



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Romans 1:18-23

"All Mankind on Death Row"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Now the Scripture reading for this morning, in our continued exposition of the Epistle to the Romans, is Romans chapter 1, verse 18 through verse 23. And those of you who've been able to obtain one of the Believers Bible bulletins know that the subject for this morning is, "All Mankind on Death Row." Let's read, beginning with verse 18. You follow along in your Bible as I read from the Authorized Version,

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: (I think I make reference in the studies to the fact that the word translated Godhead here, the Greek word "theios" is better rendered "Godhood." For it is not an attempt on the part of Paul to suggest that we may look at the natural creation about us and come to an understanding of the Trinity, of the fact that our God is one God who subsists in three persons. The word really means something like deity or divinity in

the sense of deity so, his eternal power and deity or Godhood so that they are without excuse.) Because when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things."

May God bless this reading of his word.

[Prayer removed from audio]

[Message] This is the third in our series of studies in the Epistle to the Romans and our subject this morning is, "All Mankind on Death Row." Some messages are very pleasant, others are very unpleasant, yet both may be necessary. Donald Grey Barnhouse, who was very instrumental in bringing me to the Lord as I've often reminded you, in one of his books on Romans illustrates the necessity of speaking the truth by supposing a young boy going to Western Union and asking for a job. And, just as in the old days, when their principal job was to deliver telegrams, he is told that he can start immediately. The boy, however, says to the one employing him that there is one thing that he needs to be warned about and that is that he is psychologically so constituted that he cannot stand any scene of unhappiness. And so, therefore, he said that he would deliver all telegrams that tell of fortunes being made, of congratulations for success, of acceptance in marriage. In short, all the telegrams that are of joy and happiness, but the telegrams that have to do with sickness, and death, and loss, are alien to his disposition and constitution and he cannot deliver them. Well, it wouldn't take the manager long, Dr. Barnhouse said, to tell the young man that there was no place for him in Western Union.

Now there is a sense in which that does illustrate the truths of the word of God because some of the messages of the Bible are not very pleasant. Some are very pleasant. It is the habit of many who preach the word of God to select those that are very pleasant and preach them and avoid those that are unpleasant. But, the messages of God are to be preached whether they are pleasant or unpleasant, for sometimes it is the unpleasant message that makes it possible for us to receive the pleasant one.

We even have human expressions. We say, "Sometimes you have to be cruel in order to be kind." And so, God occasionally must be cruel in order to be kind and that is the essence of what is happening here in the opening chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. By proclaiming the sin of man, the Gentiles and the Jews, the Apostle Paul is being very cruel in order that man's heart might be open to the kindness of God through the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This passage, no doubt, was very difficult for Paul to deliver, but it contains a very perceptive analysis of human nature. The apostle told the Ephesian elders that he had not shun to declare unto them that which was profitable for them. And one might ask, "Well, I wonder what Paul thought was profitable?" And then later on, he says, he's not avoided or shunned preaching to them all the counsel of God. So it becomes evident that for Paul, in Paul's mind, what is profitable for the men of his day was the whole counsel of God, just not that part of it which is pleasant.

Now Romans 1, and 2, and 3, to chapter 3, verse 21, is not very pleasant so far as a message is concerned. Because it is a passage that gives us an analysis of human nature and human nature is not good in its state since the fall. Walter Luthi, who was one of the reform preachers in the city of Berne, in one of his books has commented upon this particular chapter and has said that, "it gives us the whole truth about our condition" and it really does do that.

It is important for us because it is the passage that contains an answer to the perennial question, "Are the heathen lost?" And the apostle answers it very directly for he

says of all men that they are without excuse. It is a passage, also, that illustrates a very important principle that we'll talk about a little bit later on. And that is that perversion in life stems from perversion in faith and that's why the faith is so important for us. That's expressed in verse 18 and again in other places throughout this passage.

Among theologians who study this passage, Romans chapter 1, verse 18 through verse 23, is known as the classic passage on natural theology. That is, the things that we can know by looking at nature as God created it, and, Paul has a very important word to say concerning that here. He begins by speaking of the wrath of God as being revealed from heaven upon all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men who are holding down the truth in unrighteousness.

Now remember in the opening verses of this chapter, the apostle has given a salutation and then he has spoken to the Christians in the city of Rome seeking to explain to them why he has not visited them. After all, he said that he was "Ethnon Apostolos" or an "Apostle to the Gentiles." And since he was an apostle to the Gentiles, it would have been natural for the Romans who lived in the greatest Gentile city of Paul's day, to wonder why the apostle, if he were the apostle of the Gentiles, had not visited them.

So Paul answers them by saying, "Many times I purposed to come to you, but I was hindered in doing it because I wanted to come to you and have some fruit among you and impart some spiritual blessing to you. I'm not ashamed to preach in Rome (he said). Don't you think it's because I'm ashamed. Because I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ and I'm not ashamed of it because it's the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. And, furthermore, it's the power of God unto salvation because in it there is revealed a righteousness of God from faith to faith just as it stands written in the Old Testament (my doctrine is orthodox), the just shall live by faith."

Now we, in our last study, stressed some of the important words of verses 16 and 17, which are really the theme of the Epistle to the Romans. Said by some to be also the

theme of all Pauline theology and still others to be the theme of the Bible, "The just shall live by faith." One might ask, "Why is it so urgent to preach the gospel?" and Paul answers that question here. He says, "The sin of man and the wrath of God make it necessary for me to be urgently proclaiming the gospel. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men."

You know when you visit a doctor's office, the first thing the doctor must do, if he does not have any other information about you, is to take a kind of case history of you and he asks you all kinds of personal questions about the things that are troubling you. Some of the questions seem rather foolish and unnecessary to us, but they are very important for the doctor, because he must have a case history before he can diagnose your situation properly. And then after he has his case history and makes his diagnosis, then he will offer a remedy or at least one that is a possibility of being a remedy.

Now the apostle is giving us a kind of case history here and he's going over human nature, so to speak, of the Gentiles and the Jews. And he will make a diagnosis in chapter 3 and then he will begin to unfold the remedy in the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now this begins in verse 18 with what Melancthon, the theologian of the Luther Reformation called "an exordium terrible as lightning". The prophet Hosea speaks about the judgments of God going forth as light and that surely is the spirit of Paul's words here in Romans chapter 1. He says, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men."

Now that's a very repugnant statement, repugnant to modern man. He doesn't like to think of God as a God of wrath. In fact, he likes to, if he possibly can, to associate the exposition of the Bible in the spirit of a God of wrath with hell, fire, and damnation fundamentalist preachers, which, of course, we are not to pay any attention to. Very repugnant to modern man for us to be told that we stand under the wrath and judgment of God and that the God, the true God, the only God, is a God of wrath, a God of vengeance.

Now this is Jesus Christ's doctrine uniquely because the Lord Jesus is the one who speaks more of hell than anyone else in the Bible. But the apostles followed in the steps of our Lord and they spoke about the wrath of God and the God that they knew was a God of love, and a God of wrath, and they did not neglect that darker side of the nature of God. This is not Paul's way of speaking of vindictive rage. It's not that God is vindictive. No, this is something else.

Nor is it emotional reaction to an irritated self concern as if God is very selfish and he is irritated by the fact that in his kingdom there are individuals who are living contrary to his will and disturbing him. He's not emotionally reacting to that when through the apostle he says, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." No, this is the antagonism of holy love to evil and we will not understand the Bible if we do not understand that God hates sin and, furthermore, God hates the workers of iniquity.

We have often heard Bible teachers say that God loves the individual and hates his sin. The Bible does not say that. The Bible says that God hates the workers of iniquity. He hates sin and he hates sinners and we must be fair with the word of God. That is what it says. And this side of the nature of God is important for us to learn because we will not be saved until we have come to the conviction that we are lost. We will not desire to be delivered from hell until we have become convinced that we are on the way to hell. And so, Paul, speaking out of love for the elect saints of God and the desire to win them, speaks of the terrible, perilous condition in which they are before they are converted. So this is the antagonism of holy love to evil. God hates evil and he hates the workers of iniquity for he is a holy God. One of the signs of sanctification in believers is when they, too, come to the place where they hate sin.

Now there are Christians, of course, who turn to legalism and their hatred of sin appears to be more manifested as a kind of disagreeable legalism. That's not what we are talking about. We're not talking about hating certain particular actions or erecting a

system of taboos and identifying that with hatred of evil. We are talking about antagonism of holy love to evil and we're talking also about the hatred of that which is contrary to the word of God.

Now this is something Paul says that is a fact that is revealed from heaven and you can see it in society. The rest of the chapter, incidentally, is the issue of this wrath of God and what Paul will say is the kind of life that one sees about us is an evidence of the infliction of the wrath of God upon humanity. We'll talk more about that next week, the Lord willing. But, notice the objects of this wrath, he says, "It is against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men."

Now let's stop for a moment and notice those two words, those two nouns, ungodliness and unrighteousness. Now ungodliness is a religious word and it is, therefore, a word that speaks against idolatry and in the latter part of the chapter, Paul will speak of the idolatry of men. So ungodliness is acting contrary to God and that which becomes the concern of a soul is that which is his idol. Later in one of the other epistles, Paul will speak about covetousness and define it "which is idolatry." So anything that is the ultimate concern of an individual is an idol for him for God is the one who should be our ultimate concern.

If, for example, our ultimate concern is our financial condition that is our idol. That's what Paul means when he says "covetousness" which is idolatry. If our ultimate concern is to be accepted by the people about us, that is our idol. If our ultimate concern is to be successful in our business, that is our idol. If our ultimate concern is that our children are brought in a certain way, that is our idol. Anything that is our ultimate concern has taken the place of God who is the ultimate concern properly of all of us.

Now Paul also speaks of unrighteousness and that is a word that is moral in force and it is seen in immorality, but notice the order. It is not unrighteousness and ungodliness, but it is ungodliness and unrighteousness, for it is ungodliness that leads to unrighteousness. When God gave the Ten Commandments, the first table of the law was

directed toward God. The second table of the law was directed toward man, and the proper order is always God then men. And so, we have ungodliness, unrighteousness, or doctrine and life. That's why we preach Biblical doctrine. We don't have to emphasize that any more, I'm sure, but we preach biblical doctrine because a certain kind of life issues from a certain kind of doctrine. So it's against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

The world likes to think that the priorities should be placed upon morality. Now that is an insult to God because if morality is the ultimate priority, then God becomes a means to an end, and thus, he is not really the sovereign. He's not really the ultimate object of our worship. But, it's also an insult to men to think that morality is the thing that should be prior with us, because morality is only interested in a person's actions not in the person himself. And so, consequently, if we should have a doctrine in which priority is attached to morality, we have insulted both God and man. The Bible does not look at things that way. So Paul says, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness (first) and unrighteousness of men who are suppressing."

This word in the Greek may be translated "to hold" in the sense of "to believe a doctrine", holding truth in unrighteousness or it may mean to hold in the sense of hold down or suppress. It's not an easy decision to make exegetically, but I think that in the light of the context, it is better to take this to mean suppress. They are suppressing the truth in unrighteousness. That is, there is certain truth that they know, but in unrighteousness man suppresses that truth, which is deep down within his heart.

Now Paul explains, he says in verse 19, "Because." Now this little "because" connects this verse with something said previously and most likely the last clause of verse 18, "Who are suppressing the truth in unrighteousness because that which is known of God is manifest in them for God hath showed it to them." Now the Authorized Version, from which I am preaching in this series, says, "That which may be known of God is manifest in them." But, this word translated "may be known" is better rendered simply

that which is known. "That which is known of God is manifest in them for God hath shown it to them."

Now there are some things that are known of God and Paul speaks of those things that are known of God here. There are some things that he reveals to us and there are some things that he hides from us. We do that as well. We hide ourselves from others to some extent. We reveal ourselves to others to some extent. Some people hide most of themselves to others. Some people reveal most of themselves to others. Some people we say are very open. Some are not open. That's the sovereign right of an individual. We don't have the right to go to someone and say, "Look, you've got to reveal more of yourself to us." That is his sovereign right. It is God's sovereign right to reveal as much of himself to us as he desires.

Now we know that he has revealed certain things to us. He speaks about them here, his eternal power and his divinity has been revealed to all men. To the saints he reveals more of himself, but even to the saints, he does not reveal everything. The Bible says, "The secret things belong unto the Lord. The things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children."

Now this relationship that God has to us then is in different degrees. When we are lost, he reveals certain things to us. When we have come to be saved, he reveals a certain great amount of other things and then there are some things that will be revealed to us when we get to heaven, and some things that we probably will never know, for he is an infinite God. It's like getting married. There are some things that she reveals to you, you men, before you're married. There are some things that are revealed to you after you're married and there are some things that are a puzzle from that time on [Laughter]. There are certain little things that appear down through the years and you will still be saying, "I just do not understand you" or "I just did not understand you." That is something that goes on because the individual sovereignly reveals more and more of oneself to others.

Now the Bible says that God has revealed certain things to us. Paul says they are his eternal power and divinity. Bacon commented a long time ago that the Bible said, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God; not has not thought in his heart." In other words, he laid stress upon the fact that the Bible said, "a fool hath said" not has thought for the simple reason, in Bacon's mind, that everybody knows that there is a God deep down within. There are no atheists. Even the man who says he is an atheist has to use the term God to express his view. Where did he get the idea of a god to start with? So the Bible says that all men do know that God exists. Now they may suppress that truth, but they know it.

Now, furthermore, the Bible explains that this is because we have been created in the image of God. Now it's true that the fall has taken place and that image is marred. And, therefore, the image does not have for us the same light that it would have had for Adam in the Garden of Eden. The fall has marred the image of God and man and it is the work of the Holy Spirit to restore the image of God. That's what Paul says. But, the image of God still persists in man and there are certain things that everyone knows simply because he is a human being and one of them is that God exists.

Now Paul says in verse 20, "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and divinity; so that they are without excuse." Isn't it a striking thing that man outside of the Christian Church speaks of God as the Supreme Being? That's a rather interesting thing to me because in that expression "Supreme Being" we have almost exactly what Paul is talking about here in verse 20 for, he says, "All men know his, (if they look at nature, they know his) eternal power. They know he is the omnipotent being. They know he is a Supreme Being." And, furthermore, they know his Godhood.

Now this does not mean, I pointed out in the Scripture reading, that we can see in the creation the fact that our God is one God who subsists in three persons. We do not see the Trinity in nature. Now there are some, some of our Christian scientists who insist

that written into the nature of the created world about us is a remarkable number of trinities. And that may well be true, but one does not ordinarily see them. But Supreme Being captures almost exactly what Paul is saying and even the world speaks of our God as the Supreme Being. And in that confesses the fact that they have the understanding of God that Paul speaks about here.

Our world is just simply a speck of dust in the created world that God made in the beginning. And even the smallest things in his universe are beyond our perception, but we know they exist. So we can look either at the infinitesimally small things that we do not see, but we know exist, to the vast galaxies of space that is almost infinite. Not infinite, but almost infinite, so far as our view is concerned and we learn from this that there is such a being as a Supreme Being.

Now, unfortunately, man suppresses this knowledge. Paul says, however, that he knows his eternal power and divinity so that they are without excuse. Man has a great deal more understanding than the dim light of nature and when he turns away from what he knows, it is an apostasy that arises from the determined act of a will against the will of God. One might say, "Does he know enough to be saved?" No. He doesn't know enough to be saved, but he knows enough to be condemned. And so, God through creation, and through the things that we see, has brought men to the state of being without excuse. And the negative affects of the knowledge of the nature and being of this universe is sufficient to bring men to the status of without excuse before God.

Now then, the apostle at this juncture in his paragraph turns to look primarily of the human rationale of the wickedness of God. He says in the 21st verse, "Because when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." Now if you'll look carefully at these verses, you'll find that they're a form of religious history of mankind. You know when you study the apostle's writings, it's important that you notice every little thing about them that you possibly can.

Now one of the simplest things is to notice the tenses of verbs. Did you notice the tense of verses 18, 19, and 20? What is the predominant tense? Well, it's a present tense. Listen,

"For the wrath of God is revealed (That's a present tense in the Greek. Is revealed in heaven from all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who are holding down the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has shown it to them. For the invisible things from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: (But now, beginning at verse 21, Paul uses the past tense. He says,) because when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imagination, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man."

So the apostle now has moved to the religious history of mankind. And looking at things from the standpoint from the fall in the Garden of Eden and now the history of mankind since, he unfolds the meaning of this history. He says, "They knew God."

Now this can be understood in two ways. It can be understood as Adam and Eve knowing God in the Garden of Eden. But, it also can be understood as the knowledge that God has given by virtue of his natural creation about him. This is, I think, probably that, the knowledge from natural creation. And the story that Paul gives us here is not the story that we find in our scientific textbooks, for they tell us that what we have is the story of evolution in the story of mankind. But the Bible tells us that it is not evolution, but devolution. The man of the world likes to tell us that in the beginning things were simple and not very complex. And, consequently, the earliest men believed in the spirits that were resident in the stones, and the trees, and the rocks. They believed in animism.

Then there came a kind of magic and then ancestor worship and totemism, ghost worship, fetishism, and so on, until finally the stage of polytheism was reached. That was the state of affairs found in Greece and Rome in the time of our Lord, and eventually, man passed on to the purer form of worship known as monotheism. All of this is meant to show how there is innate in man a law which causes him to seek after God and reach out for him.

When I first became a Christian, the most popular modernist preacher was a man by the name of Harry Emerson Fosdick. He wrote a book, which was read by many thousands of people. It was called *A Guide to the Understanding of the Bible*. It really should have been entitled, *A Guide to the Misunderstanding of the Bible*. But, nevertheless, it had a wide outreach and Mr. Fosdick had a chapter in it in which he discussed the evolution of God in the Bible.

He said that the story of man, according to the Bible, was that primitive man had a kind of devilish concept of God. Noah's God destroyed the earth with a flood and, therefore, he was kind of a blood thirsty God. And then, Abraham's God was the same kind of God, except that he seemed to delight in animal sacrifices. And the God of Moses was a horrible God of volcanic fire speaking to men from Sinai and little by little man advanced to higher conceptions of God. David began to have some rather high ethical thoughts about God. They were mixed, however, with those imprecatory Psalms in which David calls down the judgment of God upon certain individuals.

But, by the time of the prophets, Mr. Fosdick said, "God was really making improvement. He now hated unrighteousness and spoke out against crimes committed by men and when Jesus came along, well Jesus gave men a beautiful concept of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. But, there was one thing that was faulty in Jesus' theology and that is, he was always talking about hell. But, fortunately, now since Jesus is no longer with us, we've reached the place now where we have modern ideas of God that are worthy of the name. He has no hell for the wicked and man and

God are now able to have fellowship with one another, because God has become so respectable that he can be worshipped in Highland Park, and University Park, and Richardson, and any other of the places where nice people are supposed to live."

That's the picture that was given, but that is, of course, directly contrary to the picture that we find in the word of God. Paul says, "They knew God. They did not glorify him as God, neither were thankful. They became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart became darkened. They professed themselves to be wise, but they became fools and they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man." So they glorified God not as God. They gave other names for God. You'll find them giving names for God like "nature," "providence," "the man upstairs," "the good God," and other types of expressions, which we often find men use today about God.

Providence. There was a farmer whose crops had failed a second time. He was being consoled by a clergyman. He had heard a lot of this preaching about providence and the clergyman had spoken to him and said that he was very sorry that he had suffered under the hand of providence. And the farmer said, "Yes. That providence is always treating me shamefully, but there's one above that will stop him" and he had come to identify God with the noun "providence."

One of the things that man likes to do is to rob God of his sovereignty. This is something that even Christians frequently do. The God of Christians can be not the God of the Bible totally either, but, it is very popular for men to deny God his sovereignty. They think of God as a person who is under some degree of obligation to his sinful creatures. He's bound to treat all of them alike. They're guilty of robbing God of his sovereignty, of his divinity, of his most majestic attribute. "They are for dictating to the King of kings and tying the hands of infinite compassion," as Mr. Spurgeon used to like to say. He said, "He believed that if God had denied him mercy, he had so sinned that he could never have impugned his justice."

And Mr. Spurgeon went on to say, and I think he was right, "When I see him save a sinner, I look at it not as a deed which he was bound to do, but as a spontaneous act, free as the air, full of his own goodness, which arises entirely from himself. He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven. I for one am perfectly satisfied with everything that God does whether of power, justice, or mercy. My heart says, 'It is the Lord. Let him do what seemeth good to him.'" He went on to speak about the fact that, "He could have sung the song of Moses at the Red Sea when all Egypt was drowned in the waters because that is exactly what Moses did under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit."

We do not really understand the God of the Bible until we could stand by that Red Sea and sing a song too when Pharaoh and his hosts were drown there. If that seems repugnant to you, it is because your nature is not yet conformable to the nature of God. The Bible puts God in that light. Mr. Spurgeon goes on and says, "He would have cried with Moses, 'I will sing unto the Lord for he hath triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider he hath thrown into the sea.' (He said,) I do not know this new God that has lately come up, who they say is all tenderness and has none of the stern attributes of righteousness and wrath. The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and Jacob, is the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and in him my soul delights. Let him sway his scepter even as he pleases. His will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

They glorified him not as God. And, my dear Christian friends, we do not truly understand the God of the Bible until we stand under the sovereign God and give him the glory that belongs to him. Do not rob divinity. Do not seek to deny him the privilege of being good and merciful to who he will and of hardening, yes, hardening. Those are his words, hardening, whom he will. We may not understand all of this, but this is our sovereign God of the Bible who has given us the Lord Jesus Christ as the expression of his mercy.

Paul says, "Neither were they thankful." Mr. Spurgeon also says, "Must we always hear the sackbut?" In Christian assemblies, we often do hear a rather sad picture of God.

We don't have the thankfulness and gratitude that probably we should have. Must we always hear the sackbut? Can we not hear the harp giving some notes of joy as well? There is a story of a Puritan who sat down at a meal and all he had was a bit of bread and a cup of cold water and he said, "What, all this and Jesus Christ too?"

And then there is a story, too, of a preacher who found on the table for dinner only one potato and a piece of fish, a herring. And he bowed his head to give the blessing and he thanked God that God had ransacked sea and land to find food for his children. [Laughter] That's the attitude of gratitude that should characterize us as believers in our Lord Jesus Christ. This great sovereign God has bent, in his sovereign mercy, to lift us up out of the miry pit and to set our feet upon the solid rock of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Who should not and would not be grateful to God for such a great salvation as that?

The Bible says there are three ways that we may learn of God. There is the Bible of nature. And in this, we may learn that God is eternally powerful and that he is God. It's insufficient to save sinners, but we can learn from creation that he is good and that he is a sovereign creator. Now the fact that our minds have been affected by the fall means that we do not even, when we look upon nature, see clearly the things that we see. That was one of the things that Calvin pointed out very strongly that, "Even though in nature we have a perfect revelation of God as a Supreme Being, we need the spectacles of Scripture and the ministry of the Holy Spirit to see clearly then." But, we see enough to know that he exists and we see enough to stand condemned before God.

But the Bible of nature does not give us the message of salvation. It is the Bible of God addressed to men as men. But, we are men who are sinners now as a result of the fall and even the Bible of conscience or the volume of the Book of Revelation entitled *Conscience* is insufficient too. From conscience we may learn that God is a governor and that he is a judge, but that, too, is insufficient to save us. Our conscience speaks to us and speaks to us very strongly, but it does not save us.

Those brethren of Joseph that we were looking at not too long ago, who in the presence of the Prime Minister whom they did not realize yet was Joseph spoke out, remember, in the midst of their troubles and said, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us and we would not hear. Therefore, is this distress come upon us?" Their conscience spoke in the midst of their trials and they understood that this was something that had come from God, but it was not enough to save. Our conscience is not enough to save us.

Adam knew what conscience meant. Eve knew what conscience meant when they ran and hid from the Lord God when he came down into the garden. The Bible, however, of God's revelation, contains a third volume and it is the Bible of holy Scripture. And in it, we have the message of salvation. In it is contained the gospel and the gospel is the power of God unto salvation because the righteousness of God is revealed in it. And the righteousness of God is that right standing before him that is given to those who, acknowledging their sin, and guilt, and condemnation, flee to the cross of Jesus Christ and receive a free gift what he has done by virtue of the blood that was shed.

And, as a result of the reception of the Lord Jesus, we have a righteousness that is acceptable to God. Justification, as we shall point out through this series, does not mean that we are made righteous. Because we're still sinners after we are saved, but it means that we have been declared righteous and are able to stand before God as righteous men or women. And this is something that is given to us through the gospel. As Isaac Watts wrote, "Nature with open volume stands, to spread her Maker's praise abroad; and every labor of His hands shows something worthy of a God; But in the grace that rescued man, His brightest form of glory shines; Here, on the cross, 'tis fairest drawn, in precious blood and crimson lines."

If there is failure to respond to the first of the two volumes of divine revelation that brings the just judgment, then we are without excuse. How much more, when we have heard the third volume of the grace of God and Jesus Christ, and still refuse to

come. As I said last time, it is not that we shall be lost; we shall remain in our lost condition if we do not come to Jesus Christ. There is no reason then to remain under wrath. The way of escape is wide open through the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is good news! Let us glorify God as God.

"Oh, I'm full of sin," someone says. Well, glorify God by accepting forgiveness of sin through the Lord Jesus Christ; "I'm so confused and troubled and I do not really understand how I stand before God." Well, bring all of your troubles and confusion to the Lord God and obtain peace through the cross of Jesus Christ. Glorify him as God, the God who solves our problems and meets our needs; "I don't know how to trust him," someone might say. Well, come to him and say, "I don't know how to trust you" and in that very act you're trusting. Thank him for his Son, his cross, and thank him for the forgiveness of sins and you'll have reason to be grateful.

As the Psalmist says,

"Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name; Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's."

What a great God we have. What a great privilege it is to trust him. We invite you to come to the cross, acknowledge your lost condition, acknowledge simply that Jesus Christ has come and offered the atoning sacrifice and offers the righteousness of God to all men. Come and receive it in faith for yourself. May God give you grace to come, may the Holy Spirit so work in your heart that you feel the burden of, and the peril of, being lost. Come to Christ right now, right where you're seated, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Do not turn and leave this auditorium not

knowing the peace and the assurance that comes from the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ. It's a decision that you alone are to make. May God help you to make it. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are so thankful to Thee for all of the messages of the Bible: those that are pleasant; those that are unpleasant. We thank Thee for this message that men are without excuse and we thank Thee for the message of the cross of Jesus Christ, for we need that deliverance. We praise Thee. We are grateful for the forgiveness of sins, for justification, for the presence of the Holy Spirit.

And we pray, O God, that there will be, in this auditorium, no individual who leaves still trusting in human works, in human goodness, for salvation. And as we leave, Lord, we praise Thee for the presence of the Holy Spirit. We are thankful for him...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]