine. It is a vicarious -- that means substitutionary, it is a vicarious death that he dies.

Now let’s assume that it is not the doctrines of Christians that Jesus Christ is our substitute and let’s turn to some of the hymns, which we sing. Let’s take Jesus Lover of

My Soul, written by Wesley. Jesus lover of my soul. Let me to thy bosom fly. Why should we fly to him if he’s only a teacher or a moral leader or a reformer? Hide oh my savior hide. Hide from what? Not from the judgment of God because we don’t believe in the judgment of God. Other refuge have I none. Refuge from what? All my trust on thee is laid. Why do we need to trust him? Why must rely upon Jesus Christ if all he is is just an example for us? Let’s take the Calvinists’ hymn. Rock of Ages prayeth for me, for me personally individually. Jesus Christ died. Let the water and the blood from thy wounded side which flowed. We have sinned the double cure. Cleanse me from its guilt and power. What’s the significance of this? If there is no need to be cleansed from the guilt and power of sin. My savior who died nothing in my hand I bring simply to thy cross I cling. How can a man possibly believe that if he thinks that salvation rests upon something that he does through the example of our Lord rather than his salvation completely and utterly upon what Jesus Christ did? You will find it universal among Christians that they sing hymns like this, which set forth the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ.

Now, finally, I want to say just a word or two about the philosophical and popular objections to the satisfaction of Christ. And first of all, I put on the board a philosophical or moral objection, the innocent cannot suffer for the wicked. How is it possible for one who is innocent to really suffer for the wicked? God cannot regard things as they are not. He cannot say I regard you as righteous when you are not righteous. Can he?

Well, actually, in actual life, the innocent often suffer as the result of transgression of others. Let’s think about a little baby that’s left in a house by itself. But the father’s been careless enough to leave a lighted cigarette in an ashtray, which falls out, falls upon on the floor. The house catches on fire and the baby dies innocently. The innocent do suffer for the wicked.

Let’s take another objection. This is Capital B. You haven’t got it on the board. I’m gonna give it to you now. Philosophical or moral. Substitution in penal matters is

illegal. It’s illegal for someone to substitute for another. Perfectly all right for one to pay a debt, a pecuniary debt but not a penal debt. If you owe a thousand dollars and I’m willing to come forth and pay it, and I’m willing to pay it, then, of course, that is acceptable but someone cannot suffer, someone cannot substitute for another in a penal way.

Now there’s a measure of truth here and sometimes our explanations of substitution are not so good. Many preachers use those illustrations about substitution that are not really true to the substitution of the New Testament. But assuming that there are no violations of the rights of others, substitution is permissible in penal law. Let’s for a moment think about a man who has been guilty of murder. Is it right for a judge to forgive a man who is guilty of murder if someone comes to take his place and die for him? Not necessarily. There are other rights. For example, there are actually four people who may be involved in the murder; the murderer, the one who has been murdered, the judge, and king or the one who is responsible for the law of the land. And so the fact that someone comes to take the place of a murderer does not necessarily satisfy all of the claims that society has on that man. But suppose we have an illustration in which the one who has been offended and the judge and the king of the land, suppose all are the same, then it’s a different thing.

And that is true, of course, of the spiritual fact. Men have sinned against God. It is God who is the judge. It is God who is the ruler of the universe. And if he should deem it proper that his sinner living with him should take the place of a guilty person and bear his own judgment, then all of the requirements of the law of heaven are met. And there is no illegality, no wrongness about it at all. So we must be careful how we illustrate substitution.

There’s another popular objection. God, the Father, is guilty of injustice. This is another variation of the same type of thing. The Father is guilty of injustice if he punishes the son, but after all, the plan of salvation is a plan of the triune God. It is God the

Father, God the Son, God the Spirit who has entered into a covenant to provide the salvation. And it is altogether voluntary on their part. Furthermore, the work brought immense glory to the Godhead and consequently it is justifiable. This objection by the way acts as a kind of boomerang. The Father is guilty of injustice because regardless of what we say about the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, he actually did die.

The Father did send the Son into the earth and the Son did suffer and the Son did die. And if he came for no reason whatsoever. If his death was not necessary, then we have a tremendous problem. How can the only holy being, the only righteous person who’s ever been in human existence, how can the Father allow him to suffer on the cross with all of the shame and ignominy of it and still be called the loving God. This kind of objection is a boomerang.

Fourth, there is a popular view that substitutionary atonement is unnecessary. If a man can forgive another man, why cannot God forgive men without requiring penitence and sacrifice? If you harm me and I can forgive you, why in the world cannot God forgive us who have wronged him? What would you say to that? Well, of course, you’d probably say that men are not like God. In the first place, men are not righteous. Men are not holy. If I forgave you and you have really wronged me, it wouldn’t be long before you might not have regard for the law at all. If you were able to escape law in that way, escape justice, in the case of God, it’s entirely different. He is love, but he is light. He is father, but he is also judge. And he has requirements that are bound up in his own nature.

There’s a final objection. Substitutionary atonement undermines the law. If it is possible for Jesus Christ to bear my judgment then there is no incentive to obedience and to holiness. The reverse is really true. When a man comes to see Jesus Christ as the one who really died for him, who really took his place, if he sees himself as a sinner and under the judgment of God and if he sees himself in the true light of his sin -- that is the cost is really a window from God to show us how sinful we really are -- when Jesus

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Christ cried out, “My God My God why hast thou forsaken me,” that is what really sin does. That is how wicked sin is. It requires the death of the Son of God. And if we really understand what it is to be a sinner in the sight of God and then we see that God out of his great love has sent the liberty in the person of his son and in a sense bore that judgment himself, in the person of the Son. I’m not talking about the Father suffering. Don’t misunderstand me.

We’ll talk about that later but, the God head, the divine person Jesus Christ suffering on behalf of the Lord God and we see then that we go free, that does not make us lax with regard to God’s laws, it makes us thankful. It makes us grateful. And the response is a response of love. So that we sing bearing shame and scathing rude in thy place condemned he stood sealed with a pardon with his blood. Hallelujah what a Savior. So when a man recognizes his sin and that Jesus Christ has died for that sin, as God’s provided sacrifice, vicariously that love is produced and a desire to live in a way that will honor God and his work. It’s eight o’clock. We’ll have to stop.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ. And we thank Thee that through this great saving work Thou hast brought us to Thyself. And we pray Lord that we shall come to understand our faith and be able to share it with clarity with others for Christ sake. Amen.