



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Various

“Fallen From Grace”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] This morning for our Scripture reading we are turning to Acts chapter 15 and reading verse 1 through 11 and then Galatians 5:2 through 4. As you probably can tell the subject has to do with the relationship of a sacrament to salvation. In this case the sacrament of circumcision was a serious problem in the early church. It raised essential questions concerning the gospel, and that is what lies behind it. In Acts chapter 15 we have the apostles at the Jerusalem Conference, and Luke describes what happened in this way,

“And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that

God had done with them. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.”

One must understand, I presume this audience does, that circumcision was the seal of the Mosaic law, and that when a person underwent circumcision he effectively said that it was his will and desire and determination to keep the Law of Moses, and so the question of circumcision raises the question of the necessity of keeping the Law of Moses for salvation, and that’s why he says, “To command them to keep the Law of Moses.” And Luke continues, “And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. And when there had been much disputing,” it’s interesting that here again “much disputing” over the matter because if you think about it for a moment you’ll realize that what was at stake was the essence of the gospel of Christ. It was the question of the grace of God. Is a person saved by grace through faith alone? Or is he saved by grace through faith necessarily through the observance of the sacraments? This is the question. I’m not surprised at all that we read that there was “no small dissention and disputation” in verse 2, and then again in verse 7, “much disputing,” because the question is still with us today.

Not too long ago a document was published called, “A Declaration of Evangelicals and Catholics Together,” in which a number of Catholics and a number of evangelicals with whom you are very familiar signed the document and in the document itself it was stated that these individuals, the evangelicals, the well known evangelicals, and the Roman Catholics acknowledged that they were brothers and sisters together, one in the body of Christ. Well that raised a question because as anyone who has studied Roman Catholicism knows there is no forgiveness of sins except through the sacraments. The seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic church are all sacraments that have to do with the forgiveness of sins, that when an infant is baptized, it is the removal of original sin

when the water is applied to the infant. So obviously this raises the question of what is the term or what are the terms by which we enter into the blessings of Christian salvation? It's easy to see how they would agree about the things that Christ had done, and that they did. But the question becomes on what terms are the benefits of what he accomplished in dying for us made ours?

Now the apostle, it's clear as we shall read in the Epistle to the Galatians, regarded the imposition of one sacrament, the sacrament of circumcision, as a violation of the principle of the grace of God and that therefore the gospel that was preached was not the same gospel but a different gospel entirely. But now let's finish what he says, verse 8,

“And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. (You notice it's by faith alone.) Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe.”

Remarkable statement by Peter, we know the Apostle's Creed as a document which originated in the 2nd century. The actual circumstances by which it originated are a bit hazy, but we know it originated in the 2nd century. It's called the Apostle's Creed. There are many things stated in the creed that Christian churches believe. The one thing that is missing from the Apostle's Creed is the term, or terms by which, or upon which, the benefits that are described in the creed become the readers. So, you see again the critical issue is not what Christ did for many people, but how do we obtain what Christ did? That's the issue. So Peter stands up now, and in verse 10 says,

“Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe, (Now this is the best

of all Apostle’s Creed.) we believe that through the grace of the LORD Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.”

In other words, if we require another sacrament in addition to simple faith alone, I shouldn't say another because it's not a sacrament, faith alone, but if we require something in addition to faith alone, then according to that statement we have raised questions about the gospel that we are preaching and believing.

Now in Galatians chapter 1 the apostle is disturbed about this very question because he had gone to Galatia. He had preached the gospel there. A church had been born there, and now Judaizers had come in, individuals who thought it was necessary to be circumcised, and the apostle writes the Epistle to the Galatians to answer some of the problems. In verse 6 of chapter 1 he said, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel,” that is, what Christ did plus circumcision, what Christ did plus circumcision. Paul says about it, “Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” Let him fall under the curse. This is a serious matter then to say that an individual is saved by what Christ did, and we obtain the benefits through faith alone. It's a very serious matter then to add to faith alone the necessity to observe a sacrament, in this case, circumcision.

Now turn to chapter 5 and verse 2 through verse 4, and this is the passage from which we get the title of the message today, “Fallen From Grace.” The apostle writes in chapter 5 verse 2 of Galatians, you know this book and this issue is so up to date. It's as up to date as tomorrow. Recently I was invited with a hundred other men to go to, right by the Harvard campus at Harvard Square, to discuss just some matters like this. It's the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals. Jim Boyce is going to be in the chapel next month, in June. He was the organizing leader of it. A number of other men in

theological seminaries and among the churches, from Lutherans, Baptists, and Independents, Presbyterians all were there to debate what is happening in the evangelical church in which we are seeing, many of us are seeing the culture is in process of capturing the evangelical church, and so the kind of ministry that is found in our churches today has been seriously affected by just some of these things. And one of the issues that is raised is the very issue we are talking about here.

In chapter 5, verse 2 the apostle writes, “Behold, I Paul say unto you,” that’s as if to say, “Remember who I am. I’m an apostle. I’m the one who brought you to the knowledge of Jesus Christ.” “Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.” I hope you can see that if you add a sacrament, a work, you’ve violated the principle of grace. You can no longer say you are saved by grace if it’s necessary to observe a sacrament. You can talk about grace. You can claim you believe in grace, but according to apostolic teaching you have violated the principle of grace.

“I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.” To start on the legal way of salvation demands total commitment, and let me tell you my friends, there isn't a person in this audience who would be a Christian if it depended on works. Now I don't know your personal life. I just know you’re a human being, and all are sinners. No one could be saved, not a single person could be saved.

“Christ is become of no effect unto you.” Now these are individuals, mind you, who believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God so far as we know, they believed in the doctrine of the trinity. They believed in the blood atonement, that Christ shed his blood for human sin. They believed that he was resurrected from the dead. They believed that he was coming again. If you read through the Epistle to the Galatians I challenge you to read through the epistle, and you’ll find no evidence that the Judaizers differed from Paul on any point but the question of circumcision, and in chapter 4 or 5 a

reference was made to meats, and attitudes toward them but that obviously had no significance because the apostle just mentions it and passed on. We observe days, and years, and so forth.

So, what he has said then, “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law;” because if you start out that way, circumcision, you must keep the whole of the law. It’s the seal of the law. Circumcision is the sign you intend to keep the law. You have fallen from grace. Some sharp words, but we need them. We need them to day in the evangelical church especially. We need it. We need them if you believe that it was perfectly alright for an evangelical to sign the Declaration of Evangelicals and Catholics Together. We need it. Let’s bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are thankful and grateful for the great apostle who was given such an understanding of the grace of God that he was able to lead us from the errors and the problems that lie along the way for the Christian church. How important it is that we remember and ponder and study and give ourselves to the doctrines of the word of God which have to do ultimately with life itself, with eternal life itself.

We thank Thee for the apostle and for his courage, for the insight that Thou didst give him, for the faithfulness that he manifested in his life. We ask Lord for a similar kind of faithfulness for us today in nineteen hundred and ninety-six and for the church, the whole church of Jesus Christ as well.

We ask Thy blessing upon this assembly, on its leadership, the elders especially. We pray for Dan and ask Thy blessing upon him physically, and others who have physical problems as well. Give guidance and direction.

We pray for our country. We ask Lord that Thou wilt guide and direct our President, those associated with him in government. We pray Lord that the United States of America may truly be guided and directed by the providence of our triune God in heaven to the blessing of the people who are the citizens of this country.

We ask for our meeting. We pray Thy blessing upon it and enable us Lord to understand and grasp the truth of the word of God, and in our lives reflect as well what it means to truly depend totally upon Jesus Christ. And we pray in his name. Amen.

[Message] About six weeks ago, it actually was March the 20th, I went up to Sherman, Texas to preach, and I spoke on this topic that I'm speaking to you on this morning. And at the conclusion of the message we went home and a day or so later I received a letter from a person who had been there. I'm not sure whether he was an elder or not, but he wrote me these words. And incidentally I should say that the message is a message in which I ask and try to answer three questions because that will help you to understand this letter that I received.

He said, “On behalf of Grace Bible Church,” that’s the name of the church in Sherman, “I’d like to thank you very much for traveling to Sherman and delivering God’s message to us. On that particular Sunday there was a family visiting us for the first time. They had been attending a local church that I know has gotten into the present day,” he puts this in quotes, “church growth movement.” “Their eleven year old son was also with them that day. I spoke with the parents later in the week and they relayed the following story. At lunch that day the family in addition to their sixteen year old daughter, who had not attended with them that morning were discussing the message. The parents said that before they were finished discussing your first question, the eleven year old started telling his sister about the first question and went ahead and also told her about the other two questions and the scriptural explanations that you had given. This astonished the parents because their son had never paid much attention to the discussions at lunch and had never been able to answer many of their questions about other messages. He was also excited to come back next Sunday to hear the Bible explained. This is just another example of why we don't have to make the Bible more interesting.” So the man who wrote me the letter who wrote me the letter wrote.

Well it was interesting to me that an eleven year old was able to understand the message and so when I thought about speaking to Believers Chapel and the level of the audience; I thought that this message might be especially suitable for u. [Laughter] But it did emphasize a point that I do think that we're in danger of forgetting, that if we really give the Bible serious attention there isn't a more interesting book in all of the world. It truly is that interesting.

But not “Fallen From Grace.” Freedom is a word, someone has said, that's on everybody's lips today. There is the African Nationalist who would like to have, and now in many cases has, freedom, “uhuru.” There is freedom from colonial rule for them. There is the economist who is very much interested in freedom. He's talking about the freedom of free trade. He'd like to be free from the kinds of things that do make trade difficult all over the world. There is the capitalist who would like to be free from central controls. In fact freedom is a big thing in all our lives.

We all, I'm sure, would be willing to admit. Well there is a freedom, of course, more important. Christians know about that freedom. It's freedom from enslaving sin to serve God by the grace given in Jesus Christ, and that's the apostle's theme in Galatians. He'd like for the Galatians believers who have been now since he had been there become troubled by the Judaizing individuals who have come and suggested that they really didn't have freedom that what they needed to have the assurance of the forgiveness of sins was to undergo the rite of circumcision. In other words, a sacrament was necessary for the reception of the benefits of what Jesus Christ had accomplished.

Now the apostle was very disturbed about it. I read the passage in chapter 1, how he expresses astonishment that they are so soon, I'm going to translate this word as it has been translated by New Testament scholars, turning “renegade” from the gospel. That's what Paul says. If you add something like that, you've become a renegade. You're a trader to the freeness and the graciousness of the gospel message. He's disturbed about that and when he comes here to chapter 5 and in verse 2 says, “Behold, I Paul, say unto

you,” he’s reminding them of the person who is speaking to them. It’s Paul who is speaking to them. Paul the one who is the apostle of Jesus Christ, the apostle of Jesus Christ who has brought them the message, brought them the message that they have, up to this point, responded to.

In fact, Timothy George who is the Dean of the Divinity School of Sanford University in Birmingham, Alabama, a Southern Baptist School, a very important school now, a school that has come forward with a great deal of significance and emphasis in the evangelical movement, Timothy George, in his commentary on Galatians, translates these words, “Mark my words, I, Paul tell you.” That’s how important it was for Paul. The Dutch commentator Herman Ridderbos has translated the first words as, “For the last time, everything or nothing.” You realize even the slightest compromise of the requirement of a work compromises the grace of the gospel message. We no longer have grace. We don't need five or ten works, one is sufficient. So, “For the last time, everything or nothing,” either we have a grace gospel, or we have a works gospel.

Now the three questions I want to ask and try to answer are very simple questions. The first one is can a Christian “fall from grace?” Can a Christian “fall from salvation?” And then thirdly, what happens when a Christian does sin? The first question, suggested by verse 4, “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law.” Now by the law means by the simple requirement of circumcision in addition to faith in Jesus Christ, “Ye are fallen from grace.”

Now, the moment that we talk about something like this about whether we can “fall from grace” or not, we raise the questions of Calvinism. If you know anything about the preaching of the gospel in the South, there are individuals who believe in “Once saved, always saved,” and they are generally identified with the Presbyterian, with the reformed element, “Once saved always saved.” And then there are those usually identified with Methodism, the church of Christ, Roman Catholicism, “Once saved, not necessarily always saved.” And it comes down to generally a debate over the Calvinistic

Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints. The Perseverance of the Saints does not mean that when a person is converted that he will always live a life well pleasing to the Lord. It means that he will never apostatize from the faith. That's the Perseverance of the Saints. He will not apostatize from the faith. In other words, once saved, he'll always be saved. So, this is really a Calvinistic question, unfortunately, it's too bad it's like that but nevertheless that's the way it is.

Those kinds of debates often cover up the real issues, and naturally people want to cover them up if they think that they have the weakest side of the argument. Thomas Erskine, a well known Scottish evangelical of some generations ago, has spoke Calvinism as a “Sheep in wolf's clothing.” That is the Doctrine of Election and Predestination and all of those things that you identify with Calvinism. That does cause individuals some fear and trepidation. You mean we have to believe that? I don't understand what that's all about. So he says that Calvinism is a “Sheep in wolf's clothing,” but Arminianism is a “Wolf in sheep's closing.” And obviously a “Wolf in sheep's clothing” to him means, it comes forward with the idea look just believe in Jesus Christ and that's all, just exercise your free will. Your free will is all that's necessary. Exercise your free will and that makes us all feel good because we have free wills, don't we? And we can exercise the free will. We forget all about the fact that Jesus said, “No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him.” “No man can come to me,” “Can come to me.” He is unable to come. So it is a “Sheep in wolf's clothing,” because if you really believe in free will in that sense, you do not know what the gospel is about at all. So, you have “fallen from grace.”

What does Paul mean when he says “You have fallen from grace?” Let me put it simply. The apostle concerned with a method of justification, a method of how we become righteous in the sight of God. Now I want you to notice before we talk about the positively that Paul does not say in verse 4 “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from God.” Doesn't say you have

fallen away from God. He doesn't say really you have fallen away from salvation. He says, “You have fallen from grace.”

What is grace? Grace is the principle by which we are saved. You could call it a method of divine dealing, diametrically opposed to law works or legalism. Grace is the principle by which God conveys his blessing to us apart from works, by grace, by the freedom of God's desire to bring individuals to the knowledge of himself. “For by grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourselves it is the gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast?” So it's through grace. It's by grace. It's in or by grace.

Paul uses various expressions to express that, but it's the principle. In other words, salvation comes apart from our contribution of work. That's the point. So, that is what he's talking about and to put it in other words, he's not speaking of moral conduct when he speaks about “falling from grace,” he's talking about methods of coming to Jesus Christ. The Galatians had been urged to add to faith in Christ the sacrifice requirement of circumcision, and Paul says, “I testify to you that Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.” And I want you to know, he says that, “I, Paul” am saying this to you. It comes with apostolic authority.

Now you can see from this that Paul regarded the addition of this simple sacrament requirement as something most serious. As a matter of fact he says that if you add simply the requirement of circumcision it has a disastrous affect on the gospel. “You have fallen from grace.” You do not have the gospel. It's another gospel. It's a different gospel, he has said in chapter 1. In fact if a person preaches that gospel he's worthy of divine judgment. The curse will fall upon him.

Now I think you can see from this how important the apostle felt. We must preserve the doctrine of the grace of God. How were you saved? Were you saved by works of yours? Well most of you in this audience, I feel I know most of you, you would say, “I was saved by grace.” I've heard enough to know I was saved by grace. I don't have anything with which I can commend myself to the Lord, God in heaven. I was

saved by grace. But Paul thinks it's disastrous. It seems like a little thing doesn't it? You believe everything that Paul believed but you just have one little thing extra. You need to be circumcision in order to be saved, and after all circumcision was a biblical sacrament at one time. The Israelites were required to be circumcised. So isn't it small? Isn't this debate over little theological matters that really don't amount to a hill of beans? What we're interested in is what's practical. Aren't we? Some of you are not shaking your head because you know if you do I'm going to be disturbed. [Laughter] But many feel like that. You know, it's something theological. It's not really practical. The apostle thought to hold that doctrine was disastrous because little things are frequently the thing that lead to the big things.

John Kennedy was a student at Harvard during the time his father was our Ambassador to Great Brittan, and about his senior year instead of finishing at Harvard he went over and spent a year or so in Great Brittan. And while he was there he wrote his thesis, everybody who graduated from Harvard in those days had to write a thesis. I used to go to Princeton on the campus, and you had to write a thesis then. Everyone who just graduated with a BA had to write a thesis. So, over there he wrote his thesis which was later published as a book. You remember the title of it? *Why England Slept* was the title. *Why England Slept*. And the second world war largely, Mr. Kennedy and others as well pointed out, largely developed because Great Brittan and France slept at the switch while Adolf Hitler was building up the German wehrmacht and the army that later swept over that part of Europe. But it all began with failure to prepare, why they slept. So, why am I here this morning? So that you won't sleep doctrinally, so that you'll know what the issue really as far as the grace of God is concerned. So you will know what the gospel requires of you. It is the salvation that is by grace through faith alone. It's by grace through faith alone that we are saved

Remarkably when the Evangelical and Catholics document was constructed there were men that you would never have guessed would have signed it, Jim Packer, greatly

respect him. He’s been in our church here on two occasions for meetings, and many evangelicals are very disturbed over Dr. Packer’s signing that document. He was concerned about unity and he signed it. He later defended it. He said, “Why I signed the document,” wrote about it. But still people wonder. There were other too who have signed it. Bill Bright was one who was involved in signing it and even went so far as to say, and this is still printed in some of the materials that one finds, that he believes that countless people are going to be in heaven because of that particular document in which the doctrine of the gospel itself is compromised. I don't think that Dr. Bright understood that, but nevertheless his name is on the document, and he’s still making that statement.

Let me answer the question, the first question. Can a Christian “fall from grace?” Well, of course he can “fall from grace.” Fall from the grace principle, that’s what the Galatians were in danger of doing. That’s why Paul was so concerned. He knew it was a possibility for them, not--well I answer that question later, but it’s possible for a person to become confused as they were in process of becoming, and to believe that it is necessary to perform a sacramental rite in order to complete salvation. John Calvin says if you want a whole Christ you cannot have any compromise like this. If you have something like that, you have only a half Christ, not a whole Christ.

So, how can a person “fall from grace?” By falling into the law, that’s what he says, you can fall from grace by falling into law, requiring circumcision for salvation. Not moral sin, doctrinal error, theological error, Paul is talking about, that’s what’s in mind. That’s what the question at Jerusalem had to do with. When those apostles and elders came together and debated this matter, they had a lengthy debate because it was a fundamental departure for them to say that salvation is by grace through faith alone. So they debated it, and finally Peter stood up and said, “We believe that we are saved through the grace of Jesus Christ alone, as well as they.” So they finally reached the conviction that circumcision or any other sacrament we might add is unnecessary. In fact not only unnecessary for salvation but destroys the gospel if we insist upon it.

Well now the second question naturally arises. Well if we can "fall from grace," can we fall from salvation? And the answer is no. The harmony of the New Testament teaching indicates that. I just will have you turn to one passage John chapter 10 verse 28 through verse 30. It's very simple. You know all about it in Believers Chapel. This isn't new truth at all to you. But we do need to note it. John chapter 10 verse 28 through verse 30, our Lord is speaking and he says, "I give unto them," that is his sheep. "I give," notice it's "I give." "I give," it's a gracious thing. "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. " I give unto them eternal, not six months life, not five years life, not ten years life, eternal life, eternal life, not life until you sin. I give unto them eternal life unless you sin. I give unto you eternal life until you sin. That's a contradiction in terms isn't it, eternal life until you sin. "And they shall never perish," never, never, never, never, never, just keep saying it, never perish. Those who have eternal life shall never perish, never; under no circumstances to they fail of entering the presence of the Lord if they have eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. So the ask the question, can a Christian fall from salvation? The answer is clear. No he cannot fall from salvation. That's why in Galatians in chapter 5 Professor Ridderbos said, "For the last time everything or nothing."

Now I have a person who, I consider him a friend of mine, he wouldn't consider me as a friend because he doesn't know me, but I consider him a friend because I read things that he writes every week. I open up the section of the paper in the morning, Martha can verify this, I look at the front page, but I take the front page, the sports section, take it in devour the sports section, glance at the front page. And then sit down at the breakfast table and look at the today section. The reason that I love cereal, the kind of cereal I eat, is not for the cereal, it's because I read it with the today section right there. You can just, in the morning if you think of me; there it is the today section. John Anders once or twice a week will write a column.

Now I remember John Anders from the day that he was a sports writer for the Dallas Morning News. I always enjoyed him because he had a little sense of humor as well as being a good analysis of the sports events, but he is a lapsed Baptist. I don't mind saying that because it's well known. He's written about it several times in the past. The first time he wrote about it I didn't have the sense enough to clip out the column, but here just a few weeks ago, February 2, 1996, he wrote these words, "They call Baptists hard shell, but I know of no more liberal policy than the Southern Baptist Doctrine of once saved always saved. It's the greatest loophole in all of Christendom, a cause for both singing and dancing," ye wrote this right after the Baylor students were now permitted to dance on the campus, "A cause for singing and dancing to those of us who subscribe to the doctrine of slack." So he is a lapsed Southern Baptist.

But notice what he says, it's "the greatest loophole in all of Christendom." Ah, Mr. Anders, you have the doctrines words fairly accurate, but you don't have the doctrine. You don't have the other things that go with it. What you've done is to take something out, look at it without the other things with which it is surrounded in the Scriptures because in the Scriptures we are told that when a person does enter into eternal life, he becomes a new creature. He has a new life. He doesn't have that old desire for the doctrine of slack, but he has a new life. In fact when he sins, he's very disturbed. He's very upset.

In fact, his conscious disturbs him, the moment he sins, he knows he's out of fellowship with God. It's a terrible feeling. You've had it. I know I've had it. I still have it. I think of some things in my past life that I know are forgiven, but I still am ashamed, very ashamed, for the things of my past life. I wouldn't tell them to anybody. One of the things I pray is that on my death bed when I don't know what I'm saying I won't repeat some of these things. [Laughter] I hope that prayer is answered. You see when a Christian becomes a Christian the last thing he wants to do is to sin. And even when he

yields to sin, he is embarrassed by it, tormented by it, disturbed by it. He is unhappy in the committing of sin.

Not only that Mr. Anders, there is biblical discipline. In the local church the elders are there to exercise discipline, and if they fail to exercise discipline, there is a God in heaven who exercises discipline and the things that happen to us in our lives and in our family lives are often the things that have resulted from our sin. We know it's spelled out in the Bible. The Corinthians sat around the Lord's table; Paul said with reference to them, he knew the situation, “Some of you weep.” Why are they weep? Because there were disturbances at the Lord's table. “Some of you are sick,” Ah and “Some of you sleep.” That's the Christian word for death. Actually individuals had died, physically, because of their sin. Mr. Anders you don't understand. It's not a doctrine of slack. “Once saved always saved,” is a marvelous doctrine, but it doesn't mean that there is a freedom now for us to do as we please. In fact, just the opposite, just the opposite, we now with a new nature, that's the last thing we want to do, is to displease the Lord. Am I speaking for you? So, can a Christian “fall from salvation?” No, he can still sin, fall under divine judgment, fall under divine discipline, but he cannot lose his life.

Third question, what happens then when a Christian sins? Well just like this morning I get so bound up in this particular topic that I'm saying a lot more than I intended to say on some points so I'll answer this one rather quickly. What happens when a Christian sins? Does he “fall from grace?” No he doesn't “fall from grace.” As a matter of fact he falls into grace. What grace? Well the grace of a marvelous, loving Father who has opened the door for return to the relationship that is happy and satisfying. What happens when a Christian sins? There opens up for him, of course divine discipline, but also the possibility of confession, simple confession, confession of sin and forgiveness of sin. Psalm 32 and verse 5, the Psalmist was writing about this. David, who knew well what it was to sin, said, “I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity

of my sin. Selah.” I want to say Hallelujah. But “Selah,” we don't know exactly what “Selah” really means, but that’s what it ought to be, Hallelujah, to have a way of return to fellowship in the family.

How can two walk together unless they be agreed? And fellowship, that fellowship is maintained through confession of sin. The God-head provides restoration. Confession of sin, individual my Christian friend, is to say the same thing with one another. In fact in the Old Testament when in the Levitical requirements, confession is referred to, it is stated that a person should confess his sin, that he has sinned, in that thing. In other words, specific confession of sin, don't pray by the side of your bed, “Oh, God forgive me for my sins.” Pray specifically, “Forgive me for my sin of,” “My sin of,” confession in that thing.

Auricular Confession we know was not made a doctrine of the Roman Catholic church until 1215 AD. It’s a recent doctrine as far as the history of the Christian church is concerned. One of the greatest things in the Bible is the fact that Christians may be forgiven of their Christian sin. Merv Rosell, an evangelist of a generation ago, used to say, “When God pardons he consigns the offense to everlasting forgetfulness.” Isn't that marvelous? “He consigns the offense to everlasting forgetfulness.” I love that, and the Lord has had to forget a lot of things everlasting as far as I'm concerned.

Let me sum it up then. Christian then “falls from grace,” only by falling into law. Such as, for example, requirement of a sacrament, like baptism or any of the other seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic church. They all have to do ultimately with the forgiveness of sins apart from by grace through faith alone. A Christian cannot “fall from salvation,” and a Christian who sins does not “fall from grace,” but he falls into grace.

There is a charming anecdote that Donald Gray Barnhouse tells in one of his messages about Sir Edward Burne-Jones. Burne-Jones studied with Rossetti; his paintings were in the Tate gallery in London. When you go there and go to the Tate Gallery you see some of his paintings. In the later years of his life he went one day to his daughter’s

house, and his granddaughter Angela was there, and while they were sitting around the tea table Angela did something that displeased her mother, and her mother consigned her to the corner of the room. And so Angela had to go over and stand in the corner and look at the wall. And Burne-Jones was very much affected by the quiet dignity of the child and her evident sorrow. So the next morning he walked down the way to the house with his brush and his paints, and he painted a mural in the corner of that particular room. On the walls of Chastisement Corner he painted a mural which became the most precious spot in the room. A flight of birds adorned the wall and a kitten played with the tail of its mother. Every true child who has ever fall into sin, I think, has discovered that there is marvelous grace in the chastisement of the Lord.

I love what Dr. Barnhouse has said with reference to this in the message, and I'm going to repeat some of the things he said. He addresses some of the great saints of the Bible and very specifically says, “Moses you fell into sin. Did you fall from grace?” And Moses, he said, would reply like this, Oh, the grace of God. I played the fool. I grew fat with pride. I unleashed my angry passions. I killed a man, and I into the desert. And while I was off in the desert for those many years, God took my hand and brought me to the burning bush. And at the sight of the burning bush telling me shoes from my feet because it was holy ground, he explained to me that the covenant made with Abraham still held. He's to God of Abraham, Isaiah, and Jacob. He still is that God. Moses was taught by the experiences in the desert, the holiness of God, and not only that, he of course was taught about the unconditional Abrahamic covenant that's still in force today. It's the secret of why there is still trouble in the land of Palestine in the east today. That covenant still holds, the enmity still holds of those outside of the family of faithful, for those who hold the unconditional promises, but at any rate, God put into my hands, Moses speaking, those marvelous words on the Mount, “Thou shalt not kill,” for the man who had killed.”

“David, you fell into sin. Well you know the story. Did you fall from grace?”
No,” David would say, “I didn't fall from grace. I fell into marvelous grace because I sinned, and I was disturbed, and I was disturbed for months and months and finally Nathan came and said to me, ‘Thou art the man that I'm talking about David.’ And you remember David confessed his sin. I've sinned, and Nathan already had the word of forgiveness. ‘God has put away your sin.’ And then gave him the great details of the Davidic covenant, the unconditional covenant of which his own son would be the king, gave him all those marvelous promises in the Davidic covenant that had to do with the future and taught David how to say, 'Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered.'”

Peter, I don't remember that Dr. Barnhouse said much about Peter, but he could have said a lot about Peter. We could add Peter. He boasted that he would lay down his life for the Lord's sake when Jesus said that one of you, or some of you, will deny me. Peter say no we wouldn't think of denying you. We would lay down our life for you. And he not only denied our Lord, but denied our Lord before a maid, a maid, not one of the roman soldiers, a maid, denied our Lord, then went off because he was afflicted by just what you and I are afflicted with when we sin. He went off and wept bitterly because he had denied the Lord.

So, he sinned. Did he “fall from grace?” No he didn't “fall from grace.” The very fact that he bitterly regretted what he's done was evidence of the fact that he is still in the family of God, and not only that, but what did Jesus say to Peter afterwards. You remember he said go to the disciples. Go tell the disciples and Peter. I love that little expression, “And Peter,” because he is the one who has disobeyed, “Go tell the disciples,” and our Lord said, “And Peter,” he's not forgotten. And then in the end of John you remember, what did he tell Peter? Singled Peter out, Peter is made one of the chief figures of the Christian church. The Book of Acts has one of its chief characters. What does he tell Peter? “Feed my sheep.” “Feed my lambs.” “Feed my sheep.” It's the

person who understands the grace of God and who knows what it is to fall into grace, who understands the condition of the saints. They need someone who can feed them properly with the knowledge of the grace of God and the experience of what it means to truly fail, receive the gospel, still fail, but know the grace of God as long as you're in this body.

We look forward to the presence of the Lord. I don't understand how anyone could possibly be in this auditorium who does not know our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ could be happy. You can never be happy until you yourself come to Jesus Christ and believe in him, and trust in him. We invite you to do that. Sorry to keep you overtime, but it's a habit. Unfortunately I have to preach next Sunday. Dan has said that he wants me to preach next Sunday. I'll try to stop at twelve on the dot then. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for the marvelous gospel of Jesus Christ. We are jealous of that gospel. We are jealous of the grace of it. We're jealous of the principle of grace. We do not like to see the beauty of God's wonderful way by which he has gone out toward men and has brought his sheep to himself in any way disturbed or misunderstood. We know we have no...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]