



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

"Miscellaneous Topics #52 - The Point of Reference - The Cross"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Today if you have your New Testaments with you, we're turning to 1 Corinthians chapter 2 verse 1 through verse 5, and the subject is "The Point of Reference - The Cross." Beginning at verse 1 and I'm reading today from the Authorized Version, Paul writes,

"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. (Probably we are to understand Christ here in the sense of the office of Messiah. Jesus Messiah and this one as crucified.) And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: (Incidentally that line that last line of verse 4 is very important theologically to make the point that the Holy Spirit is a person and not simply a divine affluence of power. Because if the Holy Spirit were not a divine person, but simply a statement of God's power, then we could read this, but in demonstration of the power and power, which would make no sense whatsoever. So it's clear from that very

statement that the Spirit is not simply a divine power. He is, as other Scriptures make very plain, a person. Now Paul says in the 5th verse,) That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. "

May the Lord bless the reading of his word, and let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the apostle and the faithfulness that he manifested to the supreme message of Christianity. We thank Thee for the faith that Thou hast given to us. We thank Thee for the place that the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ has in it. And we recognize this as the foundation for all of our hope with regard to the present and the future. And so today Lord we worship Thee, the Father, and we worship the Son, through the Spirit, and thank Thee for the gift of life, eternal life, everlasting life, through him and the sacrifice which he has accomplished on Calvary's cross. We ask Lord Thy blessing upon us as we meet and as we listen to the word of God and as we respond in our hearts in praise and worship. And we ask that through this coming week we may live in the light of a crucified Messiah who has made it possible for us to enjoy the eternal blessings that are represented by authentic Christianity.

We pray Lord Thy blessing upon the whole church of Christ. Every single individual important, unimportant, but all important to Thee, who have been brought by the Holy Spirit to rest themselves upon Thee for time and for eternity. We thank Thee for the gospel message that Thou hast given to us to proclaim, enable us Lord to continue to do it in the power that Thou dost supply. We pray for every single individual in the body of Christ who has the true life and the true forgiveness of sins and who seeks in the way of the Scriptures to bring others to the knowledge of him.

We thank Thee for this country of which we are a part. We thank Thee for the freedoms that we enjoy, may they continue. We pray for our leadership both in Washington, and in Austin, and in Dallas, under whom we live and seek to carry out the

responsibilities that we have as citizens. We pray for this great nation. We pray that its needs may be met. And above all we pray that there may be a turning to Thee. We so need that. We pray for every indication of the work of the Lord in our midst, through the fifty states.

And we ask Thy blessing upon Believers Chapel and its ministries. We thank Thee for the radio ministry; we pray Thy blessing upon its programs as they go forth. We pray for the tape ministry. We thank Thee for the way in which it has reached out to many countries on the face of this globe. And we pray for those who listen, give them understanding and direction and make them fruitful witnesses where they are living. We pray for the publications that go forth from time to time. And we ask Lord that Thou will continue to supply the funds that are necessary to carry on this work. We look to Thee. We thank Thee that we are able to rest upon the provision that Thou dost make for us. We pray Lord that with regard to the plans that are being made for changes in the ministry here, may they be fruitful, may they result in wider outreach if it should please Thee.

And Father we pray for the sick, we ask especially for them, those who have requested our prayers. Oh God, continue to minister to them. Supply their needs and give healing, and bless those who minister to them, their physicians and their family and friends, and commit them all to thee. We pray especially too for some who are bereaved just recently. Supply the things that they need and give them strength and encouragement and hope and consolation. We pray now the blessing of the Lord God upon the ministry of the word in this hour, may our Lord be exalted in it. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today as you will note on your bulletin is "The Point of Reference -- the Cross." It's necessary from time to time, I think, to return to the basics. And in authentic Christianity it's the cross of Christ, the foundation, the criterion of the faith that we believe in. The sheer oddness of the cross is remarkable, because for the

early individuals who believed in our Lord and for those who did not believe in him, the cross seemed like something of a disaster. In fact, from its birth to the present day the Christian faith was and is distinguished from all other religions and ideologies by its worship of a crucified Messiah. The taunt of the early opponents of Christianity was that Christians worshipped an evil man and his cross. *Homonoxius et crux aius*, was the Latin expression that was used.

The very fact that Christians worshipped a man who had been crucified was sufficient to utterly discredit Christianity among those who were unacquainted with its essential nature. For example, one of them stated, "The fact that their ceremonies center on a man who was put to death for his crime on the deadly wood of the cross is to assign to these abandoned wretches." That reminds me of Ted Turner's statement a few months back that "All Christians were losers." These abandoned wretches' sanctuaries which are appropriate to them in the kind of worship that they deserve." The same contempt is manifested in the second century from a Roman graffito depicting an individual, a figure, standing with the head of ass being crucified, with a second figure standing along side with his arm raised. And the slogan underneath the graffito was, "Alexaminos worships his God." So you can see the background of the preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ as a crucified Messiah.

But for the apostles the ancient tree was the point of reference. In fact, the apostle states in our text here that he "determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." This is not just simply a scattered reference either. If you look through the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, you will find that the apostles' teaching generally centered upon the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. That was the point that he wanted to make. When he wrote the Galatians he said, "O foolish Galatians, who hath laid an evil eye upon you, that you should not obey the truth before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth, crucified among you."

The disciples on the Emmaus Road were addressed by the Lord Jesus in these words, "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have written; ought not Messiah to have suffered these things and then to enter into his glory." So what we are talking about is really the point of reference of the Christian faith, the cross of Jesus Christ. Martin Luther once said, "The cross alone is our theology." Now, if you want to see how the Christian church historically has reported that idea, reflect upon the observance of the ordinances, and specifically the second of the ordinances, the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. And think of the place that the ordinance of the Lord's Supper has had in Christianity. Almost universally the Lord's Supper has always stood prominent in the worship of the church. Oh, I know, in some places it's called the mass, as in the Roman Catholic church; in other places it's called the Eucharist or the thanksgiving; in still others it's called the Holy Communion. And in assemblies such as this it's called the Lord's Supper or the Communion service, but what is universal among them is the recognition that in the Lord's Supper we have something that is significant for Christianity. And in fact the worship of the church gathers around it.

I think that is most significant because in the Lord's Supper what we have in this central form of worship, at the very least, is a commemoration of our Lord's suffering on the cross at Calvary, a kind of reenactment of what he experienced, and a recalling to the memory of his death and resurrection. So that one thing is universally recognized among the professing Christian bodies, the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, I acknowledge that there are a lot of people who don't understand why they do things like that. But that itself is testimony to the historical place that the sufferings of our Lord on Calvary's cross have in the Christian faith.

The most powerful statement may be Paul's words here, written perhaps to combat a form of triumphalism of wisdom. That is, in Paul's day there were individuals who made the claim that if you will follow our teaching you will have wisdom, wisdom in spiritual things. You will have the knowledge of true salvation. And that kind of

triumphalism was characteristic of, for example, the insipient Gnostics and then the Gnostics and others as well. And it may be that the apostle was seeking to counteract that in some of his statements that he makes along those lines. But this statement, while it may counteract that is significant, because it really stands at the bottom line of Christianity. "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." So we're looking at verse one under the general title of the "Message of Paul."

The Christian gospel, Paul says, is not worldly wisdom, not wisdom grounded in man's fallen reason. Please remember that. When we talk human reason, we are talking about fallen human reason. There is no human reason apart from Christianity which is anything other than fallen reason. And Paul makes it very plain here that he's preaching something very different from man's fallen reason. Notice his opening statement in verse 1, "I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God." Inconsistency with the principles of God's authoritative word. He's called it a word in verse 18 of chapter 1, "The word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it's the power of God." So inconsistency with the principles of God's authoritative word, rhetoric is not one of Paul's mentors. Philosophy, whether Platonism, Aristotelianism, Hegelianism or any other ism including Wegensteinism, and still others, these were not Pauline mentors, not his teachers. Psychology was not his teacher. James, Freud, Gestalt, they are not his mentors.

As a matter of fact, one of the things that we've learned in the 20th century I hope finally is that there is no such thing as scholarly neutrality. Everyone preaches from a particular pulpit. That is, the presuppositions that move him, scholarly neutrality, that term so often used is thoroughly discredited at the present day. So Paul says, "When I came to you I didn't come like that. I didn't come in excellency in speech or of wisdom." Incidentally that is great encouragement to every preacher. "Didn't come to you with

excellency of speech or of wisdom declaring unto you the testimony of God." To put it in another way as someone has put it recently, "Christ's pulpit is his cross."

Now, looking at verse 2 he says, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." I think that when he writes Jesus Christ that he's referring to the office, that is Jesus Messiah. And this Messiah crucified. Now, the reason that I think that is true is that ordinarily in the earlier stages of the New Testament, the term Christos did refer more often to the office than to the person and it became later the name of that person. But early on it was a reference to the fact of the office that the Lord Jesus Christ assumed. In fact, in Acts chapter 26, in verse 23 we have a statement that bears upon it. When Paul stood before Agrippa and he was making the defense of himself, in the 22nd verse we read, "Then Agrippa said unto Phestus, I would also hear the man myself tomorrow." I'm sorry I'm reading from chapter 25. And in verse 22 of 26 the apostle says, "Having therefore obtained help of God I continue unto this day witnessing both to small and great saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come, that Messiah should suffer and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead and should show light to the people and to the Gentiles."

This was a great difficulty for the early church, to believe and proclaim a crucified Messiah. Let me explain further why it was such a great difficulty. The Jews, as you know from Paul's statement, felt that to speak about a crucified Messiah was to introduce a stumbling block to the doctrine. Paul says, "We preach Christ crucified" unto the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks the idea of a Messiah who would be crucified was simply foolishness. They did not understand. They did not have any background whatsoever. The Jewish people who had a background did not understand that the Old Testament that the Messiah should suffer. And so they regarded this idea as a stumbling block. They thought of the Messiah as one who would come, who would establish his kingdom upon the earth. He would judge the Gentiles. He would establish them in their

place of ancient authority. And as a result when the early church began its proclamations they had to constantly explain to the Jewish opponents of the Christian faith why there was the doctrine of a crucified Messiah.

And illustration of the difficulty is found in this fact, that later on finally the Jews did acknowledge as the Christians pointed to the Old Testament Scriptures that the Old Testament Scriptures did support the idea of a crucified Messiah. So they invented the doctrine of two Messiahs, a Messiah Bin Joseph and a Messiah Bin David. The Messiah, the Son of Joseph, was the Messiah who would suffer and the Messiah the son of David was the one who would rule and reign. But there is no indication in history of this doctrine ever existing until after the time of the apologists of Christianity by the Christian. So this was a tremendous difficulty for the early church.

Now, I want to ask you a question, why the difficulty? What's the wisdom of the cross? What's the point of the cross? What are we supposed to understand by the cross? Now, if we can come to understand that, I think we'll have some understanding of why the apostles preached this as the criterion of the Christian faith. And I'd like to suggest to you three things with reference to it. First of all, the crucified Messiah was a word regarding ourselves. There is associated with the cross of Christ today gentleness, sweetness, and the kinds of things that make people think well it would be nice to have on our lapel, have a cross, or to have it hanging from our neck for decoration. But let me assure you that the wreathing of the cross in roses is anything but the significance of Jesus Christ and this one crucified.

Goethe is responsible for that. He's responsible for the expression "the cross wreathed in roses." But Goethe did not understand the nature of the Christian gospel, and as so many he liked to make the cross nothing but a piece of decoration. What this specifically says is we, every one of us, every one of you, young as well as old, are born to die. That's precisely what it says, you are born to die. You, God's greatest creation, made in the image of God, you are born to die, every one of you, young, middle aged,

older, you're born to die. The older you are the sooner you must face the fact of your death. So amidst the wreckage of our self esteem, we learn of our sin. We learn of our guilt. We learn of our lostness. We learn of our perishing. We're all on the way. We're born to die. In fact, that's what Paul means when he says in verse 18 of chapter 1, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that are perishing," present tense, are on the way to perdition unless something happens; foolishness but unto us who are being saved, we're not completely saved yet, it's the power of God."

So first of all the cross tells us we need redemption. If there is anything that it tells more plainly than that I'd like to know what it is, but it certainly tells that plainly. I think of Peter's great statement on the Day of Pentecost when looking out over that crowd of people and speaking from the temple areas perhaps he said, "Ye men of Israel hear these words, Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you as ye yourselves also know, him being delivered by the determinant council and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Notice "by wicked hands," we are to receive the message of the cross. "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and this one as crucified." Our debt's infinite; we owe our lives. We owe our eternal lives. We have sinned against an infinite God. And the message that comes immediately to us is it's a word regarding ourselves, we are lost.

Now, there is also a word regarding the world, too. Paul said, the text I cited, we preach Christ as crucified unto the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Greeks foolishness. The world's wisdom looked at the cross, and the saw Jesus Christ dying helplessly. They saw him dying pointlessly for they didn't understand. They saw him dying as one who had been abandoned. They saw him as a person who was in dereliction. That's the way they looked at him apart from the divine wisdom given through the Holy Spirit. But God contradicted the judgment of the world on Easter. In fact, that really is the problem of the world. They still look at the cross from the stand

point of the Friday on which our Lord died. I hesitate to call it Good Friday. Only a Christian can call it Good Friday. But on the Friday; they looked at him as a person who was an executed criminal or perhaps an executed teacher. But we look at him in the light of Easter morning and the resurrection. It was God's way of saying, "I reverse the judgment of men, I reverse what they say about Jesus of Nazareth, I raise him from the dead to let you know that I stand completely behind him and the message that he proclaimed." It's God's way of justifying vindicating the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ and the apostles as well.

And thirdly, it's a word regarding our God. If it's a word regarding ourselves and it reminds us that our debt is infinite, and if it's a word concerning the world and it reminds us that the world never understands our Lord nor the apostles, nor their followers. Over and over again in the New Testament we are told by the apostles the world did not understand him. The world does not understand you. It is a word concerning the world, but it's a word concerning our God; divine grace in our salvation. The preaching of the cross is to them that are perishing foolishness, but unto us who are being saved; it's the power of God. We are being saved, Paul says. And it's the power of God for us.

And further, he states in verse 30, "But of him are ye of Christ Jesus, who is of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Of him are ye in Christ Jesus. In other words, it's God's sovereign activity that relates us to the Lord Jesus Christ and in relating us to him makes him to be to us wisdom, the true wisdom, the wisdom contrary to man's fallen wisdom, the wisdom that may be defined as justification and sanctification and ultimately complete redemption in which we enjoy not only the forgiveness of our sins but at the resurrection a new body like unto his own glorious body. And this is of him, not of us; divine grace in salvation.

You know why our society, due too unfortunately to some of the preaching of popular preachers which itself is a revelation of the understanding of the world about us

and spiritual things, has made into a Christian doctrine self esteem. Nothing could be further from the truth. Self esteem, why the Scriptures make it very plain we should never have self esteem in a sense that is separated from the work of Christ on Calvary's cross. Self esteem, self esteem, in the light of what Scripture says about us, no, no, no self esteem there. The self esteem apart from the cross is false self esteem. But self esteem in the light of the Scriptures that's another matter. Self esteem genuinely grounded in the eternal love of the heavenly Father, that's the kind of self esteem that's significant. When I have self esteem truly I have the ultimate kind of self esteem that individuals who are placarding self esteem apparently do not understand at all. Think of this, I am loved by God. I am loved by an eternal God.

Now, the fact that the love that God has shown to me is an eternal love is made plain in Scripture. "I have loved you with an everlasting love." "He loved us before we were born," just like Jacob; as Paul said with reference to Jacob, "Before Esau and Jacob had done anything good or bad he set his love upon Jacob and said Jacob have I loved." He's the eternal God. Therefore nothing that can happen to me now can change the love of God. He loved me before I had any opportunity to do otherwise. I am loved by an everlasting God who loves me everlastingly. And furthermore, in case you have any doubts about it, the Scriptures say he is a God who does not change.

And so having set his love upon me, that love is an unchangeable love; and furthermore, throughout the ages of eternity I'll still be loved. Ah, there is self esteem; there is true self esteem, not in anything that comes from me. I am loved before I ever existed. It was nothing in me, and just as the eternal God does not change his mind, nothing that happens now can change his mind with reference to me. He works in me through his Holy Spirit, ultimately will bring me, oh of course he may have to discipline me. He may have to do a work of sanctification that makes a distinct difference in the kind of life that I am living. All of us experience that. We're never perfect. We know that. In fact, most of us are far from sanctified, but we have the assurance that that work

shall be continued and shall be completed. "For who he has foreknown, he has foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son. And those whom he's foreordained he has called. And those whom he has called he has justified. And those whom he has justified he has" now Paul, Paul how could you say something like that, you put it in the past tense. You mean will be don't you? No, no, he has glorified. It's so certain. Self esteem, yes I have self esteem. My self esteem is not grounded in S. Lewis Johnson though. My self esteem is grounded in what God has made me through Christ. My self esteem rests upon the eternal immutable love of an invincible God whose purposes can never be frustrated. So I'm beginning to understand why the apostle rejoiced in this message of Jesus Christ and this one crucified.

And incidentally, my Christian friend, this is how God wants to be known. This is what he has told us in his word. He has told us that he wishes to be known in this way; the illusion of man's fallen reason being competent to deal with the ultimate questions as destroyed by this. We need to be told what the term God means by the revelation that is found in holy Scripture. Christianity has always insisted on the need to be told what to understand by the term God, and that he himself establishes the basis on which we may speak about him. We are talking about a God who reveals himself. Who has taken the initiative away from us. Who encounters us before we discover him, as he said, as Paul put it, "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus who is made unto us wisdom." "God's not something we discover by looking at the starry skies," someone has said, or listening to Mozart flute concertos. We find out about God by studying holy Scripture, the things that are found there.

Luther again put it so beautifully. He said, "Scripture is the manger in which Christ is laid." "Scripture is the manger in which the Messiah is laid." That's where we find out about the Messiah. That's where we find out about salvation. That's where we find out about ourselves. That's where we find out about the world. That's where we find the truth about our God in heaven. I don't know whether you've noticed this or not, but if

you read the synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke and then if you think of say thirty-three years of our Lord's life, and if you think of the gospels as a biography, which is a mistake to begin with. They are gospels, nothing ever like a gospel ever was written until the gospels were written. It's a unique form of literature. But nevertheless look at the thirty-three years and then notice the disproportionate amount of the gospels, the synoptics that is devoted to the sufferings of our Lord in the last days, to his passion, and you'll discover that the great emphasis of the synoptic gospels is upon the passion of our Lord, because they recognize the significance of that in the unfolding of the divine revelation.

Then when you turn to the New Testament and you read also the letters of the apostles and you study them you are shocked to discover that they do not pay a whole lot of attention to the teaching of our Lord given in the gospels. Oh, they understand it; they knew it and they recognize the worth of it. But their point primarily is to interpret the cross, to interpret the sufferings. And if you'll read the gospels in this way you will see that when we read the Scriptures we are to make the passion narratives and the words of the apostles' fundamental in our understanding of the reference point of Christianity. Martin Kahler, a well known German theologian once said that "the gospels were simply passion narratives." That was carrying it a bit too far, but nevertheless the point that I've tried to make is a justified point. So when Paul preached, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus, Messiah, and this one as crucified," it's in that crucified way in which he's preached, that crucified status that makes a difference with Paul. Then he was expressing something that was significant and important.

Now, what I have to say on the remaining versus is really designed simply to show that what I've just said is the thing that we should stress. Notice Paul's method again in verses 3 and 4, he's alluded to it in verse 1. He says, "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching." You

know, what an encouragement to gospel preachers. What an encouragement to a man who stands behind the pulpit, and if he finds that he's here in weakness and fear and in much trembling, and if his speech and his preaching are not with enticing words of man's wisdom, there is one great buttress and support that he has. Paul says "but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Rejecting the confusing things of human reason, he sought the ultimate testimony, which is God's testimony. Please remember that my Christian friends, when I'm long gone from Believers Chapel please remember that the ultimate testimony to the truth of Christianity is not human reason, not fallen human reason, not even wise fallen human reason, not even the evidences of the faith, of which there are plenty of course, but the ultimate testimony is the testimony of God himself in the Spirit. The Spirit witnessing to the words of Scripture is the ultimate hope and trust and foundation of the Christian faith. You may not understand it, but that is precisely what it is.

This word demonstration in verse 4 is an interesting word. The Greek word *apodeixis* is a term that referred often to the producing of proofs in argument in court, and it's used in that sense in chapter 25 in verse 7 of the Book of Acts in its verbal form. So when he says, "In demonstration of the Spirit and of power," it's the Spirit who proves the truth of the word of God ultimately.

Those of you who know me know I've been interested in Christian theology for many, many decades now. But one man made a statement some time ago, which I've rejoiced in. This is what he said, "But in no case is reason the ultimate rule of faith. No authority can be higher than the direct testimony of God. And certainty can be greater than that imparted by the Spirit shining on the word." An accredited revelation, that's what we have. We have the manger in which Christ is laid the holy Scriptures and then we have the third person of the trinity bearing constant testimony to the fact that this is word of God. That's what he does. He constantly testifies to us, this is the word of God. He says, "An accredited revelation like an oath among men should put an end to all

controversy." Our hope is ultimately in God. Please remember that. Wigenstein's authority, insignificant; Plato's authority, insignificant; I still read him. I just read another of his essay within the past month, very interesting, many interesting things, but authoritative no, our authority comes from heaven. The authority of God is the supreme authority. He testifies to the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ as the crucified Messiah.

Why did Paul do this? Why when he went to Corinth did he determine not to know anything but Jesus Christ, and this one crucified? Well, he tells us in the 5th verse, here is his motive, "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." If the proof is from God, why magnify then the instruments, the proof is from God. The faith that rests upon philosophical arguments, wisdom, human reasoning, human fallen reasoning is at the mercy of other arguments of the same nature. What depends upon a clever argument is at the mercy of a cleverer argument. How true that is. We can never defend the Christian faith ultimately by clever arguments. There will always be a cleverer argument that human reason will think of. The ultimate testimony is the testimony of God the Holy Spirit and Christians, even though they may not understand that, if they are genuine Christians that's what they ultimately stand upon.

Now, some of what I've been saying, God wishes to be known in Christ's cross. There he has spoken showing his diving atoning love. The authentic God is with us. The cross tells us, with us Emmanuel, Emmanuel there in the cross. And furthermore, not only with us there but for us there, the eternal immutable love of the triune God is the ultimate hope of genuine Christians. And my hope for you is that it rests there, and that you have the true biblical self esteem. I am loved by an eternal immutable God who has demonstrated his love for me in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This, my Christian friend, is why our Lord is a divine person. That's why he has to be a divine person. Because if our Lord is not a divine person we have no assurance of the love of God. We have the assurance of the love of this man. That is, we think it's an evidence of his love, it might not be. But the fact that he is the eternal God, in that fact we have the assurance that

God has spoken to us. Otherwise we have no assurance, no authority. No apostle, no prophet can give God's word ultimately to us unless God endorses it. And in the work of Jesus Christ it has been endorsed. He endorsed the prophet's messages, and he endorsed those who would be his apostles and what they would bring to us. And so we have their testimony to the cruciality of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. So in Christ, in the crucified Messiah we may truly have a sound Christian ground of eternal life.

What's our response to this? Paul says it back in verse 21 of chapter 1, "For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew God. It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them," that go to church on Sunday morning, especially Believers Chapel. Save them that do good works. Save them that observe the ordinances, that have been baptized, that sit at the Eucharist or the mass, that are educated or cultured. No, the text says simply "To save them that believe," believe, believe he was a crucified Messiah, believe that he was the one who came as God's promised Savior and offered the atoning sacrifice. Our trust is in him, objectively in him; and God saves those that believe. Life is not propagated biologically. I see little children in this audience. Your responsibility is to believe this message, too. Your parents cannot bring you to heaven, only faith in Christ personally will bring you to heaven. You can bow your head and give thanks to him at any time for dying for sinners, acknowledging that you are one of them, and receiving eternal life.

My friends in the audience know that I love some of the older theologians. Samuel Rutherford lived in the 17th century. That's three hundred years ago, over three hundred years ago Mr. Rutherford lived. He pastored in a little place in Scotland, then became Professor of Theology at the University of St. Andrews. A superlapsarian Calvinist, the strongest most ultra-Calvinist of the kind, except he didn't fail to believe some things that were significant that others of a slightly different persuasion believed. Mr. Rutherford was known for the warmth of his faith, and for the warmth of his understanding of the truth of God. I challenge any Arminian to come and compare their

devotion to our Lord as expressed in Rutherford's writings with what he has written. Listen to what he says, I'll have to translate part of it for you because it's said in not simply English, but it's said in Scottish, which is not the same.

Rutherford said, talking about the saving work of Christ, he says, "Of all of the wonders that ever were read in a printed book, this is the first." And what he means by that is this is the greatest, this is the first in rank. "Christ made an exchange. Christ would coss," that's one of those Scottish words, "Christ would coss lives with you." You can find it in the Oxford Book of English Dictionary if you like. It means to barter. "Christ would barter lives with you and make a niffer," I love that word, "make a niffer." Niffer means an exchange. So he would coss lives with you and make a niffer. That is he would barter lives with you and make an exchange. This is what he means. "He never beguiled you for he took the shame and gave you glory. He took the curse and gave you the blessing. He took death and gave you life." This is the exchange. This is the niffer. "The fairest candle that ever was lighted was blown out. The head of the church is dead. And the Lord of Life is laid down in the grave. No wonder that the Son which did share part of his labors be shut down, because the great son of righteousness was shut down in the grave and a stone above him. Good right have ye to Christ, accept of his niffer," accept the exchange "and change with him, and take his best blessings and purchased redemption."

That's an exchange that you can make this morning. Three hundred plus years after Mr. Rutherford it still is true. You've made an exchange. This is what he's taken. That's why Paul said he preached nothing but Jesus Christ and "this one crucified." He's born the shame. He's born the suffering. He's born the sin. And you have the life, the hope, and the ultimate in self esteem. I am loved by an eternal, immutable, invincible God. Come to Christ. Believe in him. Trust in him. Make the exchange. And you'll know the joy that the apostles knew and they sought in their preaching to have others share with them. Come to him. Trust him. No time is better than right at this moment,

for the children, for the young people, for the adults. While there is life and breath in those who are born to die, come and receive life. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, how marvelous it is to hear the apostle say in the Spirit that they determine not to know anything but Jesus Christ and this one crucified. We know Lord that this is authentic Christianity. This is the great foundation. This is the criterion, and we pray that by Thy grace Thou will touch hearts by thy word and bring them to the knowledge of him as the crucified Messiah. Lord, if there should be someone in this audience how has not yet turned to Christ, young or old, may...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]