



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

The Suffering Savior, Mark 15:16-23

"Via Dolorosa - III"

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we're grateful to Thee for the privilege of the study of the Scriptures again, for the consideration of some of the great doctrines of the faith, and we pray that Thou will teach us in this hour to understand, in a deeper way, the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ and the significance of all that he has accomplished for us. We thank Thee for his substitutionary work. We pray that we may understand it and be able to present it in an intelligible way to others. We commit the hour to Thee again. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Our study for tonight is really a conclusion of the study we should have finished last Monday night, but did not. And our subject is "Via Dolorosa" or "Sacrifice, Substitution, and Imprecation: the Idea of Substitution in the Doctrine of the Atonement". And since I have been out of town over the weekend and have not had a chance to go home, I forgot to tell my wife to bring the outline, which I had used last week, and I don't remember how far in the outline we did go, but I think we got at least to Roman II, and I hope that the rest of the outline will enable you to fill in what you may have already had. But let me just briefly summarize where we were and then launch into the consideration of the problem of substitution, which is our last section of our subject.

Remember, in our introduction last time, I made reference to the fact that we were pausing in our study of the passion of Jesus Christ to deal with a question that is basic to an understanding of the account of the passion. I also suggested, as an opinion, that most genuine Christians believe that salvation is a work of God accomplished through the expiatory offering of Jesus Christ, which propitiates God's holiness and justice, thereby securing for guilty man acceptance with God. Not everyone, however, is able to defend the nature of the atonement; its foundation in a sacrifice that is both substitutionary and penal and this is what we are trying to do.

Since also, we are studying the use of the Old Testament, I spent a great deal of time last time on Roman One in the outline, the use of Psalm 69, and the problem of imprecation. Dealing with the New Testament context of the passage in Mark chapter 15, verse 22, verse 23; the Old Testament context; and then, the problem of imprecation. Then we launched into the discussion of the problem of sacrifice and I suggested that I wanted to raise an important question here, "Is Christ's death a penal sacrifice and what kind of sacrifice is it?"

And then under modern theories of sacrifice, I don't think that I had an opportunity to express to you what I want to take up tonight beginning with capital A and particularly this. In the discussion of modern theories of sacrifice, I think it is probably fairly accurate to say that all modern theories of sacrifice concerning the work of Jesus Christ may be put into two broad classes. First of all, there are those theories that suggest that sacrifice is designed to express the religious feelings of man as a creature. In other words, according to these theories, the reason that sacrifice is offered in religions, including the Christian religion, is that the individual who offers the sacrifice may express his religious feelings toward God. That's one class of theory.

And then the other class of theory is that sacrifices are intended to meet the needs of man as a sinner. Now let me express this again. In all of the theories of sacrifice, we can probably group them all into one of these two categories. First, the sacrifices are

designed to express the religious feelings of man as a creature. In other words, man comes simply as a creature of God and desires, through his sacrifice, to express his religious feelings toward God. And then the second class, man comes to God and, through his sacrifice, seeks to offer something that will meet his need as a sinner.

Now, of course, the key points are in the first series or class of theories, man comes simply as a creature desiring to express his religious feelings to God. In the second class of theory, man comes as a sinner and desires to have his needs met by means of the sacrifice. Now I think that if we just put them into these two categories, we have almost all of the theories of sacrifice which have been devised by men.

There are three groups in this first class and these are the three that I have put in our outline because you probably recognize that the second broad class of theory is related to the theory that we've been discussing; penal satisfaction by substitution. There are three groups of this first class of theory in which man comes to God as a creature and desires, by means of sacrifice, to express his religious feelings. Now you must understand, of course, I presume that you already have grasped this, that modern theories of sacrifice devised by modern theologians, generally speaking, fall into this first group of theories and they express, in general, man's desire to say to God how he feels as a creature. And dividing them up into these three categories, just for the sake of our discussion tonight, the first is the recognition or symbolical theories.

Now the reason these are all in the plural is because men, in attempting to explain the sacrifices of the Old Testament and the sacrifice of the New, have racked their brains trying to get out of what seems to be the fairly plain statement of the word of God that Jesus Christ died as a penal satisfaction rendered to God for the sins of men. But if you want to hold to Christian religion in the broad sense and explain the fact that we have sacrifices in the Old Testament and the sacrifice of Christ in the New, we must explain these sacrifices in such a way that we avoid believing that Jesus Christ died as a

satisfaction of the justice of God and by virtue of his substitutionary bearing of punishment, makes it possible for sinners to be restored to fellowship with him.

Symbolical theories express this idea. The worshiper gives expression to his religious feelings in his sacrifice. And he does this by means of bringing his offering and through that offering he gives homage or worship to God. Now he does not come, feeling that he has need of forgiveness for his sins, but he comes simply to express his reverence for God. These are recognition or symbolical theories of the atonement.

The second class is a class of gift theories. Now these theories are that the sacrifices are presents, which are brought by individuals, to please the deity and to gain favor with him. They are designed to placate him, but not placate him because of the offeror's sins, so much as to by means of their sacrifices, bribe him, or gain favor with him because of their faults. Now occasionally, the idea of sin intrudes, but it's a very weak idea of sin and not the idea of the New Testament or the Old Testament that sin brings eternal death; gift theories. I wish we had time, and I wish we were all interested enough, to look at some of the theories that have been invented by men to seek to explain away the New Testament and Old Testament doctrine of sacrifice. But there are a group of them that could be called "gift theories".

And, finally, communion theories: these theories are that sacrifices are formal acts of communion with the deity in a common meal; the motive being to gratify the deity by sharing with him a meal. In other words, the offeror brings an offering, the priests take the offering, and after the offering has been offered to God, the offeror and the priest sit down and eat the offering that is brought. And this is designed to be symbolical of communion between the deity, represented by the priests, and the individual who brought the sacrifice. As you probably have recognized already, there is some resemblance between this kind of theory and the theory of the peace offering in the Old Testament. For in the peace offering in the Book of Leviticus, that was exactly what happened. The Levitical worshippers brought an offering, and after the offering had been

offered, then there was a common meal at which the offeror and the priests sat down at a table and ate. Now that was designed, in the New Testament language, to express the fact that through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we have been brought into a place of reconciliation with God, and we find in the New Testament, for example, the statement made, "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God". That is a recognition of the anti-type of the peace offering of the Old Testament. These communion theories, therefore, have an element of truth in them. But if sacrifice is only a formal act of communion in which the offeror and the deity have a common meal together and, thus, the deity is gratified by it, we still have not reached the level of the New Testament. In some statements of the communion theory, the practice of establishing a covenant by common meals may be used so that the meal becomes a kind of meal covenant theory. Because it was common, in certain parts of the East, to sit down and have a meal and in that meal make a covenant with the individual who was involved.

Now these theories are the common theories suggested by modern men, modern theologians, with reference to the Old and New Testament. In this second broad class, that is the sacrifices are intended to meet the needs of man as a sinner; the worshipper comes before God, he is burdened with the guilt of his sin, he seeks to expiate his guilt by means of the slaughter of the animal, which is designed to typify the coming of the Redeemer, who would die under the judgment of God, and would in the shedding of his blood expiate the deity.

Now this is the expiatory view of sacrifice, and as you undoubtedly already have surmised, it is the theory that is most in accord with the New and the Old Testament. Now you can tell from this that in this second broad class of theory, the atonement terminates upon God. Whereas in the three elements or three groups of the first broad class, the atonement largely terminates upon man and is designed to express certain aspects of man's relationship to God. That is, his religious feelings before God. But in

the case of the Old Testament and New Testament teaching on sacrifice, the sacrifice terminates on God. Now that's the important thing.

Now then, the penal theory of sacrifice we have discussed so much, that I'm not going to discuss it any more, believe it or not. Now the main reason I am not is because my wife said, "You've repeated that too often, so it's not necessary to do it anymore", and I just figured that if she understood that, then I know all of the rest of you, undoubtedly, understand it also. You just remember these things about the penal theory of sacrifice: Christ's work is a sacrifice; second, Christ's work is penal. That is, he dies under the judgment of God; and third, his work is substitutionary. That is, he takes the place of sinners.

Now let's come on to our Roman Three: "The Problem of Substitution". Because this is a rather serious problem in theology and I don't know whether you've ever had occasion for anyone to quiz you with regard to it or not; but if you have, you probably have discovered it's not always easy to justify the biblical doctrine of substitution before someone who has philosophical, moral, or even popular types of objections to it. Now, of course, the only legitimate method of controverting a doctrine of the word of God is exegetical. But we have talked so much about the penal satisfaction theory of the atonement by means of the substitutionary work of the Lord Jesus that I hope that we have no further need with you to appeal to specific passages of Scripture.

Under each one of those points, there are literally scores of passages to which we could refer, but since we've just expounded the Suffering Servant of Jehovah Songs that should be by now unnecessary. So what I want to do in the remainder of the hour tonight is to consider philosophical, moral, and popular objections that have been raised against the doctrine of substitution.

And the first is a kind of philosophical and moral objection rolled into one, which is to this effect: the innocent cannot suffer for the wicked. It is immoral for an innocent man to suffer for a wicked or guilty man. How would you answer that objection?

Suppose someone were to say to you when you said to them, "Jesus Christ died for sinners". Suppose they were to say to you, "It is immoral for an innocent man to die for wicked men. Wicked men ought to die for their own sin. How can it be possibly moral? How can it be justified for an innocent man to die for a wicked man?" Could you answer that objection to the atonement of the Lord Jesus as you can see it is fundamental to Christianity?

Professor Berkoff in his theology has said, "This objection is tantamount to raising an objection against the moral government of God in general. In actual life, the innocent often suffer as a result of the transgression of others. Moreover, in this form, the objection would hold against all the so called theories of atonement, for they all represent the sufferings of Christ as being, in some sense, the result of the sins of mankind". There is an element of truth in what Professor Burkoff has said, but it is not the whole or everything that could be said. We all know, of course, that innocent do suffer for the wicked.

For example, we may have a home in which there is an innocent infant. And, to construct a situation, let's just imagine that the parents come home and they come home drunk. The babysitter is released. They go upstairs. They're stumbling around upstairs. They're smoking a cigarette. They fall in the bed half unconscious with a cigarette in mouth and the cigarette falls over on the mattress and soon the house is on fire and the infant dies in the flames with the guilty. Now the innocent do suffer for the guilty and you can think of thousands of illustrations of this. And, of course, that is then a fact of human existence. Professor Berkoff is right in so far as he has gone under this particular objection. The innocent do suffer for the wicked in the government of God so far as we can tell.

Now his main point, however, is this: that if we seek to explain the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, we must construct some kind of theory of the atonement. If we're going to hold to the biblical record at all, we must have some kind of theory of the atonement.

And all theories of the atonement represent the sufferings of Christ as being, in some sense, the result of the sins of mankind. So his point is, that no matter what kind of theory you have, if you restrict yourself to the biblical record, then, of course, you have to have some kind of suffering of innocent for wicked. So for those at least who hold to the biblical revelation as the authority, well then, this kind of objection will not hold.

Now I'm going to consider the other aspects of it in a moment, under the next section, so we'll leave the question of answering those who do not have any idea of accepting any part of the Christian revelation. So let's come to capital B, a philosophical, moral kind of objection: Substitution in Penal Matters is Illegal".

Now notice the word "penal". We know that substitution in other matters is not necessarily illegal. For example, if we have debt, monetary debt, it is recognized by most of our institutions that it is possible for someone else to pay our debts, and the law recognizes the legality of such a transaction. If I should owe a thousand dollars to Neiman Marcus and you should go to Neiman Marcus and pay the debt for me, I'm sure that Neiman Marcus would be completely happy. It would be totally acceptable to them. It would be perfectly legal in every way. It is a pecuniary kind of transaction and substitution is recognized as legal.

Now this is also true of other things. In cases of work for the public benefit required by law, it is possible for substitution to prevail legally. In the case of military service required on behalf of one's country, there are certain occasions in which it possible for substitution to legally take place. Even in the case of crime, when the penalty is such that a substitute can meet it, consistent with his own obligations to the law, then that frequently is acceptable. But it is not always acceptable in law for someone who is innocent to suffer for the guilty. Therefore, often our explanations as Christians are not really true to facts.

We all have heard illustrations of people who have suffered for others. I can think of several in my own notes in various sermons through the years. I remember one in

particular, in which a man just during the time of the Civil War from the Midwest was involved in a particular crime. He and a group of about eight, he lived in Missouri as I remember, he and about eight other Sympathizers with the Southern cause abducted a Yankee farmer, and as a result of this abduction of the Yankee farmer, they were caught and they were sentenced to death; nine men for abducting this farmer. I don't know what they did to him, I've forgotten. They may have tarred and feathered him, I don't know.

But anyway, the nine were sentenced to die. However, it was agreed that if a substitute should die for Hiram Smith, who was one of the men; it would be possible for him to go free. And at the last moment, a young man did come forward, twenty-three years of age, and died for Hiram Smith and the law was satisfied by that substitutionary death. And if you go to Palmyra right now, you can see a little tombstone, so I am told, in which reference is made to this fact that this young man died for another man who was guilty by law.

Is that possible in spiritual things? That's the question. And I am persuaded that it is not possible; that that is not really a true illustration of the New Testament doctrine of substitution. In fact, I do not think that represents the New Testament or the Old Testament well at all. I think that, generally speaking, we would say that substitution in penal matters is illegal. In some cases, it may be legal, but generally speaking, it is illegal. Well, what is it about the New Testament substitution then that makes it acceptable?

Well, let's think for a moment about a human crime. Let's just suppose, for example, that one man murders another man. Now in a human transaction, there are four distinct parties beside the guilty criminal. There is, first of all, the judge. He's the one who must pronounce sentence. He must uphold the law. And second, there is the innocent substitute who comes forward and offers to die for the person who is guilty of murder. Let's assume that someone does wish to come forward and die. Third, there is the wronged party or the family of the wronged party and through them, in a sense, the whole community. For the laws are the laws of the community. And fourth, let's

presume that we're living in a royalty, a kingdom, just in order that we may be able to identify the head more easily. Let's say the fourth party is the king himself who is responsible in the final analysis for all of the law, and for the execution of it, and who stands himself as the symbol of all that the kingdom stands for. So we have then, the guilty criminal, and the judge, the innocent substitute, the wronged party, and the king who represents the law of the land and to whom the judge is under oath to administer justice.

Now in the human transaction, the use of substitution, granted the substitute could surrender his own rights, would be a kind of double outrage against the wronged party and against the law that the judge had sworn to administer. But the doctrine of the cross of the Lord Jesus is different. And it seems to me it is different in some very significant ways. For, in the case of a man who stands before God as a condemned criminal, we have the guilty sinner; that's one party. But, now let's look at it from the standpoint of the law. Beside this one guilty party, who stands over against the murderer in the human illustration, the human transaction, we have judge, but who is the judge? Well, the judge is God. And then we have a wronged party. But who is the wronged party? Well, the wronged party is God. David expresses it very well when he says, "Against Thee, and Thee only, have I sinned". Who is the king? Well, the king again is God. And who is the substitute who offers to come forward and die for the guilty criminal? Well, again, it is God. So we have here, on the one hand, a guilty individual. But, on the other hand, instead of having four other different parties, we have one party, the triune God.

Now this is totally unique. There is not anything like this in human experience. It is impossible for us to say, "Because of human experience, this would be illegal". Because, there is nothing in human experience like this; it is totally unique. And, as a matter of fact, the Bible itself agrees that this is a unique situation. And, furthermore, I think the Bible also testifies to the fact that it would be impossible for any other person to die for us than God.

Let me read, Psalm 49, verses 7 and 8, "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him for the redemption of the soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever." Does anyone have the American Standard Version here? Would you read out loud those verses for me, Mr. Seal? Psalm 49, verses 7 and 8. Psalm 49, verses 7 and 8, "No man can by any means redeem his brother or give to God a ransom for him. For the redemption of his soul is costly, and he should cease trying forever." Yes, now you can see in that last clause, as well as in the other clauses, it is expressly said that "no one can redeem the soul of anyone else". No man. Only God can do this. So when we say that, we have removed this out of the realm of a human transaction. And so now, in the light of what I've tried to show here, I think that we can answer the question, "The innocent cannot suffer for the wicked in a human transaction?", but what we have is an innocent second person of the Trinity, of the triune God, who suffers for a guilty man. And that is something absolutely unique; it cannot be measured by human laws and enactments.

Let's move on again. Capital C, a kind of popular objection. As you will see this one is related to the others. "God the Father Would Be Guilty of Injustice". Now this is a variation of the same theme, but I mention it because I think occasionally it is presented in this light. It's practically the same as "A" above, in a more legal form. The Father simply sacrifices the Son for the sins of mankind; it is claimed. Often claimed by Christians; but, remember, it is not the Father who is only responsible for the work of Jesus Christ. It is the triune God. It is the Father, it is the Son, it is the Holy Spirit who together conceive and carry out the plan of redemption. It is true that in eternity, the members of the trinity agreed among themselves to carry out a covenant of redemption. The Father initiating the plan, the Son executing it by the shedding of his blood, the Spirit consummating it by the application of the benefits to those who are included within the covenant promises; but this is a work of the total triune God and not the work simply of the Father.

Furthermore, this work brings immense glory to the Godhead. This objection also, I think, would act as a kind of boomerang, for all agree who study the Scriptures at all, that the Father sent the Son for suffering and death, which, while beneficial, was by this kind of reasoning, wholly unnecessary. And if it is true that the Father allowed the Son to come and to suffer the kind of death that he suffered, and it was unnecessary, that is, he would be guilty of injustice in doing something like this, then we do have something that is cruel indeed. And those who advance this objection, out of a Christian profession, would be manufacturing and inventing something far worse, if we were to take them at their own word.

D, a popular objection: "The Substitutionary Atonement is Unnecessary". This objection goes like this: If a man can and does forgive a penitent, God surely can and does. Let's bring it down to every day life. I was visiting my daughter last night and my grandchildren, incidentally, and this morning, due to the exigencies of discipline within the family, it was necessary for my daughter to carry out a little act of discipline with regard to my granddaughter. And grandfather had to suffer on the sidelines, of course. But, nevertheless, this discipline was carried out and I can still, right now, hear Debbie saying, "I'm sorry", "I'm sorry", and various other kinds of things that she was saying.

Now we often do forgive children without requiring any kind of satisfaction or punishment. As a matter of fact, often, if a child comes to us after having done something that is obviously outside of our will, but comes and confesses the sin as a kind of penitent, it's a very rare thing, I know, but nevertheless it has been done within the family, then we forgive, do we not? Do we not forgive our children? Yes, as a matter of fact, you forgive them too often without satisfaction, without that punishment, because, well, I don't want to give you a lesson in family discipline. You don't need it. Most of you know more about that than I. But, you know, of course, that it is very common for parents to say, "I forgive you" and exact no satisfaction whatsoever because of the sin, because of the wrongdoing. Well, now, if we who are human beings can forgive without

exacting satisfaction, why cannot God forgive us without exacting satisfaction? Why does Jesus Christ have to die? Why cannot God just say, "I forgive you?" That's his duty isn't it, to forgive sin?

Now, of course, the answer to this is very simple. The first place, God the Father is not like a human father in the final analysis. There is an analogy between the two and there should be some kind of analogy between the discipline of a human father and the discipline of the Heavenly Father. And the fact that he disciplines us ought to be some inkling to us that we should discipline our children and the fact that he occasionally disciplines us in a way that is very hurtful should indicate to us that there are times when we should discipline our children similarly. The Bible regards sin as guilt that subjects one to wrath. The Bible says, "The wages of sin is death". You say in your home, "The wages of sin is a spanking" or whatever means of discipline you may have. Well, "the wages of sin is death", and so it's very nice for us to say, "God ought to forgive without any kind of satisfaction". But the Bible teaches that sin is guilt that subjects us to wrath.

Now usually associated with this is some kind of justification. If a human father can forgive a child of his sin without exacting satisfaction, surely a heavenly father can do the same thing without exacting satisfaction, particularly when we remember that God is love. I don't know of any doctrine that is more misused in the 20th Century than the doctrine that God is love. The Bible very plainly says, "God is light". Light is a figure for holiness. Over and over again, it says, "God his holy. God is just. God is righteous." He's love, but he's light. He's Father, but he's also judge. And that makes eminently good sense to me.

I do not understand how it is possible for someone to read the Scriptures and avoid these things. The text of Scriptures states it so plainly and reason supports it so plainly that I wonder that anyone can have any problem with it. But if you're looking for a text of Scripture, in 1 John 4:10 we read, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins". In other words, the

manifestation of the love of God is not in his forgiveness, but in his propitiation of our sins through the sending of Jesus Christ to die. That is the evidence of the love of God. I'll have more to say about that in just a moment.

Fifth popular objection: "Substitutionary Atonement Undermines Law". This kind of objection goes along these lines. If it is possible for someone to come and die for us, so that we are delivered from the penalty and the judgment of law, then that destroys the incentive to obedience to the law and to holiness. Because he comes and does something for us and, thus, we tend to rely on that rather than to remember that we are responsible to obey law. A gracious dealing of God with us tends to weaken the claims of divine law.

Now there is something like this expressed in Romans chapter 6 in verse 1 when Paul, after having stated, "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord", having presented this marvelous principle of grace salvation, then the sixth chapter begins remember with, "What shall we say then? Shall we sin, (or continue in sin) that grace may abound?" And in a moment, "Shall we sin, because we're not in the law, but under grace?" Each of these questions Paul answers with, "me genoito", "God forbid". As a matter of fact, the substitutionary atonement does not undermine law, destroy incentive to obedience, the reverse is really true. It creates within us devotion and gratitude and so we respond in the words of the hymn, "Bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned he stood; sealed my pardon with his blood". Not, "Now I may sin as I please", but "Hallelujah! What a Savior!"

Sixth, another popular objection: "Can We Believe in a God Who Would Send Everybody to Hell if Jesus Had Not Died?" Is that the kind of god you believe in? Do you believe in a god who would send everybody to hell if Jesus Christ had not died? Come on now, tell me! Do you really believe in a god who would send everybody to hell if Jesus Christ did not die? Come on, tell me! Do you believe in such a god? Now I can tell

there are some that are tough that say, "Yes, I can" and some of the others of you just haven't got it in you to say, "Yes". Well, I want to say to you that, that kind of question is really unfair because, of course, we don't have that kind of god.

Now I want to say that I would answer it, "Yes" if there were such a situation to arise, I could conceive of such a situation arising, but it has not arisen and will not arise. That amounts to saying, "If God were not such a god as he has revealed himself to be". But, of course, he has revealed himself to be a god who sent Jesus Christ to die. So the kind of question is really an unfair question because, you see, by making up a question like that, we've presented God in a light that he does appear in the word of God. Being the kind of god he is, he was not willing that all perish without hope, so he provided an atonement. If the objection is that God was not willing to forgive or morally able to forgive without an atonement then, of course, it is true. God is not willing nor is he morally able to forgive without an atonement. But he did forgive without demanding an atonement from men because they couldn't provide one. And he has forgiven without demanding one from them because he has provided the atonement that he demands: himself.

The Apostle Paul answers the question in Romans chapter 3 verse 25 and verse 26 when he states, "That forgiveness in all time rests on the sacrifice of the cross". Have you ever noticed that? I know you have. Romans 3:25 and 26 says, "Whom God hath set forth to be a 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". So that under the old covenant and under the new covenant as both Paul and the writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews say, "In all time forgiveness is through the cross of Jesus Christ". There is no god who would send everybody to hell if Jesus Christ had not died because he is not a kind of god, who did not send Jesus Christ or would not send Jesus Christ, but he is that holy God; so all forgiveness rests on the sacrifice of the cross.

Now I have one last objection. This is popular too. If we think of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus as a legal payment, which is rendered to God as a satisfaction, satisfying all God's claims of holiness, righteousness, justice, against us, then forgiveness is not an act of love. Forgiveness is an act of justice. But the Bible says that we are forgiven through the exercise of the loving grace of God". Over and over again, the Bible traces our salvation to the love of God. It says, for example, in Romans chapter 5, "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet perhaps for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us".

Now here the death of Jesus Christ is traced to God's love. But listen, if we owed certain debts to God because of our sin and Jesus Christ paid those debts, then for God to forgive, is not an act of love; it's an act of justice. But the Bible says that our salvation is traceable to love. Therefore, this forensic, this legal presentation of the saving work of Jesus Christ must not be really true to the spirit of the word of God. That's the objection. How would you answer it? What would you say? I'm asking you, you Christians, you keep talking about Christ dieing for sin. You say God punishes sin. You say Christ died for sin. It would seem to me that your salvation is not a salvation which stems from love, but justice.

Well, let's turn to one of my favorite texts. I've referred to it once before. I hope Mary will forgive me for repetition, but it bears on this topic. It's Romans chapter 5 and verse 21. It's a most important text. I think every Christian ought to know this text both to answer this objection and for the truth contained within it. It's in the same chapter in which we found those words, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died with us". And here is the climatic statement. This is the purpose for which our Lord came, "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might

grace reign unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord". Now as you can see, I have skipped one little phrase and that little phrase is the phrase "through righteousness". "As sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Now to say that the legal payment of the penalty leads to a forgiveness that is an act of justice, there is no place for the exercise of love in this forensic method of salvation, is the most amazing claim that any ignorant person has ever made concerning the saving work of Jesus Christ. Let me ask you this simple question, "Whose love provided the just atonement in the first place?" Whose love sent Jesus Christ to pay those debts that we had? Was it some unknown "X" in our universe who sent Jesus Christ to pay the debts that we owe and who cleared our accounts with God, so that we now have only a just salvation without any expression of love in it?" Why, no. It is God himself who has provided through the Son of God, the payment of the debt. It's true, we have a righteous salvation. One in which every debt that we have ever had before God past, present or future, is paid for and canceled, and we are given a righteous standing before God. And it is through righteousness that we are saved. We do not have to apologize for our acceptance before God. It is total and complete. But we do not, in so saying, eliminate the love of God, for it is the love of God who provided the Son to make it possible for us to have a righteous salvation. Do we understand that?

If in the preaching of the gospel, we give the impression that Jesus Christ came, and through some work that he did, forced God to lower his standards from one hundred percent perfection to ninety-five percent, and forgave us just a little bit by relaxing his own standard, such as we do when we forgive our children often, if that's the idea that we have from the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have not preached the gospel of Christ. If we give the impression that Jesus Christ has prevailed upon God in some way, to relax in the minute way the eternal principles of holiness and justice, we have presented a false gospel. Do we understand that? Am I coming through plain and clear

to you? So it is possible for us to insult God and his holiness by suggesting that forgiveness is God weakening his standards.

On the other hand, it is also true that we can so stress the legality and the forensic aspects of our Lord Jesus Christ's work that we lose sight of the fact that it is God, who out of his great loving heart, has provided the perfect cancellation of all of our debts in the costly sacrifice of Jesus Christ. So both of these elements we must hold to.

I might also say, "Who sought the sinner in infallible grace?" We say, "Who gave the Son?" It was the Father. Who sought the sinner in infallible grace? Who awakened us to the conviction of sin? Who brought us to eternal life? Why, it was God. It was God who, in love, sent the Son. It is God the Holy Spirit who, in love, moves in the hearts of the elect and brings them to Jesus Christ. Our salvation is a salvation of love, but it is also a righteous salvation and there is no antinomy between the two. Therefore, the biblical doctrine is, that Christ died as a penal satisfaction rendered to the justice of God by means of his substitution of himself for us, securing for us a perfect acceptance with God, a righteous standing before God, all traceable to the love of a heavenly Father. I know you're surprised, but I'm going to stop early.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the substitutionary work of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we thank Thee that it stands the test of inspection and investigation. And we worship Thee as the great triune God who, at infinite cost to the three persons of the Trinity, have provided for us a salvation that is perfect and complete in every way. May, oh God, our response be the response...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]