



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Various

John Bunyan Conference, Lecture 10

TRANSCRIPT

[Introduction of Dr. Johnson] Let's start out this way again; how many of you have never heard Dr. S. Lewis Johnson speak? Anyone who has never heard him? Well there are some. Of you who have heard him, how many of you heard him first on cassette tape? [Laughter] Yeah I figured it'd be a good many. To introduce Dr. Johnson is difficult because all of you know him. Yesterday I introduced him on a personal note and I think I embarrassed him, but that's his problem not mine. [Laughter] I want to tell you what I told our church yesterday. I was a young theological student, a young preacher, still am young, but younger back then. This was about twenty years ago. And someone introduced me to the tape ministry of Believers Chapel in Dallas, Texas.

And at the time I was attending a seminary and my job, what I did for a living, was drove a school bus. And a couple of the routes that I drove were with deaf children. They didn't care what I listened to in the bus. [Laughter] And they never were loud enough to interfere with my listening to anything on the bus. And in those days I listened to so many tapes by Dr. S. Lewis Johnson that you can't imagine it. I

told our folks yesterday that even before they ever heard him, even before they'd ever heard of him, they had heard them. [Laughter] He had influenced me tremendously. I'm sure there are many things about my ministry, this is not to blame him for any of the bad parts, but [Laughter] I think there are many things about my ministry and about our church in Pottsville today that are really in significant ways traced back to the influence that he had with me. I loved him before I met him. I love him dearly today. I truly count it as a privilege that we have had him here these last three years. I love the fact that the Lord allowed us to cross paths and to meet, to get acquainted. And I'm very thankful for his ministry. And I'm grateful that he's with us again this year, Dr. Johnson.

[Johnson Lecture] Well of course it's a great pleasure for me to be again here in the Bunyan Conference. And to meet many of you again that I have met in various places, and enjoy the time of fellowship. I first became acquainted with this conference through John Reisinger in Texas, and found it everything that I anticipated. We've had a very good time here. And I've already enjoyed the conference, and I know I will enjoy a great deal more while I'm here. I really been a little troubled today as to what I would like to speak on. And I've been having a little bit of a discussion with Dr. Carson. In my opinion Don Carson is the finest New Testament professor around these days. [Amen from audience] and since I spent thirty years as a New Testament professor in two seminaries, and one or two other smaller ones, I think I at least can give an educated opinion, and it's a great pleasure to be here with him. And last night we had a discussion that has influenced a change in my topic. I'd first thought of something like this a long time ago, but.

So I've changed my mind and what I want to talk about is justification by grace through faith in the light of the *Christianity Today* article by Robert Brow and then in the light of the ECT document which many of you know about and the gift of salvation document, which has raised again the question of just how it is that we become Christians. So, what I'd like to do is to turn to Genesis chapter 15 and verse 6 and say a few words about that. And then we'll turn to Galatians chapter 3 and say a few words about that. And at least touch the issue that I'm thinking about as being a very important issue that Don and others and I have discussed over the past days. I was so delighted to hear last night, we discussed two or three hours I guess, so delighted to hear that he had such an intimate knowledge of some of the discussions that had been taking place in the official positioning of some of the individuals involved in the discussion, the differences of opinion, the various kinds of things that are involved in trying to reach some kind of agreement with regard to this doctrine. So, if you want to know anything about what has been going on that's not been in *Christianity Today*, *First Things*, or any of the other periodicals, well if you can seek out Dr. Carson and get an authoritative opinion.

Five years ago, approximately, maybe six, I gave five messages on "New Time Religion." And those words were in quotes, because there was, as I remember, a series of articles by Robert Brow on New Time Religion. I think there were five because I gave I believe five messages. And Robert Brow is a Canadian minister. A very intelligent man who is known, in many ways, ways in which I don't know all of the things about him, Dr. Carson can give you some more information on him that I know. But those articles stirred me up quite a bit because what Mr. Brow was suggesting was the fact that the things that we have understood about justification by grace through faith are

not really an accurate presentation of what that doctrine is. Most of us who are evangelicals have thought of justification by grace through faith as the teaching that we are declared righteous. Not made righteous, declared righteous by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. That's very simple, it's very much to the point, it has to do with faith, and faith alone. It has to do with grace. It has to do with Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone. Now we have thought of that as being a legal, the subject having a legal background. And we have thought of justification as a legal relationship. And Mr. Brow took a different view point. He said, "So instead of being dragged tremblingly into a law court, we now are able" by virtue of the light that he was expressing and setting forth in his articles, "we are able to breathe the atmosphere of a loving family."

Now, to my mind, we who are justified by grace through faith alone, we breathe that atmosphere and we don't have to have anything new. We breathe that atmosphere because we believe that's the teaching of the word of God. What he was suggesting was that what we have before thought about justification is wrong. It's not a legal arrangement at all, it's a family relationship. And so that stirred me up a bit, because as a professor in theological seminary one of my duties for thirty years was to teach the Epistle to the Romans, and then on alternate years to weave in the other epistles, particularly the Epistle to the Galatians, and so it appeared to me, and I also taught Hebrew, so I had some insight into just exactly what these texts that begin in Genesis chapter 15 and verse 6, mean through the Old Testament as well. I thought of the relationship that I had with Jesus Christ as being a very personal one, but also a very legal one because I had been declared righteous by grace through faith in him according to his work on Calvary's cross. So that started me thinking. And we've had this

discussion yesterday and today, so I'm doing something a little different from what I intended to do.

He called it an evangelical mega-shift and I think that was right. There has been an evangelical mega-shift in parts of evangelicalism and their thoughts about some of this particular doctrine are different and changing. In fact, one of the men, sociologist who has studied evangelicalism, James Davison Hunter, in his book *Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation*, he has made the point that the tendencies that we are seeing within evangelicalism, many of you would know what he is talking about, will probably escalate and that the shift that he perceives as having occurred is going to signalize a retreat in evangelicalism and perhaps even a departure from some of what we have understood to be the teaching of the word of God.

Well I began by challenging, in my thinking, of Brow's view of justification with its instead of, rather than in addition to, as he put it, and I'd like to begin right there. He just simply has said that legal justification is an error, and we want to look at it from the standpoint of what the Scriptures say. In Genesis 15:6 we have one of the key passages that one must consider in discussing a topic like this, Genesis chapter 15 and verse 6. The apostle, I'm teaching Romans so long that [Laughter] I've just made Moses an apostle. [Laughter] Chapter 15 and verse 6 we read these words, "And he believed in the Lord, and he accounted it to him for righteousness." Some of the things that have been said about this I think I should repeat also. One of the things that John Calvin said about justification was that it was the main hinge, I believe, of the Christian faith. I had his exact words, but I'm not sure I can turn to them immediately, but that was his idea about it. And some of the others have said some other things about it, but perhaps the best thing for me to do here is to look at some of the statements that have

been made about justification and the question of whether justification by grace through faith is a legal matter, biblically legal matter.

The Augsburg Confession is extremely important for the Lutheran church and I'm going to read a section from it, and I think it will touch the point that we're talking about. The Augsburg Confession, dated 1530 reads, "It was also taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sins and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered for us, and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us, for God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness as Paul says in Romans chapter 3 verse 21 through verse 26."

The Belgic Confession, of Guido de Bres, the continental reformed statement, "We believe that our salvation consists in the remission of our sins for Jesus Christ's sake and that therein our righteousness before God is implied, as David and Paul teach us, declaring this to be the happiness of man that God imputes righteousness to him without works." All of you I know understand impute to mean to reckon. And so to have righteousness reckoned to us apart from works. And the statement continues, "And the same apostle saith that we're justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ, and therefore we always hold fast this foundation ascribing all the glory to God, humbling ourselves before him, and acknowledging ourselves to be such as we really are without presuming to trust in anything in ourselves, or in any merit of ours, relying and resting upon the obedience of Christ crucified alone, which becomes ours when we believe in him."

Now most of you in this audience I imagine are familiar with the Westminster Confession, but we'll read it because I want you to notice how all of these confessions coming from different backgrounds center on the same point. This is the point that Mr. Brow objects to and this is the point that others recognize is the object of some transformation in professing evangelicalism. But the Westminster Confession reads this way, "Those whom God effectually calleth he also freely justifieth, not by infusing righteousness into them" that of course is a specific word said with reference to the Roman Catholic position that when an infant, for example, is baptized there is infused into him a righteousness that is satisfactory for him. So he says, it says, "by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous. Not for anything wrought in them or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone, nor by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them as their righteousness, but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith, which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God." So again, that statement agrees with what the others have said.

The Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican church has this statement in it, "We are recounted righteousness before God only for the merit of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ by faith and not for our own works or deservings, wherefore that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort or more largely is expressed in the homily of justification" this incidentally, is the statement of the church of Mr. Brow. So his own church, he's not really totally in harmony with it.

All of these confessions generally express the idea of imputation or the accounting of ourselves as righteous and exude the comforts of the facts, so they say.

Now the very fact that they use the term "to impute" signifies a legal relationship. They are reckoned to be righteous by virtue of faith alone.

Now we turn back to Genesis chapter 15 and verse 6, because the story really begins more fully there. And here in Genesis chapter 15 and verse 6 we read these words, "And he believed in the Lord and he accounted it to him for righteousness." Now most of you in this audience I know are familiar with Genesis chapter 15 and verse 6, and you no doubt remember the context of the passage in which Abraham remember, has been told that he is to be the father of a great multitude of people in Genesis chapter 13 and verse 3 and 4. We read with reference to this and Abram went up from, Genesis chapter 12 I should have said,

"And now the Lord had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, and from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. And I will make you a great nation; I will bless you, will make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

In other words, what Abram is promised is that he's to be the father of a great mass of people who are part of him and his family, children of Abraham. So, it's natural that Moses tells us that the patriarch was concerned about that great promise that God had given to him, and in the mean time, he has been speaking, thinking about that.

And now in Genesis chapter 15 and verse 6, in this general context, we have the patriarchs very concerned about this matter, because it's been some time and he doesn't have any indication that he's going to be the kind of father of the faithful that

the promise seemed to suggest. So a general reward as far as he's concerned is fine, that's suggested by chapter 14 and verse 20 and chapter 15 and verse 1, but what he wants is the assurance that these promises are really going to be his. And so his heart is really set upon those promises. And his problem is that he doesn't have any indication of the fact that he's to have a son and through the son all the families of the earth are to be blessed. So in verse 2 and 3 we read, "But Abram said, "Lord God, what will you give me, seeing that I go childless, and the heir of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? Then Abraham said, Look, you have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is mine heir!" In other words, "Lord you've given me these promises, but they're not here," and so he's disturbed about it. These words express impatient misgivings about it, but the divine pledge then follows, "And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but the one who will come from your own body shall be your heir." In other words, he's not going to have just a legal heir, he's going to have an heir that is the product of his own physical organs and this promise of course, and this pledge increases the paradox, because he has this promise and he has a promise that it's going to come from him, but there's no child. But we read in verse 5 and 6, "And he brought him outside (the Lord brought him outside) and said, Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them. And He said to him, So shall your seed be."

Now this great text in Genesis 15:6, cited in Romans, cited in Galatians, "And he believed in the Lord, and he accounted it to him for righteousness." "He believed in the Lord, and he accounted it to him for righteousness." And so the narrator, as he speaks of this text here, is kind of leaves the star gazing man and addresses the reader, "And he believed in the Lord, and he accounted it to him for righteousness." I don't know

whether you noticed that in reading through that, that in the preceding verses Abram's speaking to the Lord and then the Lord brought him out and said, "So shall you seed be" and then, "And he believed in the Lord" is a reference to Abram, but it's someone, the narrator is now giving us just exactly what happened, "And he believed in the Lord, and he accounted it to him for righteousness." There's no doubt but this is the biggest word in this chapter. This is one of the biggest words in the Book of Genesis. In fact it's one of the biggest words in the whole of the Bible, "And he believed in the Lord, and he accounted it to him for righteousness."

There are three words here that are exceedingly important. The first is "he believed." This is the first occurrence of the word "to believe" in the Bible, "he believed." It's something that's asserted. It's not described. We're not told here that faith is notitia, assensus and fiducia, as theologians say today. It is knowledge, it is assent, it is trust, but simply "believed." It's personal, is it not? It's propositional. What did he believe? Well he believed the promise that the Lord had given him. And Abraham did it, personal propositional faith right from the beginning in the word of God. And when we talk about faith those two aspects of it are always there if it's the genuine biblical faith. It's personal, it's propositional.

Many years ago when I was in the business world, I had a strange background. I grew up in Charleston, South Carolina. I spent most of my time on the golf course. I did go to college, and for some reason people in Charleston, in the society of which I was a part, many of them were lawyers. And so I had in my mind I would probably be a lawyer. In that city it's one of the better professions because it's so old there are a lot of things that lawyers can do and they survive fairly well financially. So I prepared to do that. And one of the things also, since an old fashioned city, men studied Latin and

Greek. And so I was taking Latin and Greek. I'd had eight years of Latin, and three years of classical Greek before I ever was converted. And when I went to Dallas Seminary it was of great help to me, because I was already ahead of my class in Greek. Not surprising I guess that I was teaching Greek a few years later.

But, while I was in Birmingham in the business world at the time, Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer came for some meetings in Dallas and somehow or another I had just recently been converted through Donald Grey Barnhouse's preaching in South Highlands Presbyterian Church there. And I went to this meeting, and Dr. Chafer spoke on Genesis chapter 15 and verse 6. And I don't think I'll ever forget what he said. He was not a Greek student. He never had a Greek class in his life. He didn't even have a theology class before he started Dallas Theological Seminary, very strange, but, he loved the Bible. And I remember this lecture he gave on Genesis chapter 15 and verse 6 and he made the point that the Hebrew word here is the word which means "to amen" is the way he put it. It's the Hebrew word amen, but the Hebrew word amen is the word from which we do get the word amen. And so Dr. Chafer's exposition was, "And Abraham amened the Lord" [Laughter] that when he said, "This is your, the kind of seed you shall have" he "amened the Lord, and he accounted it to him for righteousness." So, to believe, now this is no legal cultic work to believe, itself. But what happens as a result of it is a legal thing, for we read, "And he believed in the Lord, and he accounted it to him for righteousness" reckoned it to him, put to one's account. We all know what putting to one's account is. It's a legal matter.

So Mr. Brow is not correct when he says that this is not a legal thing when we talk about justification by faith. We are talking about something that is a legal relationship. Righteousness is put to our account by faith in Jesus Christ alone. As a

result of that, imputed to us, also a legal term is righteousness itself. This term, we don't have time to investigate usage of it in the Old Testament, but it originally, reckon referred to legal judgments in the Old Testament in the Old Testament law.

And then the third word is righteousness, a right standing before God. This is a term of relationship, but a legal relationship, by the imputation of the merits of Jesus Christ to us which are ours by virtue of the cross. Mr. Brow kept insisting that this idea of justification rose out of Roman law rather than in the word of God. But that's wrong, this is a Hebraic concept. It begins in Genesis chapter 15. Right there is the beginning of what we have as the doctrine of justification by faith alone, the imputation of righteousness through faith alone.

Now I'd like for you to turn with me now to the New Testament to the Book of Galatians. The testimony of the creeds, I think certainly justifies the statement that justification is a legal arrangement. Of course it should be personal as well, but it's a legal arrangement. And now in Genesis chapter 15 we've seen that that is essentially what it is. But turn over now to Galatians chapter 3 and I'd like to read a few verses beginning at verse 1. To my mind this is the one epistle that we need to understand if we're going to understand the controversy that is taking place in the evangelicalism today over the question of the means of justification. Galatians chapter 3 and verse 1 the apostle writes,

"O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you, who has, (actually this term is a term that is used for laying an evil eye on someone and so) Who has laid an evil eye upon you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?"

That's a very important statement too isn't it, because it tells us the exact way by which the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ impressed the people in this day. "Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among them as crucified" *estauromenos*, crucified, in that way, in that character, as a crucified individual. That's the way they preached him. That's a message to all of us who are preachers. How would your message generally be portrayed or described by the people who listen to you? Would they be saying, "He preaches a crucified Messiah"? Well they should of course, because that's what you should be preaching, he, "was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?"

Now, what this is a reference to, as you probably know, is that controversy had risen in Galatia, the Galatian church, over the relationship of circumcision, the Hebrew sacrament, to justification by faith. And there were individuals, their called Judaizers by the commentators on Pauline theology. The Judaizers were seeking to lead individuals who had believed in Jesus Christ only to be circumcised, insisting that it was necessary for them to be circumcised as well as to believe in Christ. So far as we know they did not deny the necessity of faith, they just said faith is not enough, you need to be circumcised. In other words, salvation is a two step procedure, not a one step procedure. Faith, and then secondly, one must be circumcised in order to be saved.

Now we don't have that particular problem our day. But we do have another problem. And the problem we have today is that we also have a sacrament, ordinance, I know that individuals from different backgrounds use different terms to describe just

what baptism is, but that's aside from the point I want to make. There is, is there a two step procedure in our salvation, or is there a one step procedure? Is it necessary for us to be baptized in order to be saved? Now, I would imagine most of you in this audience would say, "No it's not necessary to be baptized in order to be saved, but it is important for us to be baptized. But baptism is an ordinance that we should exercise and we should ask of those who have exercised faith in Jesus Christ."

So, that a man cannot be saved by human merit in this passage is argued from Scriptural ideas, an argument from the early Christian experience. Listen to what the apostle says. I'll just read these verses again,

"O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain-if indeed it was in vain? Therefore, he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does he do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"

Now it's clear that the apostle thinks that salvation is a one step procedure. It's a one step action. The one step is faith in Jesus Christ. In other words, a man is justified by faith alone. He does not add an ordinance of any kind in order to be justified. The apostle's very concerned about this. He doesn't think that that's just a little thing that you sit and just reflect about, but this is something extremely important. Notice his message in chapter 1. He says in verse 6, "I marvel that you Galatians, to

whom I preach the gospel, not too long ago I marvel that you are turning away so soon from him whom calls you in the grace of Christ to a different gospel which is not another." All of you who have studied Greek, and there are many of you here, you know of course that the apostle uses the term heteros for difference of another kind. Generally speaking, that's a definition of the significance of that adjective that is true. It doesn't always follow in that way. It's not always another of a different kind, but generally that's the meaning. And then when he says, "which is not another" he uses the term allos, which is another similar synonym, but this generally means "another of the same kind." So what the apostle is saying, "I marvel that you are turning so soon from him whom called you in the grace of Christ to a different gospel which is not another." In other words, it's a different kind of gospel.

So the apostle's making the point that if you insist upon something other than faith alone as the means by which you receive righteousness, you have added to the apostle's preaching by another gospel, a different gospel. He thinks very seriously about it. He's very upset over it. He thinks that that's extremely important, because in chapter 5 he says,

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. (that's, the yoke of bondage is not only faith but faith plus a religious work) Indeed, I Paul say to you if you become circumcised Christ will prophesie you nothing. (in other words, that gospel, two step procedure, will not attain the end that you think it should attain, verse 3) I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he's a debtor to keep the whole law. (you now are involved in a different approach to righteousness before God, verse 4) I testify again to

every man who becomes circumcised that he's (I'm sorry I'm reading 3 again) You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law, you have fallen from grace."

So in other words, to demand faith plus works is to fall from the gospel the apostle preached, that you've fallen from grace because you've added a work in the obtaining of the position of righteousness before God.

Now it seems to me that this is something that needs some discovery. Lawyers talk about discovery, while they get together and discuss what the real issues are. This needs some discovery by people who know something about the word of God. Is salvation a two step procedure? It's remarkable to me that many of the evangelicals today, whom I love in the Lord and I think are very wise men, wiser than I am, but they have in effect said that this particular arrangement of faith in Jesus Christ alone plus baptism according to the standards of say the church of Rome, does not contradict the preaching of the New Testament gospel. In other words, that individuals who are in the Roman Catholic church and believe the Roman Catholic doctrine are not out of harmony with those who believe in justification by grace through faith alone, apart from any kind of sacrament by which faith is, by which righteousness received.

It seems to me that we need to rethink just exactly what justification by grace through faith alone means. Because there are those, and the Roman church of course is the chief church involved in this, there are those who do believe that to believe in Jesus Christ is necessary, but one must also be baptized. When infants are baptized in the Roman Catholic church righteousness, according to their documents, is infused into

them. In other words, the righteousness that should be from justification by faith alone is not theirs until they have also undergone the sacrament of baptism.

Now we have, that's a fundamental difference it seems to me. And the apostle is so concerned about circumcision; it appears to me that that's about as fine a parallel as you could possibly find. The apostle says justification is by faith alone. If you add circumcision you have destroyed the gospel. It's no longer another gospel of the same kind, it's a different gospel. It really has disturbed me considerably, the discussions that have been taking place, and many of you preachers in this audience you know of them, that the exegetical issues that are bound up in this question have not been discussed publicly in detail.

I just read today a statement by John Richard Neuhaus, the editor of *First Things* magazine, which I've taken for a long time. I took, I listened and read Mr. Newhouse when he was a Lutheran, before he became a Roman Catholic. And he's a very intelligent man, but I found this statement in the February issue in which he said that now the evangelicals have acknowledged that what they say about justification is acceptable to them. I didn't have the precise words with me. I have them up there in the room where we're staying, but now that is to my mind something that cannot be said.

So in Galatians chapter 3 and verse 14 then, 1 through 14, these things we must remember when we discuss this issue. The apostle here in chapter 3 and verse 1 through verse 14 has said some things that I think I'd like to conclude with. What's really at stake then, in this matter? Are we dealing simply with a fresh look at essentially the same doctrinal position? Or are we seeing perhaps, as has been said by the individual whom we cited in the beginning about the tendencies probably escalating,

James Davison Hunter, are we seeing something that's may be on the way to a departure from truth that we want to see retained. What is it that may be lost? And I suggest a number of things that may be lost by what seems to be taking place.

First of all, a sense of God's wrath or our sin, because what needs stress is the emphasis upon our own relationship to the Lord without any suggestion of relationship to a sacrament or an ordinance. The sense of God's wrath, the sense of our sin, the sense of guilt and condemnation is the thing that should characterize the preaching of the word of God and should be the thing that we major in when we talk about the things that are in the word of God.

Luther once said, "A theologian is made by living and dying and being damned." And that's one thing we need to remember when we preach the word of God, that we are to preach it in such a way that we realize that we are under divine judgment and that the relationship is a legal relationship that leads to eternal death, if there is not deliverance through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Another thing that is missed and lost perhaps is the sense of God's justice. In the other great passage in Paul's writings on justification in Romans chapter 3, verse 21 through verse 26, the apostle as he describes the gospel that he was preaching there says that, in verse 24,

"being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God set forth as a propitiation by his blood through faith to demonstrate his righteousness because in his forbearance God had passed over sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time, his righteousness that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus Christ."

That's an important part of the preaching of the gospel that we should not miss the sense of the grace of God. In Galatians chapter 3 and verse 24 and then specifically in Galatians chapter 2 and verse 21, the apostle says some things that bear on the point too. Because you see, if we really can receive righteousness by adhering to an ordinance then the place of the cross itself is in jeopardy. The apostle in Galatians chapter 2 says, "I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the law" and the law of course was one must believe but one must also be circumcised, "then Christ died in vain." The minute you add something to justification by grace through faith alone, you have in effect denied the significance of the grace of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ.

G. C. Berkouwer says with reference to verse 21, "I do not set aside the grace of God for if righteousness comes through the law then Christ died in vain" he says with reference to that that "Jesus Christ would be guilty of throwing himself away if justification could be obtained through a sacrament." I remember Dr. Chafer in discussing this text, and I think he's got a word on it his theology somewhere in which he said that, "If it is true that righteousness comes through the law and Christ died then in vain" he went on to say, "Jesus Christ's death would be the greatest blunder in the history of the universe, because it was unnecessary."

So, it's important I think, and I know I've been rather disjointed this evening because frankly I didn't think about doing this until a few minutes ago, [Laughter] it just has disturbed me so much to see that in the evangelical world today we're discussing things without proper understanding of precisely what the text says. We're going around repeating expressions like justification by faith alone and forgetting the fact that

we must look more carefully than just repeating a statement that's like a little dogma or a shortened dogma, a kind of a placarded statement. What we need to do is to be careful in handling the word of God and doing precisely the kind of study of it that brings us to a statement that is well rounded and is harmonious with the truth of the word of God itself.

So, as I say, I really have been very concerned about this, and thinking that it's so important for us to make the point that justification is by grace through faith alone for these reasons. And then spell them out as the apostle I think does in Galatians chapter 3. Merit is ruled out and. I'm trying to think of what I should say that maybe I have overlooked.

One final thing, that if we go the way that some seem to be going, or appearing to go, that what we may lose is the sense of the place of substitution in atonement, because our Lord in doing, in being our substitute, has borne all of the judgment that we have certainly deserved for our life and our position before him. One of the great statements that has often been made in recent days is that Jesus Christ has accomplished a wonderful exchange by virtue of what he has done. It's one of the characteristic words of some of recent New Testament theology to underline the fact that there is an exchange in the understanding of what happened on Calvary's cross. Luther for example, has said, "This is that mystery which is rich in divine grace to sinner wherein by a wonderful exchange our sins are no longer ours but Christ's and the righteousness of Christ is not Christ's but ours. He has emptied himself of his righteousness that he might clothe us with it and fill us with it."

Samuel Rutherford was a favorite of mine. He was, as you know, he was actually professor of theology at the university where the golf course, the golf course,

these Scottish golf courses in St. Andrews. And he has written with reference to this, "All, of all the wonders that ever were read in a printed book this is the first, Christ made an exchange, Christ would coss" that's c-o-s-s, that means in old Scott's language to barter. "Christ would coss lives with you and make a niffer." That's the Scottish word for exchange, "He would coss lives with you and make a niffer." I don't know how many of us would understand that as part of the gospel message, but three or four hundred years ago in Scotland you'd be right up to date. [Laughter] "Christ has made an exchange and he would coss lives with you and make a niffer. He never beguiled you for he took shame and gave you glory, he took the curse gave you the blessing, he took death and gave you life. The fairest candle that ever was lighted is blown out. The head of the church is dead and the Lord of life is laid down in the grave. No wonder that the Son that did show part of his labors be shut down because the great Son of righteousness was shut down in the grave and a stone laid above him. Good right have ye to Christ, accept of his niffer." [Laughter] Isn't that marvelous, "accept of his niffer, the exchange that he made, and change with him and take his seat, his best blessing and purchased possession."

Well I'm sorry I've been so disjointed, and maybe it's part of old age, but [Laughter] I have been very much disturbed about this question of evangelicals and Catholics together. I was grateful for the discussion with Don Carson last night, because he's involved in some of the side discussions in connection with it. But to me if we acknowledge that the Roman Catholic church's gospel is gospel we have fallen from grace. [Amen from audience] And therefore, I think it's important for us to pay attention to this. I hope I haven't been too hateful to them. There are many of them who are earnest individuals who want to know what the truth is and I cannot speak with

reference to their eternal standing of course, I'm simply a failing human individual and very failing too. But it's so important to me that the gospel that we proclaim is the gospel that the Apostle Paul would be able to say, "That is my gospel too." [Amen from audience] I do not want anyone to say with reference to the things that I have preached that "he has preached a gospel that is not the same gospel, it's a different gospel." Baptism is an important matter for every one of us, when we believe in Jesus Christ we should be baptized in testimony to the faith that God has given us, but it does not and is not a part of our salvation. [Amen from audience] Let me close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for the marvelous words of the word of God that Abram amened the Lord and amened the gospel as we understand it; believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. We pray for the men here, for all of us, that our dedication and faithfulness in the preaching of the word of God may be precisely Lord what Thou wouldst desire of us. We give Thee thanks. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Dr. Johnson] I did miss one thing. [Laughter] In Acts chapter 16 and verse 31 where the apostle says to the Philippian jailor, after he's asked the question, "What must I do to be saved?" I don't know whether you've noticed this or not, but there's been a lot of discussion of course in evangelicals of another kind, over the question just what faith is. Is it necessary to believe only? And I was impressed naturally because of the discussions that we've had that John Calvin in his exposition of Acts at that point,

referring to the message that Paul gave, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" he said, "That's ample." [Laughter] I like that. [Name redacted]

[Comment from audience member] I was about to say that our church is going to hear a message one of these days soon and the title of the message is "Amen."

[Laughter] Oh, I'm tempted to preach. God gave Abraham a promise. Abraham said, "Amen." It's just the offer of the gospel. Those are just the terms. God comes with a free offer. He says, "I'll save you, but I'm going to do it, you can't. And you've got to say, 'Amen.'" [Laughter] And that's just the trouble when you witness isn't it? When you talk to your friends, you say, "Look, God will save you, but he's the one doing it..."

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]