



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 15:21-28, 16:16-17

“Ancient Terms with Modern Accents”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We are reading some passages from the word of God that are not passages that we are seeking to expound in detail in the series of messages that are proceeding at the present moment, but they have reference to the things that will be said, so will you turn with me to Matthew chapter 51 [Laughter] Maybe I have some kind of disease. I read the five first and the one that, the Matthew chapter 15, and we'll look at verse 21 through verse 28. Matthew 15, verse 21 through verse 28,

“Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon. And he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. (The indication was that she was continually doing this. The original text supports.) But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. (The word dog here is a word that doesn't mean one of the more violent vicious kind of dog that was common in the land, but the kind of dog that people often had in their families.

In fact the Greek term suggests a little dog, even a puppy, so we're not to think of the vicious kinds of dogs that were common over that particular area, but a slightly different kind, more like a domesticated dog.) And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs, which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.”

Now, turn over a page or so, and we'll read Matthew chapter 16 and verse 16 and 17. In verse 16 of Matthew chapter 16, the evangelist writes, “And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”

And then the final two verses of our Scripture reading are the last two verses of this gospel, Matthew chapter 28 verse 19 and verse 20. And here the Lord Jesus says, after having said,

“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, (Probably better rendered disciple all nations.) baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

May the Lord bless this reading of his word, and bow with me now in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Our heavenly Father, we are indeed grateful to Thee that we are able to read the word of God in this the year 1990, so many years after the time of our Lord and

so many years after the time of the writing of the Scriptures. We thank Thee that by Thy grace they have been preserved and we hold within our hands the written word of God. We thank Thee for the message contained within it. For it is a message, Lord, that all of us need. The Scriptures so plainly point out that we are rebellious, that we depart from Thee, that our thoughts are constantly contrary to the things that please Thee, and we thank Thee that Thou hast preserved in the word of God a story of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, whose sacrificial, saving, atoning death is the means by which we may come to have life, and to desire to love Thee and to serve Thee and to think thy thoughts after Thee.

We are grateful, Lord, for all of the work that Thou hast done to bring us to the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we do desire as the church of Jesus Christ that others also come to know him and to know the satisfaction, the peace, the blessedness, of standing in a right relationship with Thee. And we thank Thee, Lord, that Thou hast given us also the Holy Spirit for we know that having come to know him there are still so many things in our lives that are contrary to Thy will and to Thy word, and we thank Thee for him who takes the word of God, unfolds it us, then empowers us to follow our Lord himself in our daily life.

We thank Thee for this group of individuals who have come, for the Christians, and for those who are visiting perhaps and not yet believers, we pray for each. We ask, Lord, that our meeting may glorify our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank thee for the word of God, which it says to plainly that the Lord is our light and our salvation and in the light of that fact we have no one to fear. We pray fro the whole church of Christ, not simply this body of believers, but the whole church of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, wherever they may be, oh God through the Holy Spirit build them up and sustain them and continue to edify them.

We thank Thee for this great country of which we are a part. We pray Thy blessing upon it, and upon our president. And we would especially, Lord, remember

those whose names are in our Calendar of Concern, who've requested that we pray. We know the Scriptures teach us that Thou dost hear the prayers of believing men and women, and as believing servants of the Lord Jesus, we bring before Thee those who've requested our prayers and ask, Lord, that Thou wilt meet their needs. Give healing, as it should please Thee, and sustain each of them with the promises of the word of God. Supply the things that are needed. Bless those who minister to them, and Lord, enable us all to remember that our time here upon this earth is a limited time and enable us to use that time for the glory of our triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit in whose name we pray. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today, as we conclude our series on Newtime Religion, is “Newtime Religion: Ancient Terms with Modern Accents.” Well, I have been looking for metaphors of change with which to begin my introduction, and the last one that I could think of is the one for the last message. So let me begin by saying in Eastern Europe kind of change is occurring it seems in evangelical thinking. New model, relational image, as we have been pointing out are replacing biblical courtroom images with crucial semantic shifts in the famous and best known in the terms of the word of God.

As I have mentioned in each of the messages the article a few months ago in Christianity Today, by Robert Brow, an Anglican minister who has just recently retired, is the thing that focused my attention on this particular issue, and then reading in James Davidson Hunter's book on evangelicalism the coming generation has caused me to think about the things that we have been talking about over the last few weeks. Mr. Hunter was a recognized expert in evangelicalism, being professor of sociology at the University of Virginia, and having written more than one book on evangelicalism, in his book after taking an attitudinal survey of a number of Christian colleges, among them colleges like, Wheaton, Westmont, and evangelical seminaries, like Gordon-Conwell Seminary, Fuller

Seminary, Talbot Theological Seminary and others, came to the conclusion that the tendencies are moving away from evangelicalism do exist, and while he did not want to prophecy, that I think was wise move, he said, nevertheless he did feel that the tendencies that he definitely has seen from his several years of surveys will probably escalate. And so the question is the shift is here, it would seem. Does this mean a retreat, and will it ultimately mean a departure from evangelical thinking? It would not be surprising that that would happen, for over the centuries it has happened more than once, as you, if you have studied at all the history of Christian thinking, will surely know.

In the first three messages, I challenged Mr. Brow's contention regarding justification by grace through faith. For it was his view that justification by grace through faith, grounded in a penal substitutionary death of our Lord, was not really the biblical approach, but rather something that has become professedly Christian by reason of Roman law. That Roman penal institutions, or Roman concepts of law perhaps, are responsible for the emphasis that has been upon the doctrine of justification by faith in evangelicalism.

Now, I tried to point out that idea that justification by grace through faith the Christian standing in a law court before the Lord God the judge of the earth, and being justified by the saving ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. His death on the cross, and his atoning work, his satisfaction of the righteousness and the holiness of God, has been the view of orthodox Christianity since the time of the reformation, and was found even earlier for that matter, but at any rate, it was Mr. Brow's contention that that was something that is not really found in the word of God, and we spent several of our Sundays to show that that was not true, that justification by grace through faith, does not begin with Roman intuitions, but rather begins with Genesis chapter 15, in verse 6, where God, speaking justified Abraham by faith on the principle of grace. You'll remember the text. "Abraham believed in the Lord, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness."

Now, Mr. Brow also mentioned seven terms that have been given new meanings by new model evangelicals, and these seven terms include sin, judge, wrath, hell, and we're looking at the last three of them today, faith, the church, and the Son of God. These seven terms have been given different meanings. We did mention this, and I don't want to overlook saying this, that the doctrine of justification by grace through faith contains within it's self as others have pointed out, the germs of the leading doctrines of the Christian faith. In other words, by that doctrine we have a certain concept of God as a holy and righteous God, as well as a good and merciful God, for it's he who supplies the sacrifice that satisfies him. It's he who gives his Son. It also tells us a great deal about the Lord Jesus Christ, as the infinite Son, whose one sacrifice for sins is sufficient for the penalty of all of us. It has that value before God, and thus from that fact we learn how significant the infinite Son of God is, both personally and economically. That is in what he does for us.

And we also learn what we are because if it is necessary for the infinite Son of God to die and bear our punishment before we are delivered, then that will tell us that we are truly rebels against God, sinners, justly deserving the wrath and judgment of our holy God, so that doctrine contains within itself the germs of the leading doctrines of the Christian faith.

Now, we looked last time at the terms, sin, judge, wrath and hell, and sought to show that new model interpretation of those terms is not all together harmonious with the Scriptures. Some things are, but some things are not, so the result is that the total picture is of that, which is not totally harmonious with the word of God. For example the new model can be faulted for conceding that sin is only bad behavior that needs discipline and correction. Well if we're talking about Christians, then that would not necessarily be wrong, but if we talk in that language of all men, we are talking as if all men belong to the family of God. In the family of God, our behavior that is displeasing to God does come under the discipline of God. But those who are outside of the family are condemned

and stand under the eternal judgment of God until, in God's marvelous grace, they are brought to believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, so we cannot talk about them and say, their bad behavior needs discipline and correction as if they are members of the family of God. They are not. What is really at stake?

Now, if we're just talking about the same doctrines expressed in different terms then of course there would be justification perhaps for new model evangelical theology because it is proper for us to express our doctrines in words that we all understand in the generation of which we are a part. We don't think that it is wise to speak in the languages that cannot be understood, so to speak in language that you and I understand is at the heart of any kind of communication, but is the matter more serious than that? That's the question.

Now, just to show you that it would be something that could possibly be very serious, one of the men who has identified himself, but not completely, identified himself with new model evangelical theology in the article to which I refer was Dr. Robert Webber, who is the professor of theology at Wheaton College, so you can see that if there are things that are wrong in this we are talking about departure that perhaps may be taking place in some of our important evangelical institutions. I do not in any way suggest that Dr. Webber is not an evangelical. He is an evangelical, but he has identified himself with some of the things that Mr. Brow has been talking about. That's only, not to be overly critical of him, but simply to say that we are talking about something that is perilous for evangelicalism to say the least.

Now, we're going to look at the three words, faith, church and Son of God. And first the word, faith. Someone has said, "Faith in the 20th century does not have a good press." It has a very poor press among individuals because most of us unless we are aquatinted with evangelicalism or Scriptural things, when we think about faith, we're inclined to think of it in the way the world thinks of it, believing something that really isn't so.

Now, that of course is not the biblical picture at all. In the biblical picture, faith is believing something that is true. It is the word of God. And we believe it as being a message by divine revelation from the Lord God, but the word itself has come to have a poor press. I think I will agree with that, but when we turn to Scripture, faith is something that is highly prized. For example the writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews in the 11th chapter of the great epistle, in the very first verse of it, says these things about faith. “Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.” And then even more significantly in the 6th verse, he says, “But without faith it is impossible to please him, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” So without faith it’s impossible to please God.

What does new model evangelical theology say about faith? Well, Mr. Brow speaking for new model evangelical theology says that faith is not a particular decision, but faith is simply a direction of looking.

Now, if he has said, faith is a direction of looking, and said that only, I wouldn’t have been a bit disturbed at all because faith is a direction of looking. We look, to the Lord in heaven and the light of his Word, and expect the things that he has revealed to us in Scripture to be true, but if we say it is not a particular decision, we are suggesting that there is no beginning in which an individual comes to a faith in our Lord Jesus through which he comes into the family of God as one of God’s children.

Taking a cue from C.S. Lewis, he says that heaven and hell are destinations of the heart. I am not sure exactly what he meant by that, but those are his words. He points out, too, that when people make choices, they make fallible choices. God looks upon the heart, and so we should never think or not think of a decision when we thinking about faith in the Christian life. We should rather think about a direction of looking.

Now, we’ve talked about faith, so I am not going to repeat the things that we have said. We have said that faith was made up of knowledge, assent and trust, that we must

have the knowledge of the saving work of Christ. We must assent to it. We must trust in that work for our eternal salvation. That is genuine faith, but the Scriptures make it plain, I think that faith has both an inception or an initiation and a continuation. It's God who gives faith, and it's God who also enables us to persevere, in faith. Take Ephesians chapter 2, verses 8 and 9, familiar to almost all evangelicals. “For by grace have you been saved through faith.”

Now, notice he does not say by grace are you being saved through faith. One could say that, but he does not say that in this instance, “For by grace you have been saved.” In other words, the salvation is something that has occurred in the past time. The results have continued to the present, and it is through faith. “For by grace have you been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast.” So faith, or a salvation by grace through faith is the gift of God and gifts in this instance, may be related to a particular time in an individual's life. In Philippians chapter 1 in verse 29, the apostle writes again, “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.” Again, faith, the gift of God at a particular time.

In, Acts chapter 5 in verse 31 the apostle in one of his messages, the Apostle Peter speaks about the gift of repentance, an aspect of faith. In chapter 11 in verse 18, he says the same thing. And then in an incident that you all are familiar with when the Apostle Paul was in the city of Philippi, and in prison, and after God had worked mightily and brought the jailor to the place where he asks, “What must I do to be saved?” The apostle says, “Believe.” That's a very emphatic kind of belief to a very definite act. “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

Now, he could say, “Go on believing. But he doesn't at that point. He says, simply, “believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” And the context indicates that that is precisely what happened. They did believe, and they were baptized, and we assume that by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, they continued believing, but the

point is that faith is related to a particular beginning. There is an initiation of faith as well as a continuance of faith.

In Abraham's experience when God brought him out and said, "Look into the heavens, and number the stars if you can." And Abraham, so Moses writes, believed in the Lord and it was accounted to him for righteousness, then that was the beginning of Abraham's life of justification. There may be some scholarly reason to debate a point or two, but the point is there was a beginning in Abraham's life of faith, and then years later, when God says to take Isaac and to offer him up on the altar, his faith reaches its consummation, it's completion in the gift of Isaac on the part of Abraham. To the Lord upon the altar, so the faith that began with justification of grace through faith reaches its obvious completion with the offering up of Isaac in obedience to the Lord God. There is an initiation of faith, a beginning of faith and there is also a continuation of it. All of us, who were saved many years ago, as I was, and who have continued in the faith, know that there was a time when there was a decision. We may not remember it even, having been brought up in a Christian home, we may not remember that present time, but we know that there was such a time because we are alive now, and we know that by God's grace we have continued to the present time.

Well, the Canaanite woman interests me in this respect, and I'd like to turn over to this passage because I think in her experience, you can see her experience of the Lord Jesus traceable to a particular time. She was a woman of Canaan. She evidently was a Greek, because Mark indicates that, but she lived in what is now Syria. And so the Lord Jesus departed from the land and went into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. He's out of the country. And the Canaanite woman came out of the same coasts and cried unto him, "Have mercy on me, oh Lord, Thou son of David. My daughter is grievously vexed with a demon. But he answered her not a word." Can you imagine that? The Lord Jesus being asked for mercy and grace doesn't say a thing. Well, I guess you can find many little instances of that in our Lord's ministry. Here is one. Doesn't answer her a thing. And

then we go on to read, “And the disciples came and besought him saying, “Send her away, she is crying after us.” So eventually she said that more than once, but our Lord has no response. He answered the disciples and he said, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” In other words, “I have come to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.” Paul goes on to say and that,

“The Gentiles might receive mercy, but first of all to confirm the promises, made unto the fathers. And they were made to Abraham to Isaac and Jacob and those who stand within that tradition. So I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him saying, Lord, help me. (And our Lord again says,) It is not meek to take the children’s bread. (The children obviously Israel.) The children’s bread and cast it to the dogs.” (The Gentiles.)

Now, notice what happens. She doesn’t object and say, “This fellow is discriminating against us Gentiles.” She doesn’t say that. She would have reason to be very angry, perhaps, had she not been moved by God the Holy Spirit in her faith attitude. She says, “Truth Lord. Yes, Lord, that’s all true. Yet the doggies, (That word has been translated by some puppies.) Yet the puppies, (the domesticated dogs.) Yet the doggies, the puppies eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table.” So in other words, I am one of the doggies. I take my place there. I admit. He came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He did not come first of all for me, but I am included. As Paul says, “The Lord Jesus came in order to confirm the promises made unto the fathers and that the Gentiles might receive mercy. For the promises made to the fathers also had provisions for Gentiles. Indeed shall all of the families of the earth be blessed, God said to Abraham?” So she takes her place as one of the doggies, and out of his very word she forges a petition that conquers our Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs, which fall from, their master’s table, and Jesus answered and said unto her, “Oh woman great is thy faith.”

She acknowledges that she does not stand as one of the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but she's not an alien. She's a member of the household, takes the place of a member of the household of faith. She doesn't enter a caveat against the analogy that our Lord suggests. She accepts it holy but only asks him to carry out his own metaphor. That is one of the doggies. So a crumb is enough for her. She confesses his mission, its purpose, and pleads only that he may remember that the breath of it includes her. And thus in her answer there is humility, perseverance, divine insight, ingenuity, boldness, submissiveness, in a word, faith. That's precisely what it is, faith. So acknowledging herself to be only a doggie, yet in the family, that is the family to whom the promises were given, she, you knew I was going to say this. She triumphs by her doggied faith.

So here is a woman who has in a sense conquered our Lord by hewing to the word of God. The word “master's,” “fall from their master's table” indicates she's accepted submissively the place of the Gentiles, acknowledging that the promises are first for the fathers, and those who are related to them, but they also include us Gentiles. As Luther, said, “She catches him in his own words.” Or as Helmut Thielicke has put it, “She has done what none other could do, namely entangled the Savior in his own talk. She has flung the sack of his promises at his feet, and he cannot step over it.” That's faith. That's the beginning and it was the beginning for her in the sense that it was the salvation of her child. It is the physical salvation.

John Flavel once said this, “There are two signal and remarkable acts of faith, both exceedingly difficult.” Now, I can't help but smile at that because he thinks the faith is the gift of God. So there are two signal and remarkable acts of God, both exceedingly difficult, actually impossible. First act, last act. First is the great venture that it makes of itself upon Christ. That's the first act of faith, to cast aside trust in ourselves, in our good works, in our righteousness, in our education in our culture, anything else that we may be leaning upon and giving ourselves, by God's grace to the Lord Jesus Christ, believing that he has accomplished the saving sacrifice for me. Flavel then says, “The last is also a great

venture, and that's to cast oneself into the ocean of eternity upon the credit of a promise, the word of God.” So we look into eternity and our hope, as we face eternity, and all of us may face eternity much sooner than we realize, not only us old folks, but you know yourself how many young people also have preceded you into eternity, we are launched into eternity confidently only upon the credit of a promise of the word of God, so faith is a way of looking, but it does have its beginning. It does have its conclusion.

The next word is the word church. Now, this is a historically important word, as you well know. New model evangelical theology says of the church that the church is an instrument of God's love, not a stockade for the saved or a soul saving agency. It's the royal priesthood to make known his love and to say your sins are forgiven. The mission is not the deliver the lost, but to enroll the willing by baptism, then teach then Christian truth.

Now, I must confess I don't know exactly how to take Mr. Brow's words. It seems to suggest that he does not think that the Pagans are really lost, that what he thinks is that they need teaching, and the way to bring the Pagans in is to baptize them, and then when they have become a member of the church to teach them. In other words, baptize them first, if they are willing to be baptized, then teach them the things of the Christian faith.

I looked at that passage in Matthew 28 the order is reversed. In Matthew chapter 28 it says, “Go ye therefore and disciple all nations.” And the way you disciple the nations is by baptizing them, and teaching them and so on. But in other words there must be first and evangelization and then a teaching, and it appears to me that that is what the Scriptures teach, and the incident of the New Testament indicate that. The apostles did not seek to go out and get members of the church and then teach them the gospel, but they preached the gospel, were incorporated into the church through the experience of water baptism, and they began to grow in the things of the Lord. The Pagans are lost, and they need to gospel. And the teaching follows their act of faith given by God.

And also in what way may the church say to individuals your sins are forgiven? We do not have the right, it seems to me, to stand behind the pulpit, a preacher and say, “Your sins are forgiven.” As if we are dispensing forgiveness. We do not dispense forgiveness, I or any other Christian because I am nothing more than anyone else. I, just as you may say to any believer or any non believer, “If you believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, then your sins are forgiven.” But it is not you who are pronouncing them forgive, except in the sense that you are setting forth what the Scriptures say are the conditions of forgiveness. You do not give forgiveness to them. You are simply saying these are the conditions by which you may have forgiveness. I am not sure I understand what he is saying, but I do know that the church does not say, generally speaking, your sins are forgive. That is not possible, and not the way in which the gospel should be preached.

New model evangelical theology teaches that the church is the body of those who have believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, and through the baptizing ministry of the Holy Spirit have been brought into one, one body, and they are those through whom God seeks to bring others into the family of the Lord God under the guidance and direction, and enablement of the Holy Spirit. The church is also the pillar and foundation of the truth. It is the church that has, as its ministry, the guarding of the truth of God, the pillar and the ground of that truth. That is essentially I think, what I at the moment am seeking to do, to set forth what the truth is and to set it forth as only a member of the church of Jesus Christ. So new model evangelical theology conceives of the church as the body of true believers bound into one, united in our Lord, and as he came to gather them so they are engaged in gathering others into that body under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Cotton Mather, who ministered in New England three hundred years ago said, “The great design and intention of the office of a Christian preacher,” I’d like to change that to, “Christians is to restore the throne and dominion of God in the souls of men.” That’s what we are engaged in. All of us engaged in together by God’s power to restore

the throne and dominion of God in the souls of men, through the preaching of the biblical word of God.

The final word is the word Son of God. What a thrilling word the word Son of God is. It wasn't too long ago that we expounded John's first epistle, and so many marvelous occurrences of the term Son were found in it, among them these.

“In this was manifested the love of God toward us because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Here in his love not that we love God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. And we have seen and do testify that the Father, sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.”

And then that text in the 5th chapter, the 20th verse, which I loved so much, “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true even in his Son Jesus Christ, this is the true God and eternal life.”

What a thrilling word Son of God really is. New model evangelical theology so Mr. Brow suggests believes that the incarnation did take place, but the Son was the lamb, the lion, the servant, the Shepard, from eternity. In other words, we are not to think of the cross as the time at which the foundation of our sin was accomplished, but we are to think of an eternal second person of the Trinity as an eternal lamb, an eternal lion, an eternal servant, an eternal Shepard, and not only that we can All think of that as part of the decretive will of God, but to think of the eternal Son, as the eternal lamb, the eternal lion, but notice absorbing our sins and their consequences from eternity. In other words, the time at which our sins were paid for is not the time of the cross, when the Lord Jesus died there, and cried out it is finished, but rather from eternity past, he has been sin bearer absorbing our sins.

Now, Mr. Brow would like for that to be true, because he doesn't like to think of the cross as being a judicial payment for our sins, and so he concludes that the cross then is not the judicial payment for our sins. It's simply the visible expression in his body of his eternal nature as Son. I am not sure I know what that means, but at any rate, he says the cross is not the time of judicial payment of our sins. He says, “It's much easier to relate to a God who is perceived as kindly and loving rather than a God who demands that there be a payment for our sins.”

I'd like to ask anyone who may think like that, is it easier to relate to a God who is only kindly and loving or to a God who is kindly and loving and also perfectly just and righteous. A God who is good to that which is evil and evil to that which is good is not the God that I more easily relate to. I more easily relate to a God who is righteous as well as loving, and when I look at the cross of Jesus Christ I see his great love, for he is the one who provided the Son to die for our sins. But at the same time, he is righteous and holy, and my debt therefore is paid in such a way that his righteousness and holiness is satisfied and I know that a payment has truly been made for my sins. And therefore I have a righteousness that is acceptable to the Lord God in heaven. I can relate in gracious gratitude to a God like that who has done so much for me, but one who does not care about good and evil to that extent is one that I find difficult to relate to. Call him loving and kindly, but unless he is also righteous, I do not relate to him. I guess I am really an old model evangelical. I know I am old model, [Laughter] but I think that I am an old model evangelical theologian.

Mr. Brow did say one thing that was good. He said, “The question is, is it biblical?” That is this idea that our Lord accomplished our sins by a judicial payment. Well, the Scriptures say that he is the Son of God, that his ministry as the Messiah is the ministry of suffering. We saw that Peter said, “Thou art the Christ, the Messiah, the living Son of the living God.” In chapter 24 in the Book of Luke, the Lord Jesus spoke to the two on the Emmaus road, and he said, “Oh fools and slue of heart to believe all that the

Scriptures have written. Ought not Messiah to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory.” In other words, the suffering for sins so far as I can tell is related to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I know that there are some who talk about the passive sufferings of our Lord and the active sufferings of our Lord, and even some good men like to speak of the active sufferings of our Lord as being redemptive. Even Charles Haddon Spurgeon seemed to have something of that idea, but even if we grant the truth of that, I do not. Even if we granted it, we would still have the time for the judicial payment of sins, the historical appearance of the Son of God, his death, his incarnation, his death, burial and resurrection, and not any eternal absorbing of our sins. So old model evangelical theology speaks of him as the Messiah, his sufferings, his atoning sufferings related. All evangelicals believe primarily to the historical cross, where forgiveness was purchased. There Jesus said, “It is finished.”

The Apostle Paul said, “I determine not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and this one crucified.” He said in Galatians chapter 3 in verse 13, “Christ hath redeemed us.” This morning I couldn’t remember the rest of that text, and had to acknowledge that I was old, and my memory was going, and I missed the comment that I should have made, but you should not be surprised because I am an old model, evangelical theologian. But anyway the text says, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us, just as it stand written.” And then reference is made in the text, “Cursed is everyone who hangs upon a tree.” In other words the redemption is related to the tree, to the cross itself. In 1 Peter chapter 2, in verse 24, we have the same thing. There Peter says, “Who his own self bear our sins in his own body on the tree.” So we must dispense with the idea that sins were born absorbed by the eternal Son in the ages in eternity past. That so far as I can tell, is not biblical teaching.

We do not have any hope at all, my friend, if we do not have a righteous God in heaven, and everything that is being said today about self-esteem is the kind of thing that skews the meaning of the cross.

John Piper, one of the finest younger preachers of our day, has written in a recent book, “It horribly skews the meaning the cross when contemporary prophets of self esteem say that the cross is a witness to my infinite worth, since God was willing to pay such a high price to get me. The biblical perspective is that the cross is a witness to the infinite worth of God’s glory and a witness to the immensity of the sin of my pride. What should shock us is that we have brought such contempt upon the worth of God, that the very death of his Son is required to vindicate that word. The cross stands in witness to the infinite worth of God and the infinite outrage of sin.” And we could also say this, that while it is true that God gave his Son, and thus indicated his intense determinative will that we become his, nevertheless he is not pleased with what we are, but what he is going to make us by virtue of the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

James, Denny said, “The Calvinists and the Puritans, I am quite sure, and the simplest evangelical preachers are right in their instinct of what is vital.” In other words it’s the saving work of our work of our Lord in the cross at Calvary.” He wrote a letter to Alexander White, whose biography I have been reading, and in the letter he said, “The unintelligent and in experienced books about Paul are dreadful.” Dr. Denny was one of the great students of Paul in the earlier part of the 20th century, and a professor of theology in Glasgow “He said, “All done by just men who need no repentance, and therefore have no glimmering of what way vital to the apostle. It’s always a marvel to me,” Dr. Denny said, “That the street preacher go straight to the point in Paul and finds all his answers where the ninety and nine just men find all their difficulties.” How true that is. The man who understands what he is before God who’s come to see his sin will long for the message that Paul preaches, but if he doesn’t understand his sin, he’ll never understand Paul. Paul wrote for sinners. Our Lord spoke for sinners, so what this series

of messages is trying to suggest is that there is a danger of accommodations in evangelicalism today, the rethinking of theology to make it more meaningful to contemporary man's aestheticisms, his unionism, that is his desire to be one. His physiologisms and his idealogism.

John Piper also made the point. He was talking about Mr. Spurgeon, but he went on to talk about the fact that Isaac Watts, who lived one hundred years earlier, and Samuel Johnson said, of Watts, “Whatever he took in hand was by his incessant solicitude for souls converted to theology.” John says, “I take this to mean in Watts case that everything was bought into relation to God because he cared about the people.” Today, Johnson would, I believe, well there is one Samuel Johnson. I am Samuel Johnson too, but he said, “Today Johnson would, I believe say of much contemporary preaching whatever the preacher takes in his hand is by his incessant solicitude for relevance converted to psychology.” We are living in that day. Psychological wholeness is not nearly so important, my friend as doctrinal soundness. Let us remember that. We cannot be psychologically whole if we are not doctrinally sound, and we certainly cannot have a psychological relationship that is fruitful with anyone else if we are not both sound in our doctrine, understanding of the truths of God.

There are lots of other things that could be said, but I think that's enough. The time is up. I do hope only one thing, and that is that you keep the word of God before you, and as you listen to all of us preachers including me, compare what Scriptures have to say with what those who proclaim the word of God are saying. In that case as you rely on the Holy Spirit you will be preserved from error. Not only that, but you will be able to rejoice in the blessedness of a righteous just God loving kindness who has made it possible for us to know the forgiveness of sins through the gift of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. So we invite you to come to Christ, and believe in him, trust in him and eternity is that which you can look forward to with confidence. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, how grateful we are for the message of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. No human being, sinner, sinner such as I am could ever possibly expound that great truth in harmony with all of the word of God, but we thank Thee for the plain message that those who flee to him may have eternal life, and the enjoyment of the relationship of justification by grace through faith for now, and for eternity that there should be someone Lord in this audience who is not yet believed, oh God, touch them and turn them to him, whom to know as life eternal. For Jesus' sake. Amen.