



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Romans 3:27-31

"Boasting Excluded, Law Established"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We are turning in our Scripture reading this morning to Romans chapter 3, verse 27 through verse 31 and continuing our exposition of this, that many feel is the greatest of Paul's epistles. Romans chapter 3, verse 27 through verse 31. The apostle in the preceding context has just given us the fundamental normative passage on the doctrine of justification by faith. He has pointed out that, by virtue of the saving work of Jesus Christ, God has become just in that sin has been punished. And the justifier in that irrational rapport in that a biblical basis for the imputation of righteousness has been obtained, the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.

Now, it is natural that one think about the implications of this great teaching, and that is that to which the apostle comes now. He asks,

"Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. (Luther, in his translation added one word: alone. Therefore, we concluded that a man is justified by faith alone, apart from the deeds of the law. It is not found in the original text, that word alone. We will say something about it in the exposition that follows in a few moments.) Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, who shall justify

the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith. (This is Paul’s comment on some of the controversy that has arisen recently over the question, ‘Does God hear the prayer of Jewish people?’ And finally verse 31, the third of the apostle’s consequences of justification by faith,) Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law."

And the apostle means, I shall try to argue, by putting law in its rightful place. May the Lord bless this reading of his word.

[Prayer removed from audio]

[Message] Our study in the Epistle to the Romans is "Boasting Excluded, Distinctions Rejected, The Law Established." In our last study on Romans chapter 3, verse 21 through verse 26, which is the *sedes doctrinae*, or the seat of the doctrine of justification by faith. We laid stress upon the fact that a man is declared righteous through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished by his atoning work on the cross which becomes ours through the instrumentality of faith. This is the normative passage on that great doctrine of justification by faith. So, obviously it’s an important biblical passage. Martin Lloyd-Jones, a very elderly preacher of the word of God now, but recognized for over a number of years as the outstanding evangelical preacher in Great Britain, has said when he thinks of this passage, he thinks of it as the most important and crucial passage in the whole of Scripture. And if we were to think about the most important or crucial passage in the whole of Scripture, this one we would have to include.

Now, in our last study, I tried to make plain two things. First, that the meaning of the term justify is not to be righteous or to make righteous, because we are still sinners after we have been justified, but rather to declare righteous. It is a forensic word, a word of the legal court. Now, that is evident when we look at a passage such as chapter 2, verse 13 where the apostle says, "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." Now, it should be

clear from this verse, "the doers of the law shall be justified," that when we say a doer of the law is justified, we do not mean by justified that he is made righteous or he is righteous by virtue of that declaration because he is already a doer of the law. It's clear that when we say "the doer of the law is justified," we mean the doer of the law is declared righteous. He is, by virtue of his actions, already righteous. So, when you justify a man who does the law, you are declaring him to be what he has demonstrated that he is by virtue of his life. That, of course, is impossible for any man in the flesh other than our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then, in chapter 3, verse 4 it is clear that the word cannot mean to be righteous or to make righteous. For we read here in verse 4 of chapter 3, "God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged." The only way in which God can be justified is declared just, because he already is just. So, when we use the term justification we are to think of a legal declaration, so far as, we, who are sinners, are concerned. Therefore, when we use a term justification we mean that a man is declared righteous before God.

Now, the second thing I would like to say to you is really in the form of a reminder. The Westminster Confession of Faith on Justification has said these words, and I am going to read them again. I read them two weeks ago when I spoke on the preceding part of Romans chapter 3. In the Westminster Confession of Faith, we read these words,

"Those whom God effectually calleth, He also freely justified; 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."

So, a man is justified for Christ's sake alone, not for anything that he has done. He has imputed to him the obedience and satisfaction of Christ what he has done in paying our penalty. And even the faith by which we receive this position of justification before God, it is a gift of God. Now, that is very important, I think. And if we are to understand the Bible, that's one of the things that we must understand.

Now, Paul has just expounded that great truth that God is just in the punishment of sin, and the justifier, though he declares righteous, those who are of the faith of Jesus. It would be natural, at this point, for him to speak of the implications or consequences of this teaching and that is precisely what he does. And you can notice this by the use of those little particles, those conjunctive particles that let us know when something is an inference or an explanation. For example, in verse 27, he says, "Where is boasting then?" In other words, he is introducing an inference that might be derived from justification by faith. "Where is boasting then?" And in verse 27 and 28 he talks about the exclusion of boasting. Then in verse 29 and 30, he says, "Or," in the original text there is a correlative or there, "Or is he the God of the Jews only?" And there he points out the second consequence of justification by faith, that distinctions between Jew and Gentile, so far as salvation is concerned, are rejected. And, finally, he asks one last question in verse 31, also an inference from the teaching that he has just given, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." So, the third consequence is the establishment of the law.

These are the points that I want to make. If you are satisfied with them, you can get up now and leave, the sermon is over for you. But for the rest of you, I hope you will stay and I want, now, to turn to "The Exclusion of Boasting," verses 27 and 28. I think there is something that we shall say right at the beginning. It is clear that the apostle, not only argues convincingly, but he argues polemically. That is, he does not hesitate to argue and reason the points that he wants to make. We are living in a day, a very loose, false, flabby kind of thinking, in which the whole question of polemics and argumentation in the pulpit is not thought of very highly. The attitude of many seems to be, "We don't want these arguments. We don't want you to reason with us, it's difficult for us to

follow. Give us the simple message. Give us just the simple gospel message. Make it as simple as possible, and don't give it to us negatively. Give it to us just positively. Don't bother about the other views that people may have had on these points." And I think it is important for us to realize that if this is our attitude, then we are not only not according Scripture its proper high regard, but we are denying the word of God, because the apostles thought that it was very necessary and proper to argue their points. They did not hesitate when they came together to have disputation, a great deal of disputation, in order that the truth might be established. One of the reasons that the truth is not very plainly taught and held by many believers today is that we don't have sufficient discussion of these questions.

When they met in Jerusalem, James and Paul and Peter, they had a great deal of disputation there and they argued over the question of the relationship of Jewish people and Gentile people in the new age. And after a great deal of disputation they came to some settled convictions concerning truth. So, we should not feel that if the apostle argues and reasons and debates, that this is something that we can skip over. It is important. We should argue and debate over these questions in order to arrive at the truth.

But, let us turn to the interrogation. The apostle asks, "Where is boasting then?" Well, now, someone might say in the audience, "Is Paul coming back to boasting again? He has already talked about that in chapter 2, verse 17: 'If thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God.' Here is the apostle bringing up the same old subject of boasting again." Now, a wag in the audience might say, "Well that's characteristic of preachers. You'd expect Paul to do that, he was a preacher. Isn't it characteristic of preachers to go on and on and on after they've really finished. And he finished with the question back in chapter 2 and he is just going on and on and on." Well, that might be true of some preachers, even some preachers in Believers Chapel, some old preachers in Believers Chapel, but it's not true of Paul. It's clear to me, at least, that the apostle considers this a very important thing, and so he brings it up again, simply, because, to him, it is important to state the truth negatively as well as positively. It's not enough for Paul to say, "We are

justified by grace through faith." He wants to go on and say, "We are justified by grace through faith and that means we cannot boast in anything." And he doesn't hesitate to give us the negatives, because the negatives are useful in delimiting the positive truth. In all of our teaching, in all of our preaching, in all of our talking, negatives, you will find, are necessary.

Now, I don't want to make any apology for going over and over the question of justification by faith. I know the pulpits are thought to be places of monotonous repetition of truths over and over again which the audience clearly understands and wonders, "Why does the preacher have to do that again? We have grown weary with it." Let me remind you that there are a lot of things that we are very familiar with which are very repetitious, but which we regard very highly.

Let's just take the sea. Now, I grew up in Charleston, South Carolina, and I must confess that I never did lose the joy of looking upon the Atlantic Ocean. There was always something different about it and yet, after all, if there is anything that has an abiding sameness about it, it is the Atlantic Ocean, or the sea. As Mr. Spurgeon has spoken of it, "There is always a freshness in the undulation of the waves, the whiteness of the foam of the breakers, the curl of the crested billow, and the frolicsome pursuit of every wave by its long train of brothers." We have never complained about the sea being the same everyday and yet, there it is constantly. The sun does not give us a great deal of variety either. All Texans can appreciate that. It comes up in the morning, it reaches the apex of its height in the skies, and then it goes down in the west. Every year, it does not vary. It's the same old sun, but we never grow weary of the sun. We never say, "This is wearisome to us to observe the sun come up in the east, rise to the heights of the sky wherever we may be, and then descend into the west." Or the bread that we eat day by day, everyday usually we eat some bread. And we don't grow tired of bread because it is truly the staff of life. There are some things that are very repetitious with us, but which at the same time we really, truly, deeply need and appreciate.

Well, the doctrine of justification by faith to a believer in Jesus Christ is something like that. I never grow weary, and I'm sure you do not either, of the great doctrine of justification by faith,

whereby the apostle, through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, declares us righteous by virtue of what Christ has done.

"Where is boasting then," the apostle says. What is there about boasting that is wrong? Of course, we can boast in the Lord, that's all right. But the apostle is not talking about that kind of boasting. "Where is boasting then?" What is boasting? Well boasting is self-announcing. Faith is self-renouncing. Boasting is an introspective kind of activity in which we look inward for some reason for pride, whereas faith is retrospective. We look back to the Lord Jesus Christ and what he has done. Boasting is an inward turning of a man's spirit, whereas faith is an outward or upward turning of the spirit, whereby we look toward the Lord God. By the way, it is very clear from this that faith is a gift of God. "Where is boasting then?" If faith were really something that we provided for our salvation as God provides the work of Jesus Christ, if our faith stood on the level of the work of Jesus Christ, we would have reason for boasting. We could say, "We boast in what Christ did, but we boast, also, in the fact that we of our own free will, exercised faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." But the apostle rules out all boasting by his doctrine and that fact itself confirms the fact that faith is a gift of God. We do not have any reason whatsoever for boasting in the faith which we exercise in the receiving in the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As Augustine learned that great truth, he pointed to 1 Corinthians 4:7 as the basis of it. As that text in Paul says,

"For what have we that we have not received? And our faith by which we have come to the possession of justification is a faith that is given by God. (The apostle continues,) Where is boasting then? It has been shut out. By what sort of law? By the law of works? No: but by the law of faith."

Now, the term, law, here has the sense of principle. So, it is by the principle of faith. Now, it is possible to understand this to mean the law of faith that is the teaching law of the Old Testament as if the Old Testament taught justification by faith, but I rather think the apostle means

the principle of faith. It is by the principle of faith that we come to understand that boasting is excluded.

Now, the explanation is given in verse 28: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law." A couple of interesting things here to me in the 28th verse. The apostle says we conclude that a man is justified by faith. Now, the expression in the original text is an expression that means simply by means of faith we are justified. What Paul means is that faith is not something we supply, but faith is the means by which we receive the gift of God. It's the hand of the heart; it's an instrumentality. And so, faith is the means by which we are justified.

It's interesting that in the New Testament, never does the apostles or does any other New Testament writer say that we are justified on account of our faith. We have the expressions *pistis dia tēs pisteōs*. These are expressions that mean by faith or through faith. We even have the expression *epi tē pistis* upon the basis of faith, but never do we have, in the New Testament, we are justified on account of faith. The reason for that, I think, is relatively plain. That might suggest that the cause of our salvation for the expression *dia pistin* which never occurs is causal is really a cause that rests in ourselves and our faith is really the cause of our salvation. Whereas the apostles are unanimous in affirming that it is not faith that saves, it is Christ that saves through faith. Please keep that plainly in your mind. It is not faith that saves; it is Christ who saves through faith, by means of faith, upon the basis of faith, never on account of faith. And it's remarkable that immediately after the time of the writing of the New Testament, even about the time that the last book of the New Testament was written, Clement of Rome wrote a famous epistle. You can read it today. In it he says, "Men are justified on account of faith." Even at that early time, we find evidence of the church fathers beginning to depart from the faith of the New Testament. But the apostles never say, "Saved on account of faith."

The second thing that is interesting about verse 28 has to do with Luther's translation. That famous translation that Martin Luther, the reformer, made really had a great deal to do with transforming the western world, for the Bible was put in the language of the people. In Germany

today and among German speaking people, the Luther translation is likened to the King James Version among English speaking people, because a lot of the language is archaic, but Germans still read and are still acquainted with it though there are other versions now that are becoming more and more popular among them. Luther wrote, "*So halten wir nun dafür, das der Mensch gerecht werde ohne des Gesetzes Werke, allein durch den Glauben.*" I know you understand that. Incidentally, you have heard something rather historical here. You have heard German with a Southern accent. [Laughter]. Now, the important word in that translation, it really means nothing but this, "So hold we now, therefore, that man has become justified without the work of the law alone through faith." Luther added the word *allein*, which means alone. He added that to the translation. It's not really in the Greek text. That is, it's not directly in the Greek text.

Now, in the historical context of the Luther version, when the Roman Catholics, who had a great deal of controversy with Luther over many points, read his version they immediately put their finger upon that particular translation and said that Luther had departed from the word of God at that point. They were disputing justification by faith alone. And they pointed out properly that the word alone is not in the original text at that point. He had added it in his translation. And they, of course, said he added it in order to reinforce his own interpretation of justification by faith alone. I'd like to suggest, however, that that rendering is very true to the sense of the passage and particularly to the expression, "apart from the works of the law." If anything other than faith is the means of our salvation, then our salvation is by works. If anything other than faith is the means of our salvation, then our salvation is by works. If we exclude works, then faith alone remains. Everything else is excluded, and so faith alone is left. Therefore, Luther was really right in paraphrasing this. Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith alone apart from the works of the law. The expression "apart from the works of the law" excludes everything else but faith. So, while the word was not in the original text, the rendering is true to the original text.

Now, that is the first of the consequences and Paul says, "Boasting has been shut out because we are justified by faith apart from the works of the law." There is no basis for a man to

boast over his salvation. The second thing that is rejected is the distinction between Jew and Gentile as it existed in the minds of many of the Jewish people. Now, recently, we have had a controversy aired in our newspapers and in our periodicals over the statement of a well-known religious leader of a large denomination who, here in Dallas, said these words, "It's interesting to me at great political battles how you have a Protestant to pray and a Catholic to pray, and then you have a Jew to pray. With all due respect to those dear people, my friend, God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew. For how in the world can God hear the prayer of a man who says that Jesus Christ is not the true Messiah? It is blasphemous." So spoke that religious leader of a large denomination.

Now, that immediately became very controversial because of the election year when the Jewish people heard about it and specifically when the American Jewish Committee heard about it. One of the rabbis, a well-know rabbi, who is their man who deals with this kind of thing, when he saw that he said, "Well here is an opportunity to make a point or two." So, he got a hold of the words and sent transcripts around the country. And now, every political leader and every religious leader has asked the question, "Did the man in Dallas speak the truth or did he not speak the truth?" Now, Mr. Reagan has come out and he has said that, so far as I can tell from the newspaper accounts, that the Jews' prayers are heard. And other candidates have made their comments as well and now we have lots of letters in our newspapers trying to answer the question, "Does the prayer of a Jew find hearing with the Lord God?"

Now, the apostle has, I think, something to say on that point. He says, "Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also." Now, what he is trying to say here is that justification by grace abolishes all distinctions so far as salvation is concerned. Now, I'd like to say right here that we have had a lot in the paper about what this man, who is a Protestant, has said about the prayers about the Jews. We have had nothing in the papers about what Jewish men have said about others outside of their faith. So, I'd like to give you a few quotations from Jewish writings.

Rabbi Simeon Ben Yohai on Exodus chapter 20, and verse 2 has written, "God spake to the Israelites, 'I am God over all who enter the world, but my name have I associated only with you. I have not called myself the God of the nations of the world, but the God of Israel.'" Now, there is abundant illustration in the New Testament that there were many people who thought that God only spoke to Israel. Think not to say within yourselves, "We have Abraham to our Father." We read in Matthew chapter 3 which indicates that there were people who were saying just that. Then there were some other statements that are very interesting. Here is one made by some Jewish men, "Abraham sits beside the gates of hell and does not permit any wicked Israelite to go down to hell."

The Jewish man who wrote the *Wisdom of Solomon* has said this, "For even if we sin, we are Thine knowing Thy dominion." And then another statement, "While therefore Thou doest chasten us, thou scourgest our enemies ten thousand times more." In Justin's dialogue with Trifile, the Jew, there are these words, "They who are the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, shall in any case, even if they be sinners and unbelieving and disobedient towards God, share in the eternal kingdom." Many other statements have been made like that. So, if there is some tendency for us to be narrow in our views concerning spiritual things, it exists on both sides, both Gentiles and Jews.

Now, I think that this religious leader of this large denomination made one fundamental mistake so far as the record is concerned. When he said, "God does not hear the prayer of a Jew who denies that Jesus is the Messiah," he should have gone on, in my opinion and this is only my opinion, he should have gone on and said, "nor does God hear the prayer of any Gentile who also denies the Messiahship of the Lord Jesus Christ. For today, both Jew and Gentile, according to the Christian faith, stand on the same ground. That is, the Scriptures say that there is only one way of salvation and that way is through the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, whether Jew or Gentile, the one way of salvation is taught in the New Testament, and I think it is taught in the Old Testament as well.

Now, of course, in the proclamation of this truth we may expect for people to rise up and say, "Well, that is narrow-minded; that is bigoted." And we have to accept that criticism if we believe

the New Testament. If we believe that it is bigoted to have one way of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ, then we must accept the term bigoted. Now, we, of course, do not think that we are bigoted in the sense in which that term would ordinarily be meant, because it's simply the teaching of the word of God. Let me remind you what the Bible says. The Lord Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Now, that is a very bigoted statement.

Now, if you want to criticize one way of salvation, you must attack Jesus Christ. Not the poor head of a religious denomination down here on the earth who really doesn't have the understanding of the Scriptures that our Lord did, nor the standing before people. Attack Christ; attack the apostles. Listen to what Peter said: "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. That name--Jesus Christ." What does the apostle Paul say? "Other foundation, there is none except Jesus Christ." So, the apostles and our Lord united upon the one way of salvation. If you must attack that and if you must call it bigoted, if you must call it narrow-minded, if you must call it arrogant to hold such a view, don't attack these poor little people down here on the earth who have simply read the Scriptures and have followed what they think is the word of God. Attack the source; attack our Lord Jesus Christ.

But, you see, it's much easier to attack a man down here on the earth than to attack the Lord Jesus Christ, but that's the simple teaching of the Bible. The apostle is not saying that there is a difference between the Jew and the Gentile, he is saying that both Jew and both Gentile are sinners and that they both, Jew and Gentile, can be saved in this one way. He is offering a way of salvation to all men through the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what he means when he said, "Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God." So, he looks back at the favorite text of the Jewish people, the great *Shema Yisrael*, "Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord." And he says, "Because there is one God, Christians believe in one God, with Israel we also believe in the Trinity." That is the one God who subsists in three persons: Father, Son, and Spirit. But we believe in the unity of God. Since there is one God, there must be

just one way of salvation. There cannot be different methods. There is one God who saves in one way and the Scriptures say very plainly that that way is through the Lord Jesus Christ.

I might say that right here I notice that some of you are a little uneasy in the audience. The reason you are uneasy is because this has become a controversy and it does mean if you are identified with this then you must bear some reproach, but if you are a Christian you have to bear some reproach. You cannot escape the reproach of being a Christian. The Lord Jesus said, "If the world hated me, it will surely hate you." The servant is not above his master. We cannot expect to avoid criticism. There is no way for us to avoid criticism. If we avoid criticism, we are not really being a witness for the purity of the faith. So, we must not try to avoid criticism, but we must not react in anger and bitterness. We must react in the way that our Lord Jesus reacted. When he was reviled, he did not revile back. But we must stand for what the Bible teaches. Incidentally, in this text which says, "He is the God of the Jews and also the God of the Gentiles, because he is one God," and we have reason that there is one method of salvation through faith which he says here very plainly, "He shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith."

I want to right a wrong done against some of the dispensationalists. Now, they have been criticized rightly about some things, but they have been criticized wrongly in other ways. It has often been said that dispensationalists teach different methods of salvation, because there are different ages in the unfolding of the divine purpose. Some have thought that means there are different ways to God. Dispensationalists who have understood dispensational theology have never taught that there are different methods of salvation. There is only one method of salvation. That is through faith on the principle of grace directed toward the revelation of God.

Now, in the revelation of God there has been a growth in the content of it. There has been progress in the divine revelation, but faith in the divine revelation, on the principle of grace, is the means by which all men are saved from the beginning of time on through to the end. When we preach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, we set forth Jesus Christ. We don't set forth such things as dogmas by themselves; we don't set forth ritual; we don't set forth feeling and experience; we

don't set forth works as a method of salvation; we proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ as the savior of men.

One of the outstanding theologians of the earlier part of the twentieth century was a man by the name of P. T. Forsyth. He has been called the Barth before Barth, because certain of the things that Karl Barth wrote about, Mr. Forsyth has already written about. He's generally considered an evangelical believer. He often taught and taught for many years in the New College Chapel of the University of London. There is an epitaph, now, in that university in that chapel which is in memoriam of P. T. Forsyth, and its four Latin words: *per crucem ad lucem*, through the cross, to the light. That's the way that we come to the light. We come to the light through the cross. And through the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ we come to the knowledge of justification by faith. So, distinction between Jew and Gentile is rejected. God doesn't hear, savingly, the prayers of a Jew. He doesn't hear, savingly, the prayers of a Gentile, if there is no faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. That, I believe, is what the word of God teaches.

Now, finally, in verse 31, the apostle speaks of the establishment of the law, because someone might say, at this point, "Well Paul, you've ruled out salvation by what we do, by the keeping of the Ten Commandments." Now, many people then, and many people now think that we get to heaven by keeping the commandments. So, then, the question is: Do we then make void the law through faith? Do we do away with the legal method of salvation? And in so doing, do we do away with that law of God for which there was high regard in the Old Testament and for which there is high regard today and rightly so, for the law is holy, just, and good. The apostle answers, "No, this method of justification by faith does not make void the law. It rather is the basis upon which the law is established."

Now, there has been a great deal of discussion over what is meant by the establishment of the law. Some have said it's established in that the law teaches justification by faith, understanding the law as being a reference to the whole of the Old Testament. Well, that is a truth, of course, but the apostle, through this section, has been talking about the works of the law and that would seem to

be a reference to the Ten Commandments and not the Old Testament as a whole. So, I don't think that is probably in Paul's mind. Others have said, "We have established the law, because Christ fulfilled the law."

Now, I also have a great deal of regard for that interpretation, because it's true. Jesus Christ did fulfill the law. He came in his active and passive obedience and fulfilled the Law of Moses, the only human ever able to keep the Law of Moses, the divine God-man. For example, he was circumcised according to the law. He also, when he was baptized by John the Baptist did that which the Old Testament Scriptures required. When he appeared before John, John was appalled that the Lord should appear before him. He said, "Why I ought to be baptized by you, and not you by me." But Jesus said, "Suffer it to be so now, John, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." In other words, according to the unfolding of the Scriptures, we must do this. So, he fulfilled the law.

He fulfilled the law in other ways, in fact, so much so that he turned to the Jewish people of the day and the Gentile people of the day and said, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" And no one was able to convince him of sin. When he observed the Passover, his last Passover, every little detail of that Passover was carried out in perfect conformity with the requirements of Exodus chapter 12. A super, fastidious, Jewish man looking at the way that Passover was observed, or an eager angel from heaven knowing Scripture and looking at it, could have found nothing in the way in which our Lord observed the Passover that was contrary to the Law of Moses. And, finally, he went to the cross at Calvary in obedience to the will of God and there gave himself up. So, actively he perfectly obeyed the Law of Moses.

His passive obedience was also the way by which we have come to our salvation. On the cross he bore the penalty for our sins. He suffered under the righteous judgment of God. Thus, he confirmed the holiness of God. He also established the fact that God is wrathful toward sin when he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" You can learn from that that God is holy and also that he punishes sin. And, furthermore, you can also learn the sinfulness of men, because it was necessary for him to die. So, he, in his active and passive obedience, he certainly did

fulfill the law. But I think if you will look at this context, you will find it's not in the context at all, just what I have been talking to you about. It's something imported into this context.

What does Paul mean? Well, he has said something in the context that I think is important for the understanding of that particular statement. In verse 20, he had said, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." What is the office of the law? Well, the office of the law is to show us that we are sinners. The office of the law is to convince us that we stand under divine condemnation. Put the Ten Commandments up before you, and remembering our Lord's deeper interpretation of them, ask yourself, "Have you kept the law?" And inevitably the Holy Spirit will bring home to your heart if you are open to his indications, you have broken the Law of Moses, by the law is the knowledge of sin. The office of the law is not to save us. The office of the law is to convince us of our sins so that we will flee to the cross of Jesus Christ and receive the redemption that he has accomplished as a free gift. That, I think, is what Paul means

He asks, "Do we then make void the law when we talk about justification by faith?" No, the law was never intended to save. We don't nullify the law. We establish it in its rightful place as preparatory for salvation by grace, in that it convinces us of our sin. Well, the apostle has argued very strongly then for justification by faith through the merits of a redeemer who shed his blood for our sins.

Now, the modern man finds this very objectionable. Whether the modern mind of Jewish people, or the modern mind of Gentile people, they find it very objectionable to be told that they are lost and that they can only be saved through the blood of a redeemer who died upon a cross at Calvary. I am so thankful that the modern mind is not the standard of truth. It's rather surprising, though, that the modern man and the modern mind of all minds should object to the blood. If there has ever been any mind at all that is more filled with life and blood, it is the modern mind.

At the same time that the modern mind is building bombs, atomic and hydrogen and other types of means by which they may shed the blood of other people, the modern mind at the time that

is doing all of this objects to the blood of the cross at Calvary. It is surely the strangest kind of objection, the modern mind, but the modern mind is not the standard of divine truth. The mind of God as expressed in Holy Scripture is the standard of truth. Coming to the touchstone of the word of God, we shall find all of our questions resolved, questions about whose prayers God hears and various other theological matters are set forth in the word of God. But we don't come to the Bible. We think things according to our modern mind, and thus we have difficulty. And there is reproach and stigma and various other types of response to the opinions of biblical men.

The threefold consequence of justification by grace is plain. All boasting is excluded. Distinctions between Jew and Gentile, as far as the method of salvation are concerned, are ruled out. Paul and the modern individual must be saved the same way. Peter and the Gentile of today must be saved the same way. Those Jewish apostles are saved the same way that a Gentile today is saved. They unite on the ground of the cross of Jesus Christ and the blood that was shed and affirmed that the merits of the redeemer are the only merits acceptable to the one God in heaven. Paul puts it correctly in another place. He says, "And by him," Christ, "all that believe are justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the Law of Moses." The apostle gave that great message in a Jewish synagogue. That was the message that he proclaimed, "By him all that believe are justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the Law of Moses." That is true to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, who was the founder of Dallas Seminary, used to tell us a story about a day when he was riding on the train many years ago from Kansas City to Dallas after one of his meetings. They were getting nearer to Fort Worth. It was his custom to speak to somebody on the train if possibly could, and he realized he had not spoken to the porter with whom he had had some dealings. And so he sought him out and he found him and he said, "May I ask you a question?" The porter said, "Yes sir, what's your question?" He said, "How good does a man have to be to get to heaven?" "Well, I can't tell you just how good a man has to be, but I know he has to be mighty good." "Well do you ever expect to get to heaven?" Dr Chafer said. The man said, "I

don't know. I have just about given up trying. I've tried and tried for a long time, but it doesn't seem to do any good, and I'm afraid I'll never make it."

Then Dr. Chafer said that he was guided by the Holy Spirit and he asked him, "Where do you check in, at Kansas City or in Fort Worth?" "Well, I have to check in at the Pullman office in Fort Worth a half an hour after the train pulls in." And Dr. Chafer said, "I see this train is due to arrive in Fort Worth at eight o'clock, so you have to check in by eight thirty." He said, "Yes." He said, "Well, we are late now, so, I'm afraid you are going to miss it." "Aren't you afraid you are going to miss it? Don't you think you'd better get off at the next stop and start running for Fort Worth in order that you might make it on time?" The man looked at him and said, "What are you talking about? Are you trying to make a fool out of me? I never could make Fort Worth running, but the only way I could make it is to just stay right on this train. I just trust the man that runs this train to get me there."

Well, Dr. Chafer said, "My good man, that's exactly the way you get to heaven. It's not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. And we trust the one who runs the gospel train, the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone can get us to heaven. I never could get there on any goodness of my own." Well, the porter looked at him in amazement and said, "Tell me some more about this." And Dr. Chafer explained the gospel a little more to him and left him with a little booklet and a copy of one of the gospels.

Well, six months later, Dr. Chafer said that he was coming from Kansas City to Dallas again through Fort Worth and he had remembered that he had not spoken to the porter and so he went back to where the porter was sitting and he said to the man, "How good does a man have to be to get to heaven?" And the porter looked at him and smiled and said, "You are not going to catch me twice with that question. You asked me that question about six months ago." And Dr. Chafer hadn't recognized the man and he went on to say, "I looked up all those Scriptures you showed me and I'll tell you, I just found out that there wasn't anything that I could ever do to get to heaven and so, now I'm trusting the person who runs the gospel train to get me to heaven."

Well, that's what we do. We really trust the method of salvation set forth in the word of God through the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no salvation through any other means. If you are here this morning and you have never believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, we invite you to put your trust in him. Come to him who has offered the atoning sacrifice for sinners and you may receive the forgiveness of sins. Whether Jew or Gentile, the gospel is for all, for Jesus Christ is the savior of the world. Come to Christ and through the Jewish Messiah receive everlasting life. Shall we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the privilege and opportunity of preaching the good news. We know that the good news is not received well by the natural man, but we praise Thee and thank Thee for the enlightenment that has come through the Holy Spirit. And Lord, if there is someone here who has not yet come through the one way...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]