



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

“The Fall of Man, *or* the Nature, Consequences and Transmission of Sin”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for Jesus Christ and for the way of salvation which has been worked out by virtue of his saving work upon the cross. We thank Thee for the word of God which reveals the way of salvation to us; for the Holy Spirit who has brought us to know Him, whom to know his life eternal. And as we come to the study of the Scriptures again, we pray for the ministry of the Spirit as our teacher. May you take of the things of Christ and make them living and real in our hearts and in our minds. We commit ourselves to Thee for this hour.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] The subject for tonight is “The Fall of Man; the Second Part or the Nature, Consequences and Transmission of Sin.” And we'll not be able to get to the Transmission of Sin but I hope that at least we will be able to cover most of the outline that I have put on the board of the nature and consequences of sin. But just as a place to begin, let's turn to the New Testament and read Romans chapter five, verse 12 through verse 21 because we're going to be looking at these verses if not in some detail tonight in our next study, so Romans chapter 5 in verse 12 through verse 21. The apostle writes.

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.”

Now, Paul’s point is simply this, that there was no law between Adam and Moses and yet men sinned or men sinned and men died. So since there is no imputation of sin when there is no law then for what sin did they die? The only explanation, of course, is they died because of Adam’s sin. Verse 15,

“But not as the offense, so also is the free gift. For if through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offenses unto justification. For if by one man's offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

We’re now studying the Fall of Man, accomplished through the agency of Satan. As Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians chapter 11 in the 2nd verse, I believe it is.

“For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his craftiness, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”

So you see at this point in the Garden of Eden, angelology has bisected anthropology and we must stop for just a moment and talk about man and man’s sin if we are to understand the truth concerning Satan.

Now in this event, the Fall of Man and the Satanic agency involved in it, we have the solution to the enigma of human life with its problem of evil and problem of suffering. If you were to take a course in philosophy, sooner or later, your teacher would discuss the problem of evil. He would not, most likely, discuss it from the standpoint of what the Bible says about it but he might reason about it from the standpoint of human, rational thought.

Now the Bible, of course, has a solution for the problem of evil and the problem of suffering. And it is without question, related to what happened in the Garden of Eden. And it makes, I think, a very simple and at the same time a very profound and reasonable solution to the problems of evil and suffering, which have plagued the human race.

Now in our last study we studied man’s probation; how he was placed in the garden and how he was given instruction by God. And then we discussed and studied the temptation. We saw the parts of it whereby Satan led Eve into sin and through Eve led the man into sin. And then we discussed the Fall itself for a few moments. Now, tonight we want to pick it up at Genesis chapter 3 in verse 6 where we have some insights into sin. The 6th verse reads.

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.”

So our outline now, Roman I - The Nature of Sin Compared, Genesis 3:6. Capital A - The Theories of the Nature of Sin. Before we look at some of these theories in detail, I'd like to make a general comment. I think if the United States of America knew the 3rd chapter of the Book of Genesis, then we would not be the dukes that we often are, of the warlords of the earth. And, I think, the same thing could be said of the other nations of the earth as well, for often they are the dukes of the world's warlords too. But if men knew the nature of that which transpired in the Garden of Eden, and the results and consequences of the acts, then I think we would have a society in which we recognize the reality of sin and the reality of human nature in such a way that there might be even less of war and destruction in the earth.

We would, of course, know the answer very quickly to whether we should ratify or not a nuclear proliferation treaty, for example. We would know that we would, if we had read Genesis chapter 3, that we could have no hope whatsoever, if our hope rests upon the bond of men.

Now the Englishmen like to tell us that an Englishman's word is his bond. Now, if I read Genesis chapter 3 correctly then I don't believe the Englishman when he says that. His word may be worth a little more than some other nationalities' words, but that was only because of the fact that there has been some influence from biblical thought. And as I analyze what is happening in Great Britain today, an Englishman's word is not like his word a century ago. But I think that if we could just get into our minds the truth of the fact that man is a fallen being then we would have the solution to a lot of decisions that we have to make. If, for example, we are to have an ABM system. And if our system is a

system that relies upon the voracity of the Russian communists or the Chinese communists or any other nation for that matter be they communists or not, if our system is a kind of system that depends upon the voracity, upon the good word of other men, then it has a fatal flaw and a fatal weakness in it because it rests upon an insubstantial foundation. It rests upon saying because there is no set of men whose word is really their bond. Men are liars, falsifiers, cheats, crooked, wicked, criminal, even when they cover it up with a veneer of righteousness and religion.

Did you know the things that are happening in the United States have such great parallels with what has happened in human history that it’s startling that we do not pay any attention to the past. If we studied the relationship between Rome and Carthage, we would see a beautiful illustration of the relationship between the nations that are aggressive in their desire to control the earth and those that want to live in peace. Carthage wanted to live in peace. They would give Rome anything that Rome wanted. And when Rome got everything they wanted, they said, “Now we are going to do away with Carthage.” And that’s what they did. And so they appeased and they appeased and they appeased and they appeased until finally they had to fight, but it was too late. But we don’t read those lessons. If we did read them and if we compared them with the truths of the word of God in Genesis chapter 3, we would be wise and our country would be a lot safer, and we too might be a lot safer in our own personal relationships.

Now, let’s turn to some of the theories of the nature of sin. And first of all, the dualistic theory. Now I haven’t put this on the board; we just didn’t have time to put all of the points of the outline but the dualistic theory of sin. Many systems of thought have a system of dualism. For example, they consider the principle of evil to be an eternal principle. The spirit of man represents the principle of good; the body of man represents the principle of evil. Gnostic thought was like this.

Now, of course, this idea of a dualism in which the body is evil, the spirit is good, and the principle of sin eternal is contrary to the word of God. There is nothing eternal

outside of God. He is the only eternal being and, consequently, the principle of sin is not an eternal principle. The idea of sin is an idea that is implicit in the idea of righteousness; it is its natural opposite. But the principle of sin is not an eternal principle. And, of course, if it were really true that the body contains within it the principle of evil and everybody has a body then, of course, there is a physical necessity that we sin. And if there is a physical necessity that we sin then there is no human responsibility for evil. And the Bible, of course, which pitches man as responsible for his evil, must then be an error. So, of course, this is contrary to Scripture.

The second theory is the illusion theory. It is the theory that characterizes Christian Science today. I’ve often said of Christian Science that it is neither Christian nor scientific. And it is neither. Now according to the illusion theory of sin, the difficulty with men is that they do not look at the facts of sin under the eyes of the eternal God. If we did look at sin under the eyes of the eternal God, we would see that sin does not really exist. Sin is nonexistent. We look at it from the standpoint of man, and what we see is sin. But if we looked at it as God did, we would see it as mistake perhaps, failure perhaps, but not sin. Now, we know, of course, this is contrary to our experience that sin is much more than mistake. Sin often is voluntary and intentional and willful. We know that and men often admit it. Furthermore, if it’s true that sin is really an illusion, there are no ethical distinctions. And, consequently, there is no such thing as any principle of ethics. Now, most of all, I think the greatest damage that this does, is it produces a kind of hypocrisy of the most fatal kind.

I have a friend who has a very close relative who has been in Christian Science. And he’s learned a great deal about Christian Science from his friend, his relative. And it’s not often, I mean it’s not infrequent, that a man who is identified with Christian Science, realizing that something has happened to him, that he does have something wrong with him, that he does need a doctor, that he does need to go to the hospital, that there is such a thing as sin, there is such a thing as disease, there is such a thing as injury, and so they

have a nice way of dropping out of society for a while. They just say they’re going out of town and they drop out and they go down to the hospital and they stay in the hospital for two to three weeks. And after they have been operated on or have been ministered to or are well then they come back “into town” and begin to attend church again and rejoice in the fact that God is a great healer. Yes, that exists. It does. And in the final analysis, if a man is really serious when the time comes and he realizes that he is fatally ill, sure to die, then he tries to match his teaching and what he has proclaimed that sin doesn’t exist, that illness doesn’t exist, that disease doesn’t exist and that death doesn’t exist, what must he do? Well he must be the most flagrant of hypocrites. Or else he yields himself to despair and sometimes commits suicide. That kind of teaching is not a harmless error; it is hypocrisy of the most fatal character and will surely come under the judgment of God. Sin is no illusion. I assure you of that.

A third theory is that sin is just ignorance. Sin is ignorance of God’s purposes for man’s life and, therefore, it is a pardonable kind of thing. If we just knew God’s will, we wouldn’t sin. Now this, of course, is contrary to experience again. We know it is possible for us to know the will of God and yet to sin. As a matter of fact, we know that it is possible for us to know precisely the moral law of God in its great feature and then to intentionally break that law. And we know too that when we have come to the knowledge of the law of God and we have broken that law there comes a sense of guilt. And try as we might, we cannot rid ourselves of the sense of guilt. I’m so thankful for guilt. It’s one of the greatest things that God ever invented. In the physical sphere, he invented the laws that preserve us physically. For example, if I take my hand and put my hand into a furnace, I feel the pain the moment my hand reaches the temperature that causes pain and so I immediately pull my hand out of the fire. If I never felt pain then I might put my hand in a fire and discover a few seconds later I didn’t have any hand. Pain is designed to be a help not a hindrance. It’s designed to tell us a few things. It often tells us men a few things too, you know. It’s the way that God has in speaking to

us when we won’t listen to him any other way. And my wife keeps telling me and perhaps she’s right that you are doing too much. Well if the time comes and I have a little heart attack or a big heart attack that’s God’s way of saying “I think I’ve got something I want to say to you”.

Now when it comes to the spiritual side of things, guilt is God’s way of saying something to us. What he’s trying to say to us when we have the sense of guilt is that we need forgiveness; that we need something done for us to remove this guilt. Now, the psychiatrist may speak to you and say the trouble with you is that you have a guilt complex, and we’re going to try to do everything we can to get you rid of this guilt complex. And so you may be guilty of repression and various other things that psychiatrists, who know a lot more about this than I do, may set forth as possible responses to the guilt complex. But you see God has given it to us and the solution for the guilt complex is not to repress it.

The solution to the guilt complex is to hold it forth before you constantly in the light of the cross. Feel the guilt, but feel the guilt remover. Realize you have the guilt, but realize he has taken it away with his blood. Then there comes peace. But you’ll never have peace until you do recognize that. And God’s guilt complex that he gives us is his way of speaking to us when we won’t listen to him any other way. So when we get burned by, then, ignorance of God’s word, we have not really come to the essence of sin. Sin is more than ignorance. When a man sins willfully, he recognizes in his experience that the solution is not simply to know God’s will, but to do it.

Now still others say that sin is selfishness. This is quite common among Christians. In fact, I find that a lot of superficial preachers of the word today that say that sin is occupation itself. I’d like to say, of course, that sin involves ignorance and that sin involves occupation itself a great deal of the time, but sin is more than selfishness. Selfishness is sin, but there is some sin that has selflessness about it. For example, just to illustrate, let’s suppose that my family is starving. And let’s suppose that, finally, I become

so desperate for the life of my family, not myself of course, my wife, my children. I might even be willing to die for them but, nevertheless, because my children are starving I consciously and willfully and intentionally commit theft. There is no selfishness about that to me. It’s selflessness. So selfishness is sin, but sin is more than selfishness.

Now we’ve said something about this so I don’t want to make it a point too much, but I want you to turn with me to a text that 1 John chapter 3. Now 1 John chapter 3 in verse 4 reads this way, page 1344 in the approved edition of the Kings James Version revised edition. Verse 4, “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.” Sin is lawlessness or sin is the transgression of the law. You see there is an element of transgression of divine commandment in sin. And we never do get to the basic character of sin until we have come to the place where we recognize that sin includes within it selfishness, ignorance but also the transgression of the law of God.

Now from time to time I’ve put on the board this; that sin is really unbelief. For you see it is the attitude of heart, unbelief that causes a man to break the law of God. If, for example, he knows the law of God but if he does not believe that then he is willing to transgress that law because he does not accept the certainty of the consequences of the breaking of it. He may in his mind but in his actions he’s willing, at least, to stand the possibility of the transgression of the law. So basically unbelief is the thing that leads a man to transgress the law.

This is the subjective origin of sin. It is an unbelief. Objectively, it is the transgression of the law. If someone were to look and say “What is sin?” It’s the transgression of the law. Objectively, it is produced by the attitude of unbelief. I’ve often pointed out to you already in this class, of course, that when Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would come during the present age that one of his ministries would be the ministry of convincing. And he would convince the world of sin of righteousness and of judgment. And then the Lord says to define this further that he would convince the world

of sin because men are wicked? No. Because they don’t go to church? No. Because they break the Ten Commandments? No. He would convince men of sin “because they believe not in me”. Unbelief in Jesus Christ is the root of sin, subjectively. Objectively, it is the transgression of the law. Now this, of course, leads to rebellion. We want to call this selfishness. Of course, it is. It’s more than that, but it’s rebellion against the law of God. Now, ultimately, this will lead to immorality.

There is something else involved in sin which I have not put on the board here. In this fact of sin and the rebellion that issues, there is involved guilt and pollution. In other words when a man breaks God’s law, when he transgresses the law, the rebellion is what you see and what he may feel, but that produces what God, before God guilt and pollution and it inevitably issues an immorality.

Now, of course, there may be results of sin that are invisible. It is possible for a man to live a lovely life and you would think if you were judging a man’s life that man is surely going to get to heaven. But that man may be just as wicked as it is possible for a man to be within him. He may have managed to keep out of jail. He may have managed to give the appearance of being a religious man. He may have been even a philanthropist in the community and done a lot of good, but he may have done it altogether for himself with not a thought of God in his heart, never motivated by love for God or love for men, just simply a desire that his name be great in the community. You don’t believe this exists do you? Oh yes you do. You know that deep down in your heart it does.

If you were to go over to Southern Methodist University, now I’m going to get way out on a limb, but I think this is what you would find. If you went in and talked with the president you would probably find him saying something like this “You know, it’s fairly easy for us to get nice donations if we agree to name the buildings after the donors but to get someone to give to the general fund is much more of a problem.” Now, I know that exists because many people are willing to give if they can give in such a selfish spirit that they benefit from it. And down through the years you can look over and see. Now

there’s the S. Lewis Johnson Jr. School of Psychiatry at Southern Methodist University. [Laughter] And that building over there is the Mary Johnson Laboratory. If we’ve got money, we’ll give lots to have people say that, you know, over and over again. And the community will praise us, they will think we are very good but we do it all together for our ego. So sin is objective transgression of God’s law. It is produced by subjective unbelief. It involves guilt and pollution and it issues in a sinful state, sinful deeds, sinful habits.

Now I want to say a word about the Pelagian view of sin. Now Pelagius is a name that theologians throw around quite a bit and occasionally you’ll find a preacher who is intelligent using the word. [Laughter] Now Pelagius was a British monk and he was quite a popular preacher in Rome during the days of Augustine. In fact from the years of 401 a.d. to 409, Pelagius enjoyed quite a popularity in the city of Rome. Augustine was his natural opponent. Pelagius said this about sin. He said “God has commanded good, therefore, man must have the ability to do good or else God could not logically have commanded that we do good. Man has absolute free will, so man’s responsibility is to decide for good not to decide for evil. He has absolute free will.”

Now, if that were true then decision would not rest upon moral character. The will would be utterly indeterminate in man. Sin to Pelagius was the separate acts of will. There was no sinful nature. There was no predisposition in man. Sin only existed when he made the wrong choice. Adam became evil by his choice. He had not been created holy. Pelagius also taught that sin could not be passed on, that there is no such thing as original sin. Now, I just say this about Pelagianism. There is a lot of Pelagianism around today. There is a lot of Pelagius even in evangelicalism because they have never thought very much about these things. If man has no moral character, if his decisions do not flow out of what he is then he is just an animal. It is impossible for a man just to have a will that is indeterminate and to act one way and then to act another way. A man’s will is a product of what he is. I decide a certain way because I am a certain person. The

decisions that I make arise out of something deeper than my will. The will is the product of me that’s why you can count upon a man deciding in a certain way. He is going to decide on the basis of what he is.

There is no such thing as absolute free will. I think that should be obvious to us. Just think for a moment. Why are you living in the twentieth century? Wouldn’t you have liked to live in the first century? You couldn’t pick your century, could you? Why were you a member of the family that you are a member of? Wouldn’t you rather be a Ford or a Rockefeller or an Eisenhower? What are you, a Johnson. [Laughter] Who would pick that? It’s obvious you don’t have free will. None of us has free will. There is no such thing as absolute free will. As a matter of fact, you do not have free will now. You are a free moral agent. We will talk about that in a moment but you do not have free will. You decide on the basis of what you are.

That is what Jesus was talking about, ultimately, when he said there are four kinds of soil. There is that by the wayside, there is that that is rocky ground, there is that that is covered with thorns and vines and full of the growths of the pleasures of life, and then there is that which is good ground. And good ground responds in a certain way to the seed; rocky ground in another way. These are the facts of life. Does that kind of send a little shiver of terror into your spirit? I hope it does. You want to be sure to receive Christ as your Savior. You settle the question whether you are good ground or not. And as I said yesterday in preaching, “If you don’t want to do it then what am I to think about your protestations about the word of God?”

Well Pelagius was one of the early heretics. And today if you want to say the worst thing you can say about a man’s theology call him a Pelagian. It means that he doesn’t understand sin, he doesn’t understand human nature, he doesn’t understand the will, he doesn’t understand anything about the universality of sin. And we have to hasten on.

The consequences of sin - Roman 2 and capital A - the concept of original sin. Now we want to try to define a few things because we are taking a course in systematic theology. And if you got out and someone were to say to you “What is original sin?” You would say “I don’t know” and he would say “where did you study systematic theology?” “Well, I heard Dr. Johnson” “You mean you heard Dr. Johnson and you don’t know anything about original sin.” I would be very, very upset over that.

So what about the concept of original sin? This term original sin refers to the state in which a man is born after the sin of Adam. We are born in sin, and we are touched by original sin because our nature has been affected by what Adam did in the Garden of Eden. It is original because it is derived from the original root of the human race, Adam. It is present in the life of every individual. It’s the inward root of all of the actual sins that defile a man’s life. Every one of us is born in original sin. It involves original guilt, of course. What did Paul say in Romans 5:12? “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”. And so we are all in a state of original sin. We are the inheritors of that lovely thing; original sin.

And, of course, it involves original pollution. There is the presence of positive evil in every one of us from the beginning. Now that is why I say if we understood Romans chapter 3, we would understand the Russians. We would understand the Germans. We would understand the French. We would understand De Gaulle. Someone was telling me the other night that a man asked a friend of his a question. He said “What do you think of De Gaulle?” I think his answer was something like this; he said “I am an atheist, there is no De Gaulle.” Now we would understand De Gaulle if we understood Genesis chapter 3. So when we talk about original sin that is what we mean.

By the way, there is a text that supports this too. Will you turn with me to Ephesians chapter 2? And will you listen as we read verses 1 through 3. Ephesians chapter 2 “And you hath He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” That’s

what you were before you received Christ as your Savior. You were dead in trespasses and sins; dead. You see that? Dead. You may be very much alive physically, mentally, morally in the sense of you are awakened to certain things, but you are dead spiritually. There is no connection between you and God that is vital and life giving.

He says, “In which in times passed you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”

Do you see that? By nature, not by action, not by deeds. “Were by nature the children of wrath even as others?” So that’s the state in which every one of us is born; original sin. Adam’s sin has now affected us. We’re guilty and polluted by it, every one of us. That includes the ladies, too.

Capital B - the concept of total depravity; concept of total depravity. Now that was not for the men, that remark. That was for the ladies. We knew it all along, but we were not sure the ladies did. The concept of total depravity. What is total depravity? I dare say there is hardly a person that really understands what total depravity is. And even among Evangelical Christians this term is often banded about and is not fully understood. Total depravity, this is the pervasive inherited pollution which we all have from Adam. This is the sin that we inherit universally; total depravity. It extends to every part of man’s nature and all of his faculties. It precludes the existence of divine spiritual good in the center. He is perverted, spiritually. That’s the meaning of that term.

Now these are some of the things it does not mean because I often find that people think it means too much. It does not mean that every man is equally bad. It does not mean that. It does not mean that every man is as bad as he could be, therefore, you

could be worse probably. It does not mean that a man has no conscience able to discriminate between evil and good. To some extent, God has given us each one of us a conscience. It’s the light of the eternal, it has been said. And men inherently know distinctions between right and wrong. They know that because God has planted this in their hearts. A man who is totally depraved has a conscience. He’s able to make some distinctions.

It does not mean that a man will indulge in every kind of sin. There are some men who would not touch a drop of liquor; not that there is anything sinful in touching just a drop. But there are some men that would never get drunk. There are some men that would never commit adultery. There are some men that would never steal. There are some that just seem to be constitutionally constructed in such a way that they cannot cheat on their income tax. But it doesn’t mean that they are not totally depraved. It does not mean that we will not do acts of benevolence. A man totally depraved, perverted spiritually, may do some great benevolent deeds. What it means is that he is totally unable to please God. These things that we are talking about are often simply human things. He’s totally unable to please God.

As Paul says in Romans chapter 8 “A man that is in the flesh cannot please God.” He may perform natural good, he may perform civil good, he may perform the externally religious good, but this and this is the key point, everything that he does is touched by his own unbelief and self interests. Everything that he does, even his religious acts, even his good deeds, they are touched by his own unbelief and his self interests. They are not prompted by a love for God, the Father of Jesus Christ. They are not prompted by regard for the will of God as found in the word of God, therefore, when we say a man is totally depraved, I hope we will understand it. We mean that he cannot please God; that all of his actions are touched by his own self-interests and if we are honest with ourselves outside of Christ, we would have to agree, we are totally depraved.

One final word about the concept of human freedom - Capital C. Now we must be careful in answering the question does man’s sin involve loss of freedom or free will? Now, positively, man has liberty to choose as he pleases in full accord with the dispositions and tendencies of his heart. He is a responsible, moral agent. Would you please be sure and remember that? Man is a responsible, moral agent. He possesses reason, he possesses conscience, he possesses freedom of choice, his choice. But on the negative side, he has lost the power to determine his course in the direction of the highest good. He has lost the power to do that. Ever since the fall in the Garden of Eden, there never has existed a man who possessed within himself, apart from Jesus Christ, the power to determine his course in the direction of the highest good. He has by nature now an irresistible bias to evil. He is by nature a child of wrath. His decisions tend to inevitably to the evil. His decisions tend inevitably that which contradicts the will and the word of God. He is no longer free; he is a slave of sin. And if he is not freed from without, he is hopelessly lost.

Now when the new birth comes, how does it come? Because we believe? Well yes. There will not be anybody in heaven except Jesus Christ, the angels, who is not there because he has believed in Jesus Christ. And I would presume that even the infants that pass into heaven by virtue of the imputation of righteousness, when they reach heaven they believe that is the natural response from their hearts; they believe. And so all believe, but we believe because there has been a prior work of God. And if there had been no prior work of God, we could not believe. You think? I’m just reasoning?

Let me read you a couple of texts of Scripture; John chapter 1, verse 12 and verse 13. We’ll close with these two verses. It’s the New Testament now. I tell you the truth, the reason I said that is because I was looking in Acts and I’ve got to go back and look in John. John chapter 1 in verse 12. Listen.

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

You see that? Will you mark that down. “Nor of the will of the flesh”. Do you believe this by the way? Do you believe this biblical statement? That we are born not of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God, but of God. Why do we believe? Because we are born of God. And we respond to the saving work of God in faith.

Now, I will read you another text. John was straight in his theology, you know. So was Paul. I mentioned this last night in our meeting around the Lord’s Table. We had a fellow at the Dallas Theological Seminary, mind you, get up in front of all the students and say that “Paul was not straight in his theology.” He said “He made some statements that did not agree with his own theology.” I told the people last night I felt like jumping up and saying “Paul is perfectly straight in his theology. You are not straight in your theology.” And he said it twice. If he had said it the third time, I don’t think I could have stayed in my seat. And what disturbed me quite a bit was that he got quite a laugh from the student body. I was very much disturbed.

Romans chapter 9 verse 16. So then Paul says.

“So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”

Did you notice that? So “It is not of him that willeth, not of him that willeth.” It’s “of God that showeth mercy”. Now what are you thinking? Are you thinking if salvation is totally of God, and we are totally depraved and totally unable, then how can we be morally responsible? Is that what you are thinking? Well if you are not, you are not

thinking. You should be thinking that. Next time, we are going to discuss that. Let’s close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for these great truths and we thank Thee most of all that by the Holy Spirit Thou didst move in our hearts when we were dead, when we were by nature the children of wrath. Thou didst move upon our wills and so in our response of faith, Thou didst give us eternal life. Make us eternally grateful for all of Thy work on our behalf.

For Jesus’ name. Amen.