



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Galatians 2:15-21; Romans 7:7-12

"Justification by Faith Alone"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] The Scripture reading for this morning a relatively short section from Galatians chapter 2, and I would like to take advantage of that by asking you to turn with me first to a passage in the 7th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans which also bears on the topic that is our subject for the morning. So will you turn to the 7th chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans, and listen as I read verses 7 through 12 of that chapter. Let me remind you that the apostle has stated in the 6th chapter, that "in Christ we have died to sin." And then in the 7th chapter in the 1st six verses, he has pointed out that believers have died to the law. That might raise a question, if we have died to sin and we have died to law, are we then to infer that the law is sin? So the apostle answers that specific question verse 7 through verse 12.

Notice particularly the use that the apostle sees in law, because that is the point at which this chapter is parallel with the passage in Galatians 2.

"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For

without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."

That's the answer to the question, is the law sin? No, the law is holy; the commandment is holy, just, and good. But it is by the law that we come to understand our sin. We turn over now to Galatians chapter 2, and read for our Scripture reading verses 15 through 21. And while you are finding Galatians, let me remind you that in the preceding section the apostle has been speaking about his confrontation with Peter in the city of Antioch, and the necessity he found of rebuking Peter before the entire congregation. Many scholars of the Epistle to the Galatians believe that verses 15 through 21 are a continuation of the message that Paul preached to Peter before that congregation. There are others who think this is a reflection of the apostle as he wrote the epistle, in which he speaks about the principles that were applicable to the situation at Antioch.

But these verses are not specifically verses that he gave Peter when he confronted him at Antioch. In the light of the fact that chapter 3, verse 1 begins, "Oh foolish Galatians who hath bewitched you," am inclined to side with those who say that these are words that the apostle spoke to Peter before the congregation in Antioch. But if that judgment is wrong, the principles that are found in the verses that follow are to be related very closely to the things that Paul was saying to Peter when he confronted him before the church in Antioch. We'll read them as if these are continuations of the apostle's speech that he gave to Peter and to the congregation. He has just said to Peter,

"If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou (that is by your new policy of withdrawing and separating yourself) the

Gentiles to live as do the Jews? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

Let me also point out that twice we had in this verse the expression, "the faith of Jesus Christ." Now, notice it is the faith of Jesus Christ in our Authorized Version. You might gain the impression from this that what Paul is saying is that we justified by the faith that belongs to Christ, that is by his faith. But that is not a biblical idea. We do not find justification by his faith, but by our faith in him. The Greek text probably is to be translated "faith in Jesus Christ" both here and later on. So, we'll read it then that "we might be justified by the faith that is in Christ." It is for grammarians an objective genitive. "By the faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin?" Incidentally, the word minister here is the word that is different from the word that is often translated "to minister or to serve. One of the words very commonly used of the New Testament is the word *doulos*; it means "a slave" primarily. That's not what he's saying, is Christ a slave of sin? But he uses another word, which means is therefore Christ the promoter of sin, the servant of sin, in the sense of a minister of it. Paul's answer is,

"God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. (To further explain,) For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I have been crucified with Christ (I'm rendering this as the Greek text put it, I have been crucified with Christ.): and it is no longer I live; but there lives in me, Christ: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith in (again just as above,

an objective genitive) the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not make void the grace of God: for if righteousness comes by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

A very, very important sentiment expressed there in the 21st verse. May the Lord bless this reading of his word. Let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We recognize its importance in the redemptive program, which Thou hast designed for the salvation of men. We thank Thee for all that has led up to it, and for all that has flowed from the resurrection of Christ. And today, as we meet in this auditorium on this the Lord's day, we have the confidence from the word of God that the Lord Jesus Christ is with us. We thank Thee for that marvelous figure that he himself uses of himself as walking amidst the candlesticks of the local churches that name his name.

We thank Thee for the presence of the Lord. We thank Thee for the ministry of the Lord to us. Oh, how we need it. We give Thee thanks for the blood that was shed and for the evidence of its acceptance in the fact that he lives. We ask, Lord, Thy blessing upon us this day and upon the whole church of Jesus Christ today. Wherever the risen Savior is lifted up, may the Holy Spirit accompany the message with conviction and conversion. We thank Thee for the other blessings that are ours through Christ.

We pray for the church, for its membership. We ask, Lord, especially for those who are suffering today on the day of the resurrection, comfort and encourage and strengthen and build up in the faith. We pray for our own assembly of believers here, for our elders and deacons. And we pray that Thou will sustain them, and give them wisdom and guidance as they give us direction in the things of the Lord. Bless the ministry that goes forth from the Chapel. And Lord, we commit it to Thee with the confidence that Thou art a sovereign and purpose-fulfilling Lord God in heaven. As we sing, as we listen

to the word, may we have the sense of Thy blessing in this meeting. For Jesus' sake.

Amen.

[Message] Last night, before I went to bed, I had finished all the preparation that I was going to do for the message that I would be giving this morning. And as I have been doing through the years in expounding books of the Bible, I have always tried to read a new commentary or read something that I have not read or had not read for a long time, as I think about preparing messages. Even after I have prepared the messages, and since I had not read some of the things that John Calvin had said on Galatians chapter 2, verse 15 through verse 21. At about 12:00 I opened up the commentary of Calvin on Galatians and read a few pages in it, and there was a statement in it that I thought was so good that I copied it down. It does not really have a great deal to do with what I'm saying this morning, [Laughter] but I copied it out and thought I would just read it to you.

He said, "If the death of Christ is our redemption, then we were captives. If it is payment, then we are debtors. If it is atonement, then we were guilty. If it is cleansing, we were unclean." All of these things are true. It is true that we were captives, we were debtors, we were guilty, we were unclean, but the death of Christ is our redemption. It is a payment that was made for us. It is therefore atonement and from it we have cleansing.

The subject for this morning is "Justification by Faith Alone." Luther called justification or *articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiae*. That is, "the article of a standing or falling church." For Luther, the church that preached, proclaimed, and stood for justification by faith, was a church that would stand. A church that abandoned the doctrine of justification by faith was a church that was bound to fall. For him, it was just as simple as that. It is the article of a standing or falling church.

That is not simply an ancient opinion. G. C. Berkouwer, one the outstanding contemporary theologians, Professor of Dogmatics at the free university of Amsterdam for many years, wrote in a book of his on faith and justification "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, notice that Professor Berkouwer, and I think he's absolutely right, has said that "The confession of divine justification touches man's life at its heart, at the point of its relationship to God."

James Packer, an Anglican theologian perhaps the leading British Anglican theologian has said that "For the doctrine of justification by faith is like Atlas. It bears a whole world on its shoulders, the entire evangelical knowledge of God the Savior. The doctrines of election, of effectual calling, regeneration, and repentance, of adoption, of prayer, of the church, the ministry, and the sacraments, are all to be interpreted and understood in the light of justification by faith, for this is how the Bible views them." Luther also said, he had lots of things to say about justification by faith, he said was the "the principal article of all Christian doctrine." And then I like this statement because it really applies to our studies in the Epistle to the Galatians. "Most necessary it is therefore, that we should know this article well, teach it unto others, and BEAT IT INTO THEIR HEADS CONTINUALLY. For as it is very tender, so it is soon their hurt."

Now, you know what I'm doing, I'm trying to beat it into our heads continually, this doctrine of justification by faith. I say all of this about justification by faith, because today for the first time in our studies of Galatians, we come to the word justify in this epistle. Now, we're going to have a great deal to say about it, that is Paul, and this poor preacher of Paul. But this is the first time that we come to the word justify, and we notice it in the 16th verse of the 2nd chapter. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law," so this is the first occurrence of the word justify in the Epistle to the Galatians, and if Galatians is the first Epistle that Paul wrote, as I am inclined to believe that it is, it is the first occurrence of the word justify in the writings of Paul. You notice as you read through these verses that it is very frequent in this little section. Three times it appears in the 16th verse. It again appears in the 17th verse. And in its noun form it appears also in

the 21st verse, being translated there in my version by righteousness. It could be translated justification. "For if justification comes by the law, the Christ is dead in vain."

The "Great Confrontation" has been described by the apostle. He, Paul the Apostle has confronted Peter first among equals of the twelve, and he has rebuked Peter before the entire congregation at Antioch, because his actions in withdrawing from the Gentiles and eating only with the Jews have obscured the grace character of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The apostle knew doctrine of papal primacy, because here he rebuked the first bishop of the church at Rome to his face, in the presence of the whole of the congregation in Antioch. I am taking the view point that these words that follow continue Paul's' address to Peter. But whether that is so or not, these thoughts are undoubtedly true thoughts that have to do with the issue that was raised in Antioch.

So now, he continues with his words to the Apostle Peter concerning the doctrine of justification by faith. As I have looked at these verses, it seems to me that they fall into three parts. There is a declaration in which the apostle states very emphatically that justification is by faith. Then he asks a question. I have used in the outline the word interrogation, there is a question, does faith justification make Christ the minister of sin? The answer is an objection that would have been raised by Jewish believers and readers. And finally, in expounding the justification by faith, he turns to his own experience, and using that as the background, speaks about the Mosaic Law in its relation to life, in its relation to the cross, in its relation to grace. So that's the ground that we want to cover in a few moments this morning.

Job, a long time ago, asked a question in the 9th chapter of his book. He said, "I know it is so of a truth, but how should man be just with God?" Well, that question is a question the apostle answers very emphatically in the words that are before us. And the answer that the apostle would give to Job is simply this, "A man may be just with God through faith in Jesus Christ." It would, I think, be good for us to think about one of the great credal statements of justification against the background of these words of Paul. In

the Westminster Confession of Faith's, in the 13th chapter, there are several paragraphs on the doctrine of justification. I am reading only the first two of them. The Confession says, and with this confession I agree, "Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth." Notice the word freely, "He freely justifieth, not by infusing righteousness 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; not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and 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."

Then they continue, "Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification; yet it is not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh in love." Now, you can see from this that according to the authors of that great confession, justification is grounded not in what we do, but in the work that Christ did on the cross on Calvary. Our ultimate hope is simply Jesus Christ in his saving work. We do not rest in any way upon our merits, nor works of any kind. We rest on what Christ has done for us. Furthermore, we do not rest in our faith, nor is our faith the product of our own activity. Our faith is the gift of God, and is simply the instrument by which we receive that which Christ has done for us. So when it comes to the ultimate test of our trust, we can express it in one word, our ultimate trust is Christ as the one who has died for our sins, as the one who has been raised in testimony to our justification. And our faith itself is the gift of God.

Now, of course this kind of faith, and this kind of justifying grace, produces good works in the believer, as the confession of faith has stated. This kind of justification is accompanied by good works, but the good works are the issue of the faith that saves, not the means by which we are saved. Well, the apostle is going to elucidate all aspects of



this in the next chapter or two in the Epistle to the Galatians. His proposition, as stated in chapter 2, in verse 16 is simply, a justification is by Christ alone. He's the external cause of our justification. It is by the gospel alone as the instrumental cause from the divine side, because we do learn of Christ through the word of God, and through grace alone as the internal inciting cause, because it is God's grace that works in our hearts, enabling us to see our need and to see our Lord Jesus Christ as that or as the one who meets our needs; so that salvation is, as Shuler put it a long time ago, "of the Lord," by Christ, by grace alone, by faith alone.

Now, looking at the text specifically he says, "We who are Jews by nature, Peter." Remember he's speaking to Peter. "We who are Jews by nature, Peter." Incidentally, that word nature probably should be rendered "by birth." "We who are Jews by birth, Peter and not sinners of the Gentiles." Now, when Paul speaks of the Gentiles of being sinners, he is speaking of the word in its ceremonial sense. He did not for one moment think that Jews were not sinners, but Gentiles did not have the law. For the law was given to the Jews. Because they did not have the law, they were much more inclined to fall into disobedience of the law. Not having, for example, the ceremonial laws, not knowing about the things that you could eat and could not eat, they were much more liable to violate the terms of the Mosaic Law. And so, that is the reason that the Jews often did not eat with them, because it was embarrassing. They would serve on the table things that the Jews could not eat, the Gentiles not knowing the prescriptions of the Mosaic Law. That's the sense in which he uses the term sinners.

"We who are Jews by birth, and not sinners of the Gentiles, Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law." Here is our word then to justify. Now what does the word to justify mean? It has a number of different meanings in English; to justify means in one sense, in one very common interpretation, "to validate our own position in any controversy." To justify ourselves means to make excuses for ourselves, excuses that explain certain activities. In the Bible, to justify means simply to declare righteous. It

does not mean to make righteous. When the Bible says that we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ, it does not mean that we are made righteous. It means, rather, that God has traditionally in a legal sense, pronounced a verdict of righteousness on our behalf. Now, that is done on the basis of imputation of the merits of the Lord Jesus to us, so that on the basis of the imputation of the merits of the Lord Jesus, accomplished in the shedding of his blood; on the basis of the reckoning of those merits to us, God declares that the believer in the Lord Jesus is justified.

Condemnation is a legal term, and justification is the opposite of it. It is to be declared righteous. I'm going to ask you, if you will, to turn over to Romans chapter 2, and let me read two verses, which I think will explain the point that I'm making. We will be talking about this again, because it's that important. But it's good to have at least an introduction to it today. Romans chapter 2, in verse 13, the apostle is writing and he states, "(For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." Now, notice that last clause, "the doers of the law shall be justified." Well, now if a man is a doer of the law, he is already righteous. Consequently, it cannot mean that the doers of the law shall be made righteous or made just. If a man is a doer of the law, he is made just by definition. So, when he states that the doers of the law shall be justified, it is obvious that he means that the doers of the law shall be pronounced righteous. They are doers of the law; they shall be pronounced righteous, not made righteous.

Now, if there's any question about that, turn to the 4th verse of the 3rd chapter. The apostle states in Romans 3, verse 4, "God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That Thou mightest be justified in Thy sayings." Now, how is it possible for God to be made just? God is just. So when we justify God, we declare him to be what he really is, so to be justified in Pauline language, is a forensic term, a legal term, which refers to a pronouncement, a divine pronouncement that the person who has received the benefits of the saving work of the Lord Jesus is a man righteous before God.

To be justified then, is to be declared righteous. This incidentally, is the teaching of the Old Testament as well as the New. You can turn to passages in the Old Testament such as Deuteronomy chapter 25, verse 1, you will find the same use of the Old Testament verb *tsadaq* that you have for the New Testament verb *dikaio*. So the expression "to justify" means "to declare righteous."

Now, of course, the person who has been declared righteous and has been given new life will inevitably produce works of righteousness, but the basis of his justification is not his good works. They are the issue of his justification. Now, in order that there may be no confusion about this question at all, Paul in verse 16 states three times that we are not justified by law-works. Notice it, go read it again, because he has stressed it, and I think it would be good for us to stress it, too. Notice this, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law. Incidentally, there are no articles in the Greek text at this point, before the word works or the word law. So he is not talking simply about the Mosaic Law, but about the legal principle. Now, we of course, don't have any doubts about the fact that we are not justified by the Mosaic Law, but is the religion of the man in the street, that he is justified by what he does before God; in other words, a system of merit through legal or through activity, through works.

Paul excludes that, too. His statement is very general, knowing that a man is not justified by law-works, but by the faith of Jesus Christ. "Even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Three times over he has stated we are not justified by law-works. I've wondered about that. It seems to be overdoing it worse than a preacher. A preacher keeps repeating himself. You have beautiful illustrations of that every Sunday, no doubt. The apostle repeats himself three times here, why? Well, for just the reason that I was saying just a minute ago and repeated again. It is the religion of the man of the street in every age that a man is righteous before God on the basis of what he does.

Now, in ancient times in Israel, they began to think that a man could be justified by keeping the commandments of the Old Testament. Today, we think that we can be justified by joining a church, by praying through, by coming down front in a meeting, by raising our hands in a meeting, by being a philanthropist, by having culture, by having acceptable education, various types of things by which we justify ourselves. We think that we can stand before God on the basis of what we do. Now, that is one of the most amazing testimonies, one of the most astonishing testimonies to the doctrine of the human heart that you can find in all of human history. To think of it, this great God in heaven that we are speaking about is an infinitely holy God. And we imagine, we creatures of his creation, fallen creatures at that, we imagine that in the midst of all of our sin and guilt and condemnation, all of our rebellion against him, all of our weakness, all of our failure, we can present him with a righteousness that is acceptable to his infinitely holy nature. Imagine it. Imagine it, it is an astonishing testimony to the darkness of the human heart, that the idea should ever arise in us that we could of ourselves satisfy this infinitely righteous and holy God. That's why Paul has to say it over and over again. "Not by law-works shall a man be justified." "Not by law-works." "Not by law-works."

Now, Paul was a man who believed the Bible above everything else. For him, he argued a great deal, but when it came to proving something, it was a statement from Scripture that satisfied him, and fortunately his readers were of the same mind. The last clause of verse 16, it is not so easily seen in our English translations, is actually a statement derived from Psalm 143, verse 2, where Paul says, "For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." That little word "for," "For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified," introduces the proof. You see, he said it's an Old Testament, or it's a scriptural sentiment that a man is not justified by the things that we do, but we are justified only through faith in the Lord Jesus.

The Puritans used to say justified means, "Just as if I had never sinned." That's not a bad definition if we understand what sin is. Sin includes, not only acts of commission,

but acts of omission. Occasionally you'll hear preachers say, "Justification is more than forgiveness, for forgiveness wipes out those things that are negative. It does not; however give us a positive righteousness. Justification gives us a positive righteousness, which we may present for our acceptance before God." That sentiment, that statement is dependent upon a definition of sin, which is incomplete in my opinion. Sin is not simply the acts of commission, which have offended a holy God. Sin always includes acts of omission, which we should have done, but did not do. In other words, sin is both and negative, in the sense that we do not do certain things that we should do; and it is positive, we do things that we ought not to have done.

Now, if sin is not imputed to us, then the sins that we have done are not imputed to us, and the things that we ought to have done, but did not do, the righteousness that covers them is imputed to us as well. So the effect is that we have a positive righteousness before God. Now, if you think of sin as simply, or forgiveness as simply being related to things that are negative, then justified meaning "just as if I'd never sinned" is unsatisfactory. You would have to say, justified means just as if I had never sinned, and just as if I had always done everything right. That is the meaning of justification. If that's what you mean by sin, but if you are like the Puritan, who understood to include sins of omission as well as commission, it is all right to say justified means "just as if I had never sinned;" because if I had never sinned, I have therefore given God the positive righteousness that his holy nature requires.

William Cunningham used to say, "The righteousness of God is the righteousness, which his righteousness requires him to require." And it is one of the beautiful facets of the gospel of Christ that having believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, there is given me by God for imputation a righteousness that is acceptable to him. Is not that an amazing thing, that I so blinded as to one time think that I could satisfy him by the things that I do, now have had my eyes illumined to see my condition as lost and undone as having no hope. Now through the Lord Jesus Christ and faith in him, I see that by the grace of God

there is conferred upon me a righteousness that is acceptable to God. And I stand before him justified, just as if I had never sinned. Just as if I had always done everything right. What an amazing truth the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ proclaims.

Well, the apostle answers an objection, for a Jewish man would have an objection. And it's related to the situation in Antioch. The objection is, what about these clean and unclean things? And so the apostle says in verse 17, but if Peter and I are disregarding the law of clean and unclean meats, you know you could eat pork, could not eat a hare. I once had to eat a rabbit. [Laughter] I never had wanted to eat a rabbit. It's one of the few disadvantages of being a preacher of the Lord Jesus Christ; you have to eat what is placed on the table. [Laughter] And the hare was placed on the table one time.

Unfortunately, I took a bite of it before I knew what it was. And what made it worse that the person who served it to me anticipated that it might be the first time that I had eaten rabbit, and she waited until I had eaten it to say that it was a rabbit. [Laughter] She said, "Dr. Johnson, do you know what you've just eaten?" And I said, "No, it tastes pretty good." [Laughter] She said, "It's a rabbit." Well, I didn't enjoy the rest of the meal. [Laughter]

This morning at breakfast after I had spoken here, several people at the table said, "I don't understand how you have never eaten rabbit. We have eaten rabbit." And one person spoke up and said, "Rabbit is very good. The only thing you have to watch for are the BB shells." [Laughter] Well, I didn't know anything about this, but anyway. Paul is talking about clean and unclean meats, and he says, "If Peter and I, disregarding the law of clean and unclean meats, are violators of the law," sinners in that sense, "by seeking justification in Christ, is then Christ the promoter of sin?" In other words, we have turned from seeking salvation through observing the law. We have abandoned those legal prescriptions. Is Christ therefore a minister of sin? And he answers it accepting the premises but denying the conclusion, "God forbid." May it not come to be; perish the thought. And then the apostle explains, as a matter of fact he says, "I build again the

things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor." It is the person who goes back to the law seeking to build up again those old prescriptions done away in Christ, who is the real violator of the law. And so Peter's vacillating conduct of going back to the Old Testament distinctions of meats in Antioch makes Peter a transgressor. Christ is not the promoter of sin. It is Peter, who by his conduct is really the promoter of sin.

To explain, the apostle comes to his own life as a background. He says in verse 19, "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." I have used the law as it should be used. The law is designed to show us our sin. The Ten Commandments were never designed to give life. The Ten Commandments were designed to show us that we need to be justified by faith. Let me illustrate. Let's suppose in our homes we have a glass of water. Let's suppose for the sake of the purposes of the illustration that the glass of water contains dirt and filth, even very dangerous types of germs. Suppose we let this glass of water rest for a number of weeks in our house.

Now looking at it you might think that the water was very pure, because all of the impurities have fallen to the bottom of the glass. If you take a spoon and stir it, you immediately see the filth and possible even smell the stench of the germs. Now, was the spoon responsible for the stench and impurity of the glass by stirring the water? No, the stench and the impurity was already there. The spoon, for the sake of the illustration, might have been a sterile spoon. Was the spoon to blame? No, the spoon was not to blame. The blame rests upon the impurities of the water. So the law, the law was holy, just, and good, but by saying to man, "Thou shalt not," "Thou shalt not," "Thou shalt not," "Thou shalt not," the law acted just like that sterile spoon. It stirred up the iniquity and sin that resides in the human heart. "By the law is the knowledge of sin."

As the apostle said, "I was one time alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, thou shalt not covet. Then sin revived and I died." He refers to the same thing here when he says, "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." I have used the law to die. Peter is evidently still alive, because he is

evidently still trying to keep the law. To try to keep the law, incidentally, is like going back to the graveyard, according to Paul. He moves on in verse 20 to explain further. He says, "I have been crucified with Christ: and I no longer live; but Christ liveth in me." Union with Christ is representative in redemptive acts, is the point of Paul's statement here. I have been crucified with Christ, because he was my representative. He has gone to the cross for me, and as a result of my representative bearing the punishment of the broken law, I have born the penalty of the law in my substitute. I have been crucified with Christ and I, that is the old I looked at as motivated and dominated by sin, I no longer live, but Christ liveth in me. There is a radical change in the direction of my life. I have new desires and new motivations implanted in me by the Holy Spirit. I am a new creature in Christ. "I no longer live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me."

And Paul continues, "And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Instead of then having the law as the guide of my life, it is a person who has come to supplant that law. You know, you might ask Paul a question. Paul, is it worthwhile to put your trust in the Son of God and to live your life by trust in him rather than in the keeping of the law? Those last words of verse 20 explain the apostle's answer to that. "He loved me, and he gave himself for me." The person who loved me, and gave himself for me, is the person in whom I can trust. He has accomplished an atonement for me. He has died for me upon his cross, and it was the result of his love for men. Incidentally, those last words express the voluntary nature of his death. "He gave himself for me" expresses his penal sacrifice, because he handed himself over for me. That's the meaning of the word "gave." It is substitutionary, "he gave himself for me." Isn't that beautiful? It's not so much he gave himself for the world. It's not that he gave himself for the church here, but the apostle makes it very personal, "He gave himself for me." And in giving himself for me, he has done the most that could possibly be done for me, and everything else is sure to come.

Now, a final objection might arise at this point. Paul, by your ignoring of the law,



by your saying that you have died to the law, you are ignoring the grace of God's gift of the law for righteousness. God, in wonderful grace, gave us the Law of Moses, but by your system of justification, the law is out of place. You have ignored the law for righteousness. And Paul's answer is, "I do not make void the grace of God: for if righteousness comes by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." Do you see what he is saying? He is saying that if a man is justified by the things that he does, then of what point is the death of Christ. If a man could be justified by doing good works, what's the point of the cross of Christ? If a man could be justified by joining the church, by being religious, by being a philanthropist in the community, by being a highly regarded citizen, what is the point of the cross of Jesus Christ?

Furthermore, not only is the cross made needless by a system of words, something greater even than that is true. Who is responsible ultimately for the cross of Jesus Christ? The Bible says God is; he is the one who brought our Lord Jesus to the cross ultimately. It is the Father who is responsible, ultimately, for this plan of salvation. Don't you see what you say when you say that justification comes by what we do? The cross, then, is a blunder. It is the greatest blunder ever made in the universe, and the greatest blunder that the universe has ever seen is a blunder made by God himself, for it is he, who is ultimately responsible for the sacrifice of the Son of God. Sometimes people act as if they think it's very noble for a person to try to win their way to heaven by what they do. As one Bible teacher has said, "It is dreadfully ignoble. For in effect it is to deny both the nature of God and the mission of Jesus Christ.

Well, let me sum up what Paul has been saying. It is plain that righteousness is not by legal works. Righteousness comes by faith, implanted by God in the atoning work of the Lord Jesus. That atoning work, that objective work which he has accomplished, is the basis for our salvation, and human faith is simply the means by which that salvation becomes ours. And that faith itself is the gift of God. If you had your money in an insolvent bank, the mightiest faith in that bank would not save your money, but the tiniest

little bit of faith in a solvent bank means that your money is safe. Our bank is the merit that our Lord Jesus has accomplished by the cross of Calvary. We have born our penalty in him, and by virtue of his sacrifice, God pardons our sins, and imputes righteousness to us. The tiniest little bit of trust in our Lord Jesus Christ means that we have the assurance of everlasting life, the assurance of justification before him. To refuse to case off human confidence is to insult the grace of God and defame the cross as a futile work.

If you're here this morning, and you have never believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, we remind you that the Scriptures say that all men are sinners and are under divine condemnation. For you to seek to justify yourself before God is to present to this infinitely holy God, the rags of your own personal sinful righteousness, which could never be accepted by him. It is furthermore, to insult this God who gave his only begotten sin as the sin sacrifice. You insult his holiness, you insult his wisdom, you in effect rebel against the God of the universe. But if your sin, if you know your guilt, if the Holy Spirit has pierced your heart so you see that you are utterly devastated in your sin and guilt, there is a remedy. It is the blood that was shed. And if you come to God through Christ, and cling only to him and what he has done, you are safe now and forever, declared righteous through the blood of Christ. May God speak to your heart to that end. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the greatness of the Son of God. We praise Thee for the work that was done, so necessary, so needful, so sufficient for our sin. Oh Father, if there are some here who have not yet come to him, give them a sight of themselves and a view of the cross. May, Oh God, they flee to lay hold of the refuge of the Son of God who has offered an atonement that is sufficient for all of our sin. May grace, mercy, and peace go with us. For Jesus' sake. Amen.