



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Suffering Savior, Various

"Why Did He Die? The Answers of History - II"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Tonight is the second in our series of studies in the title, "Why Did He Die? The Answers of History." And so, we are looking at the history of the doctrine of the atonement. Now, we pointed out in our last study which was two weeks ago, first of all, that the church had never formulated a conciliar definition of the theory of the atonement.

Now, what I mean by that is simply this, that in the case of the doctrine of Christology there were councils where the church wrestled with the questions of the nature of Christ and the nature of the Trinity, and after wrestling with them, and dealing even with the fine points of them, they arrived at certain decisions which have been guiding decisions for the church down through the centuries, but this was never done with respect to the atonement of Jesus Christ. There has never been a decision of a council by which the church decided upon a particular theory of the atonement. In some ways that is regrettable. It represents the fact that the church has not sufficiently studied the theory of the atonement, perhaps.

On the other hand, it is a very difficult question and it may be that the difficulty of it has led to a more lenient attitude with respect to the proper theory of the atonement.

At any rate, the church has never formulated such a theory, and what we are trying to do in these classes as we study the Gospel of Mark, and then the theory of the atonement in connection with it, we are seeking to arrive at the theory which is supported by the New Testament teaching.

Then we also pointed out that all attempts to form a theory are attempts to explain the mystery of the word "must". In Mark chapter 8, in verse 31 where the Lord Jesus said in connection with his soon-coming death, "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again." And if you had been a thinking disciple and you had heard him say, "The Son of man must suffer," you should have raised your hand in the meeting, and you should have said, "Why must you suffer? Now, you are predicting that you will suffer, and that is prophecy. But you are saying that you must suffer, and you mean by that that it is a necessity. In what is the necessity of the atonement grounded? Why must you suffer?"

And I think I would have loved to have heard our Lord explain that, because that would have settled a lot of questions that the church has had down through the years. It would have settled it in the plainest possible way. But we have another way of settling the question, and that is by studying the New Testament and putting together all the facts, and I think the evidence is clear with regard to the answer to the question, "Must?" But at any rate, all of our attempts to form a theory of the atonement are attempts to explain the mystery of that little word, "must," which the Lord Jesus used.

Now, we noted in the last lecture that the church in its earliest stages stressed the work of Christ towards Satan. It is rather remarkable that in the earliest stages of the history of the Christian church, they related what Jesus Christ did on the cross to Satan. In other words, the work of Jesus Christ was applied to the ministry of Satan. And we, as we discussed this, pointed out that Bishop Aulen who has been a well-known student of the theory of the atonement, Bishop Aulen is responsible for this particular aspect of our

Lord's work being called the classic theory of the atonement. The classic theory of the atonement, using Bishop Aulen's expression, is the theory of the atonement which relates the work of Jesus Christ to Satan. Irenaeus, one of the earliest of the church fathers is representative of that approach. He himself said nothing of another aspect of the general approach, the ransom to Satan aspect, and I want to, at this point simply comment upon that.

Irenaeus said that the death of Jesus Christ was related to Satan, and he spoke about how as a result of the ministry of the Lord Jesus we, who were in the clutches of Satan, had been freed. Now, there were others in the early church who posited the theory that a ransom was paid by Jesus Christ to Satan. For example, when the Bible says the Lord Jesus said that, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Some of the early church fathers noted the origin. Some of them said that the Lord Jesus came and paid a ransom to Satan, not to God. This became a theory which was acceptable to more than one of the early fathers. In Irenaeus, the idea is present, but it is not fully worked out. But in origin there is the idea that Jesus Christ delivered his soul to the devil in exchange for the souls of men.

This theory is found also in the writings of men like Gregory of Nyssa who came along a hundred or two hundred years later, as well as in Augustine, and it is developed something like this. I'm going to read a section because it will save me a little time. "The devil therefore had a right to adequate compensation if he were to surrender him, and for God to have exercised force would have been unfair and tyrannical, so he offered him the man Jesus as the ransom. When Satan saw him, born as he was of a virgin, and renowned as a worker of miracles, he decided that the exchange was to his advantage. What he failed to realize was the outward covering of human flesh concealing the immortal God-head. Hence, when he accepted Jesus in exchange for mankind, he could not hold him. He was outwitted and caught as a fish is by the bait which conceals the hook." Now, this is Gregory of Nyssa's illustration of how, in the attempt to take the Lord

Jesus he was caught by the Lord. There is no injustice in this theory as you might think," Gregory says, "because the devil was only getting his desserts, and in any case, God's action was going to contribute to his own ultimate benefit." For he, like Origen believed in the ultimate restoration of all men to the presence of God.

Well now, we'll drop that. The theory of a ransom paid to Satan does not, of course, have any support in the Scriptures, and it must be abandoned. On the other hand, we pointed out last week that there is a very good bit of evidence in support of the idea that Jesus Christ died in his death with special reference to the work of Satan. And one of the things he did was to overcome principalities and powers, making a show of it openly, triumphing over them by his cross. He took to himself, as the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, "flesh and blood in order that he might destroy him that had the power of death," that is the devil, "and deliver them, who through all their lifetime were subject to fear," so that there is in the New Testament as well as in the Old Testament definite teaching to the effect that when Jesus Christ died, he delivered us from the control of Satan. So, that far we can go, but we cannot go so far as to say that the Lord Jesus gave himself as a ransom to Satan.

We also said last week that as a result of overcoming Satan the Lord Jesus has overcome the occult and he holds the keys of death and Hades. Thus we have nothing to fear from the past. We have nothing to fear from the present. We have nothing to fear from the future, even from our doctors. There is a rabbinic saying which I told Dr. Howard afterwards, I don't see him in the audience tonight and I'm sorry because I wanted to remind him of this. I don't even see Dr. Mimms in the audience. But there is a rabbinic saying concerning doctors which is appropriate at this point. "If your time has not come, not even a doctor can kill you." [Laughter] As a result of what the Lord Jesus has done on the cross with reference to Satan, we have been delivered, and since he holds the keys of Hades and death, we have no fear for the past, the present, the future, and as I say, not even from our doctors.

Well in this lecture, we're turning to the second of the three most important historical interpretations of the atonement, that of Peter Abelard of Brittany in France. Abelard's name is commonly spelled, A-B-E-L-A--R-D. Abelard's name is also spelled A-B-A-I-L-A -R-D, and so if you ever see his name, he is a prominent medieval theologian, spelled in that way you will understand that it was spelled in two different ways.

Now, we have dealt with Irenaeus and the classic theory of the atonement, when we come to Abelard we are going to deal with the moral influence theory of the atonement. Roman I in our outline, Abelard and the atonement; and we're attempting in one our to cover this very, very lengthy subject, so I hope you will pardon me if I only give a cursory resume of Abelard the man and Abelard the theologian. But Abelard the man, he has been overly enthusiastically called, a morning star of the enlightenment. But even though that is an exaggeration, he nevertheless was an interesting figure. He was born in France. He studied within the church and became known as a dialectician; of course, he was within the Roman Catholic Church. He then entered into an early career as a dialectician and teacher in Paris, and became quite well known.

As a result of becoming quite well known, the canon of the cathedral of Notre Dame in the city of Paris committed into his care a niece by the name of Heloise. Heloise was a very learned and beautiful young lady, and it was not long thereafter that Abelard and Heloise had an affair and an illegitimate son, but they ultimately were married, and their love affair is a love affair that has some attractive features about it. I know that it might strike you as strange that a man who had an affair with a woman and an illegitimate son should be the father of the moral influence theory of the atonement, but nevertheless that is true. And I must say in Abelard's defense that the theory of the atonement arose after some of the wrongs of his early life had been righted. Ultimately he became a monk and an abbot and finally was condemned for heresy partially because of the jealousy of some others in the church, and he died at Cluny in France under the care of some of the monks.

Abelard as a theologian, however, has made a very distinct mark in Christian theology. He is recognized with Anselm who we shall consider next week, and Thomas Aquinas, the great Roman Catholic theologian, as one of the greatest of medieval theologians honored for his role in the development of theological methodology. In fact, if you take these three alliterated names, Anselm, Abelard, and Aquinas you have something of a summary of the theology of the medieval ages. And if you wanted to study the theology of the medieval ages, study these three men and you would have something of a summary of the theological thinking of that time.

Now, we are interested in Abelard as man who wrote on the atonement. And so in his epistle to the Romans on which he expounded that text, he makes a couple of statements that I want to read to you tonight in order for you to grasp in his own words his theory of why Jesus Christ died. Now, we're trying to answer the question, why did Jesus Christ die? And we're looking at the historical answers to that question. Then week after next we'll turn again to the Bible, the Gospel of Mark, and we'll see how these theories unfold, which one seems to be more appropriate to the gospel records.

Now, let me read one of Abelard's statements, and I want you to notice particularly the statement with reference to atonement. I will comment on it at the appropriate place. First statement, "Now it seems to us that we have been justified by the blood of Christ and reconciled to God in this way." Now you can like all false theologians, and I do consider Abelard false in that his view is insufficient. It has certain features of it that are good and certain features of it that are insufficient. You will notice, however, characteristic of theologians down through the years, that they frequently use the language of the Bible that means something either inadequate or different.

Now, this is something that you must learn in reading all kinds of theological literature and listening to all kinds of ministry. If you are going to develop any sense of perception, any sense of discernment in hearing the word of God, you must listen carefully. So listen carefully. He says, "Now it seems to us that we have been justified by

the blood of Christ, and reconciled to God in this way, through this unique act of grace manifested to us (In that his Son had taken upon himself our nature and preserved therein in teaching us by word and example even unto death) he has more fully bound us to himself by love. As a result that our heart should be enkindled by such a gift of divine grace and true charity should not now shrink from enduring anything for him."

Now, this is the essence of the moral influence theory of the atonement. You will notice that there's not reference in that statement to the fact the Jesus Christ died as a satisfaction under the judgment of God for our sins. There is no reference here to the fact that he satisfied the justice of God in his death. There is no sense of a penal substitution, but there are some lovely words nevertheless. He says, "With the result that our hearts should be enkindled by such a gift of divine grace." He is saying that the work of Jesus Christ was the kind of thing that should stir up our hearts. It was such a wonderful gift of grace. And true love should not now shrink from enduring anything for him. Now, that is a biblical sentiment, of course. He also says, "In that his Son has taken upon himself our nature." He talks about the incarnation. He believed in the incarnation, "And he has preserved therein in teaching us by word and example even unto death."

Now, you can see by those phrases precisely what he means. He means that Jesus Christ has become incarnate, he has taken to himself human nature, and he has sought through his work of dying to teach us, by word and example, the love of God; and as a result of that, to so stir our hearts by the love of God that we should be willing to do anything for him. Now that sounds very good, but that's not the biblical teaching concerning the atonement of Jesus Christ.

Let me read you another statement that Amslem makes. "Yet everyone become more righteous, by which we mean a greater lover of the Lord after the passion of Christ than before since a realized gift inspires greater love than one which is only hoped for." You can see again that he thinks of the death of our Lord Jesus as an even that inspires love. That's the essence of his theory of the atonement. The atonement of Jesus Christ is

the work by which he came, took human nature to himself, went to the cross, died on the cross in order to inspire love in us so that we might emulate the Lord Jesus, giving ourselves wholly to God, doing everything to him. It sounds very sweet, but that is not the biblical teaching concerning the atonement of Jesus Christ.

It's obvious why this theory has been called the subjective theory of the atonement, because as you can see from this presentation of the death of Jesus Christ it does not really have any relationship to God at all. It does not say anything about satisfying God's holiness or God's righteousness. It does not say anything about the necessity for the penalty of sin to be born. It is all directed toward man in order to produce a change within the heart of man, so that we might be inspired by the example of the Lord Jesus dying, to do everything for him. So it is a subjective theory. Whenever you hear the gospel preached you should look for objective facts concerning the Lord Jesus, and fact that are related to God. But here is a subjective theory, the so-called moral influence theory.

Now second, Roman II, Abelard in Contemporary Theology. For while Abelard lived in the 11th and 12th centuries, he was born in 1070 and died in 1142, while he was an 11th century theologian, 12th century theologian, the doctrine of Abelard is a doctrine that is just as contemporary as 1974. Now, again we're only going to deal with only two of the foremost advocates of the idea that love is the ground of forgiveness, Hastings Rashdall and RS Franks. There are many more that could have been dealt with, but these two have written extensively on the atonement, and they make excellent illustrations of the moral influence theory.

First of all, Hastings Rashdall; Hastings Rashdall was an Englishman. He was the Dean of Carlyle. He died in 1924, so he lived in the century in which you and I lived. He wrote a very important book called *The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology*. He was a very important Anglican scholar. He is, if anything, more Abelardian than Abelard. His salient views are these; I list simply three of them. I want you to notice, pay careful



attention to them. If you're taking notes, I didn't put these on the outline, because I want you to write them down yourself. These are the things the Rashdall says in his book. He says first of all, Jesus Christ did not die as a penal substitute. He states that very specifically. He did not die as a penal substitute.

Well you would immediately think, of course, of Mark chapter 10, in verse 45, the text that I quoted a few moments ago. And in that text, you might turn to it if you can find it in a hurry, Mark chapter 10, in verse 45. There we read these words, page 1064 in the new edition of the Scofield Bible, "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Now, it surely seems there that the Lord Jesus came to make a payment. It certainly seems from the text "to give his life a ransom instead of many," that we have here a substitution and that the Lord Jesus offered a payment to God for sins.

Rashdall, however, says that that's not the teaching of the Lord Jesus at all. It was only advice that he gave to the disciples. The incarnation was brought on by Jesus Christ, but the death was brought on by others. Jesus Christ did not die intentionally and voluntarily. He died unintentionally and involuntarily, and his death was the result of others. And therefore, his death is the less vital and efficacious because it was not intentional. It was brought on by others. Now, that's one thing he says. Jesus Christ did not die as a penal substitute. We shall see next week that Anselm's view is quite different.

Second, Rashdall taught that the only condition for forgiveness is repentance. And if a man repents, then a righteous God must forgive the past. Now, of course, we are inclined to think in Christian ways, and we are inclined to hear people preach, and we are inclined to hear them say, of course, "Repent and you shall be saved." Now, Rashdall does not mean repent in virtue of what Jesus Christ has done for you in dying as a penal substitute and receiving forgiveness as a free gift. He means, when he says the only condition for forgiveness is repentance, he means that if man repents he does not need a

penal substitute at all; in other words, if men repents of their sins, whether Jesus Christ died as a penal substitute or not, God must forgive them.

Now, you can see there is a great deal of difference between the two theories, but they sound very much alike. Repentance is the condition for forgiveness. Now, we might broadly call that the biblical view with reference to the term of salvation. Repentance is the condition for forgiveness. You hear preachers say that all the time. Take one illustration, Billy Graham constantly says that. But when Rashdall says it, it's and entirely different thing. He means we don't need the death of Christ at all; all we need is the repentance of man. And if man repents, then man is forgiven whether Jesus Christ died as a penal substitute or not. And he doesn't believe that he died as a penal substitute. So if a change takes place in the heart of man, whether Jesus Christ died or not, he's forgiven. That's his second opinion.

Thirdly, "Christ's death saves," Rashdall says, "because it's a revelation of the love of God that produces repentance." That's why Jesus Christ's death saves. It saves because it reveals the love of God, and in revealing the love of God it causes us to repent. And in that repentance we are saved. Now, I think we need to stop and talk about this, because there are texts in the Bible that might support these things Rashdall. I want you to turn with me to Luke chapter 7, and we want to look at the story of the woman who was a sinner. I think I'll begin reading at verse 36.

"And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner (Apparently this means she was a prostitute, some have thought that it was Mary Magdalene of chapter 8, verse 1 through verse 3, but that's highly unlikely. This is an unknown woman who was a sinner.), when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee

which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

Now, did you notice that statement, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven for she loved much." Let's put it in terms that Professor Rashdall would. Her sins, which are many, are forgiven for she repented much. Now, "You see," he says, "the only condition for forgiveness is repentance." And our Lord seems to say, at first glance at least, that this woman is forgiven because she loved much. In other words, her love is the reason for her forgiveness. Now, of course, if this were all that we had in this particular passage, we might say, "Well, we must say that there is some support for the Abelardian view of the atonement." I should add, of course, that this also the Roman Catholic view of the atonement, officially, because thereto it is taught that atonement is brought about by love. And here he says, "She is forgiven for she loved much."

Now, of course, this does not fit the little parable that he has told; for he has told about two men that hold different amounts and that they both were frankly, or freely, forgiven, not on the basis of anything. So it's obvious that the exposition that suggests

that love is the reason for forgiveness does not fit the illustration that our Lord had just told. So that should let us know that we're not on the right track in interpreting that statement.

Furthermore, we read in verse 50, "And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." And so it is evident that the faith, which is contrary to love, is the real reason for salvation. Well so then, how are we to understand the statement then in verse 47? "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much." Well, for may not only reason, it may prove. It may not only give the reason, it may give the evidence for a statement. For example, we may say, "It is raining, for it is wet." The rain caused the wetness, not the wetness the rain. The wetness is the visible proof that it is raining. It's raining for its wet. Or we may say, "It is light for the sun has risen." There, of course, we give the reason for the light. But we may also say, "The sun is risen for I say this, because it's light." In other words, we may reason from the effect and give evidence for something. It is evident that that is why our Lord says, in verse 47, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; and the evidence of her forgiveness is that she has loved much." The love is the evidence of a forgiveness that has taken place by virtue of faith in him. That is how his statement is to be interpreted, and that agrees with the parable, and it agrees with the statement in verse 50.

Some years ago a person sent in this little note to the airline sales office of one of our leading airlines. It said this, "Sir, may I suggest that your pilots not turn on that little light that says 'Fasten Seatbelts.' Because every time they do, the ride gets bumpy." [Laughter] Now, it is evident that their reasoning in the same way. The bumpiness is not caused by the light, but vice versa. Well, I entered into this in order to show you that the idea that is found in verse 47, does not support the moral influence theory of the atonement.

Let's move on to R.S. Franks. Franks was principal of Western College in Bristol in England from 1910 to 1939. He wrote *The History of the Doctrine of the Work of Christ*,

one of the greatest works on the history of the doctrine of the atonement. But he, himself, held to a moral influence theory of the atonement. The principle points that he set forth as his theory of atonement were these. He said the first principle of theology is this, "God is love." Now, the Abelardians usually argue that they alone do justice to the love of God. They like to say that these people who teach that Jesus Christ died as a penal substitute; they do not do justice to the love of God. And they like to stress that they alone, do justice to the love of God. However, they stress the revelation of this love, while others stress the sin-bearing and suffering element in the love.

And just because we stress, I stress; I don't know what you believe. I know what you ought to believe, but nevertheless just because I teach that the Lord Jesus bore our sins and suffered, that does not mean that I don't believe in the love of God. I think this is the best measure of the love of God, the fact that he bore sins through Jesus Christ and suffered in order that men might be saved through the sacrifice of the penal substitute. And I think the idea that Jesus Christ took human nature to himself and suffered on the cross, but not under the penal judgment of God, does not reveal the love of God as much as the sin-bearing character of his love. But they like to think that God is love, and therefore we must not speak of God judging Jesus Christ. I say it is just the opposite. I think that's an evidence of how much God did love, that he was willing, in his Son, to bear the judgment for our sins.

The second thing that Franks says is that the real problem of the atonement is how to make the sinner forgivable. The problem is man's sin, because of the impenitent heart that he possesses. He conceives of the answer to this as the movement of God upon his heart through the death of Christ, in order to produce, by the example of Christ, repentance. Now, there are certain things that we could say about that that are true and some that are not.

Third, he says the solution lies in the death of Christ; which manifests God's love and creates penitence and trust. He claims that through the death of Jesus Christ there

may be created in the heart of man, penitence and trust, but now mind you, not on the basis of what Christ suffered as a penal substitute under the judgment of God, just simply because he was an example of love in his death.

Well now, let's come to Abelard and the New Testament. These are the two greatest modern exponents, I believe, of the Abelardian theory. But you will find Abelardian theorists in the churches all over this city. If you go in, you will find them speaking of Jesus Christ as an example. Over and over again they speak about the example that Jesus Christ is for us, and they conceive of his death in an exemplary way. This exemplary theory of the atonement is nothing more than Abelard's ancient subjective moral influence theory. And I'm quite sure that you don't have to go more than half a mile or a mile in this community to find more than one man who preaches that kind of theory of the atonement. So if you go in those churches and you hear it, note it carefully. It's not Christian, though it may sound a great. Abelard and the New Testament, the Abelardian theory, as might be expected, has both true and false elements. It is very difficult to fool people unless you have some true and false elements.

If I were to reach in my pocket, everybody would like to have some gold these days with inflation as it is. If I were to reach in my pocket and pull out a false twenty dollar gold piece, which looked like gold, which had a golden color, which weighed like gold, which had the proper markings upon it, I might be able to fool you. I might be able to get out of you three hundred and sixty dollars, which I think is about the going price for a twenty dollar gold piece in United States money now. Don't you wish you had saved a lot of those about fifty years ago, or that your grandfather had? You might be fooled, but if I reached in my pocket and pulled out a triangular piece of wood, and said, "This is a twenty dollar gold piece." You wouldn't be fooled at all. You see, in order to be fooled there must be a great deal of similarity to the real thing. And the Abelardian theory, as you might expect, has a great deal of similarity to the real thing. That's why it is so easy to fool simple-minded Christians who don't attend theology classes, by such a

theory. And also, it's possible to fool some that come to theological classes, too.

[Laughter]

Now, capital A, the truth in Abelard; we want to look at a couple of New Testament authors, and let's turn to the passage that I intended to read as Scripture reading tonight, and frankly, I forgot, 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 18 through verse 25, 1 Peter 2, verse 18 through verse 25. Remember in this section of 1 Peter, Peter is seeking inculcate submission, submission among servants, and lest this be overlooked in chapter which we shall not consider, submission among the wives. [Laughter] Some of you knew that I was going to say that, because when I said, "lest this be overlooked," you looked up and smiled because you knew what 1 Peter 3 said. Notice particularly that Sarah called Abraham, "Lord." [Laughter]

Now, have you found the place? Verse 18, "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the perverse. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God."

Now you see he has exhorted these servants to be in submission to their masters. In order to illustrate, he turns to the ministry of Jesus Christ, and he points out that the Lord Jesus is perhaps the most beautiful illustration of patient endurance under unjust suffering. Just a slave in the house of an owner might have to suffer patiently, enduringly under unjust suffering. Verse 21, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." It is evident that in this passage, the idea that Jesus Christ came as an example is set forth as a true Christian teaching. Jesus Christ did come as an example, and he is an example of patient endurance under unjust suffering. You will notice, however, it does not say that atonement takes place as a result of the patient endurance under unjust suffering, unless we include the work of the cross.

Now, he is trying to stress an aspect of our Lord's ministry, so he says Jesus Christ is an example. It is perfectly proper for us to see in our Lord's ministry exemplary aspects. It is perfectly proper for us to look in our Christian experience, and ask ourselves in specific illustrations, "How would Jesus Christ react? How would he respond to the unjust things that are happening to me?" And the New Testament makes it very plain that he suffered patiently under many unjust experiences. While it is biblical for us to respond by learning from our Lord's exemplary suffering. That is plainly taught. To that extent, the Abelardian theory is correct. Our Lord was an example. Of course, there is more than the exemplary aspect of our Lord's work, for we read in verse 24 of 1 Peter 2, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree;" so, not only was he an example in his daily life, but he also bore our sins. The work of Jesus Christ is both exemplary and it is expiatory. Both of these are true, exemplary and expiatory.

Now, I don't want to pass by that exemplary aspect because it is important. In fact, that word in verse 21 is a most unusual word in the Greek text. It refers to children's copying. I remember many years ago, when my little girl was just a little tiny girl, we acquired a little tiny black board, by which just above it there were the letters of the alphabet. And Gracie, I can still remember her using that and copying off very diligently the letters of the alphabet and learning to write the letters of the alphabet by looking at the letters and writing them on that little blackboard. That's what that word exemplary word means here. And the word that is used of following in his steps in the next verse or so is also a very vivid word. It means, "To do it in great detail." Leaving us an example that you should follow very diligently, the Greek text says, his steps.

There is an old illustration that actually happened in connection with the ministry of D.M. Stearns that applies to that verse that immediately follows. Pastor Stearns, of the city of Philadelphia, is the one for whom Stearns Hall at Dallas Seminary is named. He



was an outstanding Episcopalian, reformed Episcopalian minister in the city of Philadelphia, or in the area of Philadelphia, I think in Germantown. And he was an outstandingly good evangelist. Pastor Stearns, now that I've said he was an Episcopalian I'm not sure, he may have been a Lutheran, but at any rate he was one of the two. One night, he was preaching on the subject of the cross, and when he finished a man came up to him afterwards and said to him, "Pastor Stearns, I don't like your preaching. I don't care for the cross. Instead of preaching the cross and Jesus' death on it, it would be much better to preach Jesus Christ as the teacher and example." "Would you then be willing to follow him if I preached Jesus the example," said Pastor Stearns. The man said, "I surely would. I will follow in his steps." He said, "Then we'll take the first step." And the first step as he turned to the passage in verse 22, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." He said, "Can you take the first step?" The man said, "No Pastor Stearns, I cannot. I do sin, and I do acknowledge it." "Well then," the preacher said, "your first need of Christ is not as an example, but as a Savior." But that idea of our Lord as an example is a biblical teaching. It's just not all.

Théodorit summed up the paradox in this sentence, "A new and strange method of healing is taught in this passage. The passage says, 'By his stripes we are healed.' The doctor suffered the cost and the sick received the healing." Now, how would you like to have a doctor like that? I'm really sure that Dr. Howard's not here tonight or the rest of the doctors in our congregation. A new and strange method of healing, the doctor suffered the cost and the sick received the healing. That's the kind of doctor I could like to have. 1 John chapter 3, in verse 16 and chapter 4, verse 10 through 11, I might say that's the kind of doctor I do have, really, by the grace of God; 1 John 3:16 and chapter 4, verses 10 and 11.

Now, here we also have some reference to the Lord Jesus and his death as an example. 1 John 3:16, I don't know how long I'm going to be able to teach you, because it's just getting so that I can read the Bible with my head this far from the page, [laughter]

and soon I'm either going to have to put on glasses or have Bob Nixon stand up here and hold the Bible for me about out here. [Laughter] Verse 16 of 1 John 3, "By this perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Again, notice the aspect of our Lord suffering as an example. And then in chapter 4, verses 10 and 11, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." Again, the supreme example of love is Jesus Christ's self-sacrifice. It is not only to be admired. It is to be copied. It is in contrast to the work of Cain who was one who killed his brother. In contrast, Jesus Christ dies as an example of love.

Now, there is not only a revelation of love, but a revelation of sin-bearing and suffering love here. For we read in chapter 4, verse 10, "That he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." So we can sum it up by saying that the idea of an example is in the New Testament. Our Lord did die as an example, but there is no evidence that the exemplary aspect of our Lord's death is sufficient to produce a repentance that is ground for forgiveness. Let me say it again, there is not evidence that the example is sufficient to produce a repentance that is ground for forgiveness.

Now, we turn to the error of Abelard. The weakness of the Abelardian theory is now what I want to summarize. And first of all, I did not put these facts in the outline. You'll have to write them down for yourself if you think them worthwhile. First of all, the theory of Abelard, the moral influence theory, is thoroughly subjective. All God meant to achieve, by this theory, in Christ's death was the subjective experience of penitence in the human soul. He was interested only in a change in men. God's attitude, according to Abelard and his followers, is the attitude of eternally forgiving sins. So when the revelation of love is made, he must forgive.

It is not easy to see how in any sense this is an atonement, but nevertheless it is called a theory of the atonement. It makes forgiveness cheap. That is one thing that is

obvious, and therefore ultimately wrongs the moral being of both God and man. In the New Testament the emphasis rests upon God as the agent in the atonement. The great stress of the New Testament is what God has done. The initiative begins with God. The work is a work which he has done. The secondary aspect of it is the change that is produced in men through the work of the Holy Spirit in connection with the death that he died. God's will is the initiator. God's will is the power behind the work. In other words, atonement is a Godward work primarily, and not a manward work. Though, of course, that is an aspect of it.

R.W. Dale, one of the great British theologians, a Congregationalist used to like to distinguish between the idea that Christ's death saves men because it is a revelation of love, that's the Abelardian view, and the idea that it reveals love, because it saves. And I think it is something that we need to stress, too. There is a great deal of difference between the idea that Jesus Christ's death saves men because it is a revelation of love, and that it reveals love because it saves. Now, it is evident that the love, by the second idea, is produced by the salvation. Whereas, in the case of the former, the death is only a revelation of love, and is intended to provoke a change in the heart of man. I say this makes the death of Jesus Christ cheap, and it makes the salvation cheap because it does not understand the element of the cost.

I always think in connection with this, of a story that G. Campbell Morgan used to tell about a Welsh coal miner who had attended some of his meetings. He was preaching in a little town. As Dr. Morgan used to preach, he would ask men at the conclusion of the eservice if they felt convicted because of sin, and they felt that they wished to be saves, to come in a little inquiry room which was by the side of the platform and behind the platform. He never asked men to make decisions in meetings, hold up their hands, and sign cards and all of the other things that we do in the 20th Century. But if men were genuinely concerned, they were given the opportunity to speak with someone.

And he always closed his meeting by saying, "Some of the Christians here will be happy to talk with you." And there was a big, tall, Welsh coalminer who, every night came down in order to speak about his soul, but the workers couldn't do anything with him, because he kept saying, "It's too cheap," when they presented the grace of God to him. So finally one of the workers came to Dr. Morgan and told him the story and said, "If he's here tonight, and if he comes down and wants to talk, would you be willing to talk with him." And of course, Dr. Morgan said he would, and the man was there that night and at the conclusion, when the invitation to come into the inquiry room was given, he did come forward.

And Dr. Morgan sat down to talk with him. And he explained the gospel to him, and he explained it in the terms of Isaiah chapter 55, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." And he set forth the gospel as well as he could, and the man replied by saying, "It's too cheap." He said, "After the kind of life I've lived, it's too cheap to expect God to forgive me just on the basis of grace." Dr. Morgan said that afterwards he was led by the Holy Spirit to ask him a question. He said, "By the way, you work in the mined, I understand." He said, "Yes." He said, "How do you get to your work?" He said, "Well, I walk over to the shaft and I get in the cage, and I'm taken down to where I work." Dr. Morgan said, "Well, how do you get home?" He said, "After I've finished my work, I lay down my tools, and I walk over and get in the cage, and they bring me up to ground level and I walk home." Dr. Morgan said, "How much does it cost you?" He said, "Oh well, it doesn't cost me anything."

Then he reflected and the Holy Spirit at that point brought all of the light of God into his heart. And he said, "Oh my God, is that what you mean? You mean it doesn't

cost me anything, but it costs the company." Dr. Morgan said, "That's precisely it." He said, "Salvation does not cost you anything, but it costs God the satisfaction of the shedding of the blood of his own Son, Jesus Christ. Salvation may be cheap for us, and free for us, but it is not cheap for God." I say the Abelardian theory makes Salvation cheap for it has no element of the satisfaction of the justice of God.

Second, the theory falsely assumes that love is the all-controlling attribute in God. It ignores his holiness. It ignores his justice, and what emerges is a sentimentalized version of love. In other words, love is the all-controlling attribute in God, and anything that satisfies our sentimental idea of love, we must follow that. And the idea that God is a just God, and that he's a righteous God, and that he will judge sin; well, that is unworthy of God. He's love, and that must override everything else. But if there is one thing that the Bible teaches it is that the overriding attribute of God is not love, though God is love.

If we were to decide upon an overriding attribute of God, if such were possible, I'm not sure it is, but if it were it would be his holiness. For, that means that he is utterly different from us. That's the essence of what holiness means, he is different from us. And that's something that permeates every attribute of God. His power, his knowledge, his wisdom, all of his attributes of someone who is different from us. Holiness, if anything is his overriding attribute, and if that is his overriding attribute, then there must be satisfaction for sin, for your sin and for my sin. So this theory is false in assuming that love is the all-controlling attribute in God.

Thirdly, this theory does not furnish an adequate reason for Christ's bitter sufferings and death. It is taught by many who hold this theory that it was not even necessary for Jesus Christ to die. As a matter of fact, why could not God have shown his love in other ways? Why does Jesus Christ have to suffer bitterly and die and he does? Paul writes in Galatians chapter 2, in verse 21 concerning the death of Jesus Christ and the necessity of that death. He says, "I do not make void the grace of God: for if righteousness comes by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." If it is possible for

righteousness to come to men apart from the death of our Lord under penal judgment, then the death of Jesus Christ is the greatest blunder in all of the universe.

Or this theory rests upon a superficial view of sin. Can sin-destroyed man come to repentance under his own power? If there is anything the Bible teaches us it is, no matter how you present the death of Jesus Christ, they cannot respond until the Holy Spirit works in their hearts. Now, that is as plain as day. "There is none that seeketh after God, no not one." Present the gospel as clearly as possibly, they will not come. Present it as plainly as possible, they will not come. Present it as powerfully as possible, they will not come. Jesus said, "Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life." The truth of the matter is we need a work on our will in order that we may come, and that is only done by God the Holy Spirit. There is no automatic connection between the cross and repentance, who were born, not of blood, not of the will of the will of the flesh, not of the will of man, but of God.

Now, if you don't like my doctrine, I stand with the Apostle John, "Attack us if you will." [Laughter] With Abelard, the real trouble is ignorance, as with the Greek philosophers like Plato, but it's not true that we only have to see the highest in order to do it. Well, our time's up. I know those people in the tape room are getting all excited now. They're running back and forth in front of the window wondering what in the world they're going to do, so we better close. I'll leave my fifth point for next...

**[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]**