



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

The Theology of the Reformers

TRANSCRIPT

“The Relevance, History and Biblical Foundation of Justification by Grace”

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for another opportunity to study the Scriptures tonight. We pray Thy blessing upon the class we are beginning at the moment, and then the others that begin in an hour. We pray that Thy hand may be upon us and that we may truly learn from the things that we study, matters concerning Christian doctrine and Christian practice that will help us in our Christian lives.

We commit the time to Thee. We thank Thee for the Lord Jesus who has made it possible for us to know Thee and also to be together in the study of the Scriptures. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Tonight is the first in a series of studies which we want to undertake over a rather lengthy period of time which I given the general title of, The Theology of the Reformers. But tonight we are beginning the first of the series, which will be a seven part study of the doctrine of justification by grace. This will be the first of the doctrines of the Reformers that we shall study, and we hope when we finish this one to study other doctrines that the Reformers regarded as extremely important.

Our topic tonight is “The Relevance, History and Biblical Foundation of Justification by Grace.” Now, I would like to ask you to turn with me, just tonight for the reason that I would like for you to see the expression, justification or justification by grace

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in Scripture. So will you turn with me to Titus chapter 3 and listen as I read verses 4 through 7. Titus chapter 3 verse 4 through verse 7. The apostle writes,

“But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

Luther – I should say this. I have entitled this justification by grace rather than justification by faith for a specific reason. It is not uncommon for individuals, who do not really believe in the Reformers’ idea of justification by faith to say that they accept the doctrine of justification by faith. It is today for example very popular in the Roman Catholic Church for its theological leaders to say that they accept the doctrine of justification by faith, and that really there was no reason for the Lutheran Reformation to have occurred in the severity in which it occurred, because we, they say, do accept the doctrine of justification by faith.

And I am not accusing them of dishonesty. They do think, many of them, that they accept the doctrine of justification by faith. But it is fair to say that when they go on to explain what faith is, their idea of faith is not the same as the idea of faith that the Reformers believed. So while they used the term, justification by faith, they mean something different than that which the Reformers meant by justification by faith.

I believe it is much clearer, anyway, to speak of justification by grace. If we wanted to add to it, we could say justification by grace through faith, but justification by grace lays stress upon the freeness of our justification, and I think that is where this emphasis should rest.

Luther called justification by faith *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*, which means “the article of a standing and falling church.” In fact, he also called it *fundamentalissimus articulus*, “the most fundamental article.” So in effect, what Luther was saying was this, that the church stands or falls upon its understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith.

G.C. Berkouwer, who has written a book entitled, *Faith and Justification*, in one of the chapters has this statement, “The confession of divine justification touches man’s life at its heart, at the point of its relationship to God. It defines the preaching of the church, the existence and progress of the life of faith, the root of human security and man’s perspective of the future.”

Now what Professor Berkouwer was trying to say was essential this, that when we talk about the doctrine of justification by faith, we are talking about the doctrine that has to do with our fundamental relationship to God. It defines the preaching of the church, because the preaching of the church should be a preaching of the doctrine of justification by faith, or by grace through faith fundamentally.

J. I. Packer, who has written an article on this subject also has said “The doctrine of justification by grace through faith is like Atlas.” Now we all have a picture of Atlas in our minds, bearing the globe upon his shoulders, and what Professor Packer meant by this was it bears the evangelical doctrine upon its shoulders. Now the reason that he said that was simply this, that all of the fundamental work of the Lord Jesus Christ is directed toward a securing of justification by grace. So, our Lord’s birth, incarnation, his sufferings, his death, his burial, his resurrection, and further, we can go back and even say the divine choice made in ages past: election, foreknowledge, foreordination, calling, all of these things are designed ultimately to lead to a man’s justification by grace.

You can see that very clearly in Romans chapter 8 verse 29 and 30 where the apostle writes, whom he foreknew, he predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, and whom he predestinated, these he called, and those whom he called he justified.

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And those whom he justified he glorified, so, the steps of foreordination and foreknowledge and calling are directed toward the securing of justification by grace. So, when Professor Berkouwer says this is the point of one’s relationship to God and it defines the preaching of the church, and when another theologian has said it’s the central doctrine of the Christian Scriptures, or it’s like Atlas and bears upon its shoulders biblical doctrine, I think we can understand what lies back of these statements. This is a very fundamental teaching of the word of God, then.

The Lutherans who have, I think, put us in their debt, because they have so marvelously stressed the doctrine of justification of grace through faith, have tried to point out that all of the Bible is either law or gospel. Now, translated in the language which you and I might better understand, we could say that the Bible tells us there are two principle by which men may come to know God: one is the principle of law, and the other is the principle of grace. Or, one is the principle of faith as an instrumentality, or the principle of works as an instrumentality.

So that we have law versus grace and faith versus works, and Christianity stresses of course the fact that we are saved by grace and that we are saved through faith. All of the other teaching that man has set forth as religious teaching is teaching that is based upon the principle of law and man’s relationship to God, or that which is the product of that, works.

Now we can say in a sense that the doctrine of justification by faith is the gospel of the five “onlies.” *Sola fide* – that of course means “by faith alone.” Now, you don’t have to know Latin to know *fide* means faith or trust, because you know fiduciary institutions, they are institutions of trust. *Sola fide*. *Sola gratia* – by grace alone. *Solo Christo* – by Christ alone. *Sola scriptura* – by, you understand that, I’m sure, by Scripture alone. *And soli deo gloria* – to God alone be glory.

These five expressions, *sola fide*, *sola gratia*, *solo Christo*, *sola scriptura*, *soli deo gloria*, were important phrases the Reformers used over and over again. Our justification

is by faith alone. By faith alone. Not by faith and works – by faith alone. It was grace alone; that is, it is something that comes to us freely, not on the basis of any merit by which we have attained to by any form of work, whether religious work or secular kind of work.

Solo Christo – by Christ alone. That is, our salvation rests upon the penal, substitutionary sacrifice in the satisfaction of the divine holiness and justice which Jesus Christ himself alone has accomplished. And *sola scriptura* is of course that they depended entirely upon the revelation contained in the word of God, and all of this was designed, ultimately to bring glory to God alone, because you know enough to know, I know, if we have any part in our salvation, then God does not have all the glory. And they insisted that *soli deo gloria* is the characteristic expression of Christianity – to God alone be glory.

Well now, let’s turn in our study to the relevance of justification by grace. There are trio of theological relatives that are the illegitimate offsprings of natural religion, fertilized by the gospel. [Laughter] Now what I mean by that is simply this, that this trio of theological relatives: Pelegianism, Romanism, and Arminianism, are the products of natural religion – that is, human thought, human reason, carnal understanding of spiritual things – fertilized by the gospel – that is, they have come into contact with the truth of Christianity, and they have aspects of Christianity attached to them, but they are not essentially Christian truths and do not proclaim Christian truths.

They are Pelegianism, Romanism, and Arminianism, and justification by grace, rightly understood, overthrows each one of them. I want to just note them briefly. They all of course, are characterized by legalism. That is, in each one of them there is either explicitly or implicitly, work to be performed by man that gains us merit before God.

Now the first, is the legalism of Pelegianism. I know that we could just stop and cite Ephesians 2:8 and 9, and that would be sufficient to overthrow Pelegianism. But, unfortunately, many of us aren’t as well-acquainted with Pelegianism as we ought to.

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Sometimes, we even held Pelegian doctrine and didn’t even know it. And I speak for myself, not for you – I’m not trying to talk down to you, because I’m confessing that in my own preaching in years past, there were some smidgens here and there of semi-Pelegianism, I’m sad to say.

And in fact, if you’re a good, careful listener, you might even find something in a few of the tapes that are still in the library of Believers Chapel. And sometimes people have come to me and asked me to eliminate those things, and I would like to do it, except that I think that it’s probably worthwhile to have the history of the progress of a man’s spiritual think there on tape. [Laughter] I know that it’s not the same thing that happened to President Nixon’s not going to happen to me, [more, loud laughter] so there will be no mysterious 18-minute erasures on the tape [laughter] anywhere. We’ll just leave them as they are and let you have a little fun. Dr. Johnson was untheological in that particular statement.

Augustine made a statement that Pelegius very much resisted. Augustine said, “Give what you command, and command what you will.” Give what you command, and command what you will. Now that was an epigram which the great Augustine wrote in his *Confessions*. Give what you command, and command what you will.

Now Pelegius thought that that was very bad. And in the interests of human responsibility, Pelegius taught that man’s relationship to God should be thought of in terms of capability, of willing and of being, and he used those three Latin words of *possae, velle, and esse*, the infinitives of the verbs that mean “to be able,” “to will,” and “to be.”

He resisted the idea that God gave the capability to perform his own commands. And he thought that that destroyed all human responsibility. We have people today who, when they hear the doctrine of the sovereignty of God in our salvation, they say, Well, that destroys human responsibility. Will this was the thing that Pelegius was disturbed about. He felt that God hand endowed man with capability for doing good, and the

choice of doing it rested with man, so that his responsibility was maintained by virtue of the fact that he at a point had to make a decision to do the will of God or not do it.

So, man according to Pelegius, was able to keep the commandments of God and of course, if man is able to make the decision and has the capability to do the will of God, than what is to prevent man from being entirely without sin? And so it is thought – there is a little question about this – it is thought that Pelegius actually taught that. Some of the things that were written contrary to him had made reference to statements that he made that he thought one or two men in the Old Testament were without sin, such as Daniel – I’ve forgotten whether Joseph was one of the men or not – but nevertheless, that kind of teaching leads ultimately to that.

Now, Pelegianism dose not disturb evangelicalism very much, because we of course know if we read the Bible very much at all, that man is not able to keep the commandments of God. But the question of man’s will is something else. And while Augustine won the battle with Pelegius in the 5th Century, later on semi-Pelegianism arose in which a lot of the biblical doctrines which Augustine wrote were acknowledged, but nevertheless, the decision, ultimately, according to semi-Pelegians, rested upon the decision of man’s will, and so they taught the doctrine of the freedom of the will. That is semi-Pelegianism.

Now, I know that if you listen to evangelical preaching at all, you will discover that almost all of the evangelical preaching in this country today is preaching that is characterized by an appeal based upon the doctrine of the freedom of the will.

Incidentally, when we say that the freedom of the will is the doctrine of Pelegianism, we don’t mean to imply that when man is saved or when he believes in the gospel, he does not exercise his will. That of course is ignorance of the issue to affirm something like that. We do believe that men exercise their will, that they have to exercise their will, we just simply say that that decision is simply a decision that is brought about

by the enabling power of God, and we do not have the power to make a decision for God ourselves, with our will. But we must make a decision of the will.

So, semi-Pelegianism is really the doctrine that has permeated the Christian church to the present time. As you can see, a man who believes ultimately in the freedom of the will believes there is something in man by which he may please God. And so whether he knows it or not -- usually it’s unwittingly -- he proclaims a doctrine of merit before God. Now that is legalism. So that in essence, semi-Pelegianism, or the doctrine of the freedom of the will, is legalistic.

Now the second of this trio of theological relatives is Romanism. We, I’m sure, are acquainted with the legalism of Romanism. The Romanists taught justification by faith formed by love, or furnished with love. *Fides caritate formata* – faith formed by love.

What they taught was that faith began with justification, but the grace of sanctification was imparted through baptism and penance if you lost your salvation. They did not believe in re-baptism. They believed you could lose your salvation, but it was not necessary to be baptized again. The sacrament of penance must be carried out by the person who lost his salvation.

The Romanists denies the imputation of righteousness. They believed that God gave love, the fulfilling of the law in justification. So, what Rome taught, essentially, and still teaches, is a piecemeal salvation, as someone has put it, to be gained by stages, through working a sacramental treadmill. The Reformers taught that when you believed in the Lord Jesus, you were immediately justified; you immediately stood before God with a righteousness acceptable before him. But in Romanism there were certain steps one had to follow.

For example, original sin is removed by the waters of baptism. Daily sin is removed is removed by the non-bloody sacrifice of the Mass. The Council of Trent has said, “Let him be accursed who saith that sins are not removed by the non-bloody sacrifice of the Mass.” Venial, or forgivable sins, are removed by the oil of extreme

unction. Dallasites may remember that this was one of the rites performed on President Kennedy when he was assassinated in Dallas at the hospital, just before he died. A priest was called upon, and the oil of extreme unction, that sacrament, was carried out in conjunction with President Kennedy in order that venial sins might be removed.

Other sins are removed by the fires of Purgatory. Now, you know that the Bible does not teach that there is such a thing as Purgatory. The only Purgatory of the Bible is the Purgatory of Hebrews chapter one and verse 3, where we read that the Lord Jesus has by one sacrifice purged our sins forever and has sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. That is the only purgatory of the Bible. But you can see that where sins are removed by water, bread, oil and fire, what does the blood do? If so much is done by works, little is done by grace.

Now, the legalism of Arminianism is unwitting legalism. Arminianism, historically, divided into two branches. We’ve talked about this before. I just remind you of it. The two branches of Arminianism have been an unevangelical branch, or a liberal branch, a remonstrant church in Holland represents this; and in the evangelical wing are such churches as the Methodist church, the Pentecostal movement, the Wesleyan movement in general. So that evangelical Arminianism stands within the pale of evangelicalism.

But nevertheless, in spite of the fact that Arminianism of the evangelical wing is evangelical, there is an unwitting legalism in their doctrine, because they have accepted, essentially the teaching of the semi-Pelegians, and have believed in the freedom of the will. So, when a God gives grace, in order for man to be saved, but the first step is man’s decision of his will. God gives grace – sufficient grace to believe – but man must make the first movement toward God. So, essentially the same legalism appears.

Robert Traill who was one of the Puritans and a Scot – you know, the Scots loved theology in the earlier centuries, the 19th, the 18th and the 17th. They don’t love it very much at all in the 20th Century, but they did in these centuries. They used to say that every Scot is a theologian, whether they believed in God or not, and what they meant by that

was that all argued about theology and sometimes did some bad things in the name of theology.

But Robert Traill said, “The principles of Arminianism are the natural dictates of a carnal mind, which is enmity, both to the law of God and to the gospel of Christ, and next to the dead sea of popery into which also this stream runs, have since Pelegius to this day been the greatest plague of the church of Christ, and it is likely will be until his second coming.” That is the word of a Puritan Calvinist concerning Arminianism, and probably we should excuse some of the severity of it for that reason.

Let me say just a few words now about the history of justification by grace. Now we won’t have time to deal with a lot of details here, and from time to time in our six following studies, we will turn occasionally to the statements of the creeds in order to illustrate some of the things are saying. But what I want to do now is give a little confessional reconnaissance. That is, we’ll take a look at some of the things that the outstanding Christian creeds of relative recent times have said about the doctrine of justification by faith.

And the first is the Heidelberg Catechism. This catechism was framed by two men, one by the name of Ursinus, and the other by the name of Olevianus -- two men who together with the University of Heidelberg in Germany framed the Heidelberg Catechism to be a kind of guide to preachers in their preaching, as well as a manual of instruction and confession of faith.

In for example one of the questions which this catechism is divided, one of the questions says, “But what does it profit you now that you believe all this?” And the answer that is to be given is, “I am righteous in Christ before God and an heir of eternal life.” This is what the catechism says in connection with the next question, “How are you righteous before God?” – now mind you, this is over 400 years ago, and this is what they were saying. Incidentally, this document is a document that is a very important document for all the Dutch and German Calvinists. “How are you righteous before God?” This is

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what the children would learn when they studied the catechism, “Only by true faith in Jesus Christ, in spite of the fact that my conscience accuses me that I have grievously sinned against all of the commandments of God and have not kept any one of them, and that I am still ever prone to all this that is evil. Nevertheless, God without merit of my own, out of pure grace, *sola gratia*, grants me the benefits of the perfect expiation of Christ, imputing to me his righteousness and holiness as if I had never committed a single sin or had never been sinful, having fulfilled myself all of the obedience Christ has carried out for me, if only I accept such favor with a trusting heart.”

So you can see that this is a document that proclaims the same kind of justification by free grace that evangelicals have preached 400 years ago. I don’t have time to talk about the details. We’ll pass on. We’ll come back to this statement because there are a couple of very interesting things in that statement that would bear a little more exposition.

The Belgic Confession is the second of the three great standards. (When we use the term, standard, theologically, we mean “the creed.” The standard is the standard by which the church’s faith is measured, or by which the individual who belongs to a particular church is measured.) The second of the standards is the Belgic Confession, written in 1561 which draws heavily upon another confession written for the Huguenots by among others, or at least by another, John Calvin.

And again, in Article 22, it is stated, “By faith alone.” Incidentally, let me ask you a question. Is the expression, “justified by faith alone” in the Bible? Raise your hand if you think it is. Oh come on, I know you don’t know the Bible that well [laughter]. There’s one man who says he thinks it is, and the rest of you would, a number of you – it’s not found in the Bible. You’re wise. [More laughter] I must have asked that wrong. I should have said, “Isn’t justification by faith alone found in the Bible?” It’s not found in the Bible, it’s very interesting. But it is found in the German Bible. In Romans chapter 3 verse 28, Luther inserted the word, alone, *alene*. And the Romanists were very quick to

pounce upon this, because they said, look, he’s added a word to the word of God which is not in the Greek text. There’s no basis for that in the manuscript authority.

But Luther was really right in his theology, because you see, there is only one other way to be justified. We’re either justified by law, works, or justified through faith. And if its by faith, it’s by faith alone. In other words, the very fact that we say justified by grace through faith, justifies us in adding the word, alone, because if there were any other thing than faith it would be works. So, if it’s by faith, it’s by faith alone. Faith must stand alone.

Well, this statement is obviously a statement which relies upon that which the Reformers evidently were saying, that men were justified by faith alone. Many of them knew that was not in the Bible. They were expounding the significance of what it means to be justified by faith.

It’s just as Sunday morning we were talking about the second coming, and the Lord Jesus said, “The day or the hour of my coming no man knows, nor angel, but the Father alone.” But when we say the Father alone, we could add, nor Lewis Johnson, nor Sam Storms, nor Tony Emgee, nor the Son. When you say the Father alone, that eliminates everyone else. So the insertion of the phrase, “nor the Son” – I do think it was genuine there; it’s not in some of the manuscripts, however – would be justified for exposition even if it were not found in the text of Scripture.

The Augsburg Confession, or *Augsburg* [German accent] as the Germans would say. 1530. This was a summary of evangelical faith presented to the Emperor Charles V at or for the Diet of Augsburg by Luther and Melancthon and a couple of others. It polemicizes against Rome’s doctrine of free will. And if you are interested in the further significance of the doctrine of bondage of the will, and an attack on the doctrine of free will, then this very famous confession is something you should read, because the Reformers pointed out that men could not please God apart from grace.

Calvin’s attitude toward the Augsburg Confession was that of keen appreciation of it. And in fact, he made a very famous statement about Luther. He said, before he met him, “Though he called me a devil, I shall honor him as one of the foremost of God’s students, of God’s servants.” He did believe that the doctrines that were proclaimed by the Lutherans in the Augsburg Confession were generally the doctrines of God.

The Formula of Concord. The Formula of Concorde is the Lutheran confession that sets Lutheran doctrine forth, and it became a kind of standard for the German Lutherans. It was done following Luther’s death, and it is a little bit milder than some of the things that Luther said, but nevertheless, there is taught in that doctrine the justification by faith alone, *sola fide*. There is taught the forensic or legal character of justification; that is, that in justification we are declared righteous by God through faith on the principle of grace.

And it also taught that there are no degrees in justification, that a man was either just, or he was not just. We’ll say more about this when we deal with the doctrine in further detail, biblically.

And finally, the Westminster Confession. The Westminster Confession is the confession, the dates [of which] are 1643 to 1646. The Westminster Confession of faith represents the Puritan, Calvinistic doctrine. It’s the creedal standard of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and through the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the creedal standard of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

You know, of course, there is a great deal of ferment in the various bodies of Presbyterians over this Westminster Confession of faith, because it contains very fundamental teaching which is not very popular today. And, there is a very serious attempt in several of the bodies of Presbyterians to make the Westminster Confession of faith not the doctrinal standard, but a doctrinal standard among others, which would of course water it down so that it would really have no particular significance.

In the Westminster Confession of Faith, justification by faith is taught. Let me read a sentence or two contained in that confession, in chapter 13. Now if you’re a Presbyterian, you may remember some of these phrases, because they are phrases that appear in the catechism, which most of us who grew up in the Presbyterian church had to become acquainted with. And many of you may have memorized the shorter catechism. I know there are some who have, because you told me, I remember memorizing that when I was little. That may be one of reasons you’re here now, because you memorized some good teaching.

This is what it says concerning justification, “Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth. Not by infusing righteousness (that’s directed toward the Roman Catholics) into them but by pardoning their sins and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous, not for anything wrought in them or done by them, but for Christ’s sake alone, (*solo Christo*, by Christ alone) not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience in satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith, which faith they have not of themselves; it is the gift of God.” Sound doctrine.

Continuing, “Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification (*sola fide*) yet it is not alone in the person justified, but it is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith but worketh in love.” In other words, the person who truly believes will manifest it in love toward God, good works toward fellow Christians and men. That is the inevitable issue of true faith.

Well, in the next section there are about six, six paragraphs that have to do with it. It says, “Their justification is solely of free grace (*sola gratia*).” So, the gospel of the five onlys is found in the Westminster Confession of Faith.

Now let me say a final word or two about the biblical foundation of justification by grace, and what I want to do tonight is simply look at a few of these passages very

briefly, just to read them, just to show you that the doctrine of justification by grace through faith is a doctrine that is taught all through the Bible. In our other studies, we will dealing in detail with certain of the passages. We’ll deal with major passages exegetically in some considerable detail.

But I’d like to give you a kind of overview now, and what I’m going to do is read a few of them. We don’t have time to read them all, and I ask you, if you will, just in your free time, look up all of these passages.

Now, the first of these passages is Genesis chapter 15 verse 6. In a sense, it is the fountainhead of the teaching of the Bible on justification by grace through faith. You know the story of Abraham, and when Abraham looked up into the heavens at the direction of the Lord, he heard the Lord say to him, “So shall your descendents be.” And then we read in verse 6,

“Then he believed in the Lord, and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.”

Incidentally, that is a mistranslation. That little word “as” should never have been used in the NASB. I’m sorry. Many of you have the NASB; it’s a fallible translation. It should not have been rendered in such a way as if it were thought to teach that our faith is reckoned as righteousness. Faith is the instrumentality for the imputation of righteousness, but faith is not accepted for that righteousness. The translators, unfortunately, were former students of mine. [Laughter] They didn’t pay attention, there. They should not have translated it that way. And He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Now the next of the passages, we won’t have time to read these. I’m just going to make reference to them. The second one in Numbers chapter 25 verse 1-13 and Psalm 106 verse 28 through 31 is a very interesting one, and we will study that a little bit in one of our later studies. So I am going to pass that by and ask you to turn over to Isaiah

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chapter 53 and verse 11. Isaiah chapter 53 and verse 11. Now in the great passage on the Suffering Servant of Jehovah, the Prophet writes in the 11th verse,

“As a result of the anguish of His soul,
He will see it and be satisfied;
By His knowledge the Righteous One,
My Servant, (this of course is fulfilled in the ministry of the Lord Jesus) My Servant
will justify the many...”

There again, you have the doctrine of justification, and the details of by grace through faith are spelled out in other places.

Turn to Jeremiah chapter 23 verses 5 and 6. Jeremiah 23 verse 5 and verse 6.

“ ‘Behold, the days are coming,’ declares the LORD,
‘When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch;
And He will reign as king and act wisely
And do justice and righteousness in the land.
In His days Judah will be saved,
And Israel will dwell securely;
And this is His name by which He will be called, (the righteous branch, the Lord
Jesus.

He is called, ‘The LORD our righteousness,’ or *Adonai Tsidkenu*, the Lord our justification.
In other words, this servant, is to be our justification.

Now you know the passage in Habakkuk chapter 2 verse 4. I won’t bother to read that. There the prophet, leaning heavily on Genesis 15:6, says, “The just shall live by faith.” Again, the doctrine of justification by faith, which Paul picks up in Romans chapter

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1 verse 16 and 17, cites that passage, in that passage, and states that in the gospel there is salvation because a righteousness of God is revealed in it from faith to faith as it stands written, “The just shall live by faith.”

And finally, the greatest passage of them all, probably, Romans 3:21 through 26 in which the apostle gives details of justification through faith. We’ll look at that passage in detail later on.

Well let me close by saying this, that man has from time immemorial, how can a man be just with God? And that the apostle gives is, he has saved us, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, that we being justified by grace, justified by grace, should be heirs or become heirs of eternal life. How can a man be just with God? He can only be just by the free grace from a loving God who by his own activity produces within us the response to the atoning work of the Lord Jesus upon which our salvation rests.

So, it is sola fide, sola gratia, solo Christo, on the basis of sola scriptura, only in the word of God for the ultimate goal of soli deo Gloria, to God be the glory. Next time we will pick up our study and go on from there. Let’s close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the privilege of studying the great doctrine of justification by grace through faith, and we pray Lord that it may come to mean something to us of that which it meant to the Reformers. We pray that the same love for the truth may grip us and have its application in our lives. Enable us, Lord, to truly appreciate the significance of the fact that the health of a local church, the health of an individual, the health of the body of Christ depends upon our understanding of this great doctrine by which our relationship to Thee is established and maintained.

Bless in the hour that follows. We pray for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

“The Relevance, History and Biblical Foundation of Justification by Grace” by S. Lewis Johnson
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