



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Isaiah 14:27, 46:9-10; Matthew 25:31-46

“Old Words but New Meanings”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] The Scripture reading for today is composed of two passages from Isaiah, very short ones, and then a lengthy one from Matthew chapter 25. These are passages not for us to expound today but to highlight points of the message. In Isaiah chapter 14, in verse 27 the prophets writes, “For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? And his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?”

And then in chapter 46, in verse 9 and verse 10, we read these words,

“Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.”

The term pleasure, of course, is a term that has to do with his will which is, of course, for him is pleasure. Now Matthew 25, verse 31 through verse 46, our Lord is speaking in the Olivet Discourse and in verse 31 he says,

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, and fed Thee? Or thirsty, and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? Or naked, and clothed Thee? Or when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto Thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”

I mention this; this passage has to do with the judgment of the nations in which there are sheep and goat nations and then some people that our Lord calls his brethren that are distinguished from them. But the important thing that I wanted you to notice is the fact that he himself mentions that there is an everlasting fire prepared for the devil and

his angels and there is such a thing as everlasting punishment as well as such a thing as eternal life.

May the Lord bless this reading of his word and let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the word of God and for the message that is contained within it. And we thank Thee that Thou hast given it to us with the promise of the help of the Holy Spirit that we may understand it. Give us diligence to read it and to ponder it and Lord we pray that Thou wilt give us illumination and also the will and the power to be submissive to Thy truth. We thank Thee for the day in which we live and for the opportunities of it. We praise Thee for the Daily Vacation Bible School that has just concluded and the things that were accomplished in the teaching of the young people and the children that Thou didst put in our hands. We thank Thee particularly for those who labored in that work. We give Thee praise and thanksgiving for devotion to the ministry of the word of God. And how blessed we are to have them and to have those young people in our hands and enable us, Lord, to measure up to the responsibility that we have.

We thank Thee for the whole church of Christ, we pray Thy blessing upon the whole body, for this local manifestation of it and for other local manifestations where the Lord Jesus Christ in his saviorhood is proclaimed. And we praise Thee for the promises the word of God which have to do with our day by day existence, that we have someone with whom we can walk and someone who has concern for us, someone who is constantly available to us as our great high priest at the right-hand of the throne of God in heaven. Oh God, give us the desire to fellowship with him and to receive from him the things that we need to live lives well pleasing to him. Bless the ministry of the word in this hour, the singing of the hymns, our time of fellowship together. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] We have been studying Newtime Religion over the past few weeks and last week I began the message by referring to the fact that an Iranian earthquake of change is occurring in evangelical thinking. Today I'd like to change the metaphor; a California forest fire of change is occurring in evangelical thinking. New model relational images are replacing biblical courtroom images with crucial semantic shifts taking place.

The issue was focused by the article by Mr. Robert Brow in *Christianity Today* a few months ago and it was entitled “Evangelical Mega Shift.” And the point of the article was to the effect that a great change has been taking place, somewhat quietly perhaps, in evangelical thinking, and that terms that have had historic meanings are now being given different meanings. And furthermore, as I mentioned, James Davison Hunter, a leading sociologist who has made his special study the study of evangelicalism, Professor of Sociology at the University of Virginia over in the good part of the country. Professor Hunter has written several books on this but in one of his recent books the evangelicalism, the coming generation; he has suggested that the change that has been taking place somewhat quietly is representative of tendencies that will probably escalate. And so the question is, are we looking at a shift that will lead to a retreat and finally a departure from orthodox Christian faith.

Now the past three weeks I've centered attention on justification by faith because that is such an important doctrine. I tried to challenge Mr. Brow's contention regarding that great doctrine, a contention incidentally that is contrary to historical orthodoxy. Today I want to look at some of the terms that are being given different meanings. He has suggested seven of them, I would like to look at four of them today.

The terms that we are looking at today are the terms sin, judge, wrath, and hell. Next week, the Lord willing, we'll look at faith, church, and Son of God. One of the striking things, of course, is the fact that these terms are terms that are so common and another striking thing is the fact that as one reads Mr. Brow's article one gets the very definite impression that although he says he is not a universalist, believing in the ultimate

salvation of everyone, his views are so similar that there is not a great deal of difference between them.

Many years ago there was a German theologian who wrote a series of volumes, I think they were two large volumes on sin. And they were so popular that his name Muller, the same name as George Muller, his name came to be Sunden Muller, that was his nickname. And if you know German you know that sunden means sin. So this man gained the nickname of Sin's Muller. Well he said in this book, and it's rather interesting because he himself had some strange views, but he said, “No one is surer of applause than the man who discovers some new method of evading justice under the pretext of humanity.” That is true, if we can set forth doctrines that in a sense make it possible for us to believe that there is not going to be a judgment to come one finds in our society great popularity. The preaching that is now in favor in our society often tends that way. In fact the preaching in our society is the kind of preaching that does not entail upon the hearers any considerable burden of thinking. Why should people on Sunday have to think to engage in mental labor, because this is a day of rest. Two or three bite things, a bouquet or two of rhetorical flowers, a sprinkling of anecdotes, someone has said of a pathetic cast, but not one word about God's severity constitute in the present days an ideal sermon. I do not believe that that is the way in which we should preach.

When we think about eternal judgment it's not uncommon for people to say or argue along these lines. They like to reason from man up to God which is very hazardous. You are a father, are you not? Would you ever put one of your children in a place of intense suffering if you could help it? Would you ever willingly expose a child of yours to a firey flame? And of course the answer of men and women to that is, “No.” Then you ask, “Well if you as an earthly father would not allow a child of yours to suffer in this way can you believe that a loving God will cast people into everlasting fire because of their sins? And the only answer to that question is, the only way I know of answering it is to look at what God has done and by turning to the word of God to see

what he has to say. And we find out in the word of God that he has some very plain things to say that when the time comes there is such a thing as everlasting destruction and an everlasting separation from the Lord God. As a matter of fact, some mothers and fathers in our society have occasionally seen the wisdom of committing their own children to death by the electric chair or other means for the good of the living. I grant you it's very rare but it has happened more than once.

When we think about the flood, for example, you might even argue something like this, do you think that it is possible that God would drown the whole world? Well again to answer the question we looked at the word of God and we find that is precisely what has happened with the exception of that small company of eight souls that God in his grace brought through that catastrophe. So what's really at stake in this question? A fresh look at the same position with different words or do we have here a fatal slide into heterodoxy? A shift on the way to a retreat that will likely end in departure from the faith. What will we lose? I have been saying by latitudinarian bigotry. Latitudinarian bigotry meaning simply that it's bigotry to think that God is particular in his dealings with people so we will take the other side and emphasize the breadth and thus come to a latitudinarian bigotry.

I'd like to look at the four words today of sin, of judge, of wrath, and hell. Words that Mr. Brow has suggested are given different meanings today. The first word: sin, of course, is one of the most crucial of all the biblical words. In fact, some have suggested it's the most crucial of all of the biblical terms because if we are wrong about sin we will generally speaking be wrong about the teaching of the word of God. If we do not understand that all men are sinners then we will not have salvation because salvation is simply in biblical terms deliverance from sin; it's penalty, its condemnation, as well also as its slavery in our lives.

What does new model evangelical theology say about sin and what has old model evangelical theology been saying? New model evangelical theology first. “Sin,” Mr. Brow

says, “should be seen in the context of God’s fatherly care. It requires,” he says, “discipline and correction in the community of faith.” Now notice the words because they’re very significant, “Sin should be seen in the context of God’s fatherly care and it requires, (these are his words precisely,) discipline and correction in the community of faith.”

Now no one doubts that sin requires discipline and correction in the community of faith. But the question is, what is the community of faith? Is that everyone or is that a specific limited body of believers? What does old model evangelical theology say about this? Old model evangelical theology says that sin is an offense against God, deserving of the penalty of death. Sin in the Bible is fundamentally unbelief: unbelief that leads to rebellion which in turn issues in immorality. Now we do not doubt, of course, that rebellion is sin or that immorality is sin but we are looking at the nature of sin. It is fundamentally unbelief. The reason that Adam sinned, the reason that Eve sinned, the reason that individuals sins is fundamentally they do not believe the word of God.

Now of course there are definitions in the New Testament such as, “Sin is lawlessness.” That is true, it is lawlessness. But lawlessness takes place because of unbelief. Jesus said, “When the Holy Spirit came he would convict the world of sin because they believe not on me.” Paul said similar words in Romans chapter 14 when he spoke about the universality of unbelief as being the reason why men sin.

Now when we turn to the New Testament and look more closely at it in the light of new model evangelical theology we learn that sin does have penalty. You know the text, it’s one of the texts that new Christians learn almost upon their conversion when they first think about witnessing to someone else they think of Romans 6:23, “The wages of sin is death and the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Sin exists and sin has a penalty and the penalty is death. “The soul that sinneth it shall die,” the Old Testament tells us.

Now Mr. Brow has told us in these words that sin should be seen in the context of God's fatherly care. And of course, among believers that is true. Sin should be seen in the context of God's fatherly care. Sin, therefore, is an offense against the father. But then we must make a distinction. There are individuals who are the offspring of God by creation and that is inclusive of all of us. If, for example, in our audience there are both believers and unbelievers, as is usually the case, all of us are the offspring of God. In that limited sense one might speak of us as being from God. But the Scripture is very carefully in making a distinction between the offspring of God by creation and the sons of God by regeneration.

The apostle in Galatians chapter 3, and verse 26, speaking of believers says, “That you are all the sons of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.” So if you do not have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ you don't belong to the family. And while Mr. Brow is right, sin is seen in the context of God's fatherly care among believers, it's not so in the case of the offspring of God, fatherly care. That's not all there is to it. I don't doubt that God is very good to those who are not in the family of God, he is very good because he lets us live lives of rebellion against him and a negative response to him over a lengthy period of time in his long-suffering goodness and kindness, but nevertheless ultimately sin had penalty and that penalty is, according to Scripture, eternal death. There is the responsibility of decision also. For example, the Lord Jesus, no one questions the love and loving kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ but it is he who said to Nicodemus, a good man, a man also who those seeking had not yet come to receive our Lord, our Lord said to him, “You must, you must, it is necessary, you must be born again.” And then speaks later on about eternal life. So when we look at the term sin, we see no reason whatsoever to abandon old model evangelical theological teaching concerning it.

The second word is the word judge. What does new model evangelical theology say about judge? Well we are told that judges are to be seen now as defenders of their people. Like Gideon, like Deborah, like Samuel: no one, again, questions the fact that

Deborah, Gideon, Samuel, Old Testament judges, were individuals who were defenders of their people and were concerned for, quote, “The freedom and peace of the people,” unquote. That is all true. We don’t question that at all. But while we do not deny that aspect of it we do not say that that is all. We must insist that there is more. In other words, the term judge is a term that has to do with the judgment of eternal separation from God.

Listen to some of the words of holy Scripture, because in the final analysis it’s what Scripture says, that the evangelical church at least should rest upon as its standard. In Psalm 1, in verse 5, we read, “Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.” When we turn over to the New Testament we see essentially the same thing. In Hebrews chapter 6, and verse 2, in this great epistle written by an unknown author we read of the doctrine of baptisms and of laying on of hands and of resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment, eternal judgment.

In the 9th chapter of this same book in the 27th verse we read, “It’s appointed unto men once to die but after this the judgment.” Now death is not the judgment because it’s after this that the judgment comes, after death. So, “It’s appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” Now I like the Epistle of Jude because Jude was a person who spoke very forthrightly and some of his forthrightly statements include these, “And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, (that is, these false teachers,) saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints to execute judgment upon all and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against them.” Would you say he liked the word ungodly, using it four times in that one text. There are still other passages. We remember when Paul preached before Felix, he preached of righteousness and self-control and judgment. And Felix, evidently, understood Paul not to be talking about fatherly care, but rather talking

about something far more important than concern for freedom and peace of the people because when Felix heard Paul preach we are told in the Book of Acts that he trembled when the apostle spoke of judgment.

Mr. Brow is right, he says at one point that if we take this particular view of things, evangelicals will note that they missed the note of sin, guilt, and condemnation. He's absolutely right, he understands that evangelicals truly when they think of judgment they think of sin, guilt, and condemnation and any understanding of that doctrine that does not include that can hardly be called evangelical.

In fact, we think of condemnation, and ultimate condemnation for failure to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Sword of Damocles. You know the story of Damocles, he was a courtier in the court of Dionysius I of Syracuse. And being very close to the king he kept constantly complaining. He said, “Kings have it all marvelous and the rest of us don't.” And he thought of Dionysius as, I guess, his Donald Trump of his day and he thought of the ways in which kings lived in the luxury of having everything: money, friends, possessions, and all of the other things that go to be material gain. Like Donald, he has planes, he has homes, he had businesses, and furthermore he even has a government that's interested in him. And so interested in him that they are willing to cut him down a little bit and to force him to live on four hundred and fifty thousand dollars a month [Laughter]. I guess that would be what you would call a judge that is concerned for the freedom and peace of at least one of his people.

Well, Damocles insisted in it for so long that the king thought he would teach him a little lesson and we have never forgotten it because we still use that figure, the Sword of Damocles. So he had a banquet, invited all the people to come to the banquet, and he told Damocles, “We're making you the guest of honor, we're letting you sit in the throne of the king so you will see exactly what a king's life is like.” He looked forward to it, when he came in he happened to glance up and noticed that right over the king's throne was a sword that was hanging by a thread and he didn't enjoy his supper that night even

though it was barbequed beef, so I understand. That’s only traditional, of course, but nevertheless we have used the expression the Sword of Damocles ever since.

Well if we look at the Bible, eternal condemnation is the true Sword of Damocles that hangs over every individual who had never responded to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you’re sitting in our audience at this very moment there is a worse than a Sword of Damocles that hangs precisely over you. You may not be with us next week, your life may have been snuffed out in an accident or in some other way and you may not have the eternal hope of the salvation that comes through the Lord Jesus Christ. We do not have evangelicalism if we do not have that.

The third word is the word wrath. Brow’s comments about the word wrath are startling, even to us old time theologians. The new model evangelical theology in that particular kind of theology wrath is quote, “Bad consequences,” unquote, experienced here and now. Not angry punishment. Now I would object to that adjective because when we speak of God having angry punishment we do not mean by that that God is personally angry but he has his law and his law is a reflection of his being and he must respond to what he is according to his attributes. He acts accordingly. Angry is an attempt to decide it emotionally. Let’s just say punishment. Wrath is bad consequences experienced here and now, not punishment. Like a loving parent might assign. In other words, God is a loving parent, he would never assign eternal punishment. It never means sending people to hell or as Clark Pennick [ph31:01] one who believes in this new model kind of theology says, “God is a person who does not push people around.” I don’t know who believes that God, in evangelicalism, believes that God is a God who pushes people around. But this is Professor Pennick’s [ph31:19] way of taking a little bit of a jab against Calvinists who believe as Isaiah in 14:27 and 46:9 and 10 believe that God does accomplish all of his purposes. But he doesn’t compel people to come to Christ, he does not compel them. He may enlove the love of effectual grace, move them to believe in Christ but ultimately it’s their own responsible decision.

Now so with reference to Mr. Brow I would like to suggest that the idea that wrath is bad consequences experienced here and now is not really true, although it's true that our sins do have bad consequences. We have in our society today many bad consequences of our sin if we do not follow the things that are set down in the word of God concerning, for example, sexual life then we have the problems of sex that we have today, inclusive of aids and other types of diseases that reflect the fact that we are not harmoniously following the teaching of the word of God. There are consequences for our acts of sin. But he suggests that wrath is really more like loving encouragement and rebuke. I'd like to say it's far more than that.

Old model evangelical theology has taught that wrath is the personal response of God to sin in judgment and in death. There are so many passages that speak about this that it's hard to know where to turn. But one comment that Mr. Brow makes I must object to. He suggests that one should never seek to bring people to the knowledge of the Lord by suggesting fear as a motive. But I, again, I turn to the word of God and I read that one of our inspired letters of the New Testament says, giving directions to us and other, “Save with fear, pulling them out of the fire.” And so I don't hesitate myself to preach eternal judgment and I don't hesitate to try to move people by the thought of eternal judgment. That's not the only motive that we use, we do use the love of a God who would, in his marvelous grace and loving kindness, bring the Son of God to the cross at Calvary and cause him there, bearing the weight of our sin to cry out, “My God, my God, why has Thou forsaken me?” But while we preach that, we preach the other as well for they both are in the word of God.

Might also make this point, that if we do not have suffering and a suffering that is the suffering of eternal judgment then, of course, we do not have vicarious atonement. I'd like to read a paragraph that is written with universalism in view but since Mr. Brow's views are very similar to universalism, as we shall see, I think it applies very definitely to him as well. One leading theologian has said, “Vicarious or substitutionary atonement is

incompatible with universalism which treats suffering as remedial only while vicarious atonement in its evangelical sense treats it as attributive, (that is, something given in recompense for our actions,) suffering that is merely educational does not require vicarious atonement in order to release from it, but suffering that is judicial, (that's the word Mr. Brow does not like,) impunitive can be released from the transgressor only by being inflicted upon a substitute. He, therefore, who denies personal penalty must logically deny substitutionary penalty. If the sinner himself is not obliged by justice to suffer in order to satisfy the law he has violated then certainly no one needs to suffer for him for this purpose.” Now that is, to my mind, perfectly logical. Consequently I cannot accept new model evangelical thinking with regard to the word wrath.

Well the final word is the word hell and further confusion exists here. New model evangelical theology teaches, so Mr. Brow says, that there is no one in hell who would rather be in heaven. Let me say that again, there is no one in hell who would rather be in heaven. And he takes a lot of his leads in his teaching from C. S. Lewis who he thinks has suggested just such a thing. Hell is not a judicial sentence, it's the ultimate outcome of our freedom. Now what this means then that there is no one in heaven who does not in his freedom wish to be there. Now to my mind that bears little relationship to what the New Testament teaches. It is true that our sin is punished by further sin and we are free in our sin to sin and we are free to sin more. God has permitted that in his universe and we all are illustrations of it as we think about our life before our conversion. Of course, we're not free, ultimately, he is the sovereign God and this has been done with distinct purposes in mind which we cannot refer to now.

But when we turn to old model evangelical theology I'd like to suggest these things in a partial rebuttal. Isn't it interesting that in the New Testament our Lord almost alone speaks of hell and he speaks of it as prepared for the impenitent. In other words, it's for those who do not respond to the gospel messages. So of the, I believe, thirteen

times that the term hell, the precise term Gehenna or in the Greek text *ge'enna*, is used twelve of them are used by the Lord Jesus Christ. He's the one who speaks about hell.

Now that's a lesson, I think, already. In other words, it's something that flows from the lips of our Lord Jesus Christ and to deny it and to deny it in the sense of a judicial sentence is something that is not harmonious with the words of our Lord. Let me read a passage that we looked at some months ago now when we were expounding the Book of Revelation. In chapter 20, in verse 15, we read, “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

Now that, as I understand it, is an assignment of individuals to the lake of fire. And that is a judicial sentence. So Mr. Brow's statement does not hold up in the face of Scripture. Furthermore we read, for example, in verse 41 of the passage we read for scriptural reading, “Then shall he, (the King,) say unto them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” So there is such a thing as an assignment of a judicial sentence of eternal death. But now are those individuals, individuals who prefer to be there? Well they may have thought they might prefer to be there but when they are there they have different ideas. We read in chapter 13, in verse 41 and verse 42 of the Gospel of Matthew, “The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: and there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

Then we read in verse 48 through verse 51, I'll just read verse 50, “And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” And we remember the parable or the true story that our Lord taught about Lazarus and the rich man, and we remember that the rich man was not really happy about being in hell and even asked for some ministrations to him while he was in hell. So the idea that hell is a place in which no one will be found who would rather be in heaven ultimately comes out

to the doctrine of universalism expressed under the sense of the freedom of men over against the terms of holy Scripture itself.

What we are seeing in evangelicalism today, in my opinion, is a movement away from the truth of God that has occurred in the story of the church down through the centuries. We have today some men for whom I have great admiration: one is in heaven now, John Stoddard and Philip Hughes. Philip Hughes is in heaven now, I do believe he's there, a godly man. A learned man, an evangelical man who wrote a number of very useful books and a very scholarly man; I would love to have the scholarship of Philip Hughes. John Stoddard, on the other hand, is living and preaching and highly respected among evangelicals. These two men have believed, have come to believe, and have begun to proclaim it in conditional immortality. Conditional immortality teaches that individuals who believe in Jesus Christ in this life will be with our Lord throughout eternity. It does not believe as pure annihilationists do that other people will just simply be annihilated because that's obviously exposed to the criticism, do you mean that they are annihilated no matter how grievously they may have sinned against God? So in order to answer that question, conditional immortality believers have taught that those who do not believe will be preserved for a time in conscious suffering and torment. After death the length of their torment be determined by the degree of their sin but then having reached the end of it they too will be annihilated. This is the doctrine now of John Stoddard, Philip Hughes, and others. In fact, it's very common in British evangelicalism.

I'd like to just say this in answer to it because about a year ago I was speaking here in Believers Chapel and spoke on John Stoddard and conditional immortality and devoted an hour to it. And you can get the tapes if you're interested in more information about it. I'd just simply like to say this; that it is, in my opinion rather easy to refute this doctrine because the extinction of consciousness is not of the nature of punishment. The essence of punishment is suffering and suffering involves consciousness. We are not suffering if we are not conscious of our suffering. Furthermore, you cannot say that

everlasting destruction has to do with the finality of our destruction. If this consisted in reducing the sinner forever to nothing it would not be everlasting destruction, it would be instant destruction. Not everlasting. How can punishment continue when the subject of it no longer exists? So to believe in conditional immortality is to fall prey to those obvious problems.

Now I would like, if you don't mind, I would like to take just a few moments to say one further thing. Perhaps it would have been best if I'd have saved it for next week but I'd like to say it here. You may think that this is new theology: it's not. It's the old departure from the faith of previous generations. This week I happened to come upon this statement, it had left me somewhere or other, but I happened to read it in Professor Lewis Berkoff's statement in his theology and I know you will see that the comparison for his generation, he wrote this fifty years ago, of things that have happened previously and I think you'll see the same thing. In fact, he even uses some of the very similar terminology. He says, “Now there are some Unitarians, universalists, and modernists who deny the existence of any punishment of sin except such consequences as naturally result from sinful action, (that's precisely what Mr. Brow is saying.) Punishment is not the execution of a sentence pronounced by the divine being on the merits of the case, but simply the operation of a general law. Sin brings consequences.

This position is taken by J. F. Clark, Thayer, Williamson, and Washington Gladden. The latter says, (now listen to this,) the old theology made this penalty, penalty of sin to consist in suffering inflicted upon the sinner by a judicial process in the future life. The penalty of sin as the new theology teaches consists of the natural consequences of sin. The penalty of sin is sin, ‘Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.’ The idea is not new. (Here we go all the way back to Dante,) it was present in the mind of Dante for in his famous poem The Torments of Hell, symbolize the consequences of sin. And Shelling had it in mind when he spoke of the history of the world as the judgment of the world. It's abundantly evident from Scripture, however, that this is an entirely unbiblical

view. The Bible speaks of penalties which are in no sense the natural result of consequences of the sin committed.” And then, of course, he mentions a number of them in which the penalty has no connection whatsoever with the life that preceded it. “All these passages,” he said, “Speak of a punishment of sin by the direct act of God.”

So what we are seeing, really, Mr. Brow, is we’re just seeing the same old pattern that has been followed, and so as the years go by a further group of evangelicals slough off from genuine evangelicalism and move into what is old model, no, new model evangelical theology. The error of which is to call it evangelical.

There are three great and terrible words in the Bible, they are: God is love’ God is a consuming fire; and behold, therefore, the goodness and the severity of god. We often sing in Believers Chapel, “My redeemer, O what beauties in that lovely name appear. None but Jesus in his glories shall the honored title wear. My redeemer, O how sweet to call Thee mine.” And then there is a stanza that goes like this, “Sunk in ruined sin and misery, bound by Satan’s captive chain, guided by his artful treachery, hurrying on to endless pain. My redeemer plucked me as a brand from hell.” How marvelous it is to have a redeemer. How marvelous it is to be delivered from sin, from judgment, from wrath, from hell, by what Christ suffered on Calvary’s cross. If you’re here and you’ve never believed in him we invite you to come to him and receive him as your own personal savior. Let’s stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the solemnity of the teaching on sin, wrath, judgment, and hell found in Scripture. We thank Thee that the word of God expressly says that there are some who may be saved through fear. We thank Thee for the goodness of the Holy Spirit who has touched our hearts and caused us to see the loving kindness of the Son of God who gave himself to the hands of sinners, that he might save sinners from their sin. We thank Thee for the eternal suffering he enduring that we might not have to endure it. If, Lord, there are some here who...

- 18 -

“Old Words but New Meanings” by S. Lewis Johnson
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[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]