



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Romans 3:9-20

"The Universality of Sin"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We're turning this morning for the Scripture reading to Romans chapter 3 again. And we're reading verses 9 through 20; Romans chapter 3, verses 9–20. While you are finding that passage, remember that the apostle has been charging Jews and Gentiles with sin, and then he has answered some counter claims that a Jewish man might have growing out of his knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Paul has answered them, and then in verse 9 he writes, "What then? Are we," that is we Jews, "better than they? Not altogether." Now I'm rendering the Greek expression in that way. It could be rendered as it is in the Authorized Version, No in no way. But I prefer, myself, not altogether, and the reason is simply, because he has just stated above that the Jews do have an advantage, that they do have a certain profit; so, "Not altogether. For we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin." In other words, they are no better in the matter of sin, but yet there is a sense in which they do have an advantage. The apostle then says in verse 10,

"As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues

they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes. Because (Now the Authorized Version has 'Therefore, taking the conjunction here to be inferential in force. But since in almost every case in the New Testament this conjunction is causal, it's probably wiser to take it in its ordinary sense.) Because by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

May the Lord bless this reading of his word.

[prayer removed from audio]

[Message] Our subject this morning as we continue our exposition of the Epistle to the Romans, and our study of the Epistle to the Romans, is "The Universality of Sin." Outside of humanism, which by definition rests upon the claim upon the greatness of man, and which by no means is dead. It's doubtful that one can find greater agreement in the abstract than on the doctrine of the universality of sin. The Anglican church has a general confession, and it begins with the words, "Almighty and most merciful Father we have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep." The fact that is called a general confession, points to the universality of the confession of sin.

One of the Anglican ministers whose writings I have always profited from has remarked concerning this, "The very title, General Confession, is striking and significant. It is not a private or merely sectional confession, true of particular persons or of groups and classes, but of every human being without any exception whatsoever. It is a confession that applies to the total condition of the adulterer, the thief, the swindler, the criminal of any sort. But it is equally applicable to the philanthropist, to the just, the merciful, to the most devout and exalted saint. It is true of the

plumber, the lawyer, the stockbroker, the statesman, the soldier, and the bishop—especially the bishop." [Laughter] How true that is. You see, all of these confessions of sin, especially apply to those who make certain claims; teachers, preachers, men who stand in the pulpit, they are to especially be watched. And I hope you'll remember that.

Among my sermon notes there is a collection of sayings on the universality of sin, and the documentation for some of them I don't have, but they all state this universality of sin. "We have all sinned," said the Roman philosopher Seneca, "some more and some less." Another Roman, whose works I used to read in high school and in college in Latin, Ovid, wrote, "We all strive for what is forbidden." "There are two good men," an ancient Chinese proverb runs, "one is dead, and the other is not yet born." [Laughter] And so the universality of sin is something that most men accept in the abstract as a doctrine.

The sense of universal guilt is one of the profoundest facts in human history and experience. So much so that some neo-orthodox theologians and students of the Bible claim that we cannot be said to be human unless we have sin. And this has actually affected their doctrine of the Scriptures. And they have claimed that we cannot have a Bible that is an infallible Bible if it is written by fallible men. And since all men are fallible, the Bible must have some fallible features or some errant features. Now, it is true, of course that's a false doctrine, because in the case of Adam, before Adam sinned in the Garden, he was a man without sin, and our Lord Jesus Christ was truly human, and he of course did not have sin. So is not a necessary feature of human nature, only a necessary feature after the fall.

But this sense of universal guilt is something that is seen in the universal practice of sacrifice. The religions of the world do differ among themselves, but they have certain things in common, and one of the things that they have in common is their recognition that man has offended his gods and that their anger is to be placated. And so, the universal prevalence of sacrifice testifies to the universality of sin. In the world's literature read a Dostoevsky or a Conrad or others and you will

find that there is a sense of the universality of sin amongst men. My friend Mr. Davies has said, "There is no democracy like the democracy of original sin."

About six or seven years ago one of America's best-known psychiatrists, Karl Menninger, author of many important volumes, wrote one that had the intriguing title of *Whatever Became of Sin?* And in it he argues essentially that that the word sin has almost disappeared from our vocabulary. But although the word sin had disappeared from our vocabulary, the sense of guilt remained. It was an honest admission on the part of the psychiatrist, and it laudable for that reason, although if one reads Mr. Menninger's work you will not find any solution to the problem of sin. In that sense it is a totally skeptical book. Even though we grant the moral earnestness of the author and the aims that he had. But the book is a testimony to the universality of sin and guilt.

Well, Paul in Romans chapter 3, verse 9 through verse 20 speaks of the universality of sin. He is now ready to tie the loose ends together of this argument that began in the 18th verse of the 1st chapter, and which has really concluded, so far as the accusation is concerned, with verse 8. But now he is going to tie it all together and prove what he has been trying to do in these opening verses. Calvin, with Luther and Melancthon, spoke of the Law of God as the mirror of sin. Now, I don't think that Paul would have disagreed with that. But it's also true of Paul to say the he regarded the whole of the Old Testament as a mirror of sin. And what he does here is to take the whole of the Old Testament and he brings it like a mirror before the face of all men, and asks us to look into it, and see what we see. And what we see is the universality of human sin.

Now, in the 9th verse, we have the Pauline indictment. "What then, do we excel?" That is, we Jews. "Not all together." The only way in which we can say that we excel is that we have the promises. "Not all together, for we have before charged both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;" There is one sense in which Jews and Gentiles are all alike, there is one status in which they all have the same status that Gentiles have, and that is in the status of sin. Now, the apostle, I think, when he writes, "We have before charged," gives us some idea of specifically what he is trying to do. Now the Authorized Version renders this, "we have before proved," as if to suggest that

chapter 1 and chapter 2 constitute a proof of the fact of human sin; well, I wouldn't object to that myself, but I don't think that's really what Paul is trying to say. What he is really trying to say is that chapter 1 and chapter 2 constitute an accusation. Proof for Paul always is ultimately, what do the Scriptures say? One may argue and one may reason, and that is perfectly all right. There is nothing wrong with that. There's nothing wrong with drawing reasonable inferences from the statements of the word of God. The Bible itself gives us much justification for that. But when it comes down to absolute proof for the apostle, and we can say for his readers too, the "what" the Bible says is really the significant thing.

And the fact the apostle uses a term which does not really mean "before proved" but "before charged" confirms, I think, what I'm saying. What he's saying is, in the 1st chapter, I have charged, I have made the accusation that Gentiles are sinners. In chapter 2, I made the accusation that Jewish men are sinners. I've answered the claims that have been raised against that. Now, I want to prove that they are sinners, and with this he cites a series of passages from the Old Testament. It seems to me that's what Paul is saying. So in verse 10 he writes, "As it is written." This is really his proof. For Paul, the proof lies in what the Scriptures say.

We often have heard Billy Graham speak, and we've often heard him use the expression, "the Bible says." "The Bible says;" he's been accused of misusing that kind of expression, and really citing a lot of proof texts by saying, "the Bible says." But that's only his way of saying the same thing that Paul says here, "As it is written." "As it is written," that's merely, "the Bible says." There's a great deal of de-emphasis upon judgment today in our Christian and also, that is reflective, I think, that in our society there is a great deal of de-emphasis on judgment. Reading modern theological literature, one gains the impression that God is a God of love, and while occasionally you'll find statements to the effect that God is also a God of justice. What that usually is intended to mean is that he is a God of human justice. That is, he's a God who believes in human justice that is that we should be just in our dealing with other men.

This week I received my copy of the *Christian Century*, which is a leading liberal periodical. It's the liberal periodical to which *Christianity Today* is the orthodox opposite. In it, I was amazed, one of the contemporary liberals said, "God is a God of love." He laid great stress on that, and then he said, "God is a God of justice." I thought, "Well, maybe my liberal friends are learning something after all. The Bible does say that God is just in his dealings with men." But what he meant was no, God is a God of love, and he's a God of justice. But what he meant by "God of justice" is that we ought to be just in our dealings with men. And with that he began to speak about social welfare and other things. That's the God of justice.

Now, I'm not going to say anything about those things. There are many good things there, and many evangelicals down through the years have the leaders in the exercise of justice toward men. In fact, I think if we look back over the history of evangelicalism, we would find that they are responsible for far more justice to fellow men, than the liberals have been responsible for. But what I'm speaking about here is there is a great de-emphasis upon the fact that God is a just God, and God does punish men for sin. Evidenced, as I said last week, in the fact the doctrine of universalism is so common.

The man who led me to the Lord, in his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, makes reference to the fact at this point that the prophet Habakkuk, in the 2nd chapter of his book, sets forth a series of woes upon the children of Israel, because of their disobedience, and then ends the chapter with that terrible verse, "The Lord is in his holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before him." Now, when I grew up in the Presbyterian Church, I can remember when that was used by the organist at the beginning of the church service. They would play, "The Lord is in his holy temple. The Lord is in his holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before him." And that meant, as Dr. Barnhouse pointed out, that meant simply, it's 11:00 Sunday morning. It's 11:00 Sunday morning. The church service is about to begin. Everybody quiet down. That's the way it was used.

Now, Dr. Barnhouse said that he does not know what musician went through the Bible until he found this verse, and put it to music for people to sing at the opening of a church service, but

there are few things more horrible and sadly ludicrous to the student of the Bible than to hear the choir sing that at the beginning of the morning service, because it doesn't have a thing to do with the beginning of a Christian service or the beginning of a church service. It doesn't have a thing to do with being silent in a meeting such as this. If you want to know the meaning of that text, Dr. Barnhouse says we should think rather of the courtroom where the jury has brought in a verdict of guilty of murder in the first degree in a state like New York, where the verdict carries, when he wrote this, the sentence of death, mandatory. The criminal is brought into the courtroom for the sentence. The lawyers are there; the reporters are there; there's a low murmur and a confused sound as a hundred conversations are being carried on, and then suddenly the court crier is here saying, "Order, order; this court is now in session." There's quiet. The judge appears and he sits down at his desk. And then he proceeds to the business, which is predetermined by the nature of the case. That's what's meant by "The Lord is in his holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before him."

What it really means is that God is the judge of this universe, and everybody should keep quiet before him, because he's going to execute his justice and his judgment. But we are living in a day in which those things are being deemphasized. And so, it's not popular to speak about divine judgment. Incidentally, in the 9th verse, we have the first occurrence of the word "sin" in the Epistle to the Romans." Now, there are a number of words that the writer of this epistle uses, in the Epistle to the Romans, for sin. This is a word that means essentially, "to miss the mark." And so that sin as looked as the missing of the mark. But of course, sin is more than just simply the missing of the mark. Sin is not only the missing of the mark, but sin is the perverse missing of the mark.

When I was growing up and was studying the catechism, we were told that we were sinners if we broke the Law of God, and furthermore that we were sinners if we did not do the things that the Law of God told us to do. In other words, there were sins of commission, but there were also sins of omission, and we were guilty for both of them. So to miss the mark is true to the derivation of the noun *hamartia*, but we should not think that it simply means "inability" in a negative sense. And therefore, is not really a serious word. It is a serious word. There's another word which the

apostle uses in the Epistle to the Romans, and it means something like rebellion. It really means "to step aside." That is, to do something contrary to a specific commandment of God. Later on in the 5th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, we will have it. It's possible for us to sin in that way, to violate an expressed commandment of the Lord God.

I like the story, I think it is of Dr. Ketchum's son, a Baptist minister of some years ago, who was very prominent. He had a son and one day he was sitting with some friends, and they were discussing things, probably scriptural things, things of some significance. And the little boy came in, his little son came in and he had a little boat with him, and he was very happy, obviously, and he burst into this group in the midst of this rather serious conversation, and he said, "Daddy, I want to show you my boat." And Daddy said, "Son sit down." He said, "Daddy I want to show you." "Son sit down." "But Daddy..." "Son sit down." And this young son of the preacher, this preacher's kid is supposed to have said, "All right Daddy. I may be sitting down on the outside, but I'm still standing up on the inside." [Laughter] I like that, because that's really expressive of what we are before the Lord God.

Many of [us] appear in church on Sunday morning, and we act as if we are really sitting down in the presence of God, but we are really standing up. We are in rebellion against him. Now, the apostle uses that term in the Epistle to the Romans, and we will come to it in the 5th chapter. He also uses another term that really means "a falling by the side." That's very expressive, because it suggests the fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden. That's a word that suggests weakness. So these terms all have significance. One of them expresses our inability to do the will of God. One expresses our rebellion against the will of God, another expresses the weakness of our nature, by virtue of the fact that the sin principle dwells in our members. But they all testify to the fact that we have fallen short of the glory of God. As Paul says, "We have before charged both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin."

Someone might say at this point, "Well Paul, what's the evidence for this, aside from your arguments in the opening chapters?" Well, after the accusation, there comes the demonstration. "As

it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one. Sometimes you will find our liberal friends outrageous that evangelicals use prooftexts. Have you ever heard people say that? You're just using a prooftext. You're just taking a text out of the Bible, and applying it willy-nilly. Well now, let me say, I do not believe in taking texts out of their contexts. And I do believe that some of my evangelical friends often take texts out of their contexts. That's true. But I want to say this. My liberal friends do it more often. But nevertheless, they're the ones that often criticize the evangelicals for doing it. And they not only criticize evangelicals. They lay down a universal indictment that all evangelicals do this. Well, that is not true.

But I want you to notice that the apostle does not himself feel that it is wrong, per se, to use prooftexts. Because that is precisely what he does right here. What he does is to reach back into the Old Testament into the Law of Moses into the Psalms, into the prophets, and he puts together a whole cento of passages; a collection of passages from verse 10 through verse 18. These are taken from the Old Testament. He cites these texts. He puts them all together in a patchwork of texts taken out of the Bible in order to demonstrate the fact that all men are under sin. So there is nothing wrong with the use of prooftexts if they are true to the context. What is very interesting about this is that some of these texts come from Psalm 14. And in that Psalm, which we all at least remember because of the first verse, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works. There is none that doeth good."

The second verse says, "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand and seek God." So in a sense, what the Psalmist has done is said, "Let's take a look at the Lord God, and the Lord God has looked down in the earth, and he is the man whose eyes range back over the whole of the earth, and he said he has looked down to see if there were any that did understand or that sought after God. And then the Psalmist tells us what God saw when he looked. "They are all gone aside. They are altogether become filthy. There is none that doeth good, no not one." So what we have here in Psalm 14, and what we have in Romans chapter 3 in verse 10, and following here in the immediate context, is what the Lord saw when he

looked down upon men to see if there were any who understood, or if there were any that were seeking after him. And his answer is, "I didn't see anybody doing good. And I haven't seen anybody seeking after the Lord God."

Now, these verses do not need a whole lot of exposition, and we are trying to make progress through the Epistle to the Romans. I just want to say this, this passage, beginning at verse 10 and going through the 18th verse is a verse in which the apostle gives the evidence for the indictment of all men. And he first of all, speaks about the character of men. Then he lays stress upon their conduct, and finally concludes in the 18th verse, putting his finger on the cause of sin. Now, I say that little comment is necessary except to note the first of two great emphases here. First, the universality of sin, which the apostle traces to the inner man; he says, "There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

Now, the apostle here and in other places traces this evil to the heart. Jeremiah says, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it?" Robert Browning, in one of his works says, "'Tis the faith that launched point blank her dart at the head of a lie, taught original sin, the corruption of man's heart." Stated in other terms, it's the thesis of Cassius in the well-known words, "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, But in ourselves, that we are underlings." So the Bible teaches then that "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." "There is none that seeketh after God. There is none that doeth good, no not one." That means even our righteousnesses. As Isaiah says, our righteousnesses are as filthy rags in the sight of God."

What's characteristic of filthy rags? If you were to think of a beggar in filthy rags you would think, first of all, that his clothes are foul smelling. You'd be right. And you would also think of filthy rags to be insufficient to cover the person. Well, that is true of over righteousnesses. In the sight of God they are as filthy rags, for they are foul smelling in his eyes and in his nose. And they do not cover us. They are insufficient to make us acceptable to the presence of God. What about

those people who look at other men and say, "He's a good man." Well, he's thinking as a human being, he's not thinking as God. You would say concerning a philanthropist, "He's been of great help to the city of Dallas. He's given lots of money, and he's helped the community." You are thinking about a man according to human standards.

In the divine standard, there is no good work that does not meet two qualifications. Number one, it must arise out a heart of faith in the triune God. Number two, it must be designed for the glory of this triune God. In other words, it must be biblical in its origin. It must be biblical in its end or in its aim or goal. All other human works in the sight of God are insufficient. They are filthy rags in his sight. They may be laudable among men, and we certainly would acknowledge that men have been the benefactors of communities. And certainly that is good so far as men are concerned. But so far as acceptance before the Lord God is concerned, it is worthless. That means that all of us are guilty. All of us stand under the judgment of God. And all of our so-called righteousnesses are as filthy rags in the sight of the Lord God. Upon what are you depending to get to heaven; membership in a church; attendance upon meetings; your baptism, your immersion; or you aspersion or your effusion; sitting at the Lord's Table; having a Bible around your house; reading the Bible every now and then; doing a good turn every now and then; taking care of your children; paying your income taxes. What are you depending upon; just being a good man; or maybe you're just saying "I'm not as bad as others. I'm doing the best I can." All of these things are as filthy rags in the sight of God. There is only one thing acceptable to him, and that is the righteousness of God through Jesus Christ.

Now, the apostle talks about man's conduct, too. He talks about the intensity of sin in verse 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and a total depravity is manifested. Notice the stress on the mouth first; how often do we offend by the use of our tongues? "Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." And then he talks about the ways of men. "Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known." All of this is

simply to say that men are totally depraved. It does not mean that we are not good. It doesn't mean that we are beasts. We're not beasts, we're human beings. It does not mean that we cannot do good according to human standards. When we say that men are totally depraved, Dr. Gerstner is going to speak on this, I don't want to say too much about it. But it means simply that we cannot do anything good that pleases him or makes us acceptable to him. That sin touches all of our faculties.

The great hymn "Beneath the Cross of Jesus" has a wonderful stanza, but it's been changed from the truth that the hymn writer first put in that hymn to something that's quite a bit lower. And it manifests the spirit of the age. We used to sing, "And from my stricken heart with tears, two wonders I confess, the wonders of redeeming, and my own worthlessness." But some hymn writer came along, some editor, and said, "Wait a minute, that's a little too strong." And so now, in many of our hymnals, I didn't check ours to see how it stands. You can check it. But now it reads in many of the hymnals, "And from my smitten heart with tears, two wonders I confess; the wonders of his glorious love, and my unworthiness."

So instead of a stricken heart, which means a heart that's dying, we have a smitten heart. Instead of redeeming love, which suggests the blood and the cross, our substitute, we have glorious love, which may encompass all of those other false theories of the atonement that we are taught so often today. And then instead of my own worthlessness, it's my unworthiness. After all, you must leave the congregation with some shreds of respectability on Sunday morning. [Laughter] All of these nice people gathered in this auditorium, imagine someone getting up and saying, "You're all together gone out of the way. You're all sinners. Not a one of you is seeking after God naturally. Not a one of you does anything good. You are all unrighteous. There isn't a single righteous person in your midst." That's what Paul has said about us. That's what the Bible says. That's really what we are before God. That means we are in peril. We are perishing. We're on the way to death. We're going to die. We're going to hell, if we do not respond to the word of God.

Now the apostle gives us the source of it in the 18th verse. He says, "There is no fear of God before their eyes." This is the root of their evil deeds. "There is no fear of God before their

eyes." The eyes are those organs by which we gain direction for our steps, and if we cannot see, we cannot walk properly. And if there is no fear of God before our eyes, we cannot possibly walk in a way that is pleasing to the Lord God. So "No fear of God before their eyes," means we have no direction of our steps. Put in another way Paul is saying, "They have no faith." The Bible says that the essence of sin is unbelief. And that leads to rebellion, which issues in immorality. Immorality is sin, but immorality is the result of a procedure or of a condition of unbelief, which leads to rebellion and issues in the immorality.

In the 3rd chapter of the Book of Genesis, Adam and Eve do not believe the word of God. So they rebel, and they take of the fruit. And in the next chapter, their descendants are committing murder. So we have unbelief, rebellion, immorality. Immorality is sin, but it's not the essence of sin. The essence is unbelief. You can see that the apostle does not want us to look at ourselves in relationship to men. He wants to bring us to God, and to force us to look at things in the sight of God. He would like [to] bring us to the place that David was when he said, "Against Thee and Thee only have I sinned." So we sin in thought; we sin in word; we sin in deed." We are the possessors of depravity. Not that there is no good in us, but no good in man which can satisfy God. And that evil has touched all of our being.

The apostle is a good teacher and preacher of the word, and so he makes application. And so the application follows in verses 19 and 20. "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." The Scriptures indict the world. Stopped, "Every mouth may be stopped," that's a description of the shock and the dismay that comes to us when we look at ourselves in the light of the mirror of the word of God. Martyn Lloyd-Jones has some very good volumes on the Epistle to the Romans, and on this particular text he says, "You don't begin to be a Christian until your mouth has been shut, until it's stopped, until you're speechless before the Lord God and have nothing to say. You put up your arguments. You produce all of your righteousness,

and then the law speaks and it all withers away to nothing. It becomes filthy rags and dung, and you have nothing to say."

One of the notes that is missing in our churches today is the note of despair. That is, the note that comes to an individual when he looks at himself in the light of the word of God, and in seeing himself in the light of the word of God he is brought to speechlessness, and the despair of any hope. And then, there comes the message of the gospel to him, and the burden rolls away. We have lost that note of despair. We have the nicest, kindest people sitting in the congregation. You are a nice lot of people, nicest, kindest people, but not us. So often there are people, even in the midst of our evangelical churches who have never really known what it is to come to the despair of being lost, and then to come to the knowledge of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Now, Paul makes an interesting inference here. He says, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law." That is the Jewish people, "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." What's Paul's point? Well, I think what he means is if we can demonstrate that the Jews are sinners, then a fortiori, that is "for a greater reason." All the Gentiles are guilty, because the Jews were selected out of the mass of humanity, Abraham and his descendants. There was poured upon them all of the blessings of the divine promises, the divine revelation. They've been made the trustees of that divine revelation. They had the experience of first-hand touch with the Lord God, things that the Gentiles have not had. And if you can show that the Jewish people, with all of these advantages, are sinners, then of course, you don't have to prove the Gentiles are sinners.

It's like testing for impurity in our water system. If were to raise the question, "Dallas water impure." Well, our engineers would go out to the source of our water, and they would take a sample out of the lake or the body of water, they'd pass it through their testing equipment. They wouldn't have to pass the whole lake through the equipment. All they need is just one sample, because there is a unity in the water. And there is a unity in human nature. We are all descendant of one man. Our genealogies all go back to Adam. Incidentally, the other day I heard of a man who had a genealogy

that didn't have a king or president in it. But anyway, they all go back to Adam. And so, it isn't necessary for God to prove that every individual is a sinner, if he can take his sample of Abraham's seed, and pass them through the test, and show that they are sinners according to the word of God. Well then, the Gentiles are sinners. The Jew who had the law, who had the revelation of God, he unfortunately came to think that that was a means of life, that he could be justified by what he did. But his death warrant was written in his own birth certificate, as Professor Barrett has put it. So Paul then has taught original sin. He has taught that all are sinners, and that that sin is traceable to the fact that they're all unbelievers, and that the whole race stands under the judgment of sin, because of their nature.

Mr. Davies says, in one of his books, that he was surveying the ruins of a house in a badly blitzed town in the west of England after World War II. The Germans had wrought devastation all over the land, and he remarked to the owner, who was a gracious lady of really fine character "that here was original sin in operation." He said, "She turned to me with a look of pained surprise and said: 'But surely, Mr. Davies, you don't believe in that dreadful doctrine of original sin?' To which I replied: 'Such dreadful happenings as these ' --pointing to the ruins-- 'demand some sort of dreadful doctrine in explanation.'" And then he went on to make a comment, "Here was a woman, one of the best representatives of modern life and way of thinking, staring at death and devastation wrought by deliberate human will, who could only see something 'dreadful' in the Christian affirmation of original sin. Nothing, in hard concrete fact, could be more terrible than the destruction and mutilation and terror she had witnessed with her own eyes. Nothing could be more insulting to modern man's rose-water dream about human nature than the utterly irrational and horrible bombing of defenseless children. Nevertheless, you must not utter the libel of original sin! So profound has become the aversion of modern mind to the Christian challenge to human pride with its peacock's feathers."

Let me conclude, it's not a very happy message the apostle has given us here. Righteousness cannot come from self-effort. "Those that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick."

Then Paul goes on to say, "There is no one who is whole." There is no bath that can possibly take away a single stain of sin, except that fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's' veins. Righteousness, according to the Apostle Paul and according to the Lord Jesus Christ, must come from God. Can we expect mercy? Can we expect mercy justly?

There was a liberal preacher who was one time speaking to some boys in Glasgow. Now Glasgow is the industrial town of Scotland, as you know, and in Glasgow life is pretty raw. And he was addressing a group of city urchins in a part of Glasgow where life was pretty seamy. And he was teaching the Bible to them in a Sunday School in the afternoons. And he was telling the story of the prodigal son, and he told the story of the prodigal son, about the son's rebellion and his terrible fate in the far country, and then finally his resolution to come home. And as the teacher went on, he said to the class, "Well what do you think his father would do to him when he got home?" Well, one of the little kids spoke up immediately, and said, "Bash him." [Laughter] Well, that's the way that we feel. We feel that because of the judgment of God upon our sin, that there is no hope. But the Scriptures tell us that it's all true, we are sinners. We all are under sin and condemnation. We are sinners in thought and word and deed. But there is mercy for sinners through the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, as a result of the gospel that Christ died for our sins, we may boldly pray, "Just as I am waiting not, to rid my soul of one dark blot. To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot, Oh Lamb of God, I come. I come."

If you have never come to the Lord Jesus Christ, we invite you to come to him and be delivered from the condemnation of sin. May God help you to come. Only through the Holy Spirit can you come. Otherwise you are unable, in rebellion against God, too weak to come. But as you flee to him, out of a sense of lostness and despair, you will find that God will save you and give you new life, and give you also a status before him of righteousness, making you acceptable to him. We invite you to come, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shall be saved. May we stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the privilege and opportunity of expounding the word of God. We know that we do not do justice to these great truths. But we pray that through the Holy Spirit, Thou wilt take out failing words, and bring them home to the hearts of any who may be hear who do not know him, whom to know is life eternal. Oh God, help us to appreciate the solemnity of our position before Thee. And if there should be someone here who has not yet fled for refuge...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]