



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Genesis 15:6, Galatians 3:1-14

"Justification by Faith - II"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] The Scripture reading today is Genesis chapter 15 verse 6. And then we'll turn to the New Testament to Galatians chapter 3 and read the first fourteen verse of that chapter. Genesis chapter 15 and verse 6. And Moses writes, "And he (that is Abraham) believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." And then in chapter 3 of Paul's letter to the Galatians, verse 1 through verse 14,

"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently (or openly) set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? If it be yet in vain. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith."

You'll recognize, of course, that that's a citation from Habakkuk chapter 2 verse 4. and if you have studied that verse you will know that it is derived from Genesis 15:6. So what we are doing is reading passages that have to do with that great statement that Moses made with reference to Abraham and his faith, "He believed in the Lord and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Verse 12,

"And the law is not of faith: but the man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

I think you can see that the question that the apostle is really talking about is, "How do we become heirs of the covenantal promises that God gave to Abraham?" And his answer is very very plain. It's through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who offered the atoning sacrifice by which our sins may be paid for. May the Lord bless this reading of his word and let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we give Thee thanks for the ministry of the word of God to us. We thank Thee for the way in which Thou hast preserved the Scriptures, enabling us to open and read them in the book which by Thy grace has been preserved and transmitted to us. We think of the many individuals who have written the Scriptures and now their

writings gathered into one volume that we may read and ponder as the word of God. We think Thee that we are able to hold in our hands the Scriptures and reflect upon the fact that they communicate to us the mind of our great triune God in heaven and the message that Thou wilst have us believe.

We thank Thee for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who loved us and loosed us from our sins in his own precious blood. We thank Thee Lord for all of the other promises found in the word of God, too, which remind of us the daily care that we have with a father in heaven with a Lord Jesus Christ who ever lives to make intercession for us and even at this very moment is praying for his people. And the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the comforter, the strengthener who lives within our hearts to maintain contact between the Lord Jesus Christ and those for whom he suffered and died. We thank Thee for the other promises of the word of God. We pray for the whole Church of Jesus Christ, for each individual member scattered over the face of this worldwide globe. Bless them richly at this very moment. And where the word of God is being preached at this moment we ask Thy blessing upon it. May it go forth in the power of the Holy Spirit and touch hearts. And may the spirit work in our hearts and give us the desire to know Thee and to know the comfort of the forgiveness of sins and of the possession of a righteousness that is acceptable to Thee.

We pray for our country. We ask Thy blessing up on it. And we pray particularly, Lord, for those who've asked us to pray for them, for those who are ill, or sick, or bereaved, or who have other problems and trials. Lord, minister to them through the Lord Jesus Christ and sanctify their hearts through the truths of the word of God. Give healing in accordance with Thy will. We look forward to the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ. And may that great truth also have its necessary impact upon our daily life; Monday through Saturday of this week that we have just begun.

We pray Thy blessing upon each person in this audience, upon the visitors especially, and upon the members and friends of the chapel. We commit them to Thee

and ask Thy blessing upon us all that the Lord Jesus may be glorified in what is said in done here. We pray in his name. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today is the continuation of the relatively short series of messages that I began last week. Today our topic is really the same topic, "New Time Religion, and Justification by Grace through Faith." This series is provoked by two things; one, an article by the Reverend Robert Brow, recently retired from the pastorate of an Anglican Church in Kingston, Ontario, located on the campus of DaQueens University. And article that Mr. Brow wrote in Christianity Today and the general title given to the article was "Evangelical Megashift." And the essence of it was to the effect that Evangelicalism is engaged in a theological shift it seems. And one wonders the extent to which this shift will move them from orthodox historical theology. Mr. Brow goes on to say, in addition to questioning the doctrine of justification by faith, that other terms also are being give new since. And some of the terms that he discusses are hell, faith, judge, wrath, sin, the church and the Son of God.

I mentioned last Sunday that what seems rather striking about it is that James Davidson Hunter, Professor of Sociology at the University of Virginia, wrote a book three years ago called Evangelicalism: The Coming Generation. It was the result of an attitudinal survey that Professor Hunter had been involved in over a period of time. He also has written other books on Evangelicalism and thus is very knowledgeable in Evangelicalism. The attitudinal survey was conducted on about nine of the leading Christian colleges in the United States and also on the campus of about seven of the leading theological seminaries. Many of the names of these schools you will know, such as Whitten College, Westmont College, Fuller Theological Seminary, Talbot Theological Seminary, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and others of a similar character.

The conclusion of Professor Hunter's article was that there has been indeed a modification of the Evangelical viewpoints, and that in his opinion as a sociologist the

trends that have been underway for some time will probably escalate. He does not want, he says, to be a prophet. But nevertheless, speaking from the standpoint of his own discipline and skills the indications are that the trends that have been manifested so far, his words are, "The tendencies will problem escalate."

I made reference also last week to David Wells' comments. Dr. Wells' is Professor of Theology at Gordon-Conwell Seminary and very strong evangelical man. He himself having noted the shifts has suggested that they are "related to the forces of modernity", as he puts it. That is that in our day there is a lack of respect for tradition and there is also a lack of understanding of the transcendent order that is the order of the Lord God in heaven. That those matters have lost their appeal, tradition, and the transcendent order. Furthermore, that we are living in an age in which feelings have come to be more significant than truth. And consequently the result of that is that we do not as a people, as a citizenry in the United States of America in the western world, we do not have the since of a commitment to logic and logical thinking that we once had. What we are exposed to in our emptiness is the images that we see on the television screen. And consequently, if you'll think about it for a moment, I think that's he's on to something important. When we look at the television screen what we look at are little bits and pieces of information that are flashed on the screen for us without any necessary logical connection. And so the idea of putting things together and reasoning in an inferential or logical way largely departing from the populace in the United States of America.

So what we have is something that is not really a well thought out philosophy of our daily life. I think anyone who sits in front of a television screen will see that, in you'll see it particularly in the 5:30 news on the major networks in which you have little bits of information put together for a few moments and with no logical connection necessarily between the things that you are seeing. And so the emptiness of your mind and heart is filled with these images.

What also Dr. Wells has said is characteristic of our age is that the social pluralism that we have in our society in the United States of America, really in the western world, has resulted in a gradual conviction, perhaps un-thought out but nevertheless there, that in matters of truth and in matters of spiritual truth we also have a society in which private preference is the significant thing. In other words, we do not have the idea that there is really a truth that has come to us from God. But being a pluralistic society we can believe pluralistically in the spiritual world as well.

Now I was very much upset, I admit when I read Robert Brow's article, and some of the things that he said with reference to the doctrine of justification by faith. He'd lead out in his article with a reference to it and his precise statement if you'll remember last week that I cited was this, "So instead of being dragged trembling into a law court, we are to breathe in the atmosphere of a loving family."

Now, I do not want to give anyone the suggestion that I do not believe in the warmth and atmosphere of a loving family in our relationship to God. It is very obvious that when we believe in Jesus Christ, according to Scripture, we become the children of God. And in becoming the children of God we are related to others who are the children of God and we have a family, a spiritual family relationship.

What I was particularly concerned about was the fact that Mr. Brow wrote, "So instead of being dragged trembling into a law court". What I thought he should have said was, "In addition to, we should remember this". In other words, we don't want to abandon the loving family relationship but we want to also insist that if we do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be dragged tremblingly before the final court of judgment which will be administered by the triune God in heaven.

Robert Brow, an Evangelical man by his profession, believes that legal or forensic justification is an error. In fact, he suggests that the idea of a legal or forensic justification, that is a justification before a God who holds us accountable to his law is something that originated with the Romans rather than with the Lord God and it has found its way into

the New Testament from the Romans and the way in which they loved the legal or law court. I don't doubt that that is true of the Romans, but it is not true of the New Testament. In my opinion, Mr. Brow is in error. Legal justification is plainly taught in the New Testament. And the apostle Paul is one who makes it very, very plain. As a matter of fact in Paul's writings, it's nothing more than the gospel.

Let me show you how the apostle argues this very point in Romans chapter 1 and verse 16 and 17. And you might turn there if you have a New Testament. And if you don't have your New Testament or your Bible with you, well shame on you. [Laughter] You're in Believers Chapel and you don't have the things that accompany the listening to the ministry of the word of God. You can check me if you have the Bible.

Now, Paul is giving us the theme of the Epistle to the Romans and he states in verse 16, "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ." Incidentally, I want you to notice the little "for" because Paul is not giving us a few TV images. He's giving us some logical thinking. He said in verse 15 that he's ready to preach the Gospel that are in Rome, "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ." That's why I'm ready to do it. I'm not ashamed, so I'll preach it anywhere in effect. For I'm not ashamed of it and this is why I'm not ashamed of it. "For it's the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and also the Greek." If the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes well then no one should be ashamed of proclaiming it. And furthermore, no one should fail to be ready to preach it anywhere is the point he makes.

Now, why is the Gospel the power of God unto salvation? Verse 17 says, "For therein (that is in the Gospel) is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, as it is written: The just shall live by faith." So he's ready to preach to the Gospel because it's the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes. And it's the power of God unto salvation because a justification from God, righteousness and justification come from the same route. A justification from God is found in the Gospel. So when we say we do

no believe in a justification by grace through faith we are in effect saying we do not believe in the Gospel. That's how serious it is to deny that teaching.

Now, we've cited Luther's statement about how important the doctrine of justification by faith is. "It's the article of standing or falling church," Luther said. John Calvin, in similar vein said, "It's the main on which religion turns, the doctrine of justification by faith." I would like to point this out, that Calvin also went on to say that, "This is a wonderful plan of justification that covered by the righteousness of Christ they should not tremble at the judgment they deserve and that while they rightly condemn themselves they should be accounted righteous outside themselves.

Now, I think that's so important because Mr. Brow said in his statement that, "We want to do away with this idea of bringing men tremblingly before God in a legal kind of judgment." Well, I want to say to you that if you do not have the righteousness of God you should tremble before a holy don't righteous God. You should. That's the way you will. And if you don't think you should you will find out if you do not know our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and do and do not have the righteousness of God, that when you are brought in before the final judgment that faces you; you will tremble. But Calvin says, and notice he uses the same word, he says, "This is the wonderful plan of justification that covered by the righteousness of Christ they should not tremble at the judgment they deserve." In other words, if you don't want to tremble then believe in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But if you refuse to believe in him you will tremble. And you may say that the Gospel is the kind of Gospel that you don't want to proclaim that we must be dragged in tremblingly before the Lord God. But we don't have the right to determine how those things will come to pass. The word of God has set forth precisely the way by which we may know that we have eternal life and escape that judgment. And if we say, "No, we do not." Then we are going to be the recipients of just what the Scriptures set forth.

There's one other point that I made last week that I'd like to reiterate and that is that the word to justify is a word that means "to declare righteous." Not "to be righteous",

not "to make righteous", but "to declare righteous". It's a legal term. It's a term that indicates specifically a declaration from a God who sits upon a throne. So it is a legal term. It means precisely that. In fact, in the middle of the 1st Century when one of the papyri was used of the awarding of a verdict in court; this very term. So in Scripture when we talk about justification we are talking about a declaration that a person is righteous before God. If I say to you, "I have been justified", I do not mean that have been made righteous. I will be ultimately, but not now. I do not mean that I am righteous. Luther himself said that We are *justus et peccator*; just. He also had the Latin adverb *simul, et simul peccator*, "at the same time a sinner". So we are sinner, but we have been declared righteous. God has declared those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ righteous because he has given them a righteousness that is acceptable to him and it is done by grace. It's a gift.

Now, I want to discuss the matter further today because it's that important and my mind. First, I would like to just read you some of the testimony of the Christian creeds that are important. Now, I want you know that I understand very well that the creeds are not final authority. But I would also like to say to you that the creeds are very important. Do you know why they're important? Because they represent what the Holy Spirit has taught the Christian down through the years. They are not infallible. The word of God is infallible. But Jesus said when he was here that he would teach, through the spirit, believers concerning him. And he has been teaching them. He has been teaching them for nineteen hundred years; the Holy Spirit. And therefore, we may expect to find in the literature about the Scriptures teaching from the Holy Spirit. To say, "I will not have anything to do with what the church teaches," is to say in effect, "The Holy Spirit has not done a very good job and now I'm going to do what the rest of the Christian church has been unable to do down through nineteen hundred years." And I must say if that's your position you are deeply confused about the study of the Holy Scriptures. Pay

attention to what God has taught the church, but remember that the ultimate authority is the word of God.

Now, listen. Here are some of the testimonies of the creeds. And most of these creeds were the product of extensive study. The Westminster Confession of Faith, just to use one illustration, individuals, the leading teachers of the word of God in the 17th Century in Britain spent about five years on the statement. I've read a number of their writings outside of the Westminster Confession. They were godly men, learned men. so the creeds represent a body of truth that the Christian church has set forth as their understanding of Holy Scripture.

The Lutheran Confession, the Augsburg Confession reads this way concerning justification. "It is also taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sins and become righteous before God by grace for Christ's sake through faith when we believe that Christ suffered for us and then for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. For God (Now, notice these words because here is the thought of imputation and declaration of righteousness) will regard and reckon his faith as righteousness as Paul says in Romans 3:21 through 26 and 4:5."

The Belgic Confession, the confession of the Dort Reformed Church, for example, done by Getto Debress, but recognized by them as one of their great doctrinal confessions. This particular confession, incidentally the Augsburg Confession was dated 1530, this one 1561, "We believe that our salvation consists in the remission of our sins for Jesus Christ sake and that therein our righteousness before God is implied. As David and Paul teach us, declaring this to be the happiness of men that God imputes righteousness to him without works. And the same apostle saith, 'We are justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ.' And therefore we always hold fast this foundation ascribing all the glory to God, humbling ourselves before him, and acknowledge ourselves to be such as we really are without presuming to trust in anything

in ourselves or in any merit of ours, relying and resting upon the obedience of Christ's crucified alone which becomes our when we believe in him."

The Westminster Confession, I have read this before you more than once. I'll read it again. It won't hurt you one bit. "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. Nor 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."

Now, I could read the Baptist Confession, the Second London Confession. It says practically identically the same thing as the Westminster Confession as well as the Savoy Declaration of the Independence. It reads practically identically with the Westminster Confession of faith because many of them also worked on the Westminster Confession of Faith.

Now, I'd like to come finally; now you see we've had here the Confession of the Lutheran Church the Reform Church, the Presbyterians with the Westminster Confession particularly. And now the 39 Articles of the Anglican Church, Mr. Brow's church. Listen to what they say and Article 11 of the 39 Articles. "We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by faith and not for our own works or deserving. Wherefore, that we are justification by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort as more largely is expressed in the article of justification." In other words the very truth that he, in my opinion, speaks slurringly about is the truth that he is supposed to uphold as a minister of the Anglican Church. And furthermore, suggests that by that teaching one does not have the sense of the loving family relationship that we should have. But did you notice that those who wrote this

Confession back in 1563 said, "Wherefore that we are justification by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort."? This is the thing that gives the greatest of all comfort, to know that we stand before God justified; declared righteous. Nothing could be more wonderful than that. Now, that's the testimony of the creeds. And they are very good testimonies and you'll notice that these creeds all center on the same truth of justification by grace through faith.

Now, I'd like for a moment to turn back to Genesis chapter 15 and verse 6 because Mr. Brow has suggested that this idea of being before God in a legal is something that was given by the Romans and the New Testament writers derived it from the Romans. What I would like to suggest is that it was something that was in effect long before there ever were any Romans roaming around on the Italian peninsula.

In Genesis chapter 15 and verse 6 we read, "And he believed in the Lord and he accounted it to him for righteousness." You know the context. Abraham has been given the promise that in him all the families of the earth shall be blessed, that he shall have a seed through whom this blessing shall come. Abram has become an old man; older than I am. And he has a wife that is very old as well. He's very concerned because he doesn't have that seed yet. And he says, "The only thing I have is this Eleazar who is in my house as a kind of caretaker of things in my home. I don't have the seed yet. So he brings it before the Lord. The Lord has told him that, "I am Thy shield and Thy exceeding great reward," in verse 1. He said, "Well, the reward is fine Lord but my heart is set on something else. My heart is set on the promises that you have promised me." And so he brings his problem to the Lord expressing his impatient misgivings over the promise that has been made to him that he's going to have a seed. But now he's old. And his wife? Well Scripture will go on to say she's beyond the age of having children.

So God speaks to the patriarch and he says, "Look, that man's not your heir but you're going to have one as heir," verse 4 says, "who shall come forth out of your own bowels." In other words, it's not someone who's going to be simply your heir legally. It's

going to be someone who is your heir legally but also is going to be of your flesh and blood. Well, this must have been a remarkable thing. The pledge of course, however, increases the paradox because the Lord now takes Abram out and asks him to take a look up at the sky. And he said, "Abram, do you see all those stars up there?" And Abram looked up. The heavens were filled with innumerable stars. It could not be numbered. And he said, "And so shall thy seed be." Not much comfort so far as the immediate problem is concerned. He just expands the promise a bit and makes it even more dramatic. "So shall thy seed be."

Now, you might think that the patriarch would still have some questions because after all he doesn't have an heir; one from his own organs. Now, the paradox is increased with the stars. And at this point Moses, as he recounts the story, in the sixth verse tells us simply, "And he believed in the Lord and he accounted to him for righteousness."

So the narrator, Moses, leaves the stargazing man and addresses the reader and gives what someone has called the biggest word in the chapter. "He believed in the Lord and he accounted it for righteousness." Believed; first occurrence of that word incidentally in Genesis; first occurrence in the Bible. So he said, "He believed." Notice, "He believed in the Lord." It was a personal relationship but do not say, "It's a personal relationship; not a doctrine." No, no. It's all ready evident that he believed in the person but also encompassed in the person were the promises that that person had made. So he believed in the Lord. Personal faith, prepositional faith also, related to the great promises the Father has given to him. I've said this so many times in this congregation having preached to you for so many years.

But when I was in the insurance business in Birmingham, Alabama, that was back in Old Testament times [Laughter], I attended a series of lectures on the word of God by Lewis Sperry Chafer. And in one of them he expounded Genesis chapter 15 and verse 6. I don't remember all of the message but I remember him referring to this and he made a

point. And Dr. Chafer didn't know Hebrew and didn't Greek but he had picked up a good bit from other people who did know. And he pointed out to us that the word believed is the word from which the word amen in the New Testament is derived. The Hebrew word amen and then the word in the New Testament the adverbial expression amen, which means "verily, verily", or translated that way have the same root. They are related one to another. And he'd said, "I'd like to retranslate this God said, 'So shall thy seed be,' and then Moses wrote, 'And Abraham amended God and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

Now, essentially that's what faith is. It's simply the acceptance of the word of God; a true acceptance of the word of God. No sacramental system must now be gone through in order to receive forgiveness of sins. No baptism. No circumcision. Nothing. simply faith. He believed in the Lord and it was accounted to him for righteousness. The sacramental treadmill had not been thought of yet and individuals believing entered into the fullness of the relationship with God because the text says, "And he, God, accounted it to him for righteousness." He put it to his account. That's a legal relationship. It's just as if you go down to one of the banks and if you can secure a loan from them to buy your automobile. You're going to buy that Porsche you've been looking at for a long, long time or your Jaguar, as some people like to look at. Then you're finally talking to the loan officer. He will say, "Yes, I'll lend you \$25,000 dollars." Or, "I will stand behind the debt that you're making. And you just go ahead and sign whatever check is necessary to make the sale," having arranged, of course, the details. And so even though you don't have the money in the bank you write a check out because a certain amount of money or a certain relationship has been put to your account. It's a legal relationship.

And so we read here, "He believed in the Lord and God put it to his account (his eternal account) as righteousness acceptable to Him." He reckoned it as belonging to Abraham and it is put to his account as a gift from God. this is before Rome was in existence. This is in the beginning of the word of God. This is one of the original ways

by which God deals with men, his legal way. Talk about being dragged tremblingly before a law court. If you have believed in our Lord Jesus Christ that's why you won't have to tremble in the law court that will ultimately place of the final judgment.

And it's for righteousness, a right-standing, a term of relationship by the imputation of the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, I spent a little longer than I should have on that subject because to be perfectly frank with you I think a great deal of that subject. And if you want to excite me then you have to deny it and I will be excited. Because I know this is what the Scriptures teach in the Old Testament. It's what they teach in the New Testament. And to me it is a stealing from God of the glory of the free salvation, which he in grace gives to individuals who come to him as lost sinners.

But turning to the Epistle to the Galatians for a moment Paul here deals specifically with the question of how men are saved. The Judaizers had come in among those whom he had preached to. And they had taught them it's fine to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, it's fine to believe in the atonement, it's fine to believe in the resurrection, it's fine to believe in the Second Advent, but you have not been circumcised. And if you're not circumcised you will not be saved. In other words, the sacramental treadmill, which at that time involved for them the undergoing of circumcision, is added to the Gospel message of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. So Paul argues that a man is not saved by circumcision. And he argues the point from Scriptural ideas. First from their early Christian experience he tells them, "Look when you received the Holy Spirit, did you receive it by works of law or by the hearing of faith?" Well these Galatians, they didn't even know what the Law of Moses was. They did not have the law. They were gentiles primarily. He says, "Have you suffered so many things in vein? If it be yet in vein he therefore that ministereth to you the spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, by the hearing of faith."

No, there is no two-step procedure in salvation. Believe in Christ and then undergo the sacramental work of circumcision. Just as today a man believes in Jesus

Christ and at that moment he receives a righteousness that is acceptable to God, and he is not saved only by a work of baptism. The baptism is simply a testimony to what has transpired. The sacramental system is a way by which works are added to the free grace of justification through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So Paul says, "There is no two step procedure. It is the simple experience of trust in our Lord Jesus Christ that brings righteousness." He argues from the faith of Abraham in verses 6 through 9 referring to our text in Genesis chapter 15 and verse 6, "Just as Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness, now ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the gentiles through faith, preach before the good new unto Abraham: In thee shall all nations be blessed." So those who inherit the promises, the conventional promises, are those who believe in Jesus Christ. So then which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

In other words, what we're arguing for is what Paul argued for, a new theology; "Back to Abe" theology. That's right, "Back to Abe" theology. Go back to how Abraham was saved. That's the pattern. That's the image. That's the model. How was Abraham saved? Through faith. Through faith. And furthermore, when he believed what did he receive? He received a righteousness that is acceptable to God. That's what Paul is saying.

Now then he argues from the curse of the law by just negatively saying, "Look, if you're going to put yourself unto doing something you're lost because you cannot do it. You're a sinner." and my friends, you cannot do it either. If you put yourself under a law system, whether it be sacramental or just, "I'm going to get to heaven by good works," you cannot do good works. Look at yourself. You fail constantly. And if you've failed once that's enough. You all ready owe the Lord the righteousness you cannot provide him.

Listen to what he says. Verse 10, "For as many as are of the works of the law (that is as many as are trying to be saved by what they do) they're under the curse. For it is

written; cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." You have to do everything in the law. You cannot fail once. And if you've all ready failed; forget it. You're history as far as justification by works is concerned. "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it's evident for the just shall live by faith." Listen, this is the apostle talking. This is not Mr. Brow. This is not a modern theologian. It's not S. Lewis Johnson, Jr. It's Paul. And Paul is simply reiterating what Habakkuk said, "The just shall live by faith and the law is not of faith. But the man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law being made accurse for us for it is written; cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree that the blessing of Abraham might come on the gentiles through Jesus Christ that we might receive the promise of the spirit through faith." "Through faith", emphatic in the text.

What's really at stake here? What are we arguing about? Why am I beginning to perspire? [Laughter] Because I'd like to suggest to you that something really important is at stake here. Are we dealing simply with a fresh look at a essentially the same doctrinal position? Are we just talking about putting the old Gospel in new fresh words? There's nothing wrong with that providing we maintain the old true Gospel. It can be put in fresh words and probably fresher words than I can put it. It can be, I'm sure, done.

I'm not suggesting that that's what we should not do. But on the other hand, are we seeing a fatal slide into unorthodox theology? Really a latitudinarian bigotry? In other words, to believe all of these things we have believed with the Christian church down through the centuries; let's abandon that. Let's try something else that's really different; not the same thing with new fresh language but something that's really different. A shift on the way to a retreat which leads to a departure. That's what we're talking about. Now, what is it that may be lost? Next week I'd like to finish this up, but I'm just going to mention them now. These are the things that may be lost; a sense of God's wrath, our sin, guilt, and condemnation.

Martin Luther once made a statement concerning theologians that touches the point at issue. I'll repeat this next week, too. But he said, "A theology is made not by thinking or reading, or speculating but by living, and dying and being damned." Living, dying, and being damned. In other words when a man gets hold of the truth, the fact that he lives, that's he's going to die; you'll die. I'll die. We'll all die if the Lord doesn't come. Not by for the same reason but we shall all die. And if we do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be damned. That's what God says. The wages of sin is death. I know precisely what Luther meant. So if you don't think about these things you cannot think biblically and Scriptural and truly.

So we lose a sense of God's wrath, our sin, guilt and condemnation, a sense of God's justice we've lost as if he can receive men on a basis of injustice. That's impossible. A sense of God's grace, the grace of salvation through faith alone. I want to talk about that. A sense of the true nature of faith, merit rolled out entirely so anyone who says, "I'm a believer in Jesus Christ and I have been saved," will have to admit that there is absolutely no merit before God that has gained him his status. It's what Christ has done.

And finally, a sense of the preeminent place of the substitutionary work of the Lord Jesus Christ in atonement. The time's up. I will have to save the rest for next week.

But I close with one statement with reference to the atonement. One leading Christian theologian once said, "My thoughts drown in this ocean. My thoughts drown in this ocean." I hope that through your study of the Scriptures and through your knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the magnificent work that he has done, that you come to understand it to such an extent that you realize that that magnificent work is of infinite significance, but particular significance for your eternal destiny. May you be able to say, "My thoughts drown in that ocean."

Come to Christ. Believe in him. Trust in him. Receive as a free gift a righteousness that is acceptable to God on the authority of the apostle, the prophets, and our Lord himself. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are indeed grateful to thee for these magnificent truths. We can understand how Luther said, "This is the article of a standing or falling church." And O God, by Thy grace we do pray that Believers Chapel, with all of her failings, by nevertheless stand in the light of a commitment to the great doctrine of justification by grace through faith as taught by Moses, the prophets, and the apostles, and our Lord.

Lord, if there should be someone in this audience who does not realize the peril in which he stands so touch their hearts that they flee to him who died for sinners and receive as a free gift eternal life. Just as Abram looked at the stars and believed the message, so may they Lord. Following Abram, look at the cross and the forgiveness of

[AUDIO ENDED ABRUPTLY]