



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Various

John Bunyan Lecture VIII

TRANSCRIPT

[Johnson Lecture] I haven't heard anyone say this, but I always feel that this is something that might be useful for all of us. Mr. Spurgeon has written and preached, "We are often told that we limit the atonement of Christ, because we say that Christ has not made a satisfaction for all men, or all men would be saved. Now, our reply to this is that, on the other hand, our opponents limit it: we do not. The Arminians say, Christ died for all men. Ask them what they mean by it. Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of all men? They say, "No, certainly not." Ask them the next question-Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of any man in particular? they answer "No." They are obliged to admit this if they're consistent. They say, "No. Christ has died that any man may be saved if"-and then follow certain conditions of salvation. We say then we will just go back to the old statement. Christ did not die so as beyond a doubt to secure the salvation of anybody, did he? You must say, No. You're obliged to say so, for you believe that even after a man has been pardoned, he may yet fall from grace and perish. Now, who is it that limits the death of Christ? Why, you. You say that Christ did not die so as to infallibly secure the salvation of anybody. We beg your pardon, when you say we limit Christ's death; we say, "No, my dear sir, it is you who do it." We say that Christ died that he when he died he infallibly secured the salvation of a multitude that no man can

number, who through Christ's death not only may be saved, but are saved, must be saved and cannot by any possibility run the hazard of being anything but saved. (What a great statement that is.) You are welcome to your atonement; " Mr. Spurgeon said, "you may keep it. We will never renounce ours for the sake of it."

It seems to me like that's a kind of a highlight statement for a conference that has to do with the atonement of Jesus Christ.

Well, when [name redacted] asked me to come and speak at the conference, I talked about the possibilities of some themes, and one of the themes that was suggested by Fred was that since I had said somewhere that there was a message on 2 Corinthians chapter 5 that had to do with the atonement and that I had thought possibly of speaking on that at that conference but then had not done it, he suggested that I speak on the topic here at this conference. And so I am, and I'd like for you to turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verses 20 and 21. And I want to speak on the topic of Paul's interpretation of the Son's mission. This, of course, is not the passage that one would think about in discussing this topic necessarily, but it is one of the passages where the apostle speaks about our Lord's atoning death in a very significant way.

So, 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 20 and verse 21. The apostle writes,  
  
"Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

As elsewhere in Paul's writings, for him reconciliation is closely related to justification. That's evident from Romans chapter 5 where the apostle speaks of justification in the first verse, and then at the conclusion of the paragraph, in verse 10 and verse 11, the subject of reconciliation is there. And so, he glides from one to the other, not equating them, but nevertheless, relating them very closely.

The church of Jesus Christ has never been in doubt over the importance of justification. John Calvin once said that it is the main hinge on which religion turns. Luther's experience, I'll makes reference to that in a moment, but in Luther's experience, one of the terms that was used with reference to it was that the doctrine of justification was "articulus fundamentalisimus" or the most fundamental article. *Fundamentalisimus* – quite a good Latin word to remember, but it's one of those that we can easily remember since, of course, it's fundamental. Luther's experience was that.

The Westminster Confession of Faith says these things about it: "Those whom God effectually calleth, he also 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. (The term that might be used there, and has been used is *solo Christo* – by Christ alone. Sometimes it's put in the nominative case as *solus Christus*, but in this context, *solo Christo*.) 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's the gift of God. Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and His righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification (That's why we say *sola fide* – by faith alone): yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh in love.

Christ, by His obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real and full satisfaction to His Father's justice in their behalf. Yet, in as much as He was given by the Father for them; and His obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead; and both, freely, not for any thing in them; their justification is only of free grace(*sola gratia* – by grace alone); that both the exact justice, and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners. God did, from all eternity, decree to justify all the elect, and Christ did, in the fullness of time, die for their

sins, and rise again for their justification: nevertheless, they are not justified, until the Holy Spirit doth, in due time, actually apply Christ unto them. God doth continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified; and although they can never fall from the state of justification, yet they may, by their sins, fall under God's fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of His countenance restored unto them, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance. The justification of believers under the Old Testament was, in all these respects, one and the same with the justification of believers under the New Testament.”

We know that because, of course, those statements that refer, for example, to Abraham's justification are the statements on which the apostle in the Epistle to the Romans grounds his own views concerning justification.

Now, what do we have here? As we look at this, we can see there is *solo Christo* – by Christ alone, *sola fide* – by faith alone, *sola gratia* – by grace alone. And if wanted to add a couple of more, we might have *sola scriptura* – or by Scripture alone, for the whole of the doctrine is found in Scripture. And finally, using one of Paul's famous statements, *solī Deo gloria* – to God alone be the glory, the statement that he makes in the Epistle to the Romans.

So, what do we have? We have *solo Christo, sola fide, sola gratia, sola scriptura, solī Deo gloria*. What we have is precisely what is called by some the gospel of the five "onlies". That's what it is – those set forth there in the statement in the Westminster Confession of the Faith.

Well, that is a fundamental kind of experience and the kind of experience that all of us must have at least in character if we are to enter into the same possession of the salvation that men like Luther and Calvin entered in.

Gordon Rupp is a Luther scholar. He's written some significant material, and he has said some things concerning Luther's conversion as an Augustinian monk that I think are illustrative for us of the kind of experience that individuals have in their own special

way when they come to belong to Jesus Christ. These are the key points. Luther had been taught that the righteousness of God was to be taken actively, that is, as the justice formal and active with which God is just and punishes unjust sinners. He felt that he was a sinner, no matter how irreproachably he lived as a monk, and he hated this just God. In fact, he was angry with God believing it was enough that miserable sinners be eternally damned with original sin and have further calamities laid upon them by the law of the Ten Commandments. And that God should go and add sorrow upon sorrow, and even by the gospel itself to bring his justice and wrath to bear from Romans 1:16 and 17 made him rage with a fierce and disturbed conscience. Yet he knocked importunately at Paul in this place, thirsting to most ardently know what he meant.

He lectured on the psalms in 1513 through 1515. Probably in 1514, though there's some question about this, perhaps from Psalm 71 and verse 2 as he lectured, where the psalmist writes a statement that may have been in Luther's mind and heart, because it certainly deals with some of the things that he was thinking about. The text reads "Deliver me in Your righteousness, and cause me to escape; Incline Your ear to me, and save me." And I'm sure with the thoughts that Luther had about his relationship to the Lord and how the idea of righteousness was not a blessing to him, but a curse to him, when he read "Deliver me in Your righteousness," that would have been something that he would not have understood at all. And perhaps he did reflect upon it, and out of that reflection come to understand the nature of righteousness in Scriptural language.

In any rate, he was lecturing from the psalms and it's perhaps possible that he came to a new understanding of the justice of God then. He saw it as the justice with which God makes us just, and that through faith. The work of God was that which God works in us. The strength of God – that which God empowers us. The wisdom of God – that with which he makes us wise. And the salvation of God – that with which he saves us. The justice of God, *iustitia Dei* to use the Latin term, must be taken passively and must be in Romans 1:16 and 17.

Among the things that Luther said about it when he came to understand what justification really meant as a blessing from God and a gift to him through faith were these things: "This straightway made me feel as though reborn and as though I have entered through open gates into paradise itself. From then on the whole face of Scripture appeared different." Mr. Rupp says, "And now as much as I had hated this word justice of God before, so much the more sweetly I extol this word to myself now so that this place in Paul was to me as a real gate of paradise." Afterward he read Augustine's *On the Spirit and the Letter*, and found him similarly interpreting the justice of God, although not said perfectly and with a lack of clarity about imputation.

Well, when we read a passage like 2 Corinthians 5:20 and 21, it's really impossible in my opinion to read this now in the light of the history of the Christian church and not realize that these texts have been the texts that have moved the hearts of some of the truly significant men in the history of Christianity. And if we're looking for a text that has significance for us, this text – 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 21 – is one of those. For example, Charles Hodge, one of the finest of the Presbyterian theologians, has said with reference to it, "There is probably no passage in the Scripture in which the doctrine of justification is more concisely or clearly stated than in this, "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Then, Philip Hughes in his commentary on this particular passage makes another statement with reference to it that I thought was rather unusual. He said, "In these few direct words the apostle sets forth the gospel of reconciliation in all its mystery and all its wonder. There is no sentence more profound in the whole of Scripture, for this verse embraces the whole ground of the sinner's reconciliation to God and declares the incontestable reason why he should respond to the ambassadorial entreaty (Which is of course, "Be reconciled to God."). For he made Him to be sin for us, Him who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Now the apostle has introduced this with a statement concerning the work of the ambassador or the minister. He said, "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us." This "then" of verse 20 is an inference from the preceding, particularly verse 19, "That is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, (that is, in the light of that, logically from that) we are ambassadors in Christ, as though God were pleading through us."

That's the task of the ambassador. It's to act as the emperor's legit in a foreign land, just as Madeline Albright does for our president, who as she travels around the world gives not her words. She doesn't have any words for any of those people with whom she speaks. Her word comes from President Clinton. That's enough to scare us, of course, but nevertheless, that is her position. She is an ambassador of him, and consequently, her words are not her words. Sometimes I admire some of the things she says, but actually she doesn't say them. She says exactly what President Clinton and his advisors tell her to say. She's a mouthpiece. That's what an ambassador is.

That's what we are. We are ambassadors of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We're not to tailor the message. We're not to make it different. We're not to give it an emphasis that it doesn't have in the text of holy Scripture. We are to speak precisely that message that is given to us. We are to speak as the voice of our Lord. We are ambassadors of him.

So, it's as if, Paul says, "as though God were entreating." So, for Christ's men, the voice of God is to be their voice. To give their voice instead of God's voice is to transgress. But on the other hand, what a tremendous calling it is to have the gospel message and be an ambassador of our Lord and to have entrusted to us the privilege, the immense privilege of giving out the voice and the message of God. That's what Paul is speaking about.

So, what is the message? Well, he says, we beg you on behalf of Christ, "Be reconciled to God." Receive the offered reconciliation.

Now, I want to spend a few moments on the ground of this appeal, because that's found in verse 21. The little particle "for" which begins the text that I read to you, "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us," probably is not genuine. That is, the Greek texts, the manuscripts, when textual criticism is applied to them, probably leads to the conclusion that the "for" is not valid. And so, perhaps it's not proper for us to say this is the reason for the preceding statement, although a "for" is not always necessary. In fact, in the eye and the thought and the flow of thought, it may be that a sentence is the ground of the preceding one just by virtue of what is stated.

What we read here is that "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us." This is the good news. It's the ground that makes the word of reconciliation good news. It makes it a haven of safety. And the thought that Paul uses in this 21st verse, which we've read those statements about men who thought it was so important, what makes it important is the fact that what he says here is given in terms of an exchange. Notice, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." – a kind of exchange. The non-imputation rests upon Christ's work here. And that's the only foundation for ministry, of course.

He says about him that "He knew no sin." They're many texts in the Bible that support that thought. I guess one of the most significant for us immediately is the statement that is made at the time of our Lord's baptism when the voice from heaven came, and the Father in heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." We wouldn't read any other word, of course. But the Scriptures do give us other words. The dying thief who believed by God's grace is said to have said with reference to him as he rebuked the other thief that this man has done nothing amiss. We know that the apostles made statements like, "He did no sin." Peter said that. John said,

"In Him was no sin." And Paul's statement here, then, is in thorough harmony with that.

"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us."

Notice that statement: "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us." Made sin – just what does that mean? Well we could say, as some have said, made a sinner, but that would seem to destroy the antithesis to made righteousness. Some have suggested perhaps "made sin" means "made a sin offering." But again, sin would have two senses in the same text, "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin" Him who knew no sin to be a sin offering. And it's highly unlikely that in the middle of this one verse we should have the term sin in two senses. So, perhaps it is best understood that when Paul says, "He hath made Him to be sin for us," he means he has been made sin in the sense that sin has been imputed to him. Our guilt has been imputed to him, and in that sense he has been made sin.

Now of course, the thought is not whole lot different from some of those other things, but to be more precise, he has been made sin because the guilt of those whom he represents has been imputed to him. Officially, he is guilty in our guilt. He voluntarily wraps himself in our sin, so to speak.

Remember Goodwin's words. They are, Thomas Goodwin, I referred to him a couple of days ago, "They're just two men standing before God. There is Adam and there is Christ, and all men are hanging from their girdles." I still like that expression – "hanging from his girdle" because what he does, he does for me. And how marvelous it is to know that.

But Paul goes on to say "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us," in behalf of us. Now, I don't think there's any doubt but that this text is a text that refers to the substitutionary death of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and I'd like to just say, again, a few words about that, because I think it needs to be said constantly that our Lord Jesus died as our substitute.

What do we mean when we say that? Well, in the first place, his death is a penal death, and so we recognize that he, when he died as our substitute, was bearing the penalty of our sins. His death is a death, of course. It is the giving of himself in not only a physical way, but a spiritual way as well. So, his death is penal, and particularly, his death is substitutionary, that is, it is a death that is in our behalf and we are the benefits of it.

Now if, as we said the other day, and it has been said by others, if our Lord died as our substitute, if he truly bore our sins, then on what ground can I be judged? Now, if on the other hand, we go on and say further that Christ died as a substitutionary death for all men, as many of our friends do, then on what ground can all men be judged? If it truly be said that Jesus Christ is a substitutionary sacrifice for all men, then there isn't anything that heaven can bring against any man. There is no charge. You see, this is one of the fundamental reasons why it is absolutely essential to believe in a death that is directed toward a particular people, his elect people. In fact, it is in my opinion, it is impossible to talk about the substitutionary death of our Lord Jesus Christ and not at the same time speak of a definite or particular redemption. It just cannot be otherwise. And that's one point that I think that we as individuals who would love to have others come to that viewpoint, we need to keep pressing that point.

I wrote an article a couple of years ago. It was published in a book that was edited by John Armstrong called *The Coming Crisis in Evangelicalism*. And I, in the chapter that I wrote, which was on substitution, I had a word to say regarding my old professor. One of the men that I revered and still revere as truly an outstanding man of God was Lewis Sperry Chafer. I knew him. I knew him well. I sat five feet in front of his desk when he taught because I loved him, still love him. I look forward to seeing him in heaven.

It's unfortunate that a lot of people who criticized Dr. Chafer never really knew him. I never knew a man who never had a theological class in his life, but nevertheless,

as he listened to Bible teaching and preached himself as a Bible teacher, ultimately founded a theological seminary. That's enough in itself for a man who never had a theological class in a theological classroom – founded a theological seminary that became at one point, I don't know where it stands at the moment but at one point was the largest independent evangelical seminary in the world. It's astonishing.

Well, what is also astonishing about it is that the seminary lived by faith. When I was there, and until the death of Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, no public appeals for funds were ever made. He followed the principles of George Mueller. They looked to the Lord. One time when he was out of town, someone sent a letter out from the office. He came back and was very, very upset over it and spoke very strongly to the persons responsible. I can remember as a young man, when I first came on the faculty, going around and one of the things that most appealed to me was the fact that the seminary looked to the Lord for the supply of its funds. And if they came in, we had reason to think the Lord was pleased with us. If they did not come in, then of course, that was a call to prayer.

And we had special days of prayer every semester regularly, and then we sometimes had extra days of prayer. I remember one extra day of prayer when they were particularly needy, we abandoned classes for the morning, had a two-hour prayer meeting and Dr. Lincoln, who was the business manager, rarely ever did this, but this time he said, "We really are in serious condition, and we need (and he mentioned a specific amount of money that was needed.)" And he said, "We'd appreciate if you'd pray to that end." So the seminary, the boys prayed to that end.

I was a student at the time, no I wasn't. I was still, I believe, just had begun to teach, but I was still doing a little work. And I went downtown to work, and came back. And I remember coming in the opening of the seminary building. Everything was quiet, but I was getting some mail. I walked in and there was a little notice on the small bulletin board under the clock in the office, the building where the offices were. And I looked down, and the statement was something like this: "This morning after the prayer

meeting, we received a telephone call from a lawyer in west Texas that an estate that the seminary was the beneficiary of had now been finally closed and that they were sending a check to the seminary." And it turned out to be the exact amount of that which the students had prayed for.

I remember H. A. Ironside used to talk about the seminary. He came every year, was a very close friend of the school and of Dr. Chafer. And one day he spoke about the fact that they looked to the Lord and prayed that way. He said, "One morning we came in and Chafer invited us in. Early in the morning, we got around and we prayed. And we prayed," and he said, "As a matter of fact, someone had given me a check for a certain amount." And Dr. Chafer said, "We need a certain amount." It happened to be that exact amount. But Ironside had not had a chance to tell Chafer that he had received that check. And so he used to say to us, "I prayed with great faith." [Laughter]

Well, I mention this about Dr. Chafer because the individuals who are criticizing him today, just did not know the man. He was a man of faith. He had his limitations. And one of his limitations was with respect to the doctrine of the atonement. He believed strongly in divine election. He taught it very strongly to us, but he could never quite bring himself to believe that Christ died simply for the elect. And in his volume on soteriology, he has a statement that goes something like this: He's talking about what the atonement accomplishes. And then he says, "How an atonement that is sufficient, that is directed toward the sins of all men, not only sufficient, but directed toward the sins of all men, is given for the sins of all men, may be accomplished and yet men be punished for sin is a mystery, which something like which no one or no theologian has been able to solve yet," or something like that. But to him it was a mystery.

But it's no mystery. It's no mystery to Dr. Chafer now. I imagine he's probably saying, "Go ahead and preach it, Lewis, I don't mind at all." [Laughter] But it's no mystery at all if we believe in a substitutionary atonement. That settles the matter. And

very few people would like to argue against a substitutionary atonement, except those that are steeled against the doctrine of a definite atonement.

I mentioned the other day, this is only an illustration, but Professor Clark Pinnock has struggled with this considerably. And instead of coming towards the truth that we're talking about, has turned away from this, and is now particularly attracted to a governmental theory of the atonement, he said, precisely because he cannot handle this doctrine of substitution. And so the governmental theory of the atonement is one that most of the Arminians have turned to in order to avoid what Paul is saying here when he says, "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

The nature of the love of God then is a particular love. It's the love of a Savior who came to offer himself a substitutionary sacrifice for them. The term that is used here is the preposition "hyper" which means "in behalf of" and often has this particular sense.

Now he says, "That we might become the righteousness of God in Him." The same method by which our Lord becomes sin for us, that is, by imputation, is the method by which we become the righteousness of God in him. We have the righteousness of God imputed to us, reckoned to us. There's been a great deal of debate over this in evangelicalism in the past ten years over the nature of this imputation. In fact, some have suggested that this legal idea that imputation suggests, because it means to reckon, and since it's a legal, illustrative form, it's been suggested that this is something that has been imposed upon Scripture. And that in Scripture we do not have that idea of imputation as a legal kind of justification. But surely, individuals who like to make that case have not read the Old Testament and have not read the way in which the Apostle Paul particularly uses the Old Testament.

What is the text that the Apostle Paul uses to discuss and explain and teach the doctrine of the imputation of righteousness or justification? It is Genesis chapter 15. And there, of course, we read these words: "He believed (that is, Abraham) he believed in the

Lord and it was accounted to him for righteousness." It was reckoned to him. It was imputed to him for righteousness. In other words, the legal background is found in the Old Testament right in the beginning. And so the idea that to have justification as a legal treatment of the issue is something that's found in holy Scripture. It's not something that has been imposed upon Scripture. It's in Scripture from the beginning.

So, as he says then, "He has made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Now I don't want to go beyond our time here, but what we're talking about is, as I mentioned earlier, a kind of glorious exchange. He made him who knew no sin to be sin in our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in him. What a sweet exchange this is. Luther makes a statement that the righteousness that we possess does not come to us in pieces, it comes to us in a heap that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

I was reading in the National Review some time back, and it was a kind of an annual, it was an annual statement, or let me say, it was an account of the annual meeting of the National Review leadership. And William Buckley was there. And I had a reference to a statement that was made. And I wanted to be sure and find it. But anyway. In the midst of this discussion, the annual review of how things at the National Review were getting along, Buckley was the wife, the wife of William Buckley, Priscilla Buckley was awarded, this is in humor of course, the John Jacob Aster trophy for Editorial Composure. Aster was the one who was on the Titanic when it went down. And he is reported to have said, (I wish I could get that exact statement that he made. Well, maybe I cannot, I just won't be able to remember it.) But anyway. He had just ordered ice for his drink. And when they hit the iceberg, he is said to have said to the steward, "I just ordered ice, but this is ridiculous." [Laughter]

Well, this, I couldn't help but think of that when I thought of righteousness coming to us in a heap as Luther says. It doesn't come in pieces, it comes in a heap - to be justified by grace through faith in our Lord's work.

So, let me sum up what I wanted to say. I haven't been too systematic this morning, but the church then, the communion of those receiving the gift of righteousness and securing all for which Christ died, is possessed then of a righteousness that is acceptable to God by imputation. It is reckoned to us by virtue of what Christ has won for us in his work on Calvary's cross. It is something appropriated by faith, not by good works. It's not appropriated through the cooperation of our free will, to introduce free will is to introduce another ground of salvation, nor by sacramental obedience. Justification, the Lutherans have stated, does not require even the presence of good works when the imputation is made. It is made purely on the ground of the grace of God and what Christ has accomplished in his cross. As the apostle puts it in Romans chapter 4 and verse 5, "To him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

In the history of the Christian church, of course, Latin has been one of the languages of the theologians. And one of the statements that was very commonly made was "sola fides iustificat sed non fides quae est sola" – faith alone justifies, but not the faith which is alone. Faith alone justifies, but not the faith which is alone. That is, the justifying faith will issue in the works that are expected of believing men. Justifying faith must produce fruit, but as Luther said, justification at the moment of justification does not require even the presence of good works.

What's the source of all of this? Well, if you look at our text, you'll notice what we read here is in verse 18, "Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself." All things are of God. And then in verse 21, "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." So the ultimate

source of it all is the Father himself. He has made Him to be sin for us. All things are of him.

One of the things that I have enjoyed doing through the years is to keep up with some of the Scottish theologians, and one of the individuals who has been of some importance to me has been Thomas Haliburton, and I had a statement from him. Thomas Haliburton was a Scottish theologian who lived a good while back, was professor of theology at St. Andrews University, and his volume, his memoirs, was a book that in Princeton Theological Seminary in the last century was pushed by the professors because of some of the things that Haliburton had said. He's a marvelously devotional man, but was professor of divinity at the university and a very good friend of people like Samuel Rutherford.

And I went back and read again the memoirs because I happen to have it. It's an old book. And among the things that Haliburton said are some things that I think touch the heart of an individual who thinks about justification by faith. He said, "We're foolish creatures. We would have all the trial at our disposal and limit the Lord as to the circumstances of our trial. Why should I complain of a little trouble in lying on the bed? (Now, he is on his last days, and he's speaking at the point of death.) Blest be God. There is an everlasting rest. Yeah, Christ has perfumed a bed of languishing and grave and he has (I love this expression) He has unstinged death."

Isn't that interesting? He has made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him. The strength of death is its sting, and "He has unstinged death." At one point in his final illness after experiencing a brief physical revival when it thought maybe he might get well, he says, "Whence is this to me? There is a strange change within this half hour. Ahh," said he, "I'm liked to be shipwrecked to health again."

Then I just love this statement. "It will be our glory to eternity to run deeper and deeper in debt." Will you think about that? It will be our glory to eternity to run deeper

and deeper in debt. What does he mean? Well, he means it will take an eternity for us to realize how much we really owe.

Well he has made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him. This marvel sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ is a penal sacrifice. It's a substitutionary sacrifice. Not only that, it is a legal kind of arrangement by which there is imputed to us, reckoned to our account, put to our account, the righteousness of God. That's what we mean when we talk about justification.

Let's bow in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the privilege of these days together. We thank Thee for the ministry of the word of God that has been given to us, for these who have faithfully preached the word, who have reminded us again of what Jesus Christ has done for us, reminded us also of what has been forgiven, of the marvelous possession of justification by faith now in wonderful grace imputed to our account. We pray Thy blessing upon each one gathered here. May the things of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ continue to be precious to them. For Jesus' sake. Amen.