



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Ephesians 4:25-5:2

“Christian’s Use of the Tongue” – TRANSCRIPT

Let’s bow together in a time of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for a great high priest who ever lives to make intercession for us.

We thank Thee for the privilege of approaching Thee through him. We thank Thee for the offering he has offered. And we thank Thee for the fact that that offering has made it possible for us to enter into Thy presence and as the writer to the Epistle to the Hebrews says, dwell in the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

We pray as we turn again to Thy word that it may be a lamp unto our feet, a light unto our paths. That it may be sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, of the joints and marrow. May it be a discerner of the thoughts and intents of our hearts. And may, Lord, we be not simply hearers of the word, but doers as well.

We ask Thy blessing upon us now in this hour. We pray it may be a time of spiritual refreshment and of edification.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Sermon] The Apostle James, in one of his chapters writes:

“My brethren, be not many of you teachers, knowing that we shall receive the greater judgment. For in many things we all stumble. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in horses’ mouths that they may obey us, and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they are so great, and driven by fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, wherever the pilot willeth. Even so the tongue, is a little member, and boasted great things, behold how a great a matter a little fire kindleth.”

Well, that’s probably the greatest of the New Testament passages on the use of the tongue. But one of the passages that is next to James chapter 3, probably, is the passage that we are going to look at tonight in our exposition of the Epistle to the Ephesians, Ephesians chapter 4 verse 25 through chapter 5 verse 2.

There is always a needed emphasis on the Christian use of the tongue. Even George Eliot said, “Blessed is the man who having nothing to say, abstains from giving wordy evidence of the fact.” It wouldn’t be so bad if the only problem was the fact that we weren’t saying anything, but often we say things that are very disturbing, very harming, upset others, actually things that not only disturb them but can disturb a great number of people.

So the exhortation that the Apostle gives us concerning the tongue, and the use of the tongue, in this particular passage, is important for all of us. Now the Apostle has just mentioned in chapter 4 verse 24, “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” So he’s just mentioned righteousness and holiness, and literally the expression is: righteousness and holiness of the truth. Well now he will treat truth and speak of the Christian use of the tongue. And in the next section, beginning with chapter 5 verse 3 he will treat holiness. So we look now at the

Christian’s use of the tongue. Ephesians 4 verse 25 through chapter 5 verse 2, and the first verse, verse 25 is something of a general exhortation. The Apostle writes,

“Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor:
for we are members one of another.”

Now if we are to speak truth, one of the things that is necessary is that we put away lying. That is the foundation of this general exhortation, that we speak truth. Having put off lying. The construction the Apostle uses is a very strict instruction because strictly speaking and literally what he says is, having put off *the lie*. Now there’s some basis for rendering this “lying,” and it’s possible that the lie means simply, lying. On the other hand, since he mentions the lie, and since in another place, in Romans chapter 1, he also uses that same expression and there refers to idolatry as the lie, it’s possible the Apostle has that in mind. And furthermore, it’s possible that he also in mind not simply something so specific as idolatry, nor lying as a practice, but the lie in the sense of that which is opposed to the truth of the Bible. He’s just said righteousness and holiness of the truth. Now he says, “Put away the lie.” And it’s possible that what he means is everything that is opposed to the word of God. All of the philosophy that is contrary to holy Scripture might be called “the lie.”

In fact, someone has said, this lie is the religion of the natural man. He is a follower of the lie, just as we are the follower of the truth. He has false ideas of God. The Bible gives us true ideas of God. He has false ideas of man. The Scriptures give us true ideas of man. He has false ideas of how a man may be reconciled with God. The Bible gives us true ideas of the reconciliation of man with God. He has certain ideas about how he should live his daily life. The Bible gives us the way of the truth. He has certain ideas with regard to the future. The Bible gives us truth with reference to the future.

His philosophy from its doctrine of God all the way through its doctrine of man, of angels, of salvation, doctrine of the future, is the lie. In Scripture, we have the truth. So, having put off the lie, Paul says, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another.

Now this idea of speaking truth is something that context has affirmed in other places. Verse 21 we read: “If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus.” And also in verse 24 we’ve read, “that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” of the truth. So Paul says, “Speak every man truth.” And why? Well, the Apostle here argues from the standpoint of the church. This is the Epistle to the Ephesians, the epistle of the one body, the church of Jesus Christ. And therefore, it’s not surprising that we should speak the truth because we are members one of another. Untruth harms the body.

Of course, there are other things that untruth may harm, too, but the Apostle is looking at this from the standpoint of the church of Jesus Christ. When Christians are not truthful, they not only harm themselves, but they harm the body of Christ. John Chrisistum, the 4th Century preacher whose name means “golden-tongue,” says, “If the eye sees a serpent, does it deceive the foot? If a tongue tastes bitter, does it deceive the stomach?” The man who tells a lie is really a pest in Christian circles. So, putting away the lie, speak every man truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

We are living in days in which occasionally men still try to justify lying. In fact, ten to fifteen years ago a very popular philosophy in Christianity gained a lot of credence, to the effect that our ethics should be governed by our situations in which we found ourselves, and therefore, it was ethically alright to lie in certain circumstances. As far as I can tell, the Bible does not ever justify lying, regardless of the circumstances.

I know that it’s possible for the casuists to give us all kinds of situations in which it may seem to us that lying is a thing that is perfectly alright. Here is a doctor, for example. He has a patient that is afflicted with a terminal illness. Shall he tell him the

truth, because, he may reason, telling him the truth may hasten his death? So why not tell him a lie? Well so far as the Bible is concerned, there is no justification for that. As a matter a fact, telling the patient the blunt truth may needlessly precipitate his death, but at the same time, it also may enable him to realize his condition and to better prepare for the end that is certain to come. So, Christians are guided by the word of God in truth. So far as I know, it is never justifiable for us to tell lies. And the idea that we must tell lies because of certain situations is an interpretation of the will of God that does not appear to have any real justification. It may seem sweet, but actually, it may be just the opposite.

Well, the Apostle has given us that general exhortation, and now he gives some some special exhortations that primarily relate to this, but not entirely. The first of these special exhortations are negative in character, and they begin in the 26th verse, and they go through the 31st verse. The Apostle writes,

“Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.”

So, the first of the exhortations has to do with anger. This is clearly in the context justifiable indignation. Now anger is also spoken of as something that we ought not to do. Will you let your eyes drop down to verse 31: the Apostle writes,

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking,
be put away from you, with all malice.”

How is it that the Apostle may write, in verse 26, “Be ye angry,” and then in verse 31 tell us that anger is to be put away from us? Well, the students of the word of God have reached the conclusion, and I think rightly, that what the Apostle is talking about in verse 26 is righteous indignation: “Be ye angry, and yet, do not sin.” Now in verse 31, the

anger that he speaks of there is sin. It is to be put away. So there is an anger that does not qualify for a classification as sin.

Now let’s take an illustration of this. In Mark chapter 3, the Lord Jesus is angry, but he does not sin. He healed on the Sabbath. He entered in the synagogue, and there was a man there who had a paralyzed hand. And they watched the Lord, whether he would heal him on the Sabbath Day, that they might accuse him: “And he saith unto the man, ‘Stand forth.’ And he saith unto them, ‘Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath Day, or to do evil? To save life, or to kill?’ But they held their peace.” And now in the 5th verse of Mark 3, “And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith to the man, ‘Stretch forth thy hand.’ And he stretched it out and his hand was restored, as sound as the other.” The Lord Jesus was angry, but it was the anger of righteous indignation.

The anger of a man against religious hypocrisy is righteous indignation. The anger of men at tyrants may be the anger of righteous indignation. The anger at men who delude others is the anger of righteous indignation, and that’s permissible, according to the word of God. Be ye angry, and sin not. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.

Moses was angry when he came down and saw the Children of Israel had made the Golden Calf, and he broke the tables of stone. Later on, in Moses’ experience, he was at Meribah-Kadesh, and God said to him, when the Children of Israel murmured, “Moses, speak to the rock.” Instead, in anger – in a paroxysm of anger, which is really the thing that the Apostle is speaking about here in this context, a paroxysm of anger – he smote the rock twice instead of speaking to it, and God said, alright Moses, because you have lost your temper, and in a paroxysm of anger you’ve said the things and done the things you’ve done, you’re not going to be able to enter into the Land. So, on the one hand Moses had righteous indignation; on the other hand, the anger that was sin.

Anger is a God-given emotion. And when it is righteous indignation, it is perfectly alright. But when it is the anger of sin, then it is something else. Now you’ll notice here

in this particular passage in which God gives permission for anger, even then there is a limit to it: “Be ye angry, and sin not.” In other words, do not mingle with the anger anything that may be called sin: pride, arrogance, resentment. Further, let not the sun go down upon your wrath. So there is a limit of time as well. So this particular statement, “Be ye angry,” and it’s an imperative that is guarded by “sin not,” “let not the sun go down upon your wrath.”

Incidentally, that does not mean that you can be angry until sunset. [Laughter] It does not mean that all day long you can be as angry as you like, but when sunset comes, make your confessions. One of the old, old commentators said that if that were so, then if you lived in Greenland, you could be angry for three months, because the day is three months long up there, and they would have more opportunity than other people to vent their resentment. No, he doesn’t really mean that. But even righteous anger is to be limited. That’s the thing that he really has in mind. So, be ye angry, and sin not.

And now we come to – well, verse 27, by the way, gives another limitation of anger. He says, “Neither give place to the devil.” And of course, that is by virtue of the preceding. It’s very easy for us to give place to the devil by being angry in the wrong way. He will take advantage of our weaknesses. So, do not speak anything but the truth, be angry but do not sin, let not the sun go down on your wrath, because you may give place to the devil by failure to heed these exhortations.

But in the 28th verse, he speaks of stealing:

“Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.”

Now, I’d like to say at this point that the stapler is missing from my desk in the church in there. [Laughter] And if there’s someone who feels conviction at this point, just go by and put it on the desk, and everything will be forgotten. Incidentally, when I said with

tongue-in-cheek that I was going to say this tonight to Mrs. Ray, the church secretary, she also said say something about carelessness, too. [Laughter] So, I want to confess it may not have been stolen at all. But, let him whole stole steal no more.

There was a story about a fellow who was not too good at interpreting the word of God, who in the midst of a discussion with someone said that he could prove through the Bible that stealing was alright. The other person said, “Well, how do you get that?”

He said, “Well, the Bible says let him that stole steal.” [Laughter] He just didn’t read the rest of the verse. That’s the way a lot of people read the Bible; they don’t read the rest of the verse. So, let him that stole, steal no more.

Now the Apostle, of course, is speaking about things that are very practical. He goes on to say, “But rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.” In other words, the reason that the exhortation to “steal no more” is given is because he wants the believers to sustain themselves by their own labor, not by the labor of others. By the way, this text is the only text that suggests Christianity can turn a thief into a philanthropist. Did you notice what that verse says in its totality? “Let him who stole steal no more,” that’s the thief, “but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.” In other words, the man who was the thief, by the inculcation of Christianity and Christian truth becomes the philanthropist, the one who is able to give to others who have needs.

The Apostle then has some further words concerning the tongue, primarily, in verse 29 through 31. He says,

“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and

evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.”

So again, the Apostle lays great stress upon the kinds of things that come out of our mouths. “Let no corrupt”—corrupt, rotten—“communication come out of your mouth, but only that which is good for the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”

Now, it would appear to me that this next statement, “And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God,” is supposed to be read in the context of that. In other words, we grieve the Holy Spirit of God when we do not use our tongue properly, when we use our tongues for corrupt communication, when our tongues do not express things that are good for edifying, that minister to other’s needs, that minister grace to those who hear us. It’s in this way that we grieve the Holy Spirit. So the sins of the tongue are, particularly before the Apostle in this context and right here.

Now there’s some other things that we can say about this. He says, “Grieve not the Holy Spirit.” We know from the standpoint of New Testament teaching, that when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit comes to indwell us permanently. Paul does not say, “Grieve not *away* the Holy Spirit,” as if it’s possible for us, having believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, to live in such a way that the Holy Spirit departs from us. No, it is simply, “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.” We cannot grieve him away. He’s always there. In fact, he’s with us wherever we are at all times. And all of the things that we utter are uttered in the presence of the Holy Spirit.

There’s another thing about this word. Grieve is a love word. You don’t grieve people who don’t love you. Sometimes people use words like that. But, to truly grieve a person, what is necessary is that the other person must have high regard for you. So that grieve is a word of love. That is the word that is used here: grieve not the Holy Spirit of God. He is grieved, because we are the objects of the love of the triune God. The God who elected. The God who redeemed us. The triune God who brought us to the

knowledge of this redemption and regenerated us, came to dwell in us through the Spirit. So when we say things that are displeasing to the Lord, not edifying, things that are said about others, we grieve the Holy Spirit. A love word. If you’ve ever had a relationship to a father or a mother in which you displeased them, you know exactly what Paul is talking about. My father was grieved, my mother would be grieved with me, because they loved me. So, this is a wonderful little statement, really, “grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.” We cannot grieve him away. And he loves us.

Further, the Apostle says, “By whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption.” This is the ground of the motivation for not grieving the Holy Spirit. We have been sealed by him, for the day of redemption. That is, we have been made the triune God’s property and possession. This word sealing suggests ownership, and it’s in the past tense, in the Greek text. By whom you were sealed, unto the day of redemption.

This was particularly significant for the Ephesians, because in Ephesus, there was a great deal of trading going on in timber. And it was a kind of center for that. And individuals in the harbor of Ephesus in those days, which was different from the Ephesus of the present time, the harbor would be filled with logs which had been brought down from that inner part of Asia Minor. And when individuals came from the other cities, round about, or the villages, round about, to buy lumber, because there was a good bit of industry in that area, they would buy some of the logs that were floating in the harbor, and they would take a seal. And they would make their particular mark on each of the logs that belonged to them which they bought. And later on, when the time came for them to take possession of these things, someone would come back with the seal, and then the particular logs that belonged to him would be identified, and then taken to the particular place where they were to be used.

Well, it’s something like that with us. Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed unto the day of redemption. So, the Holy Spirit has been implanted within us as a person who dwells within us permanently, and that is the sign, that’s the

seal of our redemption. And the time is coming when the Lord Jesus shall come for our redemption, and he shall obtain his property, and each of us shall have the seal, the seal of the Holy Spirit. So, don’t grieve the Holy Spirit by whom you were sealed unto the day of redemption. I think that that expression, the day of redemption, in the light of the Apostle’s statements elsewhere, refers to the time when we receive our glorified bodies.

Now there are some final special exhortations with are positive in character, and they begin in verse 32. The Apostle says,

“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”

It’s possible to begin the new section at chapter 5 verse 1, and in fact there are good reasons for doing that, because in verse 1 of chapter 4 we read, “I therefore the prisoner of the Lord,” and then in verse 17, “This I say, therefore,” and then in chapter 5 verse 1, “Be ye therefore followers of God,” so, this 32nd verse may be attached to the preceding, but many commentators make the division at this point, and make the exhortation as belonging to what follows. That’s unimportant for us.

He says be kind one to another. And further, we should remember that we are to forgive one another, because God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you. Anyone who has been cleared of a crushing debt, should not exact payment of pittances of others. And so the Apostle reminds believers that they ought to forgive one another because God, for Christ’s sake, has forgiven us.

Just think about it. Are there people that you find it difficult to forgive? Are there people that you have, for a long time found it difficult to forgive? Some little thing that they’ve done, or some big thing that they’ve done – you think it’s big. And you allow this to go on for days and days and weeks months, and in some cases, even years. And this is lying in the back of your life for months, days, years. Now would you just for a moment measure the wrong that has been done to you by – and what it would cost to forgive –

against the wrongs you have done to the Lord God, and the forgiveness that has been your experience? Forgiving one another as God, for Christ’s sake, has forgiven you.

Well, listen, I’ve been forgiven a crushing, eternal debt. So, the little wrongs that someone may have committed against me, sometimes they’re not really wrongs, but I think they are. They’re not really wrongs. Those little wrongs that have been done to me, how small they are in light of what I have been forgiven. Forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ’s sake, has forgiven you.

Many people bury the hatchet, but they leave part of it showing. In fact, I think you really could say, about a lot of people, when they speak about others – I’m speaking about the Christian church – you’re hatchet’s showing.

R.C.H. Linsky’s a fine Lutheran commentator. He’s now with the Lord. But Mr. Linsky has some interesting comments about the way in which pastors should handle situations like this. Now, of course, he writes out of a Lutheran context. He writes out of the context of one man being the person responsible for bringing two people together and reconciling them. And that’s not really the responsibility of any one man in the local church, of course, but he writes – and his advice, however, is good – he says, “You know, we should never try to bring two people together who are still angry with one another, and bring them together while they are still angry with each other, because usually what results is just some more expressions of anger.”

He says the responsibility of the pastor, and we could make this the responsibility of any Christian who sees a brother overtaken in a fault, or who sees a brother in difficulty in which he might be help: “Your responsibility is to go to the brother and to seek to bring them to the realization of the fact that they have, perhaps, been unforgiving. And then to the other person involved, and have them to see that perhaps, they too have been unforgiving and then bring them together. And he says success will usually attend your activity.”

This is a marvelous little text: “Forgiving one another even as God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven you.” I’m gonna take a look at the Greek text here, just to be absolutely certain of a point here which I forgot to note in my notes, so I’m going to have to look it up on the spur of the moment. The Apostle says in this particular verse, “Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving each other as God in Christ”—I wanted to be sure that that was the way that read—“in Christ, hath forgiven us.” I want you to notice the statement: “God in Christ hath forgiven us.”

That’s interesting, isn’t it? We’re to forgive one another as God in Christ has forgiven us. It does not say we’re to forgive one another as God has forgiven us. Because strictly speaking, God has not forgiven us, except in Christ. Even God cannot forgive, except in Christ. In other words, the forgiveness that we have from the Lord God must be a righteous forgiveness. A payment must be made for the sin. So, we forgive each other as God in Christ has forgiven us. A satisfaction is necessary, a satisfaction rendered to the Godhead for our sin. That’s what God, in Jesus Christ, has accomplished. He refers, of course, to the cross.

William G.T. Shedd, the well-known Reformed theologian, said, “Remission of sins without satisfaction for them implies that might in the Godhead is more fundamental than right. But in the Godhead, holiness and justice and righteousness are significant and must be satisfied in order for God to do that mighty thing of forgiving us. We can never be forgiven just by the word of God. All of his forgiveness is the result of the satisfaction of his law, his justice, his righteousness, his holy being, and he must be satisfied. Penalty must be paid.

So the Apostle says, “Forgive one another as God in Christ”—think of what it has cost him to forgive us, and how little it costs us to forgive one another. P.T. Forsythe, one of the best known of the British theologians of the earlier part of the 20th Century said, “God loves sinners, but he loves the law of his own nature better still.” That means

simply that he has fundamentally, because of his very being, the necessity of satisfying his own righteous character. So as God in Christ has forgiven us.

Now, the exhortation broadens a little bit in the first two verses of chapter 5:

“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; 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 savor.”

This is the only place in the Bible that I know of where we are told to copy God. In fact, that’s Moffitt’s rendering here: “Be ye therefore...as dear children, copy God.” This is interesting because just above he said that we have learned Christ, and he’s also said, don’t grieve the Spirit, and here he says, copy God. So we have the Trinity here involved in Christian life. We are to copy God. We are to learn Christ. We are not to grieve the Holy Spirit.

You ever noticed good children? Good children reflect their parents. You find a father who has certain characteristics about him, the children come along and there you’ll see the characteristics of the father. A mother has certain admirable qualities, you look at the children, and there will be those admirable qualities in the children. The children, they respond to their parents. They observe them. They watch them. And soon, they’re living like them.

Oftentimes what we see are not likenesses of appearance, but likenesses of action. And so here. We’re the children of God, aren’t we? Well, I am. Are you? We’re the children of God. We’re the sons of God. Well, there should be the family likeness. So, be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children, and walk in love.

So we’re to be followers of God as dear children, and we’re to walk in love as Christ has loved us and gave himself for us. This is the expression of love. And walk in

love as Christ hath loved us – and here is the expression of his love: he hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.

Now, in what way has Christ loved us? Well, just analyze these words for a moment. He’s loved us and he’s loved us, and he’s given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor. Some people think that the way to get Christians to respond to the Scriptures is to pound them with the law of God. That is not true. In the Scriptures, we are given the motivation of the Son of God who has loved us and has given himself as a sacrifice for us.

When the Lord Jesus expounded those texts of the New Testament preaching himself, they said, “Did not our hearts burn within us, as we listened to him expound the Scriptures?” And then they who had told him that it was late at night, and he ought to come in because it was dangerous to stay outside, immediately when they left, he raced back to Jerusalem in order to meet with the saints there, motivated by what they had learned by holy Scripture and the revelation of the sufferings and glories of the Messiah.

Now analyze here, just for a moment, what kind of a sacrifice Jesus offered for us. It was voluntary, because we read that he has given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor.

Furthermore, it’s a penal, voluntary sacrifice, because we read that he has given himself as an offering and a sacrifice to God. That was the giving of a life. In the Old Testament, the offerings and the sacrifices were generally the offerings and sacrifices of animals who were put to death. That was the sign that they represented the payment of a penalty, that something was owed to the divine throne in heaven. And so when we read that he has offered himself or given himself as an offering and a sacrifice to God, that tells us that his sacrifice is a penal sacrifice, it’s for the payment of a penalty.

That’s something modern theology just cannot swallow. Even theologies that in some respects are close to orthodox theology balk at the idea of one man paying the debt for others, and the Lord Jesus paying the debt for sinners. But that is the teaching of the

Old Testament by type, figure, by foreshadowing. It is the express teaching of the New Testament and the sufferings of Christ. So, it is a voluntary offering. It’s a sacrifice and therefore a penal offering; he pays the penalty for others.

It is also a satisfaction. That is, it is an offering which God’s holiness and God’s righteousness are satisfied by this payment that the Lord Jesus offers in his death. That’s because we read here that he has loved us and he has given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor. It is to God that the sacrifice is first given.

You see, the big question is not so much how we can be taken into the presence of God, but how a holy God can forgive unholy people. So he is an offering and a sacrifice to God, but for a sweet-smelling savor. In other words, God is pleased with this voluntary, penal sacrifice that Jesus Christ has offered.

Now when he says “to God, for a sweet-smelling savor,” students of the Bible know immediately what he is talking about, don’t we? Don’t we? We know what he’s talking about; he’s talking specifically about such places as the burnt offering. Three times in the description of the burnt offering, when the Israelite brought the animal, put his hand on the animal’s head, and the animal was slain, three times in that first chapter it was said, that that sacrifice produced the odor of a sweet smell to the Lord.

Now, the interesting thing about that Hebrew expression, *rayach nichoach*, is that it really means something like this: an odor of rest to the Lord. In other words, it’s an expression that means, essentially, that as God looks at the sacrifice which is offered in payment of a debt owed to him, he rests! He finds it an odor of rest. So, instead of executing his judgment against the person who has offended the throne of God, he rests, satisfied. The penalty is paid. So that he no longer desires and finds it necessary to execute his judgment. An odor of rest. The Lord Jesus expressed this when he said on the cross, “It is finished!” And the finishing of the offering led the throne of God to smell a sweet savor, an odor of rest. So that God is satisfied by the cross of Christ, and men are

saved when they, too, become satisfied with what Christ has done and stop relying on their own good works, or anything else they may be relying upon in order to be saved.

One last thing. The Apostle says, “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us.” Now this expression is an expression that in the context, and also in the light of the usage of the Greek preposition, *uper*, can only be a reference to a substitutionary sacrifice.

For a long time, students of New Testament Greek used to say with regard to this preposition, “That’s not the clearest preposition to express substitution.” But many had never grown up studying Classical Greek and consequently, they didn’t realize the breadth of the usage of this particular preposition. But now, in most of the modern scholarship, there is a recognition now that this preposition is perfectly suitable to express substitution. And in this context it’s clearly the expression of substitution. It’s only in this way that the death of Jesus Christ can be of benefit to us.

So we have, then, summed up here a beautiful little expression of the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It’s a voluntary death. It’s a penal death in which he bears the punishment that is for others. It’s a death in which he satisfies the holiness and righteousness of God because it produces a sweet-smelling savor in the Father in heaven. And it is for us; it is a substitutionary death. And those for whom Christ dies, have had their penalty paid. And therefore heaven can no longer, and can no more execute judgment upon them.

Isn’t that a magnificent thing? My payment has been paid by the Lord Jesus Christ, and I am free. Heaven itself can bring no further charge against me, because Jesus Christ has paid it all. Therefore, walk in love, as Christ has loved us and has given himself for us. Such a sacrifice as that. Upon a life I did not live, upon a death I did not die, another’s life, another’s death, I stake my whole eternity.

And then also, it should have such a motivating power in our lives that it enables us to walk in love, with his great exhibition of his constant love for us. Sorry I’ve kept you over a few minutes, let’s close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for the word of God, and this magnificent expression of the sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ. May we respond properly to it, Lord.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.