



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 John 2: 1-2

"The Propitiation for Sinners"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We are as Mr. Prier mentioned, continuing our studies of 1st John, and so we are turning to 1 John 2, verse 1 and verse 2. Three weeks ago the subject was an advocate with the Father, and now we are picking that up and the subject for today will be "The Propitiation for Sinners." We're just going to read the two verses 1 and 2 of 1 John 2. "My little children, these things write I unto you that you sin not, and if any man sin, we have a advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And he is propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

Now, those of you that have an Authorized Version, you will notice that the expression, "the sins of" in the concluding clause of verse 2. Those words are not found in the original text, however probably they are accurately understood, and so we probably should render the text, "but also for the sins of the whole world," and we'll talk about that later on in the exposition when we seek to speak on the subject "The Propitiation for Sinners." Let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Our Heavenly Father we are indeed grateful to Thee that on this lovely Lord's day, we may gather, hear the ministry of the word of God, sing the hymns of the Christian church in praise and thanksgiving for that which Thou hast done for us in the

saving work of the Lord Jesus. We thank Thee for each one present. We ask Lord that our meeting may be spiritually fruitful for us and may result in a more fruitful life and testimony and enjoyment of the things that we have in Christ.

We thank Thee for this great epistle written by the Apostle, and we thank Thee for the way in which, as we study it, we are brought into a walk in which we enjoy a deeper sense of communion with God. We pray Lord that as a result of our studies we may truly enter into a deeper and more fruitful communion with our triune God. We thank Thee for the whole church of Jesus Christ. Not simply this body meeting here, but others who also meet in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and seek to proclaim him.

We pray for those who proclaim him in slightly different ways, perhaps more mature ways, perhaps less mature, but we pray for all of the bodies of believers who meet in the name of our Lord, and on the ground of his finished work with the holy Scriptures in their hands, and seek to have others come to know him, whom to know as life eternal. Lord, bless each of these gatherings, not simply in the United States, but in the other countries on the face of this globe. We know that the whole church of Jesus Christ is a concern of heaven, the concern of Thee, the Son, The spirit. And may, Lord, our concern be just as broad and just as deep if it should please Thee.

We thank Thee for those whose are here today in the Chapel. We thank Thee for their lives and for their concern, for their desire to know more of Thee. We pray Thy blessing upon each one present, the members of the chapel. The friends, the visitors, Lord, richly bless them through our service together. We pray for elders and for our deacons, and for those who aid in the ministry of word of God, those who minister in the tape room, who faithfully send forth the messages that others over the face of this globe may hear the word of God, when in their locals they may not have the opportunity. Bless them. Bless the radio ministries and other forms of outreach.

And we thank Thee, Lord, for this country in which we seek to labor in the name of Christ, and we pray for the United States. Lord, give wisdom, direction and particularly

this year in which we elect a new President. We pray that by Thy providential hand, we may be guided to that that is in accord with Thine eternal purpose. We pray especially, for any who may be in our meeting who do not know the Lord, may our time together cause them to consider their condition before Thee and to turn to him who offers eternal life to those who believe.

We pray especially for those who are sick and ill who've asked for our prayers, some of whom who are very ill, we, oh God, we pray for them. Encourage them, give healing where healing is in Thy will, and give the supply of the needed funds and the supply of other things necessary to give encouragement, and comfort and consolation in times of trial. We pray for each individual mentioned in our calendar of concern especially. Minister to them, Lord, out of the riches of the great consolation, which our triune God offers, and be with us in the remainder of this meeting. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] As we have mentioned, our subject for today in the continuation of the exposition of John's 1st epistle is “The Propitiation for Sinners.” The Apostle John has been universally styled the Apostle of Love. One of the reasons no doubt for this is the fact that John frequently refers to himself as the one who leaned upon our Lord's bosom, and further John also is one who speaks frequently of the love of God in Christ. So it's not surprising that he has been called the Apostle of Love, but it's very clear, if it is true that John can be called the Apostle of Love, it in no way suggests an avoidance of emphasis upon Christian doctrine.

Just think of what we have seen in the epistle to this point. In the 2nd verse of the 1st chapter, he has referred to the incarnation. In the 5th verse he has laid stress upon the attributes of God, and particularly upon his attribute of holiness pointing out that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. He is not afraid to mention the atonement. In the 7th verse he says, "The blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all

sin." Furthermore he doesn't avoid the fact that we are sinners, and that further we still have sin even after we've come to know him as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

He states in the 8th verse, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. He says in the 10th verse, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make God a liar, and his word is not in us." So the Apostle John would have thoroughly understood and believed the fact that in ourselves we are unable to come to a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He's the one who wrote the words that our Lord said, "No man can come to me except the Father which has sent me, draw him."

In the 2nd chapter, in the first two verses, we have so much of Christian doctrine that we really ought to have three or four messages rather than two, but that's why I've divided up these two verses into two messages. We spoke about the fact that our Lord is an advocate with the Father in the last of our studies on Easter morning, and then today we're coming to he is propitiation for our sins. So he was the Apostle of Love, I'm willing to grant that, but he also is an Apostle who believes fundamentally in biblical doctrine and it's importance for healthy life for communion with God.

Now, when I got back from Amsterdam, where I'd spent a little over two weeks, on Friday lecturing to students from, well, from four African countries, from Austria, from Germany, from Korea, from the Netherlands, and from some other places, I arrived back finally after spending four days in England, as a kind of vacation before getting back Friday night. We arrived Friday afternoon I guess about 3:30 at home, and that was 9:30, by the way I had been living. By the time we got everything in shape, looked at some of the mail, then had a little something to eat it was about 10:00, I guess 9 or 10:00, and I got a call from a friend of mine who was attending a conference, actually one of the conferences on Reform Theology that James Boyce sponsors in the city of Philadelphia.

This friend calls me quite frequently. He is a graduate of a theological seminary, and so he called me, and we chatted for about a half and hour or so, and it was then

about 3 or 4:00 by the way in which I was living. But he called me, and said that he had attended the conference that evening. He was attending the conference all the meetings, but they'd had a meeting on one of their sessions on the exposition of the word of God. The subject was expounding and preaching the word, and the leader of it was a man who was an Anglican Rector of a church. The church of St. Helen's and Bishop's Gate in London, an evangelical man, and whose book on Colossians and Philemon I have read and have borrowed a few things from in the exposition of Colossians that was given here some few months back.

My friend went up to speak to the Anglican Rector afterwards because he's very interested in expository preaching, and he was asking him something about expository preaching, and the man admonished him in the course of their little talk that it was fine to preach the Bible expositively, but one should avoid preaching theology. And so my friend got on the phone and called me because he said, "I was completely astonished that someone would say that it is possible to expound the Scriptures without expounding theology or Christian doctrine because it's clear if one thinks at all when you begin with Genesis chapter 1, verse 1 and go through the rest of the Bible, what you are actually doing is reading theological propositions.

Now, you may not have thought of them in that way. You may have thought of them as spiritual propositions, things like that, but that's what the Bible is. It's a series of propositions about spiritual truth, so such is impossible, and I think that one can see as we look at John in the epistle, as the Apostle of Love doesn't hesitate to speak about Christian truth. So that's what we're doing. We're looking at the truth that this man the Apostle of Love is setting forth for us.

Now, he has urges his readers, while realizing their sin, to hold as their goal, the absence of sin. He said in verse 1, "I have written, or I am writing these things to you that you sin not." He goes on to say of course that we do sin, however, and one putting all that John has to say together would say that John's idea of the Christian life is that the

Christian life is not a life in which we are free from sin, but it's a life ideally that should be a sin judged life. That is that confession of sin is something that should characterize believers as long as they have not reached the end of this present existence and have entered the presence of the Lord. In the mean time as we go on confessing our sins, seeking to please the Lord, and seeking to sin not, the Holy Spirit works in our lives, and sanctifies us. He doesn't complete his work, as long as we're in the flesh, but he will complete it. He will not fail every believing person shall one day be brought to a sinless enjoyment of the triune God in heaven. We are confident, as Paul said, "That he that hath begun a good work in us will perform it until the end."

And so John urges us to a sin judged life, but he has also said that we have an advocate in case we sin. That raises some questions, first of all, the competence of the advocate. Is he competent for the task of serving as our advocate with the Father? Secondly, what's the ground of his advocacy? Is it sufficient? After all if the Lord Jesus had come, had become incarnate and then had not died upon Calvary's cross, and had pled for us seeking to persuade the Father to receive us he would have failed because the death on the cross is the ground of his advocacy. It's not simply the perfection of his character, though of course we cannot extol that too much, but the ground of the advocacy is, as he goes on to say, "his work on Calvary's cross for us." And then one final question raised is the sufficiency of his advocacy. Is it simply available for us, or is it fair to say that what Christ has accomplished is available for all, whether Jews or gentiles?

Now, these are the questions that we will look at, and incidentally, unfortunately in one sense, because if I pass by without saying anything about this someone would come up to me and say, "But you passed over a problem." And the problem is, what's the meaning of the expression that he's the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. Does not that say that Christ came with the intent of saving everyone? So I have to answer that. If I passed by you would be critical.

Now, that I am going to deal with it, some of you will be critical. [Laughter] You'll be critical of the way in which I deal with it. I only ask that you do one thing, that you listen, that you understand me, and then that you go out and study it for yourself, seriously.

Now, this verse, the second verse that I've read there is confidently claimed to be a lethal missile, a doctrinal silk worm, lasered into Calvinist hearts by Armenian brethren. [Laughter] Their expositions in my mind, you understand I am speaking about Armenian brethren, not those that are not brethren. So we share in Christ, even though we don't understand what we share in the same way, we are still brethren, and we love one another, and after all I was one myself at one time, in the distant past. But anyway, my opinion is that their expositions only reveal the carelessness of their exaJesus, but more about it later on. I know what they say of me as well. First of all though, we'll deal with first question, and that's the competence of the advocate.

Now, we are going to retrace our steps for just a moment. In verse 1 the apostle had said, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Now, one just looking at those words "Jesus Christ the righteous" obtains a view of John's understanding of Christ that is very significant. What it says, obviously, is that the advocacy that the Lord exercises in behalf of us believers is incompatible with the toleration of evil. He is Jesus Christ the righteous, who is our advocate. The apostle would guard against the abuse of the teaching of forgiveness, and it's proper to do that, for we all know individuals who say, "When you sin, just say to the Lord, Lord, I have sinned, and without any real concern over how you have offended the Lord God. Without any sense of sorrow, without any sense of repentance over what you've done, just recite like a mechanical formula and go on, and everything is all right."

The apostle would have spoken very sharply against that. He wants to make plain the fact, that the advocacy of Christ is incompatible with the toleration of evil, and he guards against the abuse of the teaching of forgiveness, but having said that, notice his

description of our advocate. First of all, Jesus, the great word that we read in the first chapter of the Bible means Savior. "Jesus shall be his name, for he shall save his people from their sins." The name that is, "his ointment poured forth" -- fragrant, precious for all believers in Christ. And when we think of that, you cannot help but turn to the Lord and say, "Lord Jesus, save me from my sins." Oh, I know he has saved me from the penalty of my sins, but save me from my sins as a believing man, indwelt by the sin principle, within my body, as long as I live.

Now, the next word "Christ" suggests his mediatorship. He is the Messiah. He is the mediator. He is the one who stands for the people of God, so he is Jesus Christ, and incidentally he is the mediator who saves, not by the mere ministry of persuasion. He is not an individual who just seeks by virtue of his personality to persuade a Father who is, to use a theological term, placable, that is pleaseable, pleaseable. That is working on the pleaseability of an angry but weak potentate. Thinking of God as an angry God, but at the same time weak, who relaxes his standards in case he's appealed to by a holy individual, such as the Lord Jesus Christ. Think of him as an indulgent parent, who is affected by someone who pleads for a child, but at the same time is an indulgent parent, and does for his child, what he should not do, does that which is unrighteous.

The Lord Jesus is the righteous Jesus Christ. He is the kind of advocate, we pointed out that that word means something like lawyer or barrister. He's the kind of advocate we want. In any kind of legal problem, we want an advocate who is honest. We want an advocate who is just. We want an advocate who will tell us exactly how we stand, how strong our case is, how weak our case is. We are not looking for an advocate with cunning skill. We are not looking for an advocate with skills of emotional appeals. We are not looking for advocates who lie, and if that is true in human life, and it is, how much more with a Holy Father who could never be fooled, who could never be persuaded to abandon his own justice and righteousness.

While we read in the 9th verse of the 1st chapter, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just." He is righteous, and the Son is righteous, and the Son never takes anyone's case if it's not a righteous case, so I learn from that of course that my case is righteous. He is Jesus Christ the righteous, who takes a righteous case for unrighteous people. What an amazing fact. Amazing because of course he had in his own bloodshed on Calvary's cross laid the foundation for a just freedom from the penalty of sin and from the affects of sin in our life, as we by his grace take advantage of what he has provided. So he doesn't advocate for us, simply because he's a good persuader, better persuader than someone else.

You might ask, what's the grounds of his advocacy? That's the second question, and John no doubt thinking about it adds after saying, "We have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins." His competence is established by the fact that he is Jesus Christ the righteous, the favorable conditions under which he appears with the Father because he is an advocate with the Father show that he is likely to be an individual who is able to accomplish proper advocacy for us, but now he tells us precisely the grounds on which he advocates. He says he does it because he's the propitiation for our sins.

Now, I am going to take a liberty with you. We had a series of about five messages, actually there were six because the Christmas message was essentially the same thing, in which we talked about the satisfactio. Now, you'll remember it, I hope. Some of you have already forgotten it. I can tell by the blank look that's on your face. [Laughter] *Satisfactio* is the Latin term satisfaction, which is the equivalent of propitiation, the Greek term propitiation. So he's the propitiation for our sins. He's the satisfaction. He has rendered the satisfaction to the holiness and justice for God. For God in his holiness and righteousness must punish sin. So our Lord as the mediatorial priest has offered a satisfaction to our Father judge. After all the Lord Jesus is priest, is he not? He's actually the high priest.

In fact, he's the only one in the New Testament who is called singular priest. He's the priest, and being the priest he acts for the people of God. A priest, the writer of the epistle of the Hebrews says, "Must have something to offer." He must have some what to offer. A priest must have an offering. Well, this priest, the Lord Jesus has an offering. It is he, himself, who is the priestly offering. So he is the priest, and he is the offering. The thorn crowned agonizing Son of God pouring out his soul for me is doing priestly work for me, and he obtains his forgiveness for us. The satisfaction for us. The advocacy is successful not because he simply asks, but he asks in the light of the propitiation, which he has offered. In other words, the grounds is his suffering on the cross.

Now, if you look carefully at this verse, it does not say he was the propitiation. It says that "he is the propitiation." In other words, the continual application of his death to our daily salvation is the point the apostle would make. He is the propitiation in the sense that he has died for our sins, and we no longer suffer the penalty of our sins, but sins of believers obstruct our communion with God, and the application of the saving work of the Lord Jesus to our lives as we live them, is what John is speaking about.

Now, one immediately thinks of the Old Testament here because the idea of priest offering sacrifice suggests the great words of the Old Testament. There are some people who like to say that if the Lord Jesus Christ offered a satisfaction to the Father who is holy and righteous, doesn't that present a picture of God who is not loving at all, and yet the Bible says, he is loving and merciful. That's foolish, that's foolish. That's what one reads in liberal theology very frequently, but it's foolish. Look, our God is not like the heathen gods who has to be satisfied by a bribe. He's not the kind of person that one of those heathen sinners can bring some offering to which is not sufficient at all to satisfy the holiness of a holy and just God. The gods of the heathen were unjust, unholy. They fought among themselves. They scorned one another. Fought against one another. They were viscous and vile, and did the vilest kind of things. Read the ancient panoplies. Study them, and you'll see how astonishing it was to have a holy and just God. They

knew nothing of that in the ancient world. But think about it for a moment. If the apostle says he's the propitiation for our sins, we ask the question, who is responsible for the propitiation.

One of the great statements that William G.T. Shedd made, and he made it more than once in his theology was this. He said, "These two particulars of permitting substitution and providing the substitute furnish the answer to the question, where is the mercy is of God in case justice is strictly satisfied by a vicarious person?" There is mercy in permitting another person to do for the sinner what the sinner is bound to do for himself. The very fact that God in his wisdom and purpose permits the Son of God, the second person of the trinity to for us what we have to do, satisfy God in which we cannot do of course in our sin. That's mercy, and Mr. Shedd goes on to say, "And still greater in providing that person for he not only permits someone to do for us what we cannot do but must do, but he provides the person to do it, and then," he adds, "and greater still in becoming that person. The second person of the trinity. The very God of very God, himself comes, and provides the satisfaction in his death." That satisfies the Father. Mercy, why it's the mercy and love and kindness of a God who does it righteously. Let us never forget that. So he provaseth in wrath he remembers mercy. Beneath the fire of God's anger glows the fire of his love.

The great day, perhaps in John's mind, many commentators feel was in his mind, is the great day of atonement in the Old Testament, where the children of Israel, once a year through the ministry of the great high priest, renewed the covenant by offering the necessary sacrifices, first, the sacrifices for the high priest, for he was a sinful man. Writer of the Hebrews says Jesus doesn't have to offer those kinds of sacrifices because he's a sinless individual, but then the two goats, one of the goats slain, the blood brought into the holiest of all. The blood sprinkled on the mercy seat where God and sinners meet together, and then seven times before the Ark of the Covenant, signifying propitiation, the satisfaction of the holiness and righteousness of God, and then the second goat, over

which the high priest confessed the sins of the children of Israel and sent the goat off into the wilderness in token of the forgiveness of our sins. The satisfaction of God's holiness and righteousness that's always first in atonement, and then as a result of that, the forgiveness of sins that we enjoy.

You cannot think about this without grasping the appeal of it. The cost, natural law, spiritual law, everywhere proclaims the great truth the way of the transgressors is hard. In biology, in chemistry, in all the sciences, in economics, we are learning that too in economics and banking as well, the way of the transgressor is hard. That's a fact of human life. Struggle against it, fight against it, it will always defeat us. We only prove natural law. It proclaims the way of the transgressors is hard. How to set man right with God is the *questio factsata* of the ages, the vexed question of the ages. Miracles were easier for our Lord to perform than to do this. He wrestles with the task. He's the priest. He's the victim, and then mind you, his priestly work does not stop when he says, "It is finished." The finished work stops. The unfinished work is still continuing, and now at the right hand of the throne of God he prays. He intercedes. He advocates in order to secure the full salvation of everyone for whom he died. That's what he's doing, and he cannot fail.

In fact, John like to say, "And he and he alone." That's the way some of the older commentators used to render this intensive pronoun because there's an emphasis upon it, and "He, he and he alone is the propitiation for our sins." All others ruled out. Can such a one as I, a sinner a live? Is it really true that God should care for me a vial wicked sinner with all of the thoughts that displease him? All of the rebellions that are manifest in my life constantly as I look at myself, is it possible that such a one as I can live spiritually that a God in heaven could care for me? He's the propitiation for our sins. What tremendous appeal this ought to have, but now we raise the question of the sufficiency of the advocacy.

Now, to my mind, what John is simply saying is this. He is saying look, he's the propitiation for our sins, but he's not simply the propitiation for our sins, but he's also available for the whole world. That's simply what he says. He says, in other words, our method of delivery is available for the world of Jewish Christians as well as for Gentiles. In other words, this way of return to the Lord God is no mere locally valid claim. So I prefer to say that what John speaks about, first of all is the universal provision of the atoning work of Christ. This is not peculiar treatment. That is especially true for us believers. No sinner is beyond the reach of the atonement for Christ.

Now, I know that there are individuals who are elect, and there are individuals who evidentially are not elect, even if we are not talk about human beings. We read about angels who are non-elect angels, so when we speak about this there are those who say, "But how can I know, whether I am elect?" That's the simplest question to answer that I know of in all the Bible. Arminians and Calvinists all agree that those who believe in Christ are saved. You can settle the question right now by turning in your heart to him. Within your heart acknowledging your sin, turning to the Lord and saying, "Lord, in the light of the Scriptures you offer forgiveness to sinners. I am a sinner. I come to Thee, and I receive eternal life." Ah, that proves that you are one of the elect, if that's done, but perhaps you say, "I don't like the idea." Well, why are you complaining? You are getting what you want. You cannot have both. You cannot be one of the elect, who doesn't come to the Lord. There is no such individual. They come to the Lord. So I cannot see why you have anything over which you may reasonably object.

But now, I still have ten minutes, in fact I'm going to fudge and take maybe twelve. I'm going to say a little more about this. Now, I cannot say everything. You cannot expect a man to consider all of the Armenians claims in twelve minutes, but I think that I will defeat them in twelve minutes. [Laughter] I have a good friend, who is a former student of mine actually, and we are on good terms. He says in a little book that he wrote on this question that the normal unbiased approach to this text, can you imagine

that? Who wants to treat a text and give an abnormal approach to it? Who wants to give a biased text approach to it? So he has already made the point. He's already in a flagrant *patitio principium*, begging the question. No one wants to be known for taking an abnormal biased approach, so he says the normal unbiased approach is that Christ as a penal substitute appease the wrath of God for both the elect and the non elect.

I raise some objections. First of all, have you studied the word, "world?" You should never speak about this until you go through Scriptures looking at the term "world." Do you know that the term "world" has at least ten meanings? Some have claimed thirteen in the New Testament. To affirm that it means everybody without exception, is again to beg the question. One must prove that. The contexts give us the clues. There isn't anything in the context that suggests this. In fact, if it means everybody without distinction, it makes perfectly good sense. That is either Jews or Gentiles.

The whole world may be saved through this, and particularly since John, in his literature, had in his background the coming from the nation of Israel with exclusivist tendencies that went with it, the belief that God had spoken only to them and the fact that if one wanted to become a member of the family of God in the Old Testament, he had to become a Jew, so coming out of that background, and writing in Asia Minor it would not be unlikely at all that the apostle should say that he's the propitiation for our sins. Not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world, Jew and Gentiles. This is time of the Gentile mission, which the Apostle Paul began, and John writes out of that context. Here this word means all without distinction, and John has that meaning in several places in his gospel, chapter 4, verse 22, chapter 4, verse 42, chapter 11, verse 51 and 52, and a text which is very parallel with this. You only have to study it to see. So first of all I say you have begged question by assuming a meaning for a word that you have not proved. Secondly, if so, if it's really true that Christ as a penal substitute has appeased the wrath of God for both elect and non-elect, then how can we say some are lost? If he has satisfied the claims of heaven against everyone, how can anyone be lost?

Well, it's possible to fudge a bit and say, as another man has said, we should read verse 2 this way, "And he is the actual propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also potentially for the sins of the whole world." But is ask you a simple question of exaJesus. Where did you derive the term "actual?" Where did you get the term "potential" or "provisional?" They're not stated in the text. What John states is simply, "He's the propitiation for our sins, and he's the propitiation for the sins of the whole world." He doesn't say anything about actual, provisional, potential. That's an insertion made by individuals who can't handle the text as it is written. There is no potential versus actual or possible.

Howard Marshall, professor at Aberdeen says, "The possibility of forgiveness is given us here." No, no he says he's the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only. He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. That's no possibility. That's certainty. But if we understand "world" as being available for Jews and Gentiles, perfectly good sense we don't have to modify John at all. John you said it perfectly. You said it perfectly. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, you left out actual, provisional, potential. All of those words that sometimes we in our sin, well, we in our doctrinal rebellion, find it difficult to use.

Further if the claims against us are satisfied, what are the grounds of further judgment? I think we could go on and on, but I'm going on. I know someone is going to say, "But you have to believe." Yes, you do have to believe. That's what Christ also secured when he died on the cross. He secured the gift of faith for the people of God. Listen to John Owen in his Great Conundrum. It's still applicable today. "For whom did Christ die?" Mr. Owen says, "The Father imposed his wrath due unto, and the Son underwent punishment for either, one, all the sins of all men. Two, all the sins of some men, or three, some of the sins of all men, in which case it may be said, if the last be true, all men have some sins to answer for, and so none are saved. That if the second be true, that is that he died for all the sins of some men, then Christ in there stead suffered for all

sins of all the elect of the whole world, and this is the truth." Mr. Owen said. And then thirdly he said, "But if the first be the case, he died for all the sins of all men, why not all men free from the punishment due unto their sins? You answer because of unbelief. I ask is this unbelief or sin? Or is it not? If it be, then Christ suffered the punishment due unto it, or he did not. If he did, why must that hinder them more than their other sins for which he died? If he did not, he did not die for all their sins."

Oh, I wish I had time to go on, but we don't have time to go on. I only say this. If you read the Old Testament, you'll see atonement and priesthood are coextensive. Christ dies for those for whom he exercises his priesthood, and he exercises his priesthood for the saints of God. There is no comfort here for non-elect in that context. He's talking about the saints. So I say to you that it makes excellent sense to take a view that has been called an ethological view, that is he's the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of Jews and Gentiles wherever they may be. John writing out of deaspera Judaism, makes plain good sense, and one doesn't have to add words to the text to explain what we believe, otherwise, we must be a Universalist. "He's the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but he's the propitiation for the sins of the whole world."

A Universalist would love that, but even he finds it difficult to believe that that's what he's saying, or God is frustrated in his purpose. The Son of God came with the intent of saving everyone, but he failed in his mission. How can you believe such a thing as that my Christian friend, that the Son of God came with a purpose, and failed to accomplish his purpose? That God can be frustrated in what he intended to do. I cannot believe in a God like that. I cannot except a God like that. I believe in a sovereign God. He accomplishes his purpose.

Substitution is not effectual, a substitution that does not substitute. As Jim Packer says in one of his writings, "The substitution set forth in the word of God is always an effectual substitution." It would not be effectual then. People, for whom he substituted,

by that theory, die eternally. Toplady would be wrong. Payment God cannot twice deemed first for my bleeding sured his hand, and then again mine, double jeopardy, never accepted in kind of court of law.

Let me tell you a story, this truly happened. When Pizarro came to Peru, in the 16th century, the Ketchuan Indians, the Peruvian Incas were in control of that country. Pizarro came. He conquered the Peruvians. He imprisoned the Inca, and after a time, the Inca were speaking with Pizarro in a little place in which he was found and imprisoned. He said to the Spanish, the leader Mr. Pizarro, and he said, "Mr. Pizarro," as he raised his hands like this, he said, "I will fill this room to this level with gold and silver coins if you will release me." So Pizarro agreed, and then after the natives, the loyal subjects of the Inca, whom they loved, had denied themselves to the utmost and had actually filled that room with those gold and silver coins. Mr. Pizarro lead the beloved Inca out before the people, and before their smiling expectant faces, instead of letting him go, he put him to an excruciating death in their presence. That Pizarro lifted and broadened to infinite proportions is the shadow, which a universal atonement projects upon God. It makes an infinite Pizarro, and subverts the very substratum upon which is built the throne of God, a God who can punish twice for the sins that Christ died for.

Now, one might ask, why the doctrine of the universal atonement? Well, I suggest to you that that doctrine of a vague atonement surrenders certainty while seeking to captivate our sense of the good will of God, but it doesn't accomplish any purpose. What the atoning work of Christ provides is the certainty of the forgiveness of sins for those who come to him.

Now, I'm going to end on a note, it's uncharacteristic of me I know, a note of good will. There are things over which my friend who wrote about that normal unbiased approach, and others there are things the great majority of the things in the Christian faith, I guess overall we can say we wholeheartedly agree. As a matter of fact, my friend believes that the work of the Holy Spirit, in bringing the elect to the knowledge of the

Lord is a work of distinguishing grace. How he explains what he believes about the other, I would leave that for him to do. I could not do it.

But let me end on the note of harmony. The Calvinists and the Arminian brethren, all agree on this, that the only way of reconciliation with God is by Christ's propitiation. And so for my Arminian brethren, and for my Calvinistic brethren, I say to you who've been listening to me so patiently, only two or three of you have fallen asleep. [Laughter] So patiently come to him. Believe in him. Trust in the blood that he shed. There is no other foundation than that which is laid which is Jesus Christ our Lord. As Peter says, "Neither is there salvation in any other for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Come to Christ. Believe in him. Trust in him, and ask God through the Holy Spirit, to shed light on his word as you study and seek to grow in the knowledge of the Lord, and since there is only one sin bearer for humanity, and he's for Jews and Gentiles, and prophets and apostles invite all to him, all have the reconciliation who embrace the faith, embrace the faith. Believe in the Son. Settle the question of your divine election, if you want to put it that way. Settle the question of your salvation. Settle the question of the forgiveness of sins, and of justification before him. There is no sin, no sinner, which is at anytime beyond the reach of that great atonement work of Christ, so far as we know. Come and sing having received Christ "Worthy is the lamb that was slain, to receive honor, and glory and power and blessing." Come to him. Trust in him for salvation, and find in him all that the apostles say that he is, the "propitiation for sinners." Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father we give Thee thanks and praise for these magnificent words from the Apostle of Love, divine love unfailing unchanging, infinite. How grateful we are. Never to lose it once we have known it. Who could not sing peons of praises to the triune God, now and forever. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

“The Propitiation for Sinners” by S. Lewis Johnson
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