



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Romans 3:21-26

"Man Be Justified With God?"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Returning to Romans chapter 3, verse 21 through 26 for our study in Romans this morning. So will you take your New Testaments and follow along with me as I read. The 21st verse begins,

"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all that believe: for there is no difference: (Those of you who have a King James Version will notice that the phrase, 'And upon all them that believe,' is found in their text but it is probably not genuine. So it should simply be, 'Unto all them that believe.')

For there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

We have a very interesting thing in verse 24, the participle which is in the Greek text a present participle, rendered 'being justified' here in verse 24 as a participle that agrees with the subject of the verb sinned. As is the custom in Greek a participle must agree in gender and number and in this case it is a plural, "Being justified freely," it's in the nominative case, case of the subject and therefore agrees with all have sinned. Now

generally speaking we have read this, "All have sinned," as a reference to all men universally. That is all men without exception. And I think it is probably so much the general interpretation of this particular verse that when the apostle writes, "Being justified freely," grammatical excuses, or grammatical explanations is a better word, have been sought for this agreement. Because if we take it literally, if 'all' is a reference to everyone, without exception, the next verse says that they are, "Justified freely by his grace," and the result would be a teaching of universal salvation.

Now in order to avoid that, because it's clear the apostle does not teach that in other parts of the New Testament, various grammatical explanations have been sought. But now if we will pay careful attention to the context and at the same time observe normal grammatical usage we shall have no problem, I don't think. Verse 22 says he's talking about the righteousness of God which is, "By faith of Jesus Christ unto all them that believe: For all have sinned." What is the 'all' reference to? Well it's the all who have believed. Those all who have believed have sinned. And they all, believers, are justified freely and we have no problem. The apostle is speaking about believers. He's talking about believers in this context. He says this righteousness of God is for all that believe because there is no difference, all have sinned. And all of the believers are justified freely.

It's an illustration of the fact that when we read the Bible it's good not to come to it with presuppositions. Presuppositions of universal redemption, for example, lead us astray here. But if we read it like George Whitefield read it, like John Calvin read it, like Benjamin B. Warfield read it, we have no problem. I recommend their theology. "Being justified freely by," I am getting there. Some of you are looking very solemn. [Laughter]

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To

declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

It's rather interesting to read in the light of this passage that the apostle has set forth, which is really the normative passage on the doctrine of justification by faith. As the older theologians used to say it's the *sedes doctrinae*, the seat of the doctrine. It's the passage which most fully and completely sets forth the doctrine of justification by faith.

Now in the light of what we have just read, for all creeds should be read in the light of the Scriptures, not vice versa, I carefully wait until after we've read the Bible to read this statement from the Westminster Confession of Faith. But in the light of what we read listen to the Westminster Confession of Faith on the subject of justification, chapter 13, "Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth: not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their satisfaction; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God."

That's an admirable statement. John Owen, probably the greatest of the English theologians as over against the Scots, all Scots are theologians just like all Welsh men are singers, and all Irish are debaters, John Owen, probably the greatest of the English theologians says on justification and imputation after denying negatively fictitious justification, foundationless justification, and the transfusion of righteousness he writes, "Positively this imputation is an act of God of pure grace. Of his mere love and grace whereby on the consideration of the mediation of Christ he makes an effectual grant and donation of a true, real, perfect righteousness even that of Christ himself unto all that do

believe. And accounting it is theirs on his own gracious act both of absolves them from sin and granteth them right and title unto eternal life."

May the Lord bless this reading of his word.

[Prayer removed from audio]

[Message] ...the disintegration of my physical being, because I did not intend to say that the Scots were singers, but the Welsh were singers. And I still stick by my statement that the Irish are debaters. But Mr. McCracken confessed that he was Scotch-Irish and I thought I should give you the Scotch-Irish prayer. Now, he confessed this. I happen to have a little Scotch-Irish blood in me too. But the Scotch-Irish prayer is, "Oh God, help me to be always right for Thou knowest that I am hard to turn." [Laughter]

It's the Scots who are theologians, in fact it is said that the Scots are always theologians even when they're not religious. It's the Welsh who are the singers and it's the Irish who are the debaters. But Scotch-Irish, well that's a good combination, Mr. McCracken.

Now we are turning to Romans chapter 3 and our subject for this morning is just a clause taken from Job chapter 9, in verse 2, "How should a man be just with God?" In Romans the apostle is challenging human pride with its peacock feathers and he's attempting to show in these earlier paragraphs and sentences man's fatal disease of sin; Original Sin, imputed sin, total sin. As I was saying just the other day one of the reasons that we have congregations of ecclesiastical people who are the nicest, kindest, sweetest people but who have no sense of despair or of gratitude for deliverance from their sins is because they have not come to understand their sinful condition before the Lord God.

Robert Horn who has written a little book on justification has some very healthy words that are apropos here. He says, "Some forms of communication just cannot carry the whole gospel. Some types of message may be very arresting, the speaker is bright

and breezy, has a story a minute, and shows great familiarity with the Almighty. Some styles of music and singing may hold the attention with the throb of the music or the use of the voice. At best they can convey only aspects of the good news. No one can communicate truly about genuine conviction of sin or God is holy or judgment in a slick, bouncy, effervescent manner. Even if what he says or sings is true, he obscures the truth by the impression he creates. The medium belies the message. To paint only the brighter colors is exciting at first but makes the total picture flat and insipid. With no depth of color or contrast, even the bright colors lose their glory, the gospel's splendor disappears."

What we are seeing today in evangelicalism is a living out of this because the kind of preaching of the gospel that we are exposed to is the kind of which Mr. Horn who has written this book, published by the InterVarsity Christian press, speaks about. The historic evangelism had to do with sin and guilt and condemnation and judgment and wrath, eternal wrath. The gospel that is proclaimed in many of our professing Christian churches today is a gospel not of, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Rather, you have been elected and you are saved and now it is your responsibility simply to accept that or to believe it.

The historic evangelism preached to men as if they were lost, but the new kind of evangelism preaches to all men as if they are all saved. But history under the direction of God has a way of rewriting human ideas. And so history is rewriting the doctrine of Original Sin into the uneasy conscience of the human race. Some even showing signs of a self-confidence shaken by the facts and are asking in the words of Zedekiah, "Is there any word from the Lord?"

Now the Bible contains a word from the Lord. It is Habakkuk's word, "The just shall live by faith." It is Paul's word, "The just shall live by faith." It is Augustine's words, "The just shall by faith." And it is Luther's and Calvin's and Wesley's as well. It is the gospel.

Job's problem about which he speaks so movingly in chapter 9 does have a solution. It's true, he says, "How should a man be just before God?" He says,

"If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, he shall also prove me perverse. If I wash myself with snow, and make my hands never so clean; Yet Thou shalt plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me. For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both."

Now Job, and especially as the Bible unfolds, teaches that there is a daysman who lays his hand upon us both. And this daysman is one who has the ability to lay his hand upon God, for he is God. He possesses the divine nature. He is very God, a very God. But at the same time he is very man, a very man and so he can lay his hand upon man. And being able to lay his hand upon God and lay his hand upon man he's able to bring the two into the reconciliation of fellowship.

Now Luther spoke about the doctrine of justification as the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*, or the article of a standing or falling church. And what Luther was attempting to say is simply that the church that preaches the doctrine of justification by faith shall stand. The church that does not preach it shall be a falling church. It's been my prayer ever since the establishment of Believers Chapel that the doctrine of justification by faith shall, until our Lord comes, be preached from this pulpit. And that when I am long gone, if that should happen before the Lord comes, that someone will be raised up to preach the same kind of gospel, the gospel of justification by faith out of a sense of the conviction of the depravity of man and of an atonement that is by God designed for his people to save them.

Now the apostle writes of this justification by faith in the brief section that we have read for our Scripture reading this morning he speaks of the manifestation of that

justification. He describes it and then he lays a great deal of stress upon the intention of God in providing it. And that's what we want to look at. Contained in these verses, verses 24 and 25 concerning, which one of the greatest of the New Testament scholars said is the marrow of theology, verse 24 and 25, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." Others have called this the acropolis of Scripture.

Notice that it begins with the little phrase, "But now." That marks a turn in the argument. The apostle has been talking about sin. And now he is going to talk about the remedy for sin. Back in verse 17 of chapter 1 he had said that the righteousness of God had been revealed. But now he speaks of that righteousness as being manifested. In other words, that which was revealed is now made plainer through the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now the apostle describes this righteousness in its relationships to the law, particularly in verse 21. He says, "But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets."

Now that's an interesting statement, for he says that this righteousness of God, this justification, is something that is manifested apart from law. What he means by that is very simple, of course. It is that a man does not reach heaven by his good works so it is apart from law, apart from a legal righteousness. And yet it is witnessed by the law and the prophets.

But let's think for a moment about this expression, "The righteousness of God, apart from law." Now the Jews and others who read the Scriptures at all were well acquainted with the system that God instituted which we know as the Levitical system. It was designed to be a pedagogical device for Israel to teach them spiritual things. Now we know, for example, that the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin. The New Testament tells us that. But the Bible tells us that God desired that the children of Israel bring the sacrificial animals. At the same time in the psalms we read, "Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire."

So what is the force of this sacrificial system? What was the purpose of it? If he didn't desire it nor require it, why did he command it throughout the Old Testament period? Why did he cut off from fellowship with Israel those who refused to bring the sacrifices? Well the answer to the question lies in the nature and purpose of the sacrificial system.

God did not take pleasure in sacrifices if they were intended to be ways of approaching him for salvation. Now we know that the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sin, but he is the one who instituted the bringing of sacrifices. What was the purpose? Perhaps this can be illustrated by something that has happened in our 20th Century which has made a great deal of impression upon us.

In the field of physical reactions early in the century there was a Russian physicist by the name of Pavlov who made a study of things such as this and is responsible for the expression, "Conditioned reflex." Pavlov in his experiments first took a little puppy, and he took this puppy just when it was born and he began to feed it under special conditions. Every time the dog was given food a bell was rung. Never did the dog have food, month after month, except when the bell was rung.

Now we know that when a dog is in the presence of food its mouth salivates, preparing to receive the food, and its glands excrete the saliva in large quantities to help the dog digest the food. A dog does not salivate unless the food is before him. But Pavlov, after conditioning his little puppy, gathered his students about him after some months of this and he had a bell and as the students gathered round and watched the dog, he rang the bell. There was no food there but he rang the bell and immediately the dog began to salivate, anticipating the food. The dog had never eaten, never tasted food, except upon the sound of the bell, but immediately his glands began to flow.

Now that is an experiment that demonstrated something that's also true in human's life too. There was a certain woman who fainted every time she heard a fire siren. And every time it happened it disturbed her and finally she decided she would go to the

doctor about it. Well, the doctor asked a lot of questions and finally he arrived at the solution to her problem. It happened that sometime before this she had picked up the telephone and she had heard someone tell her that her son was involved in a very serious and critical accident. But just as she picked up the phone a fire siren had been heard and ever since then she had associated the fire siren unconsciously with something that happened to my son.

So when the Lord God wanted to establish a conditioned reflex in Israel, he had them bring offerings. Every day they brought offerings. Then when they sinned they brought offerings. When they sinned, sin, sins they brought offerings. When they sinned trespasses in that way, they brought offerings. Peace offerings were brought, other types of offerings were brought. So just as that little dog thought bell means food, bell means food, and as the woman thought the siren means something's happened to my son, so the sacrifice was designed to prepare Israel for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sin means death, sin means death, sin means the death of a substitute, sin means the death of a substitutionary sacrifice. So when the Lord Jesus Christ comes they would be prepared for his coming.

Now the apostle says, "But now the righteousness of God apart from law is manifested." Here is the reality to which all of these sacrifices had pointed the Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless Paul says it was witnessed in the law and in the prophets. And here he speaks of all the Messianic promises of the Old Testament that pointed forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now he describes this righteousness in the 22nd verse as, "The righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all them that believe: for there is no difference." In other words, there's a righteousness that comes from God, did not come from men, it comes from God, but it is for all who believe, from God for believers. Dr. [unintelligible] was saying, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life." All that text says is

that God loved the believers in Christ and desired that they should not perish. So here this is a righteousness that comes from God and it is for believers. Now he says it is for all believers because all of them have sinned. For all have sinned and are coming short of the glory of God.

In the Bible the standard that God requires of men is the standard of perfection. He's not interested in your religion. The fact that you have religion does not mean that you have acceptance before him. You may be a good Baptist, you may be on the rolls of a Baptist church, you may have attended all of the meetings and even some of those meetings during the week, and still be just as lost as a man who never darkens the door of a church. You may be a good Presbyterian and adhere outwardly to the Westminster Confession of Faith, a great confession of faith, but be lost. You may be an Anglican and hold to the Thirty-Nine Articles and be lost.

It's not religion that makes us acceptable to the Lord God. It's not culture, it's not education, it's not works. God's standard is infinite perfection. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and thy neighbor as thyself." In other words, God requires a perfection of righteousness before we are acceptable to him.

That is his standard. "Thou art have purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity," the Prophet Habakkuk writes, but what about man's state? Why, the Bible teaches that men are sinners. Now that means all men, that means even those religious men are sinners. Let's just for a moment call some witnesses. I know that there are some in this audience who probably deep down within you're kind of like the woman to whom an evangelist was speaking one time and he was trying to convince her of her sin and finally he said, "Well, do you abhor yourself?" And she said, "No, I'm not that bad." But really according to the Bible she was that bad.

Let's just have a little fun, let's just bring some witnesses up on the platform here. Now you'll not be able to see them, they are invisible. They're like those people that see

the preacher and say, "Well preacher, I was with you in spirit on Sunday but not in body. I had some other things to do." One great thing about attenders in spirit is you only need one little seat for them, you can pile them on top of each other [Laughter] because spirits don't take up a whole lot of room in the meetings of the church. I'm not suggesting, incidentally, that you gain approval before the Lord God by being present in a meeting, that's not the point.

But let's take these men. Job, let's take Job, and Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and Peter, and Paul, and let's quiz them and see what they say about their relationship before the Lord God. We'll start with Job. And we'll just say, "Mr. Job, you are from the Land of Oz, is that not right?" "Yes", Job will say. "Were you an upright man?" "Yes I was an upright man." "Job, is it true that you as you, say in your book, delivered the poor that cried and the fatherless and him that had none to help him? And also that you caused the widows heart to sing for joy, and that you were eyes to the blind and the feet to the lame, and a father?" "Yes, all these things were true of me." But did you one day realize the presence of the Lord God, Job?" "Yes I did, I found myself in my presence and I said, 'I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee wherefore I abhor myself and repent and dust in ashes.'" "Did you also say, 'I'm vile,' Job?" "Yes, in his presence, truly I am vile." Alright Job, we'll accept your testimony, "I am vile."

Isaiah we'd like to have a word with you. "Is it true Isaiah that in the year that King Uzziah died that you entered into the temple and you saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up and that you heard the seraphim cry, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.'" "Yes, that's right. I've written it in the 6th chapter of my book, that's when I was really called to the ministry of the word of God. I felt my own unfitness for the divine presence." "What did you say of yourself, Mr. Isaiah?" And he would say, "Well I said, 'Woe is me! For I am undone.'" Job says, "I am vile." Isaiah says, "I am undone."

Jeremiah, let's hear a word from you, "You're the weeping prophet. You're actually a prophet that some even likened to our Lord Jesus Christ when he came. Is it true that you mediated upon the terrible, terrible back-slidings of Israel and the nation's sin against Jehovah? And you identified yourself there with and you said, 'I am black?'" "Yes it's true. With brokenness of spirit I said, 'I am black.'"

"Peter, you first among equals, primus inter pares, among the apostles, Peter, what's your testimony? You were there when the Lord Jesus gave that mighty miracle of the miraculous draft of fishes in the lake, what did you do?" He said, "I fell down in that boat, realizing that the Lord God of Israel was there in that boat with me and I cried out, 'Depart from me for I am a sinful man, oh Lord.' I am sinful."

"And you Paul, you the greatest of the apostles perhaps. Was not your character according to your own words, 'In harmony with the law.'" "Yes," Paul would say, "not only was it in my mind in harmony with the law, I was actually blameless before the law. But when the Lord Jesus Christ appeared in glory, what did you say that you were then?" He said, "By the Holy Spirit this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinner of whom I am chief."

Now listen to these men. Job, "I am vile." Isaiah, "I am undone." Jeremiah, "I am black." Peter, "I am sinful." Paul, "I am the chief of sinners." Now I imagine that there's some people in this audience that rather think that they are pretty good. We'd like to give you just a few moments if you'd like to stand up right now and tell us how you do just a little better than Job, and Jeremiah, and Isaiah, and Peter, and Paul. Would you like to do it? We'd take a few moments out and let you describe to us your righteousness. Here are the great men of the word of God, great men, and they have acknowledged that there is nothing good in them. They are giving us the truth. And they're also asking us to reflect upon our own life deep down within our heart to realize that we are truly full of wickedness. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Horace was one of the greatest of the Latin authors, when I was studying Latin Horace was one of the men that I read. He has a work called *De Arte Poetica* concerning the poetic art. And in it he makes a rather interesting statement. He says, "*Nec duces intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus Inciderit,*" which means a god must not be introduced into the action unless the plot has gotten into such a tangle that only a god could unravel it. Well that's the way the plot is at this point. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God and so now the apostle introduces the work of the God-man into his plot.

He says, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." And here we have a beautiful description of some of the significant facts of justification. Some of the things that we'll be talking about in the few weeks that are ahead of us.

Now before we begin to say anything about these two verses I want to just make a couple of comments concerning two important words. It's important that we understand the meaning of the word justify. This Greek term *dikaioo* means not to be righteous, it does not mean to make righteous, it means to declare righteous. It is a legal term; we've referred to it previously. It means to be declared righteous in this text. When he says being justified freely he means being declared righteous. We are still sinners, but we are declared righteous. That is, by the grace of God we are given a righteous standing even though we are sinners before a holy and righteous God. That is the result of the imputation of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The other word is the word propitiation. That word is a word that means, probably, mercy seat in this case. It's a reference back to the Old Testament where the blood was shed, and where the blood was sprinkled, and particularly where it was sprinkled on the day of atonement when the priest came in once a year and sprinkled the blood of the bullock there and made an atonement for the children of Israel for one more year, the mercy seat. "Whom God hath set forth a mercy seat." To put it in other terms we could say, "Whom God hath set forth a satisfaction." This word means a satisfaction.

Now there's no need for us to apologize for theological words. Men never have understood or appreciated theological words naturally. But there are things that we need to understand if we are to understand the Bible.

Some time ago, I have referred to this previously because one of you not too long ago reminded me of this, but some time ago I read in Christianity Today a little article entitled Unwrap the Word. A man who sought some advice from one of our governmental agencies about using a certain chemical in his business received a letter, but the letter was a negative letter but it was couched in such technical language that he couldn't understand it. So he assumed it was alright to use the chemical and he wrote back thanking the agency for informing him and that he would go ahead and use it. Realizing, when the department saw his letter, that realizing what had happened they wrote back immediately and said just these simple words, "Don't use that chemical, it will rust the hell out of your pipes." [Laughter]. Now he got the message with those simple words but I want to stress the fact that we will not understand the Bible if we do not understand some of these technical words like justification, propitiation.

Now the apostle writes, "Being justified freely," that means without a cause in us all of the cause resting in God, being justified freely. Lenski, the Lutheran commentator, calls this pure, abounding, astounding grace. As we often sing, particularly in our evening meetings, "Awake, my soul, to joyful lays, and sing thy great Redeemer's praise; He justly claims a song from thee - His lovingkindness, O how free!"

Now Paul writes of the method of this justification and we've talked a lot about it, I hope we don't have to spend too much time now. But what he essentially says is that the Father has provided a satisfaction of his holiness and justice through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, which has secured our redemption from bondage. He says, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

That word redemption is a word that means ransoming. It's the language of a slave market and we are looked at as having been in the slave market by reason of our

sin. And the Lord Jesus by virtue of the purchase that he has made of his blood has ransomed us from the slave market. The apostle has used a very intensive word, which Chrysostom was the first to note. And he said that this word the apostle uses is not 'ransoming', lytrois, but apolytrois, which means a 'ransoming away', an intensive word. And the force of it, Chrysostom said and commentators have repeated him down through the centuries, the force of it is to say that, "We were in the slave market of sin but Jesus Christ paid the price, and by virtue of his merits we are ransomed away from the slave market as if to suggest that we shall never again return to it."

Now he says, "Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a satisfaction," the mercy seat. You can see that the apostle places a great deal of stress upon the fact that approach to God is on the basis of blood. There is no keen way of approach to God. We approach God through the blood sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the means of appropriation is set forth plainly all through this passage. It is through faith. What is faith? Well in this context faith is simply to rest in the saving work of Jesus Christ. It's in affect to say, "Lord since you, the Father, rest in what Christ has done, I'll not rest in my church membership, I'll not rest in my good works, I'll not rest in my culture, my education, or whatever it may be. I will simply rest in what you have done. I will take as my hope for all eternity the merits of my representative, the Lord Jesus Christ. I will no longer struggle, I will no longer seek to justify myself before God, but I will rest in what you have done. And when I rest in what Christ has done, I take the same attitude toward Christ that the Father takes." That's faith. Faith is simply to stop trusting in anything else and to trust in what God has provided through the redeeming sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

All of this, of course, had a purpose. We read in verse 25, "To declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past." You see, there would have been a problem for people who read the Scriptures down through the centuries. Four thousand

years the spectacle was presented to mankind, which was a denial of the morality, it appeared, that was taught in the word of God. Because after all, the Old Testament teaches that the wages of sin is death. Not only is that taught in the New Testament, it's taught in the Old Testament. But the Old Testament is one continual, unfolding of the sin of men, and not only the sin of men outside the faith, but the sin of men in the faith. The sin of Abraham, the sin of Isaac, the sin of Jacob as we've been studying, so that we have four thousand years of a continual scandal with the exception of great moments of judgment on the part of God.

It almost seems that God did not punish sin through the Old Testament times. It's almost as if divine righteousness were asleep but finally the Lord Jesus Christ came. And finally he went to the Cross of Calvary and finally there God meted out upon him the penalty for the sins of sinners. And then the question was answered, what of the wages of sin? The wages of sin are death, as one can see from the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

So he says, "For the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God," but further, "to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness." In other words, not only did Jesus Christ die for the sins of sinners under the old covenant as the write of the Epistle to the Hebrews puts it, but he dies for the sins of the sinners under the new covenant as well.

And have you noticed here that it is God who has first place in the cross? It's not so much that Christ came to save us from our sins, as it is that he came to demonstrate the righteousness of God, first of all, in dying under the judgment of sin. And then we are brought in as the beneficiaries of the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And finally he concludes by saying not only did Christ come to demonstrate righteousness for the past, and righteousness for the present, but to make it possible for believers to have righteousness. That he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth of Jesus. Job's problem of the ages is solved. We have a righteous God and a savior. How should a man be just with God? "There is no daysman who can lay his hand

upon us both," Job said. The New Testament tells us in plain language that there is a daysman, the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ, he lays his hand upon God, he lays his hand upon man, he dies for sinners and makes it possible for sinners to be reconciled to God.

The Scriptures say he is light, he executes judgment upon sin. The Scriptures say he is love, and so he provides the remedy himself for his own satisfaction. Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer who was the founder of Dallas Seminary used to love to tell his students about the publican. And he would turn often to Luke and handle that particular chapter in which the publican prayed, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." And Dr. Chafer used to like to point out that the Greek text there, he never knew Greek but he had learned a lot from listening to people who did, and he used to like to say to his students that the term to be merciful is really be propitiated, comes from the same root as this word 'propitiation' here. And he used to like to stress the fact that we should not pray, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner," because he said as far as the cross of Jesus Christ is concerned if there's one thing it teaches it isn't God has been satisfied by the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ. So he used to like to stress to us you don't have to beg God to show mercy to you, you don't have to implore him, wheedle him, plead with him, cajole him, or coax mercy out of him. And you certainly shouldn't pray, "O God, be propitiated to me," when the Lord Jesus Christ has already offered the sacrifice that has propitiated God. He used to say, "God is propitious, he is ready to receive sinners by virtue of what Jesus Christ has done."

When I was in the insurance business in Alabama just after I had been converted I made contact with a Presbyterian minister in the city who was an evangelical man. He still lives in Fort Worth, Texas. He had a ministry then in Birmingham. He is an independent Presbyterian minister in Fort Worth, his name is John Elliott, and his brother was Dr. William Elliott who was the pastor of the Highland Park Presbyterian Church here in Dallas for many years. Well John Elliott was a young man then, and I came into

contact with him shortly after I had been converted. And John he had a very good sense of humor and I used to play golf in golf tournaments around the country, in amateur golf tournaments, and when I began to think about going to theological seminary he asked me, "Well where are you going to seminary?" I said, "Well I'm thinking about going to Dallas Theological Seminary."

And he said, "Well now, if you'll go to our Presbyterian Seminary," and I was a Presbyterian, he said, "If you'll go to our Presbyterian Seminary," incidentally John had taken a few semesters at Dallas Seminary, too. He said, "If you'll go to our Presbyterian Seminary we'll give you two years credit for your golf there." [Laughter] Now he said that with a twinkle in his eye, but what I'm leading up to is that John had Dr. Chafer come for some meetings in his church. And Dr. Chafer was an elderly man then, about seventy years of age, and a small man, a very distinguished looking man. And in the course of the message, which was on Psalm 22, I'll never forget it, he spoke about faith. And he talked about what faith was. And right at the conclusion of his message he was trying to stress that faith is the means by which we receive the salvation of God and is not a work itself.

And he said, "Let's suppose you're walking down the street and you should take your handkerchief out of your pocket but in the course of putting it back in you should not quite put it back in and it should fall upon the ground." And he dropped it on the pulpit of the Highland Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, on the platform, and I was sitting on about the second row, very much interested in what he was going to do, and so he said, "Probably what would happen would be this, that someone walking behind you would reach down and pick it up and take it and tap you on the shoulder and say, 'Sir, you dropped your handkerchief, here it is.'" He said, "Now you'd take the handkerchief and what would you say? Why, you'd say, 'Thank you.'" He said, "Well, that's really what faith is. Faith is the realization that Christ has died for sinners. It's the realization that the

atoning sacrifice has been offered, that the merits of the Lord Jesus are imputed to believers. Faith is to say simply within the heart, thank you Lord."

I do trust in the merits that you have won by your saving sacrifice. And I do not trust in the church, in the ordinances, in my good works, and my education, my culture. Thank you Lord, I trust Christ. That's really what faith is. From that time on we can sing that great hymn, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand. All other ground is sinking stand."

Last night about twelve o'clock, the game doesn't start until three [Laughter], last night about twelve o'clock I was reading a sermon by a great Calvinist, George Whitefield. It was entitled The Lord Our Righteousness. In the course of it he made reference to Mr. Stoddard of North Hampton and New England, and he said these words, "The great Stoddard of North Hampton and New England has therefore well entitled a book which he wrote, and which I would take this opportunity to recommend, *The Safety of Appearing in the Righteousness of Christ*. For why should I lean upon a broken reed when I can have the rock of ages to stand upon that never can be moved?" The Safety of Appearing in the Righteousness of Christ, I recommend it to you.

I recommend it to your children in the audience, for you have a responsibility to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Your family cannot believe for you. Sometimes your family is a means, a stumbling block to you. God calls upon you young people to believe in him. You children believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not wait for your family, believe in him. It may be that a little child shall lead them to faith in him. You young men, and you young women, so beautiful and handsome on the exterior, how is your soul within? How does it look in the sight of the Lord God? You middle aged people who are so filled with concern over the material things, what's your relationship to the Lord God? And I say I word particularly to you who have the grey hairs beginning to appear in you head, for you are only a few steps from eternity. And what a terrible thing

it would be to have heard a sermon in which we have extolled the glories of the Lord Jesus Christ as the means by whom we may be justified before the Lord God, and then to pass into eternity never having believed in him. We call upon you to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. To look within at the state of your own spirit and turn to him. May God bring you face to face with Jesus Christ. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for these wonderful passages from the Epistle to the Romans that set forth so beautifully the ground of our hope for the future. We do not trust in ourselves, we do not trust in human merit. We do not trust in the merit of a church, of ordinances, of good works, culture, education. We trust only in the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we praise Thee that through faith, through the instrumentality of faith, we have had imputed to us the righteousness of God. How wonderful to be in that position, Lord God. And if there should be someone in this audience who has not that glorious position, oh give them no rest until they do have it.

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]