



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Romans 5:12-21

"The Imputation of Adam's Sin"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We turn in our Scripture reading to Romans chapter 5, and in spite of the fact that the message this morning will be devoted to the first verse of this section, I would like to read the entire section, beginning at verse 12 through verse 21, as our reading from the word of God this morning. The apostle writes, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:" That word translated "have sinned here," in the light of the theology of this verse, is much more likely to be correctly rendered just simply "sinned," for all "sinned," the reference being to what happened in the Garden of Eden.

"For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto

justification. For if by one man's offence death reined by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ."

You can see the apostle is drawing an important analogy between Adam and Jesus Christ, affirming that these two men, in their one acts, affect their posterities. One, the physical posterity of Adam, affected by his one act, and the spiritual posterity affected by his one act on the cross.

"Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer removed from audio]

[Message] The topic for this morning in the exposition of Paul's letter to the Romans is "The Imputation of Adam's Sin." One of the sad aspects of modern evangelical church life is the antipathy to theology that seems to be prevalent in many of our churches and institutions. I think one of the most disappointing and discouraging things is the fact that, in many of our Bible colleges and theological seminaries, there are actually members of the faculty who affirm that they do not understand the importance of

theology at all. And in fact, on some of the faculties that I've served, there has actually been a tendency, on the part of some faculty members, to take the position that we should not even have systematic theology at all. And this, on several of the faculties with which I have been associated; it is, I think, one of the really sad aspects of our modern evangelical church life.

Elton Trueblood, who is not known for his strong fundamentalism, has said we hear repeatedly, "The cliché that deeds are everything while beliefs are unimportant;" but he adds, "But this is manifest nonsense. The truth is that belief leads to action, and acting often depends upon believing. We are wise to remind ourselves of what Dr. Johnson said to Boswell on July 14, 1763, apropos of a man who denied the existence of a moral order: If he does really think that there is no distinction between virtue and vice, why Sir, when he leaves our house, let us count our spoons." [Laughter] Well that is very true and very wise because really the things that we believe determine our actions. You can almost be as certain as if you have seen them ahead of time the kinds of actions that people will take if you know what they are thinking in their minds. It is one of the facts of our life that what we believe determines what we do.

About nine years about, in nineteen hundred and seventy-one, I was staying with an attorney in Memphis, Tennessee while participating in a Keswick Conference at the First Evangelical Church of that city. We were having meetings in the morning and then meetings in the evening, and the other man, staying in the home of the attorney, who was participating in the conference, was a man from Scotland, Stanley Collins. And in the mornings we would leave and drive from Mr. Morrow's house, the attorney, to the meetings in the church, and it was just about ten minutes from his home. Well, he gave us the use of one of his automobiles which happened to be a Ford Thunderbird to travel from his house to the meetings.

Well the first morning we walked out and Mr. Collins, I guess, pleading since he was from Scotland, that I ought to be the one driving the car, gave me the keys, and I sat

down in the car, and I looked over the instrument panel, never having driven a Thunderbird. And I, inadvertently, pushed in the emergency foot brake while looking over the instrument panel, and then discovered that I could find no release for the brake. Well we only had about ten minutes to waste, and we both began to look at the panel, look under the panel. I got out of the car and looked underneath the panel, and finally even got out of the automobile, not really thinking that the starter was on the outside, [Laughter] but just wondering what in the world we were going to do. Until finally, I got the brilliant idea, well, let's look at the car manual. And we opened up the little pocket there, and there was a car manual. And we got it out, and we hastily thumbed through the pages to find how to start the car. And then discovered I had forgotten exactly how you release the brake, but it seems to me that I remember that the moment you took it out of park into gear, the brake came off. At any rate we just barely made it.

Well, it so happened that morning at the breakfast table we had had a discussion over theology with George Morrow, the attorney who was an officer in that church. And he had said to me that morning, and to Stanley, "Theology is for you preachers and professors, I'm interested in that which is practical and useful for my daily life." Well, I couldn't wait until Mr. Morrow came home that night to explain to him how important theology was. It was just like that car manual. You could not start that car and run it if you did not know the information that was in that car manual.

Now in Christian things it is impossible for us to live a Christian life that is pleasing to the Lord if we don't know the manual. And the manual is found here before us in the word of God, and it is our manual of theology. Theology is the most important thing in our human existence. One of the great theological words is the word "imputation." Now, "imputation," or the word that is used to translate that idea in the New Testament means "to think," "to count," "to impute," "to reckon," "to regard." It also means "to describe as coming from another." Such as, a candidate for office might say, "This statement was imputed to me, but I disavow it." "To impute" is to ascribe as coming

from another. It means, in theological terms, "to make an effectual grant of righteousness to another on the ground of the mediation of Jesus Christ." So when we say a man is justified, we mean that a grant of righteousness has been given to the believer in Jesus Christ by virtue of the mediatorial work that he accomplished. So to "impute" righteousness is to regard as righteous before the Lord God.

There are three great acts of imputation in the Bible. And if we are to understand the theology of the word of God, we must understand them. One is the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, to us, to all of us. That's the first of the imputations. We are regarded as having sinned in Adam. He is our representative, our federal head. And then the second of the imputations is the imputation of the sin of the people of God to Jesus Christ. He is the representative of God's elect people. That's the second of the imputations. The third of the imputations is the imputation of God's righteousness to those who believe, that is, to his people. So the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, the imputation of the sins of God's people to their representative, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the imputation of God's righteousness to these people who have had their sin imputed to the Lord Jesus Christ for which he died on the cross at Calvary.

The question of the imputation of sin to the human race comes first. And that, of course, is what we have before us. It raises some questions, such as, "Is the doctrine of sin important?" Well, of course, it's important. It not only has to do with our condition and is important because we stand under divine condemnation, but it also is the reason that Jesus Christ came. "His name shall be called Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins." And so, of course, sin is important, and the doctrine of sin, as taught in Scripture, is absolutely fundamental. Well is the human situation today the same as it was in Paul's day? Perhaps they were greater sinners in Paul's day than we are in our day. Well, now anyone who has known anything about ancient life and compared it with modern life would have to agree that the human situation is largely the same as it was in Paul's day. Paul is not dated. He is vindicated every day. The great stress the apostle

places upon sin, and human sin, is borne out by human experience constantly. It's not only taught in the Bible, it's seen about us every day. Just read the newspapers and one sees ample justification for believing that the Scriptures are vindicated in their teaching. Unbelief, pride, materialism abound in our day.

About ten years or so ago, I read a book by Randall Stewart, which was entitled *American Literature and Christian Doctrine*, and he sought, in this book, to show the relationship between the literature of leading American authors and the doctrines taught in the Bible. In the course of it, he described some of the justifications for believing that our age did not fully understand the human situation, and that was reflected in the literature of the time. There was a paragraph in which he had made fun of the TV advertisements of that day. It was back in the sixties that he's talking about, but you'll recognize that it's still true. This one concerned a TV advertisement in which a man drives his car into a quick wash place, rolls up his windows and, while the water pours in around him, plugs in his electric razor and shaves himself. And then as he drives out, he lowers the window, and looks at the camera and sticks out his head, announcing ecstatically to the audience, "It's a wonderful world when a man can have a car wash and a shave all in one minute." And Mr. Stewart said, "Oh brave new world that has such gadgets in it." That is, I think, reflective of the same situation that obtains today. Communism, as we all know, has attributed the evils of our society to capitalism, liberalism, and liberal theology has generally sought to tell us that the trouble with our world today is its unscientific attitudes, and if we had scientific attitudes toward even spiritual things, we would not be in the situation that we are. The Scriptures, however, tell us that man does evil because he is evil.

Reinhold Niebuhr, who died about a decade ago, was a man who was known among liberals as one of them. But at the same time, he had come to see the poverty of liberal thought and had written some very significant literature. In fact, some of his works having to do with human nature and the Kingdom of God in America are very well worth

reading by conservatives, even though he, himself, was a liberal because he had come to understand the nature of the peril that we were in because of our human sin. He said somewhere in a famous statement, which perhaps you've heard before somewhere, that Christian people had begun to put their trust in a God without wrath who brings men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross. That is, I think, a placarding of liberal theology in its poverty.

Now the Apostle Paul has some very important theological words to say to us in Romans chapter 5 and verse 12, and if we can master the content of this 12th verse, I assure you that we will understand a great part of the Bible. This morning after the message at 8:30 someone said to me, and I sympathized with this because there are people who can be very deep and who can be very abstruse, and I classify myself with them from time to time, I think that I'm fairly clear generally speaking, but occasionally I confuse even myself. [Laughter] I listen to myself, incidentally, over the radio at 8:00 for ten minutes or so before I get to the meeting here on Sunday morning, and I find myself say, "Now, did I say that?" [Laughter] I wonder what this preacher means by that particular text, or by that particular sentence. But anyway this is a rather difficult section, and I want to warn you ahead of time if you're already thinking about how the Cowboys are going to do with the Giants, don't worry about it. The Giants will, probably, hardly be able to get eleven men on the field today. So I assure you that they're going to win the game. Just relax now, and try to follow this particular verse which is an important text, in spite of the fact that it is not easy.

Now the connection between verse 12 and the preceding context is indicated by that little word "wherefore," which begins verse 12. In the original text it is literally "on account of this." What Paul means is, simply, "for this cause." That is, since we have salvation by one man, Jesus Christ, which he's explained in the preceding paragraphs, since we have salvation by one man, there exists this likeness between that one man and Jesus Christ in the effects that they have had upon their posterities. Just as Adam the first,

by his act, affected his posterity, so Adam the last, by his great work on the cross at Calvary, has guaranteed the destiny of those whom he represented there. So, "Wherefore," just as we have salvation by one man, there exists, then, a likeness between Christ and Adam. Sin, condemnation and death come by Adam the first, who sinned in the Garden of Eden. Righteousness, justification and life come by the last Adam. So the master thought of this paragraph is that the unity of the many in the one, the unity of the many in Adam, the unity of the many in Christ. That's the background of the section. If we can keep that in our minds, like the thread that one used to take in the catacombs in order to find ones way out, we will be able to find our way down through the passage understanding its primary points.

The apostle says, as he talks about the origination of human sin and death, "Wherefore, as by one man." Now he refers back to the Garden of Eden and the probation which God imposed upon Adam and Eve in those opening chapters of the Book of Genesis, describing how after the creation, God created the man and the woman, and he placed them in the garden. Now he gave them a very simple test. It is recorded for us in Genesis chapter 2 verse 16 and verse 17. There, after creating them and giving them the garden, he took them. He put them in the Garden of Eden in order that they should till it and keep it. They were to work. He then commanded the man saying, notice, he commanded the man, and he said, now Adam "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."

Notice, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it; because in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die," now, isn't that an interesting thing? This tree, we don't know what kind it was, whether it was an apple tree, or a pear tree, or an orange, we just don't know. The Bible doesn't tell us. That's insignificant. We also notice that it was not really an evil act morally to eat of the tree. This tree is a test of man's creature-hood. It's a test

of his dependence upon God. Ultimately, it's a test. Will Adam believe the word of God? For sin is, ultimately, unbelief. It issues in immorality, but it is, essentially, unbelief. So the question is, "Adam will you obey the word of God?" It was a test of his creaturehood. And then, ultimately, a test of his faith in the word of God. It was not the sex act. It was not wine. It was not any of the other things that have been suggested. Well, you also notice that God gave them, or allowed them, a maximum and forbade them a minimum. He said of every tree, you may freely eat, but of one tree, you cannot.

Who taught children to sin? Do you know that if my child was in the company of your child when they were just little children and my child had forty-three toys: an automobile, four or five airplanes, buckets, shovels, etcetera, and your child had one, my child would not be happy until he had your child's toy also. Now, who taught children to be like that? Well that's exactly the way Adam was. He acted like a child. He had every tree in the whole of the garden to eat and feed upon, but there was one tree he didn't have, and he said, "I must have that." So, when you see your little children playing with other children and, forgetting their toys, reach out to get the toys that belong to others, you can just think, "Well he belongs to the human race alright." He's one of us because he acts exactly as his father did in the Garden of Eden. "By one man," so the test was a test that was posed to this one man, Adam.

Now the Bible, of course, tells us how he failed. Incidentally, Adam failed long before he ate of the fruit of the tree. Just as the Lord Jesus said when a man looks upon a woman to lust after her, he has committed adultery. So Adam sinned before he took the fruit. He inclined toward evil. He had volition toward evil, and then he actually took the fruit. But the inclination to evil was the origination of sin, followed by the volition and then the action. The action was just the consequences of the inclination and the volition. One could learn, if he just looked at those things, the nature of human sin. One could even anticipate our Lord's description of the true meaning of the law by analyzing what

happened in the Garden of Eden. Adam sinned long before he ate of the fruit, but he carried it out. There was an inclination, volition and an action. And he took of the fruit.

Now it is also striking, if you'll remember, that when Eve took of the fruit of the tree, nothing happened. This is not a chapter for feminists. Nothing happened, but when Adam took of that fruit, then if I may use a popular expression, "All hell broke loose," and somewhat literally because you see Adam was the federal head. It's not that Eve's act was not an act of sin or that she did not have a part in Adam's sinning. She certainly did. She, too, fell. But the important person was Adam. For when Adam sinned, the representative sinned, and when the representative sinned, sin entered the human race. Now it existed previously. The serpent had come into the Garden of Eden with sin and a sinful act, sinful attitudes. So when we read here, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world," that's not a text that has to do with the origin of sin. It's a text that has to do with the origin of sin in the human race. Sin had existed in the angelic sphere, evidently, long before that time.

Now Paul not only says, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world," but he says, "And death by sin," so that death is the result of sin. There are some modern theologians who do not like this doctrine, do not like that theology. And so, they say that it was built into the human race when they were created that his body should die. No, no, the Bible says sin entered through Adam and also death by sin. In other words, every time you read the obituary column in the newspaper, you should think of Genesis chapter 3. That's why we have obituary columns. That's why people die. They die because of what happened in the Garden of Eden.

Now I know that some of you are going to say, "Well some die because of what the doctors did to them." Well that's true, that's true also. Doctors will be the first to grant that. Now those facts are buried in the records of the hospital, but nevertheless, they do happen. But really the death would have occurred eventually anyway. It just so happens they don't have quite as long her on the earth as some others. There are some

secondary causes that might be responsible for death, but, ultimately, the death of men goes back to what happened in the Garden of Eden.

Now when Adam died, it's customary and popular for people to say that there are three kinds of death. There is spiritual death, physical death and eternal death. But really there is only one penalty for sin, and that's spiritual death. But spiritual death has certain consequences. Now God said Adam on the day that you eat of that fruit you will die. Well now if you had been there in the garden and had a camera on Adam, and you saw him reach out and take of the fruit, and you saw him eat it, you would not have noticed anything different. Well his face might have flushed a little bit, he might of said, "You know this is pretty good," or something else may have happened. But he was just the same person physically afterwards as before apparently, but he had died. God said he died. "In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die." It is clear he didn't die physically, so, he must have died spiritually.

But then God, as he pronounces judgment upon the serpent and the woman and the man because of what happened says to Adam, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Even in the very act of his creation, when God took of the dust of the ground and breathed into it the breath of life, *n'shamah chayyim*, even in that, there was an indication of the fact that it was possible for the man to die. So, he was made out of dust so that he is of us, but he also is given breath of life from God so that in man there is an aspect of his nature that has to do with this world about us. And there is an aspect of his being that has to do with God. He is created in the image of God and given breath of life, or spirit, something that the animals do not have. But the text says, later in judgment, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." So the spiritual death that Adam died the moment that he took of the fruit is lived out, ultimately, to physical death, and after hundreds of years, for Adam lived to be many hundreds of years old, Adam was placed in a grave.

Now in the mean time, of course, he had believed in Jesus Christ. It appears from the reading of the Book of Genesis that an announcement of the redeemer was given to him in at least a symbolic form, and Adam responded to the revelation that God gave. So, Adam died spiritually, and he died physically. But the eternal death was something Adam didn't experience because he believed in the word of God, and God reckoned to him righteousness by clothing him in coats of skin. It was all a picture of the redemption that we have through Jesus Christ. But now if a person, having died spiritually, and we are born this way now because we're all Adam's children, lives his life out and does not come to faith in the redeemer then that physical death which follows is simply a moment in his experience. And the spiritual death, which he has lived in, is prolonged throughout eternity. So, we have three aspects to death. It's much better, I think, to put it that way. The penalty for sin is one. It is death. Spiritual death which issues in physical death and if there is no response to the Revelation of God, prolongation throughout the ages of eternity, or eternal death, also said in the New Testament to be the lake of fire.

So sin entered into the world and death by sin. The remedy for spiritual death is eternal life, or spiritual life. The remedy of physical death is the resurrection of the body. That's why that's important in Christian theology. And as for the remedy of eternal death, there is no remedy for eternal death. Purgatory is no remedy for eternal death. Eternal death is, by its own definition, eternal death.

Now the apostle doesn't stop with that. He goes on to say, "And so death passed upon all men." So after having talked of the entrance of sin into Adam, he talks about how this sin and death has penetrated all men, so, "Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," death. Now this is probably physical death, primarily, in the context here, but it is inseparable from spiritual death which is the cause of physical death. And he says, "Passed upon all men." In other words, the universal diffusion of sin and death in the human race is set forth by the Apostle Paul. Oh the awful power of the act of that one man, Adam, to turn this whole human race into one vast cemetery, for that is what

we have. Human life is like one vast cemetery. All men have sinned in Adam, and death has come to them.

Now I know that people react to this. They don't really like this. They don't like the idea that the act of the one man should affect them in that way. But nevertheless, that's the teaching of the word of God. We are not responsible, as preachers of the Scriptures, to change the word of God because some little insignificant individual in the pew doesn't like the teaching. As a minister of the word of God, we are responsible to give exactly what the Scriptures say. We don't originate truth. I don't originate truth. I only hope that I reflect accurately what is written in the word of God. And if you quarrel with me if I have given what the Bible says, you're really quarreling with the Lord God. So the responsibility rests upon the individual to respond to the Lord God.

Now throughout the Bible the principle of collective judgment because of the sins of individuals is taught. It's all through the Bible, for example, just to take one example, "I the Lord your God am a jealous God visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations." We even have it in our society. Edward the eighth may decline to become the king of England, and all of his posterity, if he had had posterity, would have been affected by that act. Or in our society in other ways, here is a man who has managed to make a fortune, and he passes it on to a son. And the son has inherited a fortune, but through foolishness in his investments and his handling of the money, he's lost all of the money that came to him. His children don't have a right in law to seek to have that money returned to them. The father's actions affect the son's. It's part of our society. It is part of man and his experience as God has created him. So death passed upon all men. All men do die. All men are sinners. All men do die.

Now there are some religious organizations that tell us that sin is an error of the mortal mind, and that death does not really exist. I have a friend who is a Bible teacher. He visited the Christian Science building at World's Fair asking to speak to Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science. "She's not here," was the answer. Well, she was

really dead, of course. He knew that. This was an evangelical preacher. He wanted to have a little time of witnessing. And so, he went in that particular place in order to have some fun. He wanted to talk about these things. You know some evangelical preachers do have a good sense of humor. And so, he went in, and he said he wanted to speak to Mary Baker Eddy. "She's not here," was the answer. And so, he said, "Well, when can I see her?" And they said, "Well she won't be here later." He said, "Well I'd like to write to her." And they said, "Well, she doesn't have a mailing address." And he said, "Can I telephone her?" "No you can't reach her by telephone." Finally, the attendant blurted out, "She's dead." And my Bible teacher friend said, "You bet she is." [Laughter]

So, when he told that to another Bible teaching friend of his, a man by the name of John Phillips. And John was a Bible teacher and was speaking at the Moody Bible Institute, not long after that, and he thought he would tell the story about how Mr. Tatham [phonetic] had gone in to the booth at the world's fair. He told it to the students of Moody Bible Institute and that afternoon, he happened to be on the elevator in the Moody Bible Institute, and one of the students got on. And he looked up, and he saw Mr. Phillips, and he said, "You know what I did this afternoon Mr. Phillips?" And he said, "No." And he said, "Well, I visited the Christian Science reading room, and I asked to speak to Mary Baker Eddy. And do you know what they said?" And John Phillips said, "No, I don't." He said, "You've got to be kidding?" [Laughter] Well the Bible does tell us that sin was universally diffused among men by the act of Adam. Sin entered into the world and death by sin. So death passed upon all men.

Now the final clause is probably the most significant of the clauses in so far as difficulty is concerned because those simple words, "Because all have sinned," or "For all have sinned," have been understood in several different ways. This is a major theological battleground. The question is, "How have all sinned, in what way have all sinned?" How can you explain Paul's words? Now there are different explanations, and I suggest that you read the material that I have put in the Believers Bible Bulletin because it's in a little

more detail than I will give you here right now. There are Pelagians, that is those who believe that individuals can be saved by their own works or else can be saved by the act of their own free will, which is of the same nature, ultimately, Pelagians say that the reason Paul writes, "For all have sinned," or "For all sinned," is because he's referring to personal sins. And these personal sins are the products of our free will. That is, our free will acting in particular situations responds negatively to God, and that's why we sin.

Now, I'd like to ask a question or two. If you really believe that men are referred to here, "For all have sinned," or referred to in the sense that all have committed acts of sin which have proceeded from their free will, if our will is truly free, then, of course, it is a contingent will. That is, it's not necessitated that that will should sin. It's not something that is predictable. It's something that is, by nature, by its definition, unpredictable. So if you talk about free will, you are saying, in effect, that they could have made a decision either way. It's a contingent will. That's the view. Personal sins are the result of free will, acting contingently, or a contingent free will. But now, I ask you, why are the results always the same? Why is it that everybody, who has a free will, according to this view, has always sinned? Why is it? If the sin is not necessitated, if it's contingent, if it's unpredictable, by definition, why is it that everybody has sinned? Not only that, some have said, "Well it's because we have bad examples. Well, Adam gave us a bad example." So everybody else has been following bad examples, and that explains how everybody sins of their own free will. Well it is true. Adam didn't give us a very good example, but then why did not Jesus Christ sin?

You know if you went out to Las Vegas, now I don't handle the dice anymore [Laughter], but when I was in college and I was a member of a fraternity, and I lived the kind of life that, before I was converted, that unconverted fraternity members live. And it was not uncommon for us to get hold of the dice and to play a little craps. Now, you know if you took the dice in your hand, and you were running a game, say at Las Vegas, you went out there, and you wanted to try the tables, and so, if as those dice were rolled,

if they just kept coming up snake eyes, you wouldn't say, "Well, now it's just a contingent pair of dice. It just so happens, it's coming up snake eyes every time." Every gambler, anybody with any commonsense would know that those dice were loaded. You wouldn't stand for that very long at all.

Now why is it that we can believe that there are individuals who actually believe that men have free will but everybody has always, predictably, sinned? Well, of course, the fact is we don't have free will. That explains it all. That explains why the dice keep coming up the same way. They're loaded. The facts are we don't have free will. We are fallen men, and consequently, our nature is evil, and therefore when moral decisions face us, we always go negative. It's because of our nature. That's why we do. Just take a look at your own actions. You'll know that. The Pelagians cannot be right. Paul does not say that sin is entered into the world and death by sin, so death passed upon all men because all have sinned in their actions. Yes, of course, they have, but that's not what Paul means. Those actions of sin, which we all sin, are the product of something anterior to that. We have a sin nature that is given to us all as we are born.

Now others have explained this as Realistic Union. That is, when we read, "For all have sinned," what is meant is that there is a genealogical and biological connection with Adam. We were in Adam seminally. That is, everybody is a physical descendent of Adam. And so, when Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden everybody sinned. We are co-sinners with Adam. Now there is an element of truth in this because we are co-sinners with Adam. All did sin in the sin of the one man. That is true.

But now the Bible, here in Paul's literature, draws an analogy between justification and condemnation. When we turn over and discover how we are justified, it is not because we are in Christ physically that we are justified. It's because we are reckoned legally to stand in him as our representative. If we say that we have sinned because we are in Adam physically, but we are justified because we are in the last Adam in a covenantal representative way, the analogy is broken. Furthermore, the apostle in verse

14 says, "Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." Now Realistic Union has no place for a different modus of sinning. If everybody has sinned in Adam genealogically and biologically, you cannot say that there are any who have not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression. Everybody has sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression. So that text over throws that doctrine, although there is a lot of truth in it.

Furthermore, someone might say, "Wait a minute, you mean I sinned in Adam, thousands of years ago? I wasn't even a person then." So how can a non-entity act? No that's not what Paul is talking about. It is obvious, people who have suggested that, have been trying to get away from the fact that people criticize the biblical doctrine by saying how can we be responsible for an act done by others? We are shut up to believe that just as the Lord Jesus Christ was our federal head, our representative, so Adam was our federal head. And the explanation of that last clause is that all men have sinned by immediate federal imputation of Adam's sin to every member of the human race. We stood our probation in our natural. He was our biological head, our natural covenantal representative. His act is deemed our act because he acted for us.

Now we know that Adam acted for us as a head because the promises that God gave him were promises for the race, and the proof of that is that the threats that God laid down as he gave Adam his probation in the garden are threats that have been carried out against all of us. The Bible says, "In the day, Adam, that you eat of it, you shall surely die." But as the Scriptures unfold, it becomes obvious that the whole race is involved in Adam's sin because we all die. We can't come to the Lord and say, "Well wait a minute, in Genesis chapter 2 you said that only Adam should die. You didn't say that we should die. So why do I die?" We cannot say that. We do die. So we are responsible to face the consequences of the facts. We do die, thus the threats that were given by God to Adam are threats that are directed to him and to his posterity. He was our representative. Oh, maybe we don't understand everything about it, that's inconsequential. This is God's

will, and we are responsible to bow down before his will. You can be sure of this, that what God wills is right. And if we do not understand it yet, I think I do understand it, I like this method, but if we do not, we still are responsible to bow down before the Lord God who has made Adam our federal head because, by virtue of that, we may have another federal head who is the redeemer, and if we stand in him, we shall have the righteousness of God.

Now people object to this method of dealing with men, but I like it. I wish I had time to argue that there are about four ways in which God could have dealt with men, but this is the best way of all. It's the most benevolent way that he could have dealt with men. Let me ask you a question. Don't worry about the game. I've already told you how it's going to come out. Let me ask you this question. Do you think that you would have done better than Adam? Do you think that if you stood for your own sin as an individual, and incidentally you stood without any course of redemption, because that's the way the angels stood their probation, they don't have redeemers, would you like that method? I wouldn't because I know I would fail. I'd fail long before Adam. First place, I wouldn't have the incentive that Adam had because he knew that the whole destiny of the race rested upon him. He had the greatest incentive to respond positively to the word of God. I wouldn't. You wouldn't.

So the Bible teaches that we are condemned through no fault of our own individually, but we are also justified through Jesus Christ through no merit of our own. And we may be saved by virtue of what Christ has done. I know people say it's not right that something Adam has done should affect my eternal lot. Well it doesn't affect your eternal lot. You have now heard the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. It affects the fact that you're a sinner, but that's what you are. You can't change that. You are. You're sitting there right now, you look like sinners. [Laughter] You are sinners. I look like a sinner. That's what we look like. We all are sinners. But, you have the privilege of believing in the second representative head, the Lord Jesus Christ and receiving

everlasting life as a free gift of God. So what Adam has done has not affected your eternal lot. It affects your present lot but not your eternal lot. The other side is true also. You know when the father strikes oil, and the children get rich. And we have hit a gusher in the last Adam, Jesus Christ, through whom we may have eternal life.

May God help you to come to be in Christ, by virtue of the saving work he's accomplished and the convicting ministry and efficacious grace of the Holy Spirit. You know in this text, it says in verse 8, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Notice that verb, "commendeth," what a majestic present tense that is because that is what he is saying right now. He commends his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

James Denney used to like to say, "I don't believe that the Christian religion, let alone the Christian church, can live unless we can be sure of three things: a real being of God in Christ, the atoning death, and the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ was not, in a real sense, God manifest in the flesh, God wearing the homespun of our human nature, but only one more fallible man, like ourselves, guessing and groping after God, we'd better erase the word gospel from our vocabulary and close our churches." "We are no better," some other New Testament scholar has said, "Than the Unitarian preacher who went to Aberdeen, and for three days and three nights, sought to win converts from the down and outs. And finally, on the third evening, a fallen woman out of the crowd bluntly told him he had better pack up and go home. She said, 'Your rope is not long enough for the likes of me.' "

We have a rope that is long enough for sinners in the blood that was shed on Calvary's cross. We invite you to come to Christ. Put your trust in him. Receive everlasting life, as a free gift, through the second man and the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ. May God help you to come. Let's stand for the benediction.

“The Imputation of Adam’s Sin” by S. Lewis Johnson
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[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for the wonderful way in which Thou hast dealt with men. We would not change one iota of it. An all wise and an all merciful and an all loving God has surely done that which is best. Thus, as it seemed good in Thy sight, oh Father, if there are...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]