



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Genesis 15:6; Psalm 32:1-2; Romans 4:1-8

“Justification by Faith, part III”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] The Scripture reading this morning is composed of two passages that we have made reference to and then we want to look at Romans 4:1-8. But Genesis 15:6 is so important for the things that I have been saying this series, and Psalm 32 is another passage that is cited in our Romans 4 passage. So I'd like to read Genesis 15:6 again and then Psalm 32, verse 1 and 2, and then we'll turn to Romans 4:1-8.

Genesis 15:6 is the statement that Moses made with reference to Abraham's response to God's great promise as he took him out, had him look at the stars in heaven, and ask that he number them if he was able to number them. And God added, “So shall thy seed be.” And in the 6th verse, this great verse cited by Paul in more than one place, “And he believed in the LORD; and he accounted it to him for righteousness.”

Then the second passage in Psalm 32, and verse 1 and verse 2, David writes in a passage that obviously has connections with the truth that is stated in Genesis 15:6. He says in the first two verses of his Psalm, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.”

Now we know that the Apostle Paul was a great student of the Book of Genesis and we know that he was a great student of the Psalms because these are passages that

he frequently quotes from. So we turn to Romans chapter 4 and we read verse 1 through verse 8. Let me just say one or two things by way of reminder. In the Epistle to the Romans in the 16th and 17th verses of the 1st chapter the apostle has set forth the theme that he will develop. He says,

“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: it’s the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek, (and it’s the power of God unto salvation for, verse 17,) therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”

That statement, incidentally, from Habakkuk is built upon Genesis 15:6. As anyone who studies the Hebrew text both of those passages will discern. Well you know how Paul in the opening chapters sets forth the sin of the gentiles and the sin of the Jews and then concludes in the earlier part of chapter 3 that, “All stand guilty.” He says in the 20th verse of the 3rd chapter, “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” But then adds, “But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.”

In other words he says, “What I am saying to you that a man is justified by faith on the principle of grace, apart from legal works, is taught in Scripture.” And he concludes with that general statement at the end of chapter 3, in verse 31, he says, “We conclude, (verse 28,) that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Do we then make void the law through faith? (He says,) God forbid: yea, we establish the law.” We establish the law in the sense in which it was given. That is, that by the law we come to understand our sin, as he says in verse 20.

Now the question that arrives for anyone who was acquainted with the Old Testament, Paul you are teaching a justification by grace through faith but is that

harmonious with the Old Testament. And so in the 4th chapter he shows by the illustration of Abraham and David and other statements that he makes that the Old Testament way of salvation or justification is the same thing that he is preaching in New Covenant times.

Now beginning with the 4th chapter, in verse 1,

“What shall we say that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness, (just as David, so David is introduced in support of that particular concussion.) Just as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”

Now you have noticed, of course, the terms, “counted unto him for righteousness”, “reckoned”, “counted for righteousness”, “imputeth righteousness”, as a matter of fact, the term that means to account or to reckon or to impute is found eleven times in these verses. So that one can see that the apostle regards this as a very significant term. And it means to account, to reckon, to impute, all of those mean the same thing.

So the apostle concludes, then, with the 8th verse, “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” May the Lord bless this reading of his word, let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful for the privilege that is ours to gather together to sing the hymns of our faith, to read the Scriptures which are the word of God and are the ground of all of the knowledge that we have of our triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We thank Thee that Thou hast preserved the word of God and that Thou hast given the Scriptures to us in such a way, together with the Holy Spirit to teach us that our Lord in his salvation may be honored and glorified, and proclaimed among sinful men.

We thank Thee, Lord, for this great truth of justification by grace through faith. And we ask that we may be faithful in the proclamation of it. We pray for Believers Chapel and for all bodies of believers who seek to stand upon the teaching of holy Scripture. And that the salvation that is found in the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray Thy blessing upon the whole church, the true church of believing men in our day. We also, Lord, ask Thy blessing upon our country, we pray for our president. We ask Thy blessing upon us in the difficult days in which we live.

We would pray especially for those who've requested our prayers, who are sick or who have loved ones who are sick. We pray for those who are in the hospital. We thank Thee for some good news with reference to some of them and we pray that Thou shalt undertake for each who is suffering, hospitalized, some who are grieving, we pray for them as well, and for those who have critical and troubling problems. We ask Thy blessing upon them also.

We pray particularly for the Daily Vacation Bible School which begins tomorrow. Bless the teachers as they prepare and bless especially the young people and the children who will be involved. May this be a time of growth in the knowledge of our Lord. And if it please Thee in the personal salvation of some and the edification of others. We thank Thee now for our meeting. We ask Thy blessing upon it, upon the meeting this evening, as we remember the Lord and as we have a baptism. We commit the time to Thee and we pray that the name of Jesus Christ may be exulted in all that we do and say and think today. For his names' sake. Amen.

[Message] This is the third in our series of messages on new time religion and it's the third and final one on new time religion and justification by grace through faith. An Iranian earthquake of change is occurring in evangelical thinking many feel. New model relational images are replacing biblical courtroom images and the result is a crucial somatic shift in the meaning of some very important biblical terms: shifts in meaning in such terms as wrath, hell, sin, judge, church, and even in the term Son of God.

This was focused particularly for many by an article from an Anglican minister from the country of Canada that appeared in *Christianity Today* in February of this year. Mr. Robert Brow who has since retired as the minister of an Anglican church on the campus of one of the Canadian universities an evangelical, no question about that, an evangelical man, wrote an article and was responded to by a number of others the general title of the article and the discussions was evangelical mega shift. And it was his contention that there was a mega shift in evangelical thinking. What was interesting about it, I thought and others as well, is that the shift that Brow contended is taking place and not simply Brow but others who responded affirmatively to the article, including the Professor of Theology at Wheaton College, and some other well-known men.

What that indicated was that the distinct change that had been prophesied, or shall I say intimated, by some polls that have been taken a few years back apparently is coming to pass. James Davison Hunter wrote among several of his volumes, wrote a book on evangelicalism, *The Coming Generation*, it was issued in 1987. And in that book after an attitudinal survey on leading Christian evangelical colleges together with a number of theological seminaries, all evangelical, as a result of his survey he suggested that there was a change coming, and that the tendencies -- he said he hated to prophesy - - but the tendencies will probably escalate. And so what he suggested is happening was a shift in the thinking of evangelicals leading to a retreat from what has historically been

the evangelical viewpoint and probably perhaps whatever to a departure from orthodox faith.

Now in these three messages I've sought to challenge Mr. Brow's contention that historic orthodoxy's atonement rests on a Roman legal model. That was the ground upon which he suggested we should abandon it because it's not biblical, he said, it rests upon Roman legal model.

Now if that we really true, if we should abandon the Roman legal model, well let's put it this way because we denied last week that it was Roman, we showed, I thought, from Scripture, that it was Mosaic to begin with, if we abandon that model of justification by grace through faith as a kind of legal model we are abandoning the doctrine of justification by grace through faith because that doctrine is built upon that model. So it's not a meaningless suggestion, it's something that touches the heart of the Christian faith. What we have sought to do in the past two messages is to show that Scripture, the Old Testament and the New Testament and the historic orthodox creeds of the Christian church attest the biblical validity of justification by grace before God's tribunal.

That is, there is a tribunal of God and all of us stand before it as creatures of God and there is in Scripture in the Old and New Testaments the teaching that justification before God, before that tribunal, is by grace through faith. And we cannot abandon that tribunal without abandoning the heart of the Christian faith. I made reference to Martin Luther's words on 2nd Corinthians chapter 5, in verse 21, where he said, "This is that mystery which is rich in divine grace to sinners wherein by 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."

Now you can see from that statement that Luther believed most firmly in the doctrine of justification by faith. We have, for example, Alistair McGrath, a present day Oxford theologian, an evangelical, who has said, "Just as a mother hen covers her chicks with her wings, so God clothes us with an alien righteousness." Alien is a theological

term that means it's not our own naturally. It's an alien righteousness, it comes from God as a gift which we don't have of ourselves. It is something he goes on to say that is given to us, something that we ourselves could never obtain. Mr. McGrath also goes on to mention the fact that the doctrine of justification by faith contains within itself the germs of the leading doctrines of the Christian faith. Think about it for a moment, it contains within it the doctrine of God, what kind of God do we have.

It contains within it concepts of Christ, what has Christ done. In other words, who is Jesus Christ. That is determined by what he has done. And what he has done gains its value by who he is. We cannot separate the person and the work of Christ. It contains doctrine that the concepts concerning human nature which the Scriptures teach that we are sinners, that we are condemned that we are heading toward an eternal condemnation forever. The doctrine of justification by faith plainly teaches that. So when we say that this doctrine is important, that it's at the center of the Christian faith, we are talking about the most fundamental doctrines of the word of God. Forget about relying upon the word of God if our doctrine of God, if our doctrine of Christ, if our doctrine of human nature are the product of modern thinking rather than the product of Scriptural thinking.

What then is really at stake? That question I asked last week and did not get a chance to answer it for the time. What's at stake? Is this simply a fresh look at the same position that orthodoxy has held down through the centuries or are we talking about a fatal slide to heterodoxy? Are we talking about a shift on the way to a retreat that will likely end in departure? What will we lose with a latitudinarian bigotry? Now I'm calling it bigotry on purpose. We are talking about something that is broad and gathers within itself various concepts that really do not have a whole lot of fellowship with one another but I'm calling it bigotry because those who proclaim it insist that this is right and the other is wrong. And so it is a latitudinarian bigotry. And is it something that we are to gain as Christians if we embrace this or do we lose something fundamental to the Christian faith. It's my contention and my firm belief that we lose a great deal. And what

I'd like to show in the moments that we have is some of the things that we lose, and I'm going to have seven points. Isn't that nice? Not just three, but seven. And to try to finish it in thirty minutes is going to be hard to do but I'm going to try to do it. We'll hurry over some things and over others we'll not hurry.

But first of all I want to suggest to you that if we are adopt this particular approach to Christian truth we lose the true meaning of God's justice. I'll ask you to turn back to chapter 3 and let me just read a passage that you are familiar with which we have read before in this series, Romans chapter 3, and verse 24 through verse 26. The apostle writes concerning the work of Christ,

“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, (a satisfaction, this is what the reformers talked about when they used the term *satisfactio*, a satisfaction. The propitiation, Christ's work in his death of satisfying the holiness and righteousness of God which if not satisfied would plunge us all into eternal judgment.) Propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

In other words, God is just and therefore those who stand before his tribunal and are acquitted must be acquitted justly. We not only are to be acquitted but we are to be acquitted justly. And the only way in which we may saved justly is by Christ satisfying Justly the righteousness and holiness of God which would have plunged us into eternal judgment on account of our sin. We are told, Paul says, that Christ has come and has offered his sacrifice that God may be just. That is, he does not reduce the requirements of his law, his law must be dealt with perfectly, carried out perfectly. Its principles are eternal, that he might be just and at the same time the justifier of the one who believes in

Jesus. Ezekiel has a text that says, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” That is a principle of the word of God and the souls that sin shall die and since all have sinned and come short of the glory of God we all are headed for a Christ-less eternity but the Lord Jesus has come and as our substitute has satisfied God’s claims against us justly, justly.

Now I know there are people who like to say, “Well if we have a salvation like there where is the grace in it? If we have a just deliverance where is the grace in it?” Oh, how blind can we be? How blind can we be to make a statement like that? Because who provides the person who makes the just sacrifice. Who is the one who makes it possible for the Son of God to come and to carry out his atoning work? It is the Father who has initiated the plan of salvation. And in the provision of the Lord Jesus Christ we have the greatest expression of the grace of God.

And furthermore, not only do we have the greatest exhibition of the grace of God but think about it for a moment, we Christians believe in one God who subsists in three persons. So we have not only the picture of a God who sends someone else to die for men’s sins but we have the triune God who himself as the Son of God dies upon Calvary’s cross. What could be more gracious than that to affirm and objection like that is to fail to understand the Christian faith.

Secondly, we would lose the true meaning of man’s sin and guilt. Without this there is no Christianity at all if we do not understand that we are sinners. The reason we believe in Christ is because we know we are sinners and we need a redemption. Luther once said, “A theologian is made by oration, meditation, and tentatio,” or, “A theologian is made by prayer and meditation and trial.” Last week I also quoted another statement of him on theologians on which he said, “A theologian is made not by thinking or reading or speculating but by living and dying and being damned.” And what he meant by that was that we must have a concept of what we are as sinners and that we are on the road to damnation. And until we have that sense, until we’ve come to realize what we are, we’ll not adequately appreciate what Christ has done. So important, so important because we

have too many people behind the pulpit today who do not realize the depths from which they have been delivered. And therefore, they do not preach the kind of doctrine that speaks to our inner most nature that tells us we are lost people.

Isaiah, when he got a picture of God, he says, “Woe is me for I am undone!” When Peter was in that boat and the Lord Jesus brought that miraculous draft of fishes up after they had tried for a long time to catch one little fish and saw the hand of God in it, he spoke similarly, “Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord,” was the same kind of thing he said. And that’s been the position of the saints down through the years.

Robert Browning captured it in *Gold Hair*, “Tis the faith that launched point-blank its dart at the head of a lie,” that is, that we don’t need redemption, “Taught original sin, the corruption of man’s heart.” If we lose the doctrine of justification by grace through faith we lose the true meaning of man’s sin and guilt. And third, we lose the true meaning of Christ’s satisfaction.

Melancthon who was the theologian of the Lutheran movement; to my mind Luther was a brilliant man, the way in which God brought him to the knowledge of salvation is one of the great blessings of the civilized world in my opinion and particularly of the Western world. Luther was an inspirational kind of theologian who had brilliant insights. Melancthon, his friend and scholar, and a scholar of greater ability, probably, than Luther was the theologian of the Lutheran movement, as is often the case, many -- both Lutheran’s and others -- think that Melancthon’s theology was not as brilliant as Luther’s. But he was a fine man and an unusually gifted man. He once said, “This is to know Christ, to know his benefits.” That’s right, to know Christ is to know his benefits. If we know his benefits we know Christ. We do not know Christ if we do not know his benefits. To say, “I’m interested in the person of Christ and not in the work of Christ is not to know Christ. So we, to know Christ, must know his benefits and his great benefit, his greatest benefit of all is the benefit of the saving work on Calvary’s cross; the satisfaction that he offered there.

Today we talk about a God of love, entirely too much in my opinion, although the Bible emphasizes that God is love. But he's love in his doctrine of justification by grace through faith. The man who led me to the Lord used to speak of the sentimental kind of doctrine of love that people had a generation ago. He spoke of it as, “Mamby pamby milky effeminate spineless molly coddling jelly-fishing love.” [Laughter] And he did the latter because he was thinking about how so many pop songs were sung using that word and using it with those syllables. Vernon McGee used to say, “I'm tired of sloppy agope.” [Laughter] And that's true as well.

When we talk about divine love, if we really want to talk about the love of God, you cannot talk about divine love if you do not talk about propitiation. That's the love of God, the propitiation. The propitiation defines the love and love is defined by the propitiation. So if we adopt this kind of thinking, relational thinking and abandon the idea of standing before a holy God and being judged by a holy God we lose the true meaning of Christ's satisfaction.

And fourthly, we lose the true meaning of divine imputation. It's a natural question that would be asked at the end of Roman's chapter 3, “Paul, you've eliminated law works as a source of salvation and consequent boasting, but what about the Old Testament? Does the Old Testament teach this?” Because in Paul's day those with whom he wrestled so often were individuals who had other ideas which were taught them by the rabbis and others. And so consequently as it was necessary for the apostle to show that what he was teaching was not a new teaching. It was not a false, new teaching; we are exposed to a lot of that today with the kinds of things that float around even around in evangelicalism. So he had to turn to the Old Testament and show that the Old Testament taught the same doctrine that he was teaching, justification by grace through faith.

Were not, Paul, Old Testament men justified by merit? There was a reason why someone would say that because in the Rabbinic teaching that was precisely said and

even said about Abraham. Let me just read you a couple of things that were said by those with whom Paul came into contact quite frequently. That Abraham was justified on the ground of his works was what Paul's Jewish contemporaries were accustomed to assume. According to Jubilee's 23, in verse 10, we read this, "Abraham was perfect in all his deeds with the Lord and well-pleasing in righteousness all the days of his life." And then in another midrashic work it's stated, quote, "We find that Abraham, our father, had performed the whole law before it was given, for it's written, 'Because that Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws,' (that's quotation from Genesis 26:5) he was one, (the text goes on to say,) he was one of the righteous ones not needing repentance Thou, therefore, oh Lord that are the God, the just, as to not appointed repentance to the just, to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob which have not sinned against Thee but Thou hast appointed repentance unto me that I am a sinner." That was a prayer of Manassas. And so on such a view as that Abraham clearly had ground for boasting which Paul denies here.

More explicit is a statement attributed to Rabbi Shammai in one of the midrashic works, the Mekhilta, this is what he said, "The faith with which your father Abraham believed in me, (he's put this in the mouth of God,) merits, (notice the word), merits that I should divide the sea for you as it is written and he believed in the Lord and he counted it to him for righteousness." In other words, the text that we look at and say, "This teaches justification by grace through faith," they looked at it and said, "That teaches the merit of Abraham."

Goes on to say, "So you find that our father Abraham became the heir of this and of the coming world simply by the merit of the faith with which he believed in the Lord, as it is written, 'He believed in the Lord and he counted it to him for righteousness.'" Which contains, incidentally, it contains the significant statement, "The merit of faith." So this is what the apostle had to deal with and so he wants to show that the Old Testament Scriptures teach the same doctrine of justification by grace through faith. The problem is

set out in verses 1 and 2 where he says, "What shall we then say, that Abraham our Father as pertaining to the flesh hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God."

Now having pointed to the problem he looks at the teaching of Scripture and gives his exegesis of the significance of Genesis 15:6, "But what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Now when he says that he's turning, of course, to the supreme court of the word of God and he says, "Abraham believed, he didn't achieve, he believed." Now he goes on beyond that and says, "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." In other words, if a man is working for what he is to get you don't say that it is by grace that he gets what he gets. If I were working, for example, for IBM and at the end of the month of thirty days labor I went to get my check for whatever it was and the man should hand me a check and say, "This is your gift in grace," I would say, "Wait a minute, that's not a gift of grace, that's a debt you owe me on account of my work." That's what Paul is saying here when he says, "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt."

When we say that Abraham was justified by faith or by grace through faith and he did it because he believed it's not because of something that he did, Paul is saying. Now I want to say that Abraham probably could have been as bold as anyone at heaven's tribunal. He could look back to a number of things that characterized his life and he might of, as a matter of fact, put some value in them and claimed it before the Lord God. It's remarkable that in the New Testament in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man at the end of the little parable, you may remember it. The rich man is speaking and he says, "I have five brethren that he may testify unto them lest they come into this place of torment. 'Abraham said unto him, They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead they will repent. And he said unto him, if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will

they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.” In other words, the only instance in the Bible in which we have Abraham able to convey something, he cannot convey anything, all he can say is, “Read what the Scriptures say.”

Now the 5th verse states, “That to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Let’s ask ourselves the question, did Abraham have merit because he believed? In other words, was Genesis chapter 15, verse 6, designed to teach us that Abraham was justified by human merit? Now let’s go back to the context. Let’s think about what happened. God took Abraham out and he said, “Abraham, look at the stars, see if you can number them.” And Abraham is unable to number the innumerable stars that are in heaven, and God adds, “So shall thy seed be.” And Moses said, “Abraham believed in the Lord, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” We pointed out that many people have said that Abraham did essentially nothing more than to say, “Amen, Lord.” For the word to believe is built on the same root as the adverb ‘amen’ found so often in the New Testament on the lips of our Lord.

So as far as Abraham, according to Genesis 15 is concerned, he didn’t do any work at all. All he did was rely on the promise that was given to him, “So shall thy seed be.” Now furthermore, if that is a work and we can conceive of the possibility, now it’s a work to believe. If that is a work then what he received was a reward which is his because now God is in his debt. He has worked and so God must reward him. Having done something that is pleasing to him, Abraham is to get what he gets as given by God because he owes Abraham the reward. But listen, look what Paul, he says, “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace but of debt. But him that worketh not but believeth on him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” In other words, as far as Paul is concerned, as far as Moses is concerned, it’s no work in Abraham’s case because Abraham is a person who is simply believed. And to him that

worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not but believeth, his faith is counted for righteousness.

So Paul denies that what Abraham received was a debt that God owed him. It's right there in the text. But more, you'll notice the 5th verse says, “God justifies the ungodly.” Not the godly. He says, “But to him worketh not, (like Abraham,) but believeth on him that justifieth as Abraham did, the ungodly.” In other words, the text states that Abraham didn't work. And furthermore, Abraham is ungodly but the God that justifies the ungodly's faith, that faith is counted for righteousness.

Furthermore, verses 6, 7, and 8, follow, and Paul says, “Even as David.” In other words, the instance of Psalm 32 agrees with Genesis 15, “Just as David also describes the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.” Without works. So Abraham's faith is no work. The rabbis have missed the point. His faith is no work, it's something given by God as the Christian creeds have pointed out. It's the gift of God. Abraham didn't have anything. He was an ungodly man. He had a promise from God. He relied on the promise and God said that reliance upon the promise is reckoned to the obtaining of righteousness. In other words, it's a righteousness by faith, apart from any works that Abraham did. Thus is a righteousness by faith on the principle of grace, G-R-A-C-E; God doing something for us. God's righteousness at Christ's expense, if you want to know the meaning of G-R-A-C-E. God's righteousness at Christ's expense.

So the apostle has taken the Old Testament and has pointed out that the imputation of righteousness is a gift of God. But further, notice from the citation from Psalm 32 the imputation of righteousness is the equivalent of the forgiveness of sins, not the recognition of merit; the forgiveness of sins. Look at it, “Even as David also describes the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works saying, Blast are they whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blast is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” We're not talking about merits, we don't

have any merits. Abraham had no merits. David had no merits. No one has any merit. You don't have any merit. We are talking about free justification grounded in the merit of the saving work of Christ which becomes ours through the instrumentality of faith, faith alone. Faith alone to receive it as a guilty sinner who recognizes his perilous condition that every breath that he breaths is the only one he can be sure of, he may not have another one, and consequently unless this issue is settled he is headed strictly and straightly to a Christ-less eternity.

When Paul wrote his great letter to Philemon, only one chapter, he wrote about Onesimus, the servant of Philemon who had been converted. And in the defense of Philemon because Philemon's life was at stake, he had run off from his master, in the 18th verse of the Epistle of Philemon Paul says with reference to Onesimus as he wrote Philemon, “Philemon, if he hath wronged thee or oweth thee anything, put that on mine account.” That word is very closely related to the word used by Paul, “Put that on mine account.” Charge that to my account, that's the way by which you have come into the salvation found in Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ, by his saving work, has made it possible for your account to possess the righteousness of God and your sins have been charged to his account, as Luther put it. “Jesus, Thy robe of righteousness, my beauty is my glorious dress,” we often sing.

Fifthly, I see I only have three or four minutes, we're going to run quickly. We lose the true meaning of divine grace. “Those justified,” as Paul says, “are ungodly, but as a result of what Christ has done.” Now I'm going to use a term, you may think I have turned to Christian psychology and you will say, “Dr. Johnson is gone, he's gone the way of the new theological thinking. I want to say to you that those justified are ungodly but when they are justified through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ they are freed to become themselves. Doesn't that sound nice, psychological language? Freed to become themselves but that it is true? You know why? Because up until the time we are saved we're in bondage to sin. We are bound by sin. We are in the prison house of sin and

when those bonds which hold us before we come to Christ are broken, then we are able to become what God has created us.

And if you've ever seen a sinner saved by grace and then know the old man and the new man, you will know what I'm talking about. You would not have liked me. You may not like me now, but you would not have liked me before I was converted. But God broke some of the bonds, he hasn't broken them all yet in the practical life, the daily life, but he broke the bonds by which I may become what he created me to become. No need to talk about the sacraments here, we're talking about grace. We're not talking about things that are ours by virtue of the works of so-called Christian sacraments. We're not, incidentally, we're not saying that our faith has become our righteousness. The New Testament over and over again Paul particularly says, "We receive righteousness through faith." So if the righteousness is received through faith it cannot be the faith, I hope you will understand that. It cannot be both the means and the end at the same time.

Sixthly, we lose the true meaning of saving faith. Faith is the hand of the heart, it's our act but it's not our work as we've been talking about. It is our act, but not our work. The hand of the heart. Jim Packer has said in some words that I think are very good, he says, "Faith is the conscious acknowledgement of our own unrighteousness and ungodliness, and on that basis are looking unto Christ as our righteousness. Our clasping of him as the ring clasps a jewel, so Luther receiving of him as an empty vessel receives a treasure, so Calvin, and a reverent, resolute, reliance on the biblical promise of life through him for all who believe. It's just receiving. It's so important, of course, that what you receive has some significant content. The mightiest faith in an insolvent bank is of no value to us. There must be something substantial to be received and that is what Christ has won on Calvary's cross, by his satisfactio, his satisfaction of the Lord God. You may have one hundred and fifty thousand dollars in one of these savings and loans around this state, I'm thankful for the hundred thousand you have, but the fifty you can kiss goodbye. You may think that it's sound but if it's from one of these insolvent banks your fifty is

gone. The government will guarantee your hundred thousand, I think, as long as the government stands [Laughter] but if you do not have faith in a solvent bank it doesn't help to have the greatest faith in the world in that bank. It's solvency is the key to your possessions.

What do we mean when we talk about saving faith? We're talking simply about trusting what Christ has done, that's all, receiving a promise. We are not talking about anything else, we're not talking about the addition of anything else but that God has said believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shall be saved and that is what we believe. That through Christ salvation is offered by virtue of what he did on Calvary's cross. And if you believe that message. I'm not talking about kind of false mouthing of, "I believe," when you don't but a genuine faith according to the New Testament. Faith is the alone term by which the benefits that Christ has won becomes ours. We trust the atonement by pleading the atonement. We get down upon our knees and say, "Lord thank you that Christ has died for sinners, he's died for me, for I'm surely a sinner. I receive as a free gift what Christ has done for sinners." And if that's a genuine transaction you have eternal life, you have a righteousness that is pleasing to God, acceptable to him, and by his saving, mighty work he'll transform you and free you to become what he would have you become.

Many years ago the man who led me to the Lord, Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse, said that he was once speaking to a man the gospel and he was having a difficult time getting through to him and finally he couldn't seem to penetrate, he said, "The murk of his fallen spirit." And he heard the man say to him, "But what does God want, tell me what does God want?" And he said, "God gave me in that moment a glittering comment in this line," I said to him, "God wants to be believed. More than anything else God wants to be believed." If you sandpaper your life until you've taken off all the surface roughness and yet do not believe him he will have to cast you out of darkness but if you will understand that he longs and yearns with deep desire that men shall simply take him

at his word and believe what he says then he's satisfied to completion and will declare you as righteous as himself, God wants to be believed.” He came home to the man and he said to Dr. Barnhouse in the dawning wonderment of the revelation, “I begin to see, after all, the honor of God is involved.” If you don't believe me you distrust my truthfulness. If you do not believe God and you know this message you do not trust his truthfulness. If you believe him you honor him. If you believe me you honor me. Honor God, believe him, trust in his word. And if this takes place then you will see, I'm sure, that the seventh and last thing that you lose if you do not understand the doctrine of justification by grace through faith is the true meaning of glorifying God, in this way; salvation is truly of the Lord. Justification by grace explains God for us.

When the apostle finished in the 8th chapter his great discussion of salvation at the 31st verse of Romans chapter 8, he said, “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” If God before us, Promobeas, the reformist, used to like to say, “God for us, thus Promobeas. That's what Scripture tells us in the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that through Jesus Christ, God is for us. Come to Christ, believe in him, trust him, and receive the gift of eternal life. Let's stand for the benediction. What you have seen today is that it's impossible for a preacher to do seven points in thirty minutes [Laughter]. I apologize keeping you over. If there is someone who needs to make a decision there's no better time than right now. Let's bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for the goodness that Thou has shown us in Christ. And if there should be some here who need redemption, who need justification, who need the righteousness that is pleasing to Thee, oh Father, touch their...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]