



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Divine Purpose

TRANSCRIPT

“The Fall of Man and the Messianic Promise, or The Covenant of Grace”

[Prayer] We thank Thee, Lord, for the privilege of the study of the Scriptures again, and we ask that Thou wilt be with us as we seek to understand the argument of the Scriptures, the plan of the ages, and the way by which Thou hast revealed Thyself in grace, in mercy, loving kindness, and also in holiness and justice. We thank Thee for the Scriptures given to us for that purpose, and we thank Thee for the clarity of them. We know, Lord, that were we to listen more faithfully to the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, as we seek with the helps available to us to interpret the Scriptures, we probably would understand the Scriptures better than we do, and we pray, Lord, that Thou wilt enable us to do just that; to understand the Scriptures better, but not simply as an end, as a means to the end of knowing Thee better. We pray that our knowledge of the word of God may not simply be an objective, intellectual knowledge, but also may have the true understanding that issues in experimental Christianity, as the kind of walk that is true to the word of God, and glorifies Thy name; a walk in holiness and righteousness of the truth. We ask Thy blessing upon us in this hour to that end.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Now, I hope all of you have the outline. We will be following the outline as it is given, and we begin as the outline suggests with a word of introduction. There is no indication in the early Church fathers, that the Covenant of Works was specifically recognized as biblical. The elements of it are there, for they do speak of the “probationary command” of God to Adam in Genesis 2:15 through 17. The fathers also speak of the freedom of choice that Adam had in his innocent or holy, that would be better, his holy condition, and they spoke also of the possibility of sin and death.

Augustine, in one of his greatest works, *The City of God*, speaks of the relation of Adam to God originally as a covenant. Further, some others argued the covenant from Hosea chapter 6 and verse 7, a passage that we will look at a bit later. The transmission of sin was generally conceived realistically and not federally or by immediate imputation. And let me explain those terms, because while we have used them, it’s necessary to understand them to understand just precisely what we are talking about.

We all know if we studied the Bible very much that the “fall” has affected us. We know that because Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, “we have sinned,” so Paul says in Romans 5:12. That, of course, does not settle the kinds of questions that we might ask. For example, “For as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed through all men for all sinned.” Well, we can see immediately, that there is a connection between human sin and what Adam did in the Garden, but the next question is one that is more difficult to answer, and that is, “In what way did we become implicated in Adam’s sin?” Now, some have conceived of this as being realistic, and the Doctrine of Realism is a doctrine that has been held by many well-known men, beginning with Augustine and some of the early Church fathers. And by realism, it is stated and understood that we were “in Adam” in a realistic way when he sinned. In fact, we were “in him” so much, that it could be said that we seminally in him; that is, we are physical descendants of Adam and we sinned seminally. That natural union that all men have in Adam is said, according to this view, to be the way in which we have participated in

Adam’s sin. And if one reads Romans chapter 5 in verse 12, it’s possible to understand that text in that way; seminally, realistically. But if one reads verses 13 and 14, it becomes more difficult to hold to that view because the apostle there distinguishes between two kinds of sin, and if it is true that there are two kinds of sin as stated in verse 13, 14, then realism cannot be truly biblical, because realism allows for no different modus or way of sinning. If we all sinned in Adam because we were all physically “in Adam” then we all sinned in the same way, so there can be no different kinds of sin. That really is the fatal flaw; the Achilles heel of realism but, nevertheless, there’s a lot of truth in realism in the sense, that we are descendants of Adam.

Now, the covenant theologians, and many who are not covenant theologians as well, have, therefore, followed the interpretation called “immediate imputation”; that is, Adam stood as our federal head and, therefore, when Adam sinned, we all sinned in Adam as our federal head. In other words, Adam’s sin is imputed or reckoned to us. Now, in that sense, the Christian church has understood that Adam’s sin is the sin of a mediator; a sponsor, a head, a representative, a covenant head of all men. And when Adam sinned, then we all participated in Adam’s sin in the sin of our representative. Now, we’ll talk about that later on, and the reasons of why that is not unjust, that kind of thing. But, nevertheless, this is not the time to go into detail on it, but simply to mention that in the early days of the Christian church, the transmission of sin was generally conceived realistically, and not federally.

When it came to be seen, however, the Scripture represented the plan of salvation in the form of a covenant, and that is clear from our Lord’s last Passover and first Lord’s Supper when he took the wine and said, “This is the blood of the New Covenant, shed for many for the remission of sins,” it’s obvious that our salvation is conceived of covenantally or federally or representatively. So when it was perceived that the Lord Jesus analyzes our salvation in a covenantal way in the light of the obvious parallel between Adam and the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, then the idea of looking at

Adam’s sin in a federal way or a covenantal way became the viewpoint of many very, very sound people.

Now, the Covenant of Works bears on this because it is one of the essential covenants of covenant theology. It’s sometimes called the Covenant of Creation; sometimes called the Covenant of Nature. The first clear reference to the Covenant of Works, under the term of “Covenant of Creation” was by Ursinus, one of the men that we looked at in the history of covenant theology. That’s the first clearly articulated reference to the Covenant of Works, but not the first mention of what was essentially the Covenant of Works.

Now, you probably, if you’ve read the Schofield Bible, you probably are thinking, “Well now, it seems to me that in the Schofield Bible, we have reference to what happened in the Garden of Eden as being of a covenantal nature.” And that’s true. In some of the editions of the Schofield Bible, you’ll find it referred to Genesis chapter 2 and Adam’s Probation as the Edenic Covenant. So one must learn right at the beginning that covenant theology is not different from dispensational theology in everything that covenant theology teaches. There are points that overlap, and there are distinctive things as well.

The Westminster Catechism has a clear reference to the Covenant of Works in its words. “The first covenant made with man was a Covenant of Works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.” And other texts are given in support of that besides Romans 5:12,19; 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 22 and verse 47.

Witsius, whom we have referred to as the one who formulated covenant theology in its final generally-received form writes of this Covenant, “The Covenant of Works is the agreement between God and Adam created in God’s image to be the head and prince of the whole human race, by which God was promising him eternal life and felicity, should he obey all his precepts most perfectly, adding the threat of death should he sin even in

the least detail, while Adam was accepting this condition.” Now, you’ll notice as you read Genesis chapter 2, there isn’t anything that says, “And Adam said; I agree.” This was something that imposed upon him, evidently, but at the same time, it’s evident that they agreed to it by the way in which Eve responds in chapter 3. When Satan comes to tempt, well, she doesn’t hesitate to cite some of those words as applicable to them. So its fair, even though that statement is not made, Adam accepted the conditions to realize that he was the creature and God did make this covenant with him.

Now, I’d like for you to turn to Genesis 2, and we’ll read verse 15 through verse 17, because we’ll be talking about this a good bit right now. We’re turning now to the scriptural foundation of the Covenant of Works, and capital A: Inferential Evidence, in our outline. And Moses writes in verse 15 of Genesis chapter 2.

“And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man saying; of every tree of the Garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.”

Now, we say inferential evidence because the word “covenant” is not found in these early chapters of Genesis. In fact, the first mention of “covenant” in the Bible is not until Genesis chapter 6 in verse 18, and there it’s a reference to the Noahic Covenant.

Of course, we don’t deny doctrine, because the precise term is not found in Scripture. There are different ways of saying the same thing. If we did that, we wouldn’t have the doctrine of the Trinity, as we’ve often said, because the term “Trinity” is not found in the Bible either, but the doctrine is clearly taught. There are many other biblical terms that are not found precisely in the word of God, but theological terms are useful, because by theological terms we’re able to say a great deal, much more easily than to go into all of the detail of justifying everything by the words of Scripture. There are certain

people that think that you shouldn't say anything unless it's in the words of Scripture. In that case, when you preach on Sunday morning, all you should do is rearrange the texts of the Bible and cite texts of the Bible. Well, that wouldn't be very illuminating preaching, generally speaking, because we need explanatory comments. And there's plenty of justification for the way in which the apostles wrote their letters to realize that they didn't hesitate to explain Scripture by other words than scriptural words.

The elements of a covenant are found in Genesis 1 through 3, however; the parties to the covenant are named, a condition is stated, and a penalty for disobedience is mentioned in this passage that we've just read. It might be claimed that Adam didn't come to agreement with God, and that he didn't specifically accept the condition. Well, the same is true of Noah and Abraham, and the term “covenant” is used with reference to their relationship to God, so it's fair to say that most of God's covenants are of the nature of sovereign dispositions imposed upon man. And it's obvious this is one that is imposed upon Adam, but he didn't object. God commanded him and told him these things. There is, however, one thing that you need to note. It is a conditional covenant, and that's important for our later studies.

The Covenant of Grace which we will study next week, the Lord willing, the last of the theological covenants is grounded in the execution of the original Covenant by Christ as our surety. He did what Adam failed to do, but he did his work in the fulfillment of a covenant; as we mentioned, our Lord's use of the term, “The Last Passover.” So it would seem to follow that the original agreement must have been a covenant. The parallel between Adam and Christ in Romans 5:12 through 21, is explainable on the assumption, that Adam was a representative head of a covenantal arrangement. Just as Christ's righteousness is imputed to us without any personal merit on our part, so Adam's guilt is reckoned to us, although we are not and were not in the Garden with him. So if we'll keep those two things in mind, we won't have a whole lot of difficulty with that at least.

Now, capital B” The Biblical Evidence. There is one specific text that might refer to a Covenant or Works, and it’s Hosea chapter 6 in verse 7, and if you have your Old Testaments, and you want to have them, turn to the Book of Hosea, and we’ll declare an intermission for some of you to have a cup of tea while some find the Book of Hosea. Now, I cannot tell you where it is in your text, but it’s page thirteen thirty-two in my text, and it’s before Joel, if that will give you some help. Hosea chapter 6 in verse 7 reads this way, “But they like men have transgressed the covenant. There have they dealt treacherously against me.” Now, this passage has had a great deal of debate about it, and I put the Hebrew text on the outline page, because I thought maybe we’d have someone in the audience who would understand a little bit of Hebrew in what I’m going to say. But I’m not going to be real technical, because I know most of you have not read any Hebrew, and it won’t mean anything than to you than Japanese scratchings mean to me. But, at any rate, in the Hebrew text we read, “And they like adam.” Now this word “adam” is a word that means “earth” but it also is the personal name of Adam. That’s why he was called “Adam” because “adam” means “the earth” and “adam” means “man.” It’s one of the words for “man” that identifies him with the ground. There are other terms like *ish*, and *gibbour*, and so on in Hebrew, but this is the term “*audam*” that connects him with the earth. He was made of the dust of the ground, “adam”, and so the text reads simply, “But they like adam have transgressed the covenant. There they have dealt treacherously with me.”

Now, as you can probably guess, it’s not surprising that this is debated, because there are some people that would like to say that what happened in the Garden of Eden is not a covenant. But some of the texts have Adam, instead of as our Authorized Version, “But they like men.” Now, this word is in the singular in the original text, and you probably have a little note by your Bible that would say something like, “literally, like Adam or as Adam or according to Adam” for the Hebrew preposition can mean all of those things, and that’s clearly a possible rendering. Modern, some but not all, but some

modern interpreters of the Book of Hosea have been unwilling to give this the sense of, “they like Adam” and so they have sought to identify this as a place; that is, a place by the name of “Adam”, and there is a place in the Old Testament named “Adam.” It’s found in Joshua chapter 3 in verse 16. There’s no indication in Hosea, however, of any difficulty in connection with the city of Adam, and so it remains a speculation to suggest that this is the city of Adam. So some have rendered it, “They as at Adam have broken the covenant.” That is, as at the city of Adam. But as I say, there’s nothing in the context to indicate that anything happened there, so far as Hosea is concerned, and there’s nothing in Joshua to suggest that as well.

Now, to skip some of the further technical information, we can only say this, I should say this, by the way, in fairness to those who hold that view. I don’t want you to think that I am discounting all modern scholarship. I might say that so far as modern scholarship is concerned, there is a disagreement in modern scholarship over this, and some accept the rendering. They like Adam; that is, the person, and some like, “They as at Adam” that is the town. Notice in verse 7, it says, “There have they dealt treacherously against me.” And on that basis, one modern critical commentary, Tator of the Hebrew text of Hosea has suggested that there is confirmation that “Adam” is a place.” Well of course, it could be that, but you don’t have to have a place mentioned for the people who read Hosea to know where this rebellion took place. So speaking of the way in which Israel has turned from the Lord, the prophet says, “They like Adam have transgressed the covenant. There they have dealt treacherously against me.” And the audience might well have understood precisely what Hosea was talking about, but unfortunately, we don’t have full information.

I can only say this, that it’s likely in my opinion, that we are to understand this as Adam. If that is correct, then we have some scripturally specific information, that what took place in the Garden of Eden was the making of a covenant and the breaking of a covenant as well. Well, we don’t have to have that. In fact, if you could show that that

was a place Hosea 6:7, referred to, we still have more than sufficient information in Genesis chapter 2, itself to say that it was a covenant between God and Adam. So I don't see any difficulty in calling this a covenant, and most students of Scripture will acknowledge that it is, and even some of those who say that Adam is a place in Hosea, go on to say, “What happened in Genesis chapter 2, was a covenant made and then later broken.”

So let's turn now to the structure of the Covenant of Works, and in very brief fashion, I would like to set forth the structure of the Covenant, and then I want to spend a little time on the way in which we may justify this federal relationship, which covenant theology and others who are not covenant theologians believe concerning this Covenant.

Now, the structure of the Covenant of Works. Capital A: The Contracting Parties. In the midst of a scene described in Genesis chapter 2 that is a model of parental care, God makes an arrangement with Adam. The parties to the Covenant of Works are the triune God on the one hand and the first man on the other. And we said that Adam yielded to the Lord's command, accepted the conditions of the Covenant, as indicated by chapter 3, verses 2 and 3. Capital B: The Promise of the Covenant. The promise of the Covenant is life. Now, it's not stated in precisely those words like, “The promise of the Covenant is life” but it's implied by chapter 2, verse 17, where the Lord said to Adam, “In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” So the very fact that he says, “Thou shalt surely die,” indicates by implication, that the promise of the Covenant was life. Adam had, it is true, spiritual life already, but the difference between Adam's spiritual life and the spiritual life of men who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ today is that Adam's life was are you ready for a good theological term? Amissible, A-M-I-S-S-I-B-L-E.

Now, if you read any theological literature, and why you have lived this long and you have not read any theological literature, is one of the mysteries of the age. Amissible. It means “it cannot be lost.” Now, amissible means here I'm giving you wrong definition, “it can be lost” if it's amissible, and it was probationary; that is, the life that Adam

possessed in the Garden of Eden. It could be lost. If you recognize the Latin word “mito” that means “to send”, and amissible has the idea of “sending away”, or “departing from a person”, so this life that Adam had in the Garden of Eden was spiritual life. It was the knowledge of God in the Garden of Eden, but it was something that he could lose. It was probationary. The penalty that followed suggests that eternal life was the goal of the promise, because when he sinned, he not only died physically, but he also died spiritually and eternally. So the implication is that had Adam obeyed, this amissible life would have become eternal life ultimately. Now, that’s all implication. We cannot say anything more than that.

Capital C: The Objective Test of the Covenant. The tree has been regarded under different terms. For example, some have regarded it as meaning “the experimental knowledge of God” but Genesis chapter 3 in verse 22, indicates that that’s not true. Some have suggested it refers to a kind of omniscience. That’s very unlikely. There have been some strange interpretations such as; the knowledge of good and evil has been said to be sexual awakening, think of that by responsible otherwise responsible interpreters. But what it, evidently, refers to is autonomy and the determination of what is right and what is wrong; the knowledge of good and evil. And God has that alone. So to sum up, Adam was not given a policy or a moral principle. He was given a bare word from God, and it was, “Do not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the Garden, for in the day you eat of it, you shall surely die.” It required obedience for no other reason than the sovereign will of God. The tree was indifferent in itself. So far as we know, there was nothing specifically wrong with the tree, such as would cause someone to say, “The tree is immoral.” In fact, as I said in the beginning, Adam was placed in an environment that is a model of parental care. Think of all of the things that Adam could do. He could enjoy the whole of the Garden, and God withheld from him only one thing, and that was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and he was not to eat of that; just that one thing.

Now, you can see from this that sin is not essentially immorality. People often think that, but it's not immorality. As a matter of fact, sin is not selfishness. It's not immorality. It's not the desire to be God. All those things flow out of sin. It's obvious that sin can be located in one thing; unbelief that leads to rebellion and issues in immorality. Now, the Bible makes that plain. If you just study it long enough, you will see that sin is unbelief. It issues a rebellion, as we see in Adam's case, in the Garden of Eden. And, finally, from the rebellion there issues immorality and so murder takes place in Genesis chapter 4.

Now, just bear that in mind. People often think that sin is rebellion, selfishness, pride, et cetera. All those things are the products of unbelief. That's why the word of God is so important, and that's why submission to the word of God is so important. And when the Lord Jesus tells the apostles in the Upper Room that the Holy Spirit has come, and when he comes, he's going to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, it's of sin because “they believe not in me.” Paul says, “Whatsoever is not a faith is sin.” So in the Old Testament, and in the New, the writers of the Bible locate the essence of sin in unbelief; failure to believe the word of God.

Capital D: The Subjective Condition of the Covenant. Subjectively, as we've said, his demands then were settled on one point; faith obedience. Probably Adam was to obey while under probation for a time. Nothing specifically is said about that, however, and so it's difficult for us again, to do anything more than to make implications. Now, if I were to analyze this and fill it out a little bit, I would say that probably, God's purpose was to turn Adam, who was his servant, into his Son. And the ground of the sonship of a father over a son is the ground of love and also of gracious inheritance. That's what happens when you are the son of an individual. You are loved by your father and you are legally his heir. And so, evidently, the Lord God had in mind from the beginning that Adam who is a servant at this point in the Garden of Eden will be turned by God's gracious plan into a Son. Now Adam, of course, had plenty of reasons to be happy. Can

you not imagine how Adam felt when he came to consciousness, and he looked around him and saw this beautiful creation, and he looked at himself, and he thought of all of the things that he was; how he could think, how he could enjoy what was about him. And when he came to the understanding that the Lord God is the one who had created him as this marvelous being and to live in this marvelous garden and have all these feelings of appreciation and feelings of worship toward the Lord God, it wouldn't surprise me if the first thing that Adam did after creation, after he had just realized astonishingly what had taken place that he fell down upon his knees, and praised his creator. Now, that is the way, I think, that Adam probably began his life.

Now, his obedience is not stated to have been forever. I'm just assuming, this is an assumption, that he had a limited time in which he would endure probation, and his limited obedience, that is, for a limited time would lead to an immutable confirmation in life, beyond the possibility of guilt. In other words, if he had persisted in his obedience for a rather lengthy period of time, yet limited, then he would ultimately have been rewarded by the kind of life that would be unlimited. But that's not stated in the word, so we are not free to say it definitely. One thing we can say is faith obedience was the subjective condition of the Covenant, and the Covenant was a conditional covenant. It was conditioned upon Adam's obedience.

Capital E: The Penalty of the Covenant was Spiritual Death. “In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” Now, that included cauporial death, or bodily death, or physical death, with all of the miseries that are entailed therein; all of the feelings of lack that we feel because our bodies are not absolutely healthy and do not stay healthy; all of those things are the products of the “fall” in the Garden of Eden and, ultimately, if our Lord does not come, all of us shall be placed in the ground, physical life having left our bodies. So spiritual death that issues in physical death, and if there is no responsiveness to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, a prolongation of spiritual death into eternity, called by Bible students, “eternal death” but really nothing more than the

prolongation of the spiritual death into which we are born at the present time. That is the loss of God, it's the loss of his fellowship and favor, and the experience of all the evils that flow from the righteous displeasure of God, some of which men experience now, but the full tale of them, they shall experience after they die if they have not come to the knowledge of the Lord.

The purpose of the covenantal test, well, the aim was indefectability or immutable perfection; that is, to have the kind of perfection that cannot be lost; not God's curiosity or his malevolence. He didn't arrange this test in order to like a scientist doing some kind of experiments according to the scientific method, putting his material into a laboratory and taking a look at it with all of the means by which he has to examine and come to know his material. It isn't that God is the great scientist looking at what will happen to his creation, nor is it that he had some kind of feeling of malevolence; that is, that he would create some one beautiful being, and then he would send him off to eternal separation from God, and all of those who followed after him, sending the great mass of humanity off to suffer in the lake of fire which he had created for the devil and his angels. Adam possessed a positive holiness, but it was amissible. It was loseable, and God's aim was to bring Adam to the place where he could not sin. And that, of course, is what he does for the saints of God through the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ now.

John Wesley has said a lot of good things, and then he said some things that were not so good, but one thing he did say in one of his hymns was very good. And he spoke of this as a prayer, and it was addressed to the Lord God, and it's something we sing. “Take away the power of sinning.” Now, that's the cry of a Christian heart; a will that is so strongly determined toward holiness by its union with the divine will, that it is beyond the hazard of apostasy. That's the greater good that we could have; much greater than a will that is holy, but exposed to the hazard of the loss of one's holiness. So to move from amissible nature and amissible holiness to an indefectable holiness, is to advance to that which is a greater good.

And, finally, the sacraments of the Covenant, if there were any sacraments of the covenant then the tree of life would be the sacrament of the Covenant. It may be a symbol or a seal of life. We are not told. So when Adam forfeited the promise, he was barred from the tree. Perhaps, I can only say perhaps, he was told that he could freely eat of the tree of life, and his life was maintained sacramentally in the Garden by the partaking of the tree of life. We know that when we come to the end of the Bible, and so many of the things of the Book of Genesis find their ultimate consummation in holiness and righteousness, and in the ultimate aim and goal of God in the Book of Revelation, there again appears the picture of the tree of life. So it may have been that.

But at any rate, now, let's take a look at Roman III in our outline; The Present Status of the Covenant of Works, and capital A: The Arminian View. Hodge speaks of the question as the perpetuity of the Covenant. Arminians contend that the Covenant has been abridged, as do most Calvinists. They also argue that since God cannot demand obedience of the unable, he has established a new covenant, which man may keep if he uses enabling sufficient grace given by the death of Christ. Now, Calvinists have disagreed with that because the idea that one must be able in order to be responsible is shown to be untrue to much of Scripture, even though it's a very popular doctrine today.

Let me show you, just by a little bit of reasoning, why if you say that you must be able in order to be responsible, you'd be treading on ground that one cannot maintain. Now, we all know that when a person sins that affects him. In fact, the Scriptures say very plainly that the more a person sins the more he becomes a slave of sin. In other words, continue in the path of sin, the more of a sinner you become. In fact, if you just keep on sinning, on sinning, on sinning, finally you come under divine retribution. That's very plain. And so keep on sinning, on sinning, you become harder and harder toward the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and toward the word of God. You become more and more a slave of sin, so that you become less and less able to obey the will of God. Now, would you say if a man persists in sin, and he becomes less and less able to obey the

word of God, that he becomes less responsible? It's obvious that ability does not determine responsibility. You may come to the place where you cannot do the will of God. That's plainly taught in the Bible too as a divine judgment. Are you then no longer responsible? No, no. The facts are, as Luther and many others have pointed out, is that ability does not determine responsibility. That's one of the fundamental planks of Arminianism, but it's surely a false one.

Now the Reformed View, and we are talking about the Reform View because we're talking about covenant theology. Some Reform scholars have held that the Covenant is still in force and that man always owes God perfect obedience, but it seems better, I think, to deny this. If the Covenant is still in force then men were still on probation; that is, that the race didn't fall in Adam. If Adam, however, was the federal head, then men stood their probation in him, and they fell with him, and the Scriptures do teach that we come into the world under condemnation. “We're by nature, children of wrath,” Paul says in Ephesians 2:3. Therefore, the race did fall in Adam when Adam fell, and the Covenant is no longer in force. And it's evident that the penalty or the sanction of the Covenant has been imposed upon men, because we all die. So it's evident, that the Covenant was made with Adam as he stood for others.

So to conclude; there is then, according to this tradition, a Covenant of Works, or an Edenic Covenant, as I believe some dispensationalists call it. Adam is the Covenant head of the race, standing probation for himself and his seed, confirmed by the experience of death universally in the flow of history. Back in the early days when, in the United States of America, we had a better understanding of spiritual things, and back in New England, when they had a better understanding of spiritual things, there was a famous little primer that most New England schoolboys studied. A famous New England primer set forth moral maxims for children in colonial days under the letters of A and X in the alphabet, and it had these couplets. A and X. They went through Z. “In Adam's fall, we send all.” That's A. Think of the kids in school, in the public school,

mind you, saying, “In Adam’s sin fall, we send all.” Now, the American Civil Liberties Union would get upset over that, wouldn’t they? But these are the things that our children back in colonial days were taught. And then under X, “Xerxes the Great did die, and so must you and I.” So putting these two together, “In Adam’s fall, we send all. Xerxes the Great did die, and so must you and I.” You know, there are lots of people who say, “That’s not a very good thing for God to put Adam under such an arrangement, this covenantal arrangement. That’s bad.”

Now, I’d like to take just a few minutes that we have left, and point out to you that this is not only a good thing, it’s the best thing that God could have done. Now, I’m going to spend a little time here on this, just a few minutes, but a little time on it because there are so many Christians. When you ask them, “Explain why there is an arrangement such as this” their mouths fly open, and they have nothing to say. And it’s one reason why when somebody sitting out by the side of you in your office or by the side of you wherever you may be in the grocer store or whatever, when you begin to talk to them, you find that if you mention something about the imputation of sin, you find it difficult to answer if someone says, “Well, I don’t think that’s fair. I was not there in the Garden of Eden.” So I’d like to suggest, that it’s the fairest where, and the most marvelous way in which God could have done things, and if you’ll reflect upon it, you will see I think, why he did it. I think it’s “eminently benevolent” to use the way that one Christian has described this and it’s a very just way.

Actually, so far as I can tell, there were about four plans that God could have undertaken. First, he could have left man in the natural relation to God forever. In other words, he could left Adam in the Garden of Eden amissible and just left him there forever in that state. But Adam’s a finite man, and if he lived as we live, he would be exposed to infinite tests and trials. Satan was one of the first who came down into the Garden of Eden in the form of the serpent and Adam fell. So he would be exposed to all kinds of trials; infinite trials, because as long as he lived, the trials would come. There is a moral

certainty that he would fall, and as one theologian said, “He would centrifugally fly off into outer space, and out of darkness, leaving God at last, a Son without a planet.” In other words, everybody would sooner or later fall. Let me ask you a question. How do you think you would have done? Do you think that you would have stayed in the Garden of Eden for days and months and years, and you would have implicitly, explicitly, and finally eternally obeyed the Lord God? Well, I know, most Christians would say, “No, I don’t think I would do it.” And if you’ll reflect for just a moment, Adam had the noblest motives to stand, which you individually would never stand, because Adam knew he stood for all. So he knew everything depended upon him, evidently, and that would give him further motive, which no individual, if we stood individually, would ever have. So God gave him the greatest of motives to stand. That’s one way; man just left in his natural relationship to God forever. Well, I’m quite certain myself, men would fall.

Well, you could have a gracious Covenant of Works arrangement in which you said, “Adam, if you obey for seventy years, then if you withstand the probation of seventy years, a limited period, then at the end of it, you will inherit eternal life. Man’s experience again is such, that it would be very doubtful if men would stand, and let us say, if we follow this particular principle, even if Adam had not sinned, what about all of Adam’s descendants, because Adam would be having children, and down through the years there would be many, many children. And sooner or later someone is going to fail, and when someone fails, if Adam didn’t fail, then there’s going to be the example of failure, and the example of failure will create even more failure because even the Pelagians say when they try to explain that sin in the universe, they explain it, since they deny any kind of federal relationship, they say that men sin because of the examples of other men. It’s not because men are afflicted with a sin nature and must sin. They sin because so many other people around them sin. They sin by example. That’s the way the Pelagians explain it, and the Socinians also; if you like that kind of theology. I don’t. But it seems as if the example of the Lord Jesus Christ’s sinless life never helped anyone,

because there's never been another sinless man, except our Lord. So I must say, I don't think that would do us much better. The card of evil would soon be general. As soon as one person sinned, and everybody stands for himself for this seventy year period of time I wouldn't like that.

Well, there's one thing that you could think about. You could say, “Well, why didn't God just create us all confirmed eternally in the holy knowledge of God, and with all of our children likewise?” They would all be born confirmed in holiness with the knowledge of God. Why didn't he do it that way? Well, of course, the only thing we can say is what the Lord Jesus said in Matthew chapter 11 in verse 26, where he says, “Even so Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight.” He didn't do that. It's obvious he didn't do it. There's a bunch of sinners out here in front of me. He didn't do it. Not everybody is confirmed in holiness that can never be lost. So he didn't do that way.

What way did he do? Well, he determined that Adam would be a federal head and that Adam would stand for the race. Now, he would stand for the race as a mature man, not as a child. Imagine if we stood on our own. You have to stand from the time you are born. And so Adam is a mature man possessed of all of the qualities of maturity, and he's to be a federal head. God has done everything for Adam. He's given him all the responsibility of standing for the race, and all of that incentive to obey God, which he could never give to each individual as they came along, because you would stand on your own. And from the time you were a little babe, you would be responsible, and I'm afraid we all would be sinners before we ever reach maturity. So God determined that Adam should be a federal head, and he, a mature man, with no bad previous examples to follow unless we think of the angels put in the most favorable situation, the Garden of Eden, to stand for everybody with the noblest motives of all. And the result, by virtue of what Adam has done, is that God had to inflict upon Adam the penalties of the broken Covenant, but by virtue of that plan, it was possible for God to deal with men by another mediator; the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So without representation in the fall in the Garden of Eden, the safety of the race would always be contingent forever; some standing longer than others perhaps. Well, what's any time in the light of eternity? And if we cannot sin in another; that is, if it's against the will of God for us to sin in Adam, then how can we be redeemed by another? And so the principle of representation is at the heart of the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and God in his marvelous wisdom has set men in the Garden of Eden representatively, and through his infinite planning, he determines to redeem the people of God by the same principle of representation, the Lord Jesus standing as the head of the people of God. Further, the generic constitution; that is, we all descend from Adam, do we not? Well, scripturally we do. We all descend from Adam. This generic constitution set out in Scripture, evidently itself, looks to a federal relationship, because all the children of Adam are related to him as the head of the race. That in itself is an indication of what how God was going to deal with the race. We are one by birth, because we were destined to be one by covenant. Adam was the root of the race and its father, because he was its head in covenant.

Now, if you think for a moment about the angels, you'll see how wonderful it was to have a federal relationship. The angels have no blood connection with one another, so far as we know, and thus, there was no representative principle among them, and those that have sinned, have sinned individually, and the elect on the other hand, preserved by God from it, are the elect angels. You know, I can see as I think about this, that this is a marvelous manifestation of the wisdom and grace of our great God, and so I thank God for the fact, as the apostle says it, “There is therefore now, no condemnation to those who are in Christ.” That's what “in Christ” means. We are in him who is our federal head, and God has in his wonderful grace, made it possible for men who fell in Adam to have the life that is the life indeed.

Now, if I may close with this. You know, the principle of representation is so common in our daily life that we sometimes fail to note how common it is. A father is the

legal head of his children during their minority. I read the paper. I opened it up this morning to look at a particular thing for sale, and there are some personal words and a man saying, “I alone am responsible for my debts.” He was probably getting a divorce. And they have to be his debts. He’s not going to be responsible for anyone else. I read also that a business house is held responsible for the transactions of its agents, and the evils of men who work for banks, the banks must pay. The evils that take place in security houses, the security houses must pay. The principle pertains to the heads of state, and everything that Ronnie does, ultimately, out of the power of his office; you and I become responsible for. How do you think you would stand if you went to Washington and said, “I’d like to say, I didn’t borrow that money. That two hundred and eleven billion dollars or whatever it is this year, I didn’t borrow one cent of it, and so, therefore, I’m not liable.” Well, you might wind up in Huntsville or some place like that. But the principle of representation is woven into the fabric of our society, because God has created us in that way.

Let’s bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for Thy Word. We thank Thee for the way in which [End of Tape]