



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Acts 15:1-11

“Salvation, part I”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Well, I want to say that the first thing that I was impressed about Community Bible was what I noticed when I came over here on Monday or Tuesday and looked at your, to me, new auditorium. And I'm so glad to see that this auditorium has been built, and it makes a very good impression. And we would congratulate you on what has happened. Now that may be very late, but I haven't been over here since you were in the old arrangement. It's a pleasure to be here and to relieve Bob Deffinbaugh of the temperature. I understand he's in Washington. I talked to him ahead of time. He said he was going to escape from Texas and not suffer with the rest of us. But I'm happy to be here and I appreciate the invitation to come over to Community and to speak to you in these two Sundays, this Sunday and the next Sunday.

Now I'd like to explain the four page introduction that I gave the office which they have printed up for you. What this is is not an outline of what I'm going to talk about, but it is an outline of the problems that the message, the two messages, I'm to give are directed towards. Let me just say a few words about it. Now many of you may know all about this, and you'll just have to follow along with me. But I know there are some here who may not have heard much about the declaration, Evangelicals and Catholics Together, a great deal of discussion has taken place over it, and as a matter of fact, so

much discussion has taken place over it that there is a second document, or a second declaration which is another declaration concerning the same thing that has been published, and it is called *The Gift of Salvation*. And *Evangelicals and Catholics Together* is the document that I would like to say something about.

It is an attempt on the part of a number of Roman Catholics and a number of Evangelicals leading Evangelical individuals. One of them, for example, is Jim Packard, J.I. Packard, who wrote the book that is circulated so widely *Knowing God*, and a number of other evangelicals are signatory to that document *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*. And the purpose of the discussions and the purpose of the declaration and the second declaration as well with some additional names as signators is to bring Evangelicals and Catholics together to acknowledge that they are both believing Christians and ultimately no doubt to have a general union of the two groups, although that's not stated so specifically at this point. But in that document those individuals who signed it have affirmed together, the Catholics and the Evangelicals, that each of these groups are believers together, members together of the body of Christ.

Now there are a number of Evangelicals who have been very disturbed about that and disturbed for this reason, that they do not believe that the terms by which the Roman Catholic church teaches that an individual becomes a member of the church are terms that Evangelicals can support, and fundamentally, just state this right at the beginning, fundamentally the debate begins with the Doctrine of Baptism. The Roman Catholic church believes that an individual receives the righteousness that saves, that is sufficient for salvation, through water baptism. In other words, when an individual is baptized by water he enters into relationship with the Triune God in heaven. Specifically in the Council of Trent which is the historic document of the Roman Catholic church's doctrines, specifically it is stated that when a person is baptized in water righteousness is poured into them as the water signified in baptism indicates. So that actually the Latin term that is used, for those of you taking a little Latin, is “*infundo*” which means “to pour into.” So

when a person is baptized in water righteousness is poured into them and they become members of the church, recognized as individuals who are genuine Christians.

Evangelicals, of course, do not agree with that. They believe that when a person believes and only believes, truly believes, that individual is born again and receives the declaration of righteousness on his heart. He is declared by God to be righteous. So Evangelicals believe that we are justified by faith alone, by Jesus Christ alone, that is through his work alone, and not through any work such as baptism.

Now this is very important, seems very minute, but it's a very important distinction that must be recognized because of the difference is the difference of the possession of divine righteousness or not. Can we be saved by a sacrament? Or must we be saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in our Lord Jesus Christ alone? That's the essential question.

Now what has been startling about it is the fact that so many Evangelicals have signed their names to these documents. Some men teaching on faculties that I have taught on, I would never have guessed in my life, for example, that Jim Packard, would have signed a document like this. To him, to Jim, I owe a great deal; a remarkable student of Christian theology, and has had a remarkable ministry. Some of the others have been on faculties with me. I do not understand how and why they have put their name to this document because it suggests that a person can become a member of the church of Jesus Christ through a sacramental act such as baptism.

Now the two texts that I have chosen for my two Sunday mornings bear on this point. I hope you will get the four pages, I thought everybody, if it's been passed out that's fine. I hope you will read them and ponder them, and then when I'm here next week if you have questions or if you want to call me over the telephone during this week, you may call me. I give you permission to do that. That's a great permission. [Laughter] And ask me any questions that you may find on here that you find puzzling, but the aim of it is just to set forth essentially what I have told you. I have particularly at this point, or I would at this point recommend that you read page three and the statements that are made

there concerning justification by grace alone and by faith alone and the things that go on to page four which have to do with what the Roman Catholic church specifically says concerning baptism and salvation.

Now I was sitting at my little chair at night frequently before going to bed, and I was reading in a book that had a number of little stories that were supposed to be amusing, and I was reading them and I finally found one that I thought that's one that I should say something about this morning. And in fact I want to say it to you.

There was a speaker who got up and said, “I have only ten minutes and hardly know where to begin.” And someone shouted out in the audience, “Begin at number nine.” Well that's kind of how I feel. I have so much to say and so little time to say it so I'm just going to have to hit the high spots of Acts chapter 15 verse 1 through 11, but this particular passage is a very significant passage because it touches just what we are talking about in this declaration. This is the passage that has to do with the Council of Jerusalem which was dated about 49 AD. Most scholars date it right at that time.

Now, like other biblical expressions the Council of Jerusalem is not really an accurate designation of it for the simple reason, among others, that it was not really a council. It was an agreement in which some individuals came together to discuss a point. So it was not really what we would call a council. There are many things like that in the Bible. We have the Great Commission, the Lord's prayer, the Apostle's Creed, and things like that that are not always really accurate. And this one is not really accurate, but nevertheless it's that thing that has been used. So here then the first Council of Jerusalem, and as I say, like other biblical expressions it's not really accurate. Incidentally you could say it's not even a convention of delegates. It's a meeting of Antioch with Jerusalem. As if, for example, Ft. Worth and Dallas should come together, and we'd call it the Council of Something or other. Paul and Barnabas are there for consultation. They're not there to give a significant decree, but they are simply there for discussion. The authority of this council is not the authority of the whole Evangelical church. It's simply the authority of

the apostles and elders, and so we call it the Council of Jerusalem, but strictly speaking it isn't quite that.

Now the consultation involved the principle of grace in human salvation, and so therefore it touches precisely what Evangelicals and Catholics Together touches because after all, the question about baptism and salvation is ultimately the question of shall we be saved through an act, or shall we be saved on the principle of divine grace. We're not surprised that there is strife because there is always strife when you have something like this, when grace is at stake because the natural man does not like to think that the only way by which he receives salvation is by divine grace, that it's free. He naturally, because of his fallen state and his fallen mind, wants to think that he must do something in order to be saved, and Christianity, of course, as you know in this congregation I know, Christianity is grounded upon the principle of grace not the principle of works. So, the principle of grace was at stake here, but people didn't realize that. And there are a lot of individuals today who do not realize that if we add the necessity of the act of baptism in order to be saved after we acknowledge the principle of faith that by so doing we have turned away from the gospel of the grace of God. They do not realize that. They must come to understand it. And the apostles in the Book of Acts make that very plain if you read carefully what they are saying. The cross is the offense of humanity. The cross of Jesus Christ which suggests to us that it's necessary for someone to pay the penalty of our sins, all of them, that we cannot pay them ourselves, that is an offense to the self-righteousness of fallen sinners, which we all are since what happened in the Garden of Eden. Morality, it's an offense against morality because works cannot justify it.

The man who led me to the Lord, Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse, in one of his messages before he went on to be with the Lord, made the statement that, “Character can take you to hell, but it will never take you to heaven.” Now biblically that is true. The cross is not only an offense to morality; it's an offense to philosophy because its appeal is not to the wisdom of man. Its appeal is to faith. It is an offense to culture because its truths are

revealed to the simple as is made plain by Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 26. It's an offense to the sense of caste which frequently we have in our human society because God, according to Scriptures, chooses the poor and the humble. It's an offense to the will of man because the gospel calls for the unconditional surrender of the human will. James chapter 1 verse 18, I don't have time to read that now because I'm already at point seven or eight in the ten, so I won't say anything about it. You look it up. It's an offense to the human will. It's an offense to human pride because it reveals the exceeding sinfulness of the human heart. And it's an offense, finally, to man, himself, because it declares him to be dead and that he must be born again. That's precisely what Scripture says about us. No act of baptism could bring us out of death into life. Now we might have thought that Cornelius' salvation, for those of you who know the chapters preceding which have to do with the salvation of this Roman centurion, we might have thought that his salvation settled the problem of Gentile salvation. As a matter of fact back in chapter 11 and verse 18 we read, “When they heard these things they became silent; they glorified God, saying, ‘Then God has also granted to the Gentiles (this, of course, is the centurion) granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.’” That would have, it seemed, made very plain that the Gentiles could be saved just as the Jewish people could be saved, but that was an incident in Cornelius' life, and the church had not yet grasped the significance of it. There is another point about it, however, that we might make, and that is that Cornelius' salvation, because remember Peter was preaching, and while he was preaching, the Holy Spirit fell upon Cornelius as he gave out a gospel text, and so it was clear to them that it was not necessary to be circumcised, the Old Testament sacrament, in order to be saved since the Holy Spirit fell upon him before he had any experience of having been circumcised. You might have thought that that would have settled the question in the early church, but that only concerned the fact of salvation. They learned from that incident that Gentiles could be saved. But the question of the method of salvation is still

at issue. And that's what we're talking about in the rest of the Book of the Acts, for that matter, and in the second texts that I want to use in the Book of Galatians in our next study. So the fact of salvation was made plain when Cornelius was brought into the knowledge of our Lord by the Holy Spirit, but now we're dealing with the method of salvation. How is a man saved?

Now we are standing many hundreds of years after the events that happened in the days of Cornelius and Peter and Paul, so in Evangelical churches we are often well taught in the fact that it is by grace through faith alone that we come to the possession of the righteousness that satisfies God. But going back to the century in which this was not plain at all, we have individuals who are wrestling with questions that were big questions. And they didn't have the answers that you and I have if we are reading the Bible. So in Acts chapter 15 beginning in verse 1 and we are in Antioch, some individuals, we read, came down from Judea and taught the brethren, and these were Jewish professing believers, came down from Antioch and taught the brethren unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved. Now these individuals apparently are the same individuals who are referred to by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 2:12. I can just imagine what they look like. I don't know the precise clothes that they wear, but I think of them as gloomy long-faced kill-joys going around hanging gospel crepe. And even Peter was disturbed when they came to Antioch when he was there. So even he dissembled with them. So Paul had to stand up and say something about it. In verse 1 we read, “And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’” Now remember this, the rite of circumcision originally indicated the inefficacy of the flesh. It was a figure, of course, to explain that our human activity, our human flesh is not sufficient to gain for us salvation. We cannot do it. What it especially taught though, unfortunately to some, was that the ritual is necessary before we receive the right relationship with the Lord God. Now, if that had continued in the Christian church then,

of course, today we would have had a ritual, the undergoing of a ritual, as necessary to be saved. And in many of our professing Christian churches that's precisely the situation. Not simply the Roman Catholic church, but in a number of other churches the same essential idea is prominent and if you speak to many of the individuals who are members of a number of the professing Christian churches you will find them tracing their salvation back to their baptism. "Are you a Christian?" "Yes." "How do you know it?" "I was baptized."

I remember one man when I was a pastor of a church here in Dallas that wanted to join the church that I was the pastor of, and we had the custom of going out and visiting with them to find out something about their spiritual condition, and I asked this man was he a Christian. He said, "Yes." And I said, "How do you know you're a Christian?" He said, "I was baptized by Dr. Truett." Well now Dr. Truett is a wonderful man and has had a wonderful ministry in the city of Dallas, but Dr. Truett's baptism did not confer salvation. What he thought was that by undergoing water baptism in the First Baptist Church of Dallas that made him a Christian. In other words, it was that specific physical act that brought him into the church of Jesus Christ. Paul says, "It's by grace through faith that we are saved, not of works, lest any man should boast." So essentially, this is the problem. Now we read in verse 2 here, "Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them." I'm so thankful for the individuals here and there in the history of the Christian church who have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit. They didn't gain it from their own wisdom. They've been enlightened by the Holy Spirit to see that salvation is through the principle of grace, grace apart from works. So these individuals said you must be circumcised. That word, as I said, indicated the inefficacy of the flesh, but Paul and Barnabas didn't like that. And so in verse 2, Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them. I like that expression, "No small dissension with them" because actually what it was was what we call an explosion. In fact the Greek term is the term "stasis," and I know everyone in this audience is familiar

with the expression “static” because that’s the word from which our English word “static” comes. There was a whole lot of evangelical static about that fact that some were requiring that an individual should be circumcised in order to be saved is over against the Pauline doctrine. We are saved by grace through faith. So it was an explosion.

I can imagine how the argument went. Standing over on one side was the Jewish man, Jewish Christian man, because they were Christians, they were confused at this point. All that we know had not been revealed yet. I can imagine them saying, “Well I understand why circumcision is necessary. Remember Abraham was circumcised. And Paul tells us that we are the children of God, children of Abraham by faith, and so if Abraham was circumcised why shouldn't we be circumcised?” And then I can imagine some of those students there who were like the students of the word of God in Community Bible Church, and so they would respond, would they not, like the Apostle Paul responded in Romans chapter 4 when this question came up. And in verse 9 he’s talking about justification by faith. Now if I’m giving you accolades you don't deserve, don't say anything about it. I don't know yet. But in verse 9 of Romans 4 the apostle’s arguing this very point because undoubtedly it had been raised many times. Why should we not be circumcised? Why must we not? Abraham was; our great head of the family of the faithful. Paul says, “Does this blessedness,” this is Romans 4:9, “Then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness.” See Abraham was justified by faith and he was circumcised. How then was it accounted?

In other words, we know Abraham was justified by faith but how was he justified? And when was he justified? And Paul says, “While he was circumcised or uncircumcised?” And here is the climatic statement. “Not while circumcised but while uncircumcised.” In chapter 15 of the Book of Genesis we are taught about Abram’s justification, but it’s not until chapter 17 that we read about his circumcision. So he was justified before he was circumcised. The justification came from his faith. When we read, “Abraham believed

God and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” So not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised, and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised. See the point? So the apostle had already argued this point, but this people didn't know it yet. Just like so often, we don't realize what has already taken place in the discussions of the doctrines of the word of God. So anyway, that's what happened.

So the individuals have made their trip now, let me find my place again, they've made their place now back to the question at issue. And we read in verse 3 that they went up to Jerusalem in order to settle the question. Where they visited on the way we don't know. They might have stopped by to see Cornelius. They might have stopped to see Philip. They arrived in Jerusalem, we read in verses 4 and 5, and when they arrived in Jerusalem they didn't find all of the great doctrines of justification through faith and grace alone that you might expect. But in Jerusalem there wasn't a whole lot of joy at this time, sour, somber, sepulchral, and sanctimoniousness. They were sympathizers with the Judaizers because circumcision was something the Jews had done for centuries, and they had come to attach their salvation with a sacramental act. What an error. What a mistake theology to attach your salvation to a sacramental act when we are told, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

So they have a public meeting. The apostles and elders lead the meeting, and Peter, after a good bit of disputation, stands up and speaks. And in verse 7 through verse 9 he recounts the illustration of Cornelius. “And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: ‘Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.’” He's referring to Cornelius and the salvation that occurred while he was preaching and the Holy Spirit fell upon Cornelius in token of his reception of salvation. “So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just

as He did to us, 9 and made no distinction between us (Jewish believers) and them, purifying their hearts by faith,” “Purifying their hearts by faith.” Now this is so important for us because what we are seeing is that sacramental salvation, that is the receiving of the benefits of Christ’s work, the receiving of divine righteousness, and the standing before God as righteous, is not related to a sacramental act, and not related to something that we do. As I’ve said, I’ve already cited the text twice in Ephesians chapter 2 verse 8 and 9 Paul says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

Now I want to suggest to you this, and I think it’s very important, and if I could I would like to discuss this with some of the signers of that document or declaration, Evangelicals and Catholics Together because what is a work? Well to me, and I think this is biblical, a work in the sense in which the Apostle Paul and others mean a work, the work is something that is physical. It’s something that is material, or material instrumentality is involved. It is something that is visible. That is you can see a work accomplished. And it is something that attached to it is human agency.

Now let’s think about the act of circumcision because that is said to be a work.

Circumcision is a physical act. It’s similar to baptism in this sense. Circumcision is performed by the use of a knife. Baptism is an act that is performed by the use of water. So we have a knife and water. Circumcision is a material act. It has to do with a material thing, a knife. Baptism is a material act. It has to do with water. Circumcision is a visible act. As a matter of fact in Jewish circles where circumcision takes place constantly, and in among Gentiles where circumcision is practiced there are usually those who observe it. And it’s a very significant thing among the Jews. In fact there will be spectators who will see a circumcision of an infant. So we can say with reference to circumcision, it’s a physical act. It’s a material act. It’s a visible act. And it’s carried on by human agency.

Now I suggest to you baptism is the same thing. Baptism is a physical act. It’s performed with a material instrumentality. It’s a visible act, and it’s performed by human agency. In

other words, if we insist that salvation comes through the act of baptism we are committing the same mistake that the Jewish people made so frequently which was never intended because we saw in Abraham's case, he was justified before he was circumcised. It was the faith that he had that justified him, not the resulting circumcision. We are making the same kind of mistake that the Jewish people made in the time of Paul and Peter, and that particular error was something that they had to speak out so strongly against. Let me remind you again in the Roman Catholic doctrine the Council of Trent spells all of this out and that's still the official doctrine of the Roman Catholic church, that if one is to be justified, one must experience baptism. Water baptism is the means by which we enter into the faith. It is called in roman literature, I cited this in one place on page 2 or 3, and it's the laver of regeneration. So when an infant is baptized, when an adult is baptized they are at that point by the water regenerated, born again. That's what the word means.

Now I know you're thinking, "My goodness is it as strong as that?" Yes, it's as strong as that. The reason it's as strong as that is because if we do not understand the grace of God, if we do not understand that the salvation we have comes from the work of God alone, what have we done? Well we have torn away from Jesus Christ the glory of his saving work. We're taken it to ourselves. We in a sense have taken what belongs to him and have made it our own. The apostle makes that very plain, and some others have made a great deal about that.

I want to read you something. I won't tell you who this man is; it might upset some of you. His name has six letters in it. [Laughter] But anyway, he points out three important reasons that force the Apostle Paul to protest at this case, over this issue. "First, if law keeping is necessary then salvation is bound to works, whereas it should be founded on the grace of Christ. And remember circumcision is the act that begins the keeping of the law. In fact it's kind of the symbol for the whole keeping of the law. Therefore when Paul saw the cult of the law being set over against the free righteousness of faith, it was

not right for him to be silent. It's not right for me to be silent if I understand this I'm suppose to speak to you about it and others about it. Unless I want to abandon Jesus Christ and his salvation, and I'm not willing to stand up for him and what the Scriptures teach. For when his adversaries deny that anyone will be saved unless he keeps the Law of Moses, that is the act of circumcision, translated into the New Testament age, unless he's baptized in water, they snatched away the glory of salvation from Christ and were transferring it to works. It's not a trifling matter, to strip faithful souls of the liberty acquired by the blood of Christ from confinement under the childish custody of the law. Such teaching poured out darkness on the light of the gospel or at least interposed something like dark clouds so that Christ the Son of righteousness might not send out his full splendor. He therefore took up the flight not on behalf of the external uncircumcision of the flesh, but for the salvation of men by grace. And secondly to set godly consciousness free from the curse of the law and the guilt of eternal death and finally that with the removal of all obstacles the splendor of the grace of Christ might shine out again as though in a clear and serene sky.”

This is what we are talking about my Christian friend; we're talking about the shining out of the clear doctrine of the grace of Jesus Christ in human salvation. I love what John six-letter last word says about this. I also take into account that those rascals, that's what Calvin called them, those rascals who want to make the gospel a gospel of works instead of a gospel of grace were doing serious harm to the law in impiously or impiously corrupting the proper use of it.

Now, in our day we have the same old thing taking place with Evangelicals and Catholics Together. What is Rome's doctrine? Let me sum it up. As a friend of mine, in fact the man who led me to the Lord, used to sum it up. According to Romanism, original sin is removed by the waters of baptism. Daily sins are removed by the non bloody sacrifice of the Mass. The Council of Trent, the official doctrine, states “Let him be a cursed who saith that sins are not removed by the non bloody sacrifice of the Mass.” Venial sins, the

smaller sins, forgivable sins are removed by the oil of extreme unction. Other sins removed by purgatory, really it should be called purge-atory but purgatory is the term. That of course is the doctrine of the Roman Catholic church.

In Hebrews chapter 1 and verse 3 where the Apostle Paul says something, or the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, I should say, says something that touches on the point. He says in chapter 1 and verse 3 of this great epistle, “When He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,” that’s the only purgatory in the New Testament, that which our Lord had done. So, what’s left for the cross of Christ my Christian friend? When water, bread, oil and fire remove sins, what does the blood do? If so much is done by works, little is done by grace. As a matter of fact grace is cancelled by the requirement that these things are necessary for salvation.

Now Peter, they didn't tell me when to stop so I just assumed I could go as long as I want to. I'm only about point three now, [Laughter] out of ten. Now the Judaizers were testing because they refused to acknowledge the right of Peter and the apostles to admit the Gentiles into the family of God. So in verse 10 Peter says,

“Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? 11 But we believe (now this is his summary) But we believe (we, we apostles) But we (apostles) believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.”

Now what does Peter indicate by saying “That we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that we shall be saved?” He’s just simply saying as plainly as it can be said we’re not saved by sacramental works. We are saved by grace. And he defines a sacramental work as not compatible with the principle of divine grace. So the work of baptism is not compatible with free grace. It’s a work. Sitting at the Lord’s table is not compatible with grace if we use that as a means of salvation, if we are saved by

eating the bread and drinking the wine. If we think we are, we are violating the principles of the grace of God. So, the apostle is simply making the point that we are saved by grace and not otherwise.

One of the men who has meant so much to me through the years was Charles Haden Spurgeon, and I must confess I still love to read Charles Haden Spurgeon. I'm going to read something that I thought was rather touching, and he is the author of it in one of his expositions of the gospel. He says, “I think it's very clear again from the text that the apostles did not believe in salvation by the natural force of free will. I fail to detect a trace of the glorification of free will. Peter puts it, ‘We believe that we shall be saved through our unbiased will, through the volitions of our own well balanced nature, not at all sir, but we believe through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved. He takes the crown from off the head of man in all respects and gives all glory to the grace of God. He extols God the gracious sovereign who will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy and who will have compassion upon whom he will have compassion.’ I wish,” Mr. Spurgeon said, “I had a voice of thunder to proclaim in every street of London this glorious doctrine by grace, ‘You are saved through faith and that not of yourselves. It's the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.’ This is the old reformation doctrine,” Spurgeon says. “This is the doctrine that will shake the very gates of hell if it be but faithfully preached. Oh for an army of witnesses to publish abroad the gospel of grace of God in its sovereignty, in its omnipotence and it's fullness.” And we can say today, surely some of you in this audience with me and others just as he has said, “Oh for an army of witnesses to publish abroad the gospel of grace of God.” He says some other wonderful things. We don't have the time to talk about them.

The man who led me to the Lord, Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse, to whom I referred earlier, said, “Many people think of God as a professor who gives exams to men to determine if they qualify for heaven and the passing mark is seventy, but if God's passing mark is seventy, then heaven is thirty percent dirty. If the passing mark is ninety-nine

then heaven is one percent dirty. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” And I can hear Dr. Barnhouse saying this next sentence. “God cannot, cannot, cannot, cannot accept human righteousness. He will not take that which smells of Adam. He will only accept that which comes from Jesus Christ.” So, Peter says, I must stop now. I’m not through, but I’m going to stop. He says, “But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.” So, we’re all familiar with the Apostle’s Creed which is at best incidentally a 2nd century product, not a 1st century product, so we believe in circumcision, baptismal regeneration? No, we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they. We believe in doing ones best, turning over a new leaf in religion? No, with Peter we say, “We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.” We believe that the morally good need him and may be saved through him by their moral good works? No, “We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that we shall be saved even as they.” The moralists, too, those who believe in good works, who like good works, who perform some good works, although that’s questionable before a person is saved, they too need to come to the fountain, the fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel’s veins to be saved by the saving work of Jesus Christ.

We don't say we would come if we're better. The Scriptures tell us to “come just as we are” because “as we are” is the condition in which we need the fountain. And so, my time is three minutes gone. No one’s told me when to stop, incidentally. I appreciate the grace of that marvelous omission. But I have come to the end of what I wanted to say, not that I could not say more, [Laughter] but I have come to the end of what I intend to say. And I just want to stress the fact again we do not say we would come if we were better. What the Scriptures say in the invitation it gives to us is, “Come as you are.” All of us have offended the holiness of God. All of us stand under the judgment of sin. Come

just as you are to him and receive as a free gift the saving ministry of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Thank you very much for inviting me. Next week if possible read my four pages because it will give you some idea of the struggle that I'm talking about. It's still going on. It's actually a little stronger now than it was. And read the Epistle to the Galatians, and we'll seek to show that this is not something we find only in Acts chapter 15, but it's something the apostles universally taught. Now I don't know what you do at the end of your service, but I'm going to have a word of pray and then turn it over to you and whatever you'd like to do, do. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for the ministry of the apostles found in the Bible that we carry about with you, so important to us, so marvelous, so delivering in its great almighty power to take us from our sins into the possession of a righteousness that is acceptable to Thee. We are thankful Lord, and we pray that if there should be some in this audience who have not yet believed in him that they may at this very moment, if it should by Thy will, may they come to Thee and receive the gift of everlasting life...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]