



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Romans 11:1-10

"Is Israel's Rejection Total?"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Returning to Romans chapter 11, verse 1 through verse 10 for the Scripture reading preparatory to the message that follows later on. The apostle has just stated in the last part of Romans chapter 10, "But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." That raises a question, what about God's relationship to Israel in the light of the promises, and in the light of their disobedience. And so, the apostle deals with that beginning with Romans chapter 11, and verse 1. He continues writing,

"I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I too am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Know ye not what the scripture saith of Elijah? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and dug down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no

more grace. (The remaining words, in the Authorized Version are not found in the better Greek manuscripts. The principle of them however is a very true one. A very thoughtful scribe, no doubt in the early days, copying the manuscript of the Epistle to the Romans, added this by way of an explanation. It's like a word of exposition. When Paul says, "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace," he thought well, lets' just turn it around.) But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. (And of course, both of these express the exclusiveness of grace and works. That is, if we have works, we do not have grace. And if we have grace, we do not have works. So the words are very true, even though they may not be in the original edition of the Epistle to the Romans that the apostle wrote. The seventh verse continues,) What then? (This was by way of conclusion.) Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded. (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and recompense unto them: Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway."

Those are very terrifying words, because they express divine judgment upon those who have had a very wide and total acquaintance with the word of God. They are words that we in the evangelical church should take very much to heart. So may the Lord, with that in mind, bless our reading of the word of God.

[Prayer removed from audio.]

[Message] The subject for this morning, as we turn to the well-known and difficult chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, is "Is Israel's Rejection Total?" The general argument

of the first eight chapters of the Epistle to the Romans is something of an exposition of Habakkuk chapter 2, and verse 4. That was the text that the apostle cited in the 1st chapter when he set forth the theme of this epistle, "The just by faith shall live."

Commentators have often made the comment that what the apostle does in the Epistle to the Romans in the first eight chapters, is to take that expression from the Hebrew and from the Greek and expound the three parts. So righteous by faith shall live, is the order in which the apostle writes the Greek expression "The just shall live by faith." So that chapter 1, verse 1 through chapter 3, in verse 20 is an exposition of the term righteous or just. And at the conclusion of it the apostle says that, "There is none righteous, no not one."

Then he expounds the nature of saving faith. Beginning at verse 21 of chapter 3, through chapter 5, "there by faith," is expounded, and the apostle makes the point that it is not by works of the Law that we are justified, but it is by faith. And then in chapters 6, 7, and 8, he discusses the question of life, "By faith shall the righteous live." And in discussing the doctrines of sanctification and glorification that arise out of justification, he sets forth the believer's life. Well, Romans chapter 1, verse 8, then has set forth an elect group that have been justified by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But as the readers of the Epistle to the Romans would have noted who paid attention to this, Israel seems missing from this elect group. The apostle has only made one or two statements with reference to that question, and therefore they ask, when they come to chapter 9, what of the Jews? Has God's program of the covenants of the Old Testament been annulled? Has it been dropped or laid aside? What's the place of the Jews?

So in Romans 9, 10, and 11 a theodicy in which God justifies his own workings on the ground of justice. God makes through the Apostle Paul three points. First of all he says that Israel's failure, and it is a failure is because of spiritual pride and self-sufficiency on the human side. On the divine side, of course, it is divine election, because there has been that process working through history, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." And so on,

"Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated." But from Israel's stand point it has been spiritual pride and self-sufficiency. Paul had written in verse 31 of chapter 9, "But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." He writes in chapter 10, verse 3, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." What they had failed to see was that righteousness comes by faith and not by the works of the Law. They had failed to see that no man can be saved by what he does, because he doesn't do that which God requires, and that is present him with a perfect righteousness. So they had the pride of self-righteousness, thinking because they had received the revelation of God, and thinking because they had lived up to their idea of what the standard of God required that God would be required to reward their merit by eternal life. We really don't understand, still it seems, just what pride is in the sight of God.

Have you ever heard people say with reference to another man, "He's a real good man, but he's proud?" We rather accept that as a common statement. Most of us wouldn't think too much about it. Suppose I put it this way, "He's a real good man, but he's a thief." Well, you would say immediately, "Well, wait a minute. How can he be a real good man and be a thief?" Well, of course, you cannot be a real good man and be a thief, but when it comes to pride, we've come to the place where we think that pride is something different. But in the sight of God, pride is fully as bad, if not worse, than stealing. Israel failed to realize the sin of pride.

Now, after the apostle has said that, he still wants to answer the question that is lying at the bottom of all of this, What about Israel? And in chapter 11 he makes two points, they are very simple points. Israel's failure is not total. We should never forget

that. It is not that all Israel has been set aside now. There are Israelites who are being saved. There are Israelites who are in the company of the Gentiles, who are in the church of God. There is a remnant according to the election of grace. And finally, he makes the point that her failure is not final. There is coming a time when all Israel shall be saved the promises of the Old Testament are to be fulfilled. Robert Louis Stevenson once wrote, "I cannot understand how you theologians and preachers can apply to the church--or multiplicity of churches—Scripture promises which, in their plain meaning apply to God's chosen people, Israel, and to Palestine; and which consequently must be still future. The prophetic books are full, of teachings which, if they are interpreted literally, would be inspiring, and a magnificent assurance of a great and glorious future; but which, as they are spiritualized, becomes farcical--as applied to the church they are a comedy."

Another thing that appears as the apostle answers these questions is the fact that his answers are taken from the word of God. For the Apostle Paul, the final court of appeal was the word of God. Adolf Schlatter was one of the best known of the evangelical scholars of the earlier part of this century in which we are living. He was a German theologian who wrote a number of very significant books. A man, it is said, once came to Schlatter and poured forth his praise of Professor Schlatter. He obviously was an ardent admirer of him. He said, "I've always wanted to meet a theologian who stands on the Word of God." And Professor Schlatter is supposed to have said, very solemnly, to the man, "Well, thank you, sir. But I don't stand on the Word of God; I stand under the word of God." He made the point, of course, that the word of God was his authority. Well, the word of God is the authority of the Apostle Paul.

Now, he's just said that Israel is a disobedient and gainsaying people, so naturally the question arises, has God cast away his people? And so Paul begins the 11th chapter with just that question. "I say then, Hath God cast away his people?" Greeks had a way of asking a question in such a way that you knew what answer they expected. We do,

too, in English. We say, for example, "You like football, don't you?" And we expect when we put it that way, that the person will say yes." And when you say, "You don't like soccer, do you?" well, then we expect them to say no. The way things are going in this country, they will, however, say yes. But nevertheless, we expect by the language of the question, a certain kind of answer.

Now, in Greek, the apostle and others could indicate the kind of answer they expected by the way they put the question. Now, this is one of those cases. And the apostle, by the construction that he uses, expects the negative answer. "I say then, Hath God cast away his people?" Now, I didn't look at the New American Standard Bible, but it is a very literal translation. It probably has something like, "God has not cast away his people, has he?" Seeking to give you the benefit of the little particle "may" which the apostle used in this verse, so we can expound it in that way. The apostle's statement is, "God cast away his people, has he?" That's a natural question after he said that Israel was a disobedient and gainsaying people. And as one looked around and saw the spiritual status of Israel today. You might have known the kind of answer that he expected by the fact that he used the expression, "his people." He doesn't say, "Has God cast away Israel?" He says, "Has God cast away his people?" The very fact that he has said "his people," also anticipates the answer, "No he has not cast away the people, because they are his people." And the reader of the Old Testament will recognize that more than once in the Old Testament we have the positive statement, which Paul uses in framing his question, incidentally. God has not cast away his people. For example, in the 94th Psalm, he says that, positively. God has not cast away his people. That statement is still true today. God has not cast away his people.

Now, Paul's answer to the question is, as is so often the case, a three-fold answer. And first of all, it's just a direct denial. He says, "God forbid." Now, don't you realize that if you ask a question like that, "Has God cast away his people?" And you should answer it, "Yes, he's cast away his people." You are making God a liar, because when God

chooses a people, he chooses them permanently. So to say, "Has God cast away his people?" and answer, "Yes," is to make God a liar. That is to attack the character of God. That's to make out that God is a covenant breaker. When he made a covenant with Abraham, it was a covenant. It was an unconditional covenant. When he made his covenant with David it was an unconditional covenant. When he made his covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah that he would forgive their sins, it was an unconditional covenant. If he were not to do that, he would be a covenant breaker, he would be a liar. And if Israel may be cast away having those covenantal promises, then you with the promises of the gospel may also some day find yourself rejected. John 3:16 is no longer valid, it's only temporarily valid. Romans 3:23-26 is only temporarily valid; Romans 5:1 is only temporarily valid. God may change his mind, and thus ye may be excluded. So the apostle says, "God forbid." How is that possible?

And of course, if one looked at history, he would know the answer, too, because Israel, in spite of their disobedience is still with us. Now, some Gentiles say, "Yes they are still with us all right. And I wish they weren't." Well, God's attitude is quite a bit different. They are still with us, because they are still the covenant people; abiding in rejection, abiding in rejection in the sense that if they do not respond to the word of God, then they too shall be lost. But they have the promise of a glorious future as a nation. And so all Israel shall be saved, the apostle says. If you looked at the history of Israel, you would find it a puzzle that can only be explained by the light of the word of God. So I say to you Gentiles in the audience, study Israel's history. Take a good look at it. And you will see that even today the hand of God is manifested in the history of that people.

There is an old anecdote, the exact nature of which I'm not sure of, but because it's appeared in a couple of forms. But I think it was an anecdote concerning Frederick the Great. He and his chaplain were discussing the voracity of the Bible, and finally the king, or Frederick the Great, replied to the chaplain in the discussion, "Give me in a word proof that the Bible is the inspired word of God." And the chaplain said, "Your majesty it

is possible for me to answer your request exactly as you require it, in one word, Jew." So the Jew, that is the evidence of the inspiration of holy Scripture.

So the apostle, first of all then, directly denies that God has cast away his people, "God forbid." Now he said my own salvation proves God's trustworthiness. The fact that I am an apostle of Jesus Christ, the fact that I am here writing an epistle to you of the grace of God, that 's an evidence that he hasn't cast away his people, because I belong to his people. "For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin." Benjamin was the aristocratic tribe. When the ten tribes broke away and went into apostasy erecting an altar, or altars, creating an alien priesthood, building temples that were contrary to the will of God at both Bethel and Gilgal. Little Benjamin with the tribe of Judah refused to go along, so that little Benjamin, as David calls the tribe, the smallest of the tribes in Israel, was a tribe that was associated with the aristocracy of Israel. Moses, when he gave out his blessings to the tribes, gave one of the greatest of them to Benjamin, "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him, and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders." Paul says, "I am an Israelite. I'm of the seed of Abraham, and I'm of the tribe of Benjamin, little Benjamin. God has not cast away his people whom he foreknew."

Now, we might have gained that knowledge if we had just studied the Bible, because did not the parents of the Lord Jesus, when they brought him into the temple in order to perform the things required by the Law, did not they come into contact with Simeon. Simeon had been told by the Lord, as a prophet, that he would not die until his eyes had set upon the salvation of God. And when the little child came in, the Holy Spirit spoke to Simeon who was a prophet and said, "There is the salvation of Israel." And he took the little babe in his arms, and looked upon him, and spoke those magnificent words of prophecy that he speaks in Luke chapter 2. Then Anna, the ancient prophetess, who had been in the temple serving the Lord for about eighty years after the death of her

husband, she, too, spoke of the redemption that would be accomplished. So there were Jewish individuals who were responsive to the message of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But someone might say when Paul says, "I am an Israelite of the tribe of Benjamin and of the seed of Abraham," one swallow does not make a summer. And the apostle will have a further answer for that. But I want you to notice that expression, "whom he foreknew." We've been saying all along that in the Bible when we read of foreknowledge, we really have a word of divine election that we are not to think of this in the way that it is popularly thought of, as if God looked down through the years and saw who would believe and then chose them. The choice then is not God's, the choice is man's. God would be gaining in knowledge, and he's omniscient eternally. Think of this for a moment, if "whom he foreknew" means whom he foreknew would believe there is no problem. No one would ever ask the question, "Has God cast away his people." If he has foreknown them, he foreknows that they will believe. That's no problem. The problem arises when we think of divine election. He has elected a people, but these people are today in apostasy. Then what about the election, that is a problem. And so the apostle says, "God has not cast away his people whom he foreknew." He set his heart upon them in divine love and chose them, is the force of that word. He has not cast away his people "whom he foreknew."

Or Dr. Way, one of the great classical scholars translated epistles of Paul and the Epistle to the Hebrews into the language of his time, and that translation is an interesting translation, because Dr. Way was one of the leading classical scholars of his day, has done a lot of the work in the Loeb Classical Library, a man who was recognized as one of the greatest of the classical scholars of Great Britain. When Arthur Way translates Romans chapter 11, verse 2, he translates it this way, "God hath not cast away his people whom he marked out for his own, so long ago." Dr. Way recognized that the term "foreknew" or "foreknow" means to choose in the sense of to choose out an intimate relationship with a person. God's not fickle. He doesn't change his mind. He has a plan within a plan,

and his plan unfolds in history, and when he has made his choice by divine election that will come to pass.

Well, I say the apostle might have heard someone over to the side say, "But one swallow does not make a summer." See one swallow flying and you know that the summer is not necessarily over, and the fact that Paul is of the tribe of Benjamin and now a part of the saved company, that doesn't mean necessarily an answer to the question. And so he goes back into the Old Testament, because his readers recognize the authority of the Bible. And he says, "The situation today is parallel today with the situation in Elijah's day." What was the situation in Elijah's day?" Well, apostasy was general. It was hard to find a true believer in the God of Israel. General apostasy, but it was not universal, not universal. Now, Elijah thought it was well-nigh universal, because after he had won his great victory on Mount Carmel, Jezebel said, "I'll have Elijah's life." And so, here is the prophet of God fleeing from a woman after winning this great victory on Mount Carmel. And he reverses the journey of Israel. Instead of coming from Egypt into the land, he's in the land and he starts running. And he runs in the reverse direction, and finally when he gets down to Mount Sinai, there he has the experience in which he saw the wind, and the earthquake, and the fire, and God spoke to him in the still quiet voice of his inmost being and said to him, "Elijah, I have seven thousand who have not bowed beneath to Baal." He had said, "Lord, I alone am left." I sometimes feel that way myself. [Laughter] I understand exactly what Elijah feels. "I alone am left preaching the gospel of the grace of God." And God said, "Elijah there are six thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine others, seven thousand who have not bowed beneath to Baal." And so the apostle says, "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

Now, when he says there is a remnant, he means a remnant of Jewish people. He means that within the company of the church of Jesus Christ, there is evidence of the fact that God has not forgotten his Abraham promises. So every time you see a Hebrew

convert who has been brought to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, you can say "The Abraham promises are being fulfilled." That's why we are called the children of Abraham. That's why we're called the seed of Abraham. The Christian church began as a Jewish church, God fulfilling his promises, to a remnant but fulfilling his promises. Down through the history, there has always been Hebrew believers, Hebrew Christians; Alfred Edersheim, Neander, Adolf Saphir, David Baron, present-day Charles Feinberg, who taught me Hebrew. His son is a colleague of mine on the faculty of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Chicago right now. There are, in my classes in Trinity in Chicago, Hebrew Christians sitting right there, part of this remnant according to the election of grace. Not many, but some, and as a matter of fact it seems that they are growing today. But at any rate, it is still a remnant, and it is according to the election of grace, according to gracious election; not according to works, according to grace.

And so, the apostle adds in verse 6, "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace." They are mutually exclusive, grace and works. What are the things that characterize legalism, or the attempt to gain salvation by good works? I had a professor who said that there were three things that characterize legalism. First, redemption by human effort; that is, the desire to gain God's approval by what we do. And then he said, the mercenary spirit, by which we do things and then we go to God and say, "Now Lord you must reward me for the things that I do." It is very easy for that to enter into human nature, and to think that because we do certain things, God must do certain things for us. I got down on my knees and prayed last night, therefore God must bless me today. Or, I read the Bible this past week. I read the Bible almost every day, and God must bless me for that. Finally, I managed to say a word, escaped from my tongue-tied condition and said a word to someone about Jesus Christ, he must therefore reward me for what I have done. And then it is a fondness for negatives. Have you ever noticed that about legalists? They love the "Thou shalt nots." They love to set up their little taboos, and they live up to them, and they say, "Ah, I've lived up to a divine taboo."

Suddenly a human taboo has become a divine taboo. "I've lived up to the divine taboo, and now God must reward me."

We often sing, "Could my tears forever flow, could my zeal no languor know, these for sin could not atone, Thou must save and Thou alone. In my hand no price I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling." Paul says if it's of grace, it's no more works. People often think of the apostle as being unintelligible. I've often heard Christians; professing Christians at least, say "I must confess that when I read the Apostle Paul I find it very difficult to understand Paul." To say that Paul is unintelligible or that he presents Christianity in a way which does it every kind of injustice and is finally unacceptable to us, is to fly into the face of history and experience. There have always been people who found Paul intelligible and accepted the gospel that he preached. There are people still; they may not be in theological classrooms, and they may not be in theological churches, but there are people who find Paul imminently intelligible, because one doesn't need historical scholarship to understand Paul. That might help some. One doesn't need philosophy; one doesn't need the insight of genius to understand Paul. Do you know what people need to understand Paul? It's despair, spiritual despair. It's to come to the place where you realize that you are lost and undone and under divine judgment, and you are looking around for some deliverance. And then you read, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God." It's despair that opens up the understanding of the Apostle Paul. Paul didn't preach to those scholars, he preached for sinners. And those who know that they are sinners find Paul imminently intelligible today. And the simple woman who has never had any course in theology at all can get a blessing out of the reading of the Apostle Paul, if they come to him out of that spiritual background.

Now, the apostle comes to the logical conclusion of everything. He says in verse 7, "What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." Better and harder, the rest were hardened. In fact, the very word that the apostle uses is built upon a Greek word that meant a callus.

So Israel has been hardened: the election has obtained it, but the rest were hardened. They've been made callus. By whom, by themselves? Well yes, in one sense, by themselves, but Paul's not speaking about that. Look at his next verse, "(According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day." And David, speaking in the imprecatory 69th Psalm says, "Let their table be made a snare and a trap and a stumblingblock and recompense unto them. Let their eyes be darkened that they may not see, and bow down their back always."

May I say a few very solemn words to you? A man is free to accept or reject the gospel, so far as the human side of things is concerned. But if he rejects it, he has not therefore cut himself off from all contact in connection with that rejected Savior. He still sustains a relationship to the one that he has rejected, and the message that he has refused to believe is exercising an influence upon his character and his destiny. It makes him a stumblingstone, against which, by rejection and unbelief, he breaks himself. Looking into the Old Testament, there came a day when Israel said in their minds, "We want to be like the countries of the heathen, we want to be like the Gentiles. We want to serve gods of wood and stone." And Ezekiel says, "That which cometh into your mind shall not be at all." Vain dream, you cannot say, "I want to be like the Gentiles. I want to be like the other people. I'll pass the gospel by; I just won't pay much attention to it." Don't you know that when the gospel comes in its slightest way to you, you are never the same thereafter? It's like a piece of unexposed film, when the light strikes it, that film is never the same again. And so, when the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, the smallest treatment of it, comes to you, there is the ineffaceable sign and mark upon the heart of that individual that the gospel has been preached to them. The gospel that has been preached is the gospel that has been heard by them.

I'm not uncharitable when I say that no man ever yet passively neglected the message of the love of God in Jesus Christ. And that all who have every heard the gospel

have, in some way or other, this experience. There is a movement, feeble and transitory, of hardened wills. When he hears the gospel, the conscience says, even to the hardest of men, "You ought. You ought." And the will says, as feebly as it possibly can, "I will. I will." But it does not. The heart is touched by some sense of the great and gentle vision of the light of the God, as the love of God passes before the spiritual eyes. They are, as one man has said, "Like some feeble ridden patient lying on the bed, who raises his hands. And then as he raises his hands very weakly, sickly, suddenly falls back on the bed." You ought. I will. But I cannot. In other words, it's not true that every man that reject Christ does in simple verity reject him, and not merely neglect him. There is always an effort. There is always a struggle, but it's real and it ends in a turning away. It's not that you stand there and simply let him go past. That's bad enough, but it's more than that. It's that you turn your back upon him. It's not that his hand is laid on yours and yours remains dead, and cold, and lifeless, and you don't open to clasp his hand; but it's that when his hand is laid on yours, you clench yours the tighter against him. So you wound your conscience, you harden your heart. You make yourself a worse man, just because you've had a glimpse of the love of God in Jesus Christ. John puts it this way, "They love darkness, rather than light."

"Whosoever falls on this stone shall be broken," the Lord Jesus said. That's the whole history of the heresies of the church. Go back and read the story of the heresies of the church. Men with rich gifts and rich intellects have sought to attack the truth of God with indomitable perseverance, a martyr for not truth, but error. Marcian, Julian, Pelagian, Voltaire, Ingersoll, right on down to the present time, they are still martyrs to error. They set themselves against the truth that is sphered in Jesus Christ. And the great divine message simply goes on its way, and all the battlement and noise is like "so many bats flying against the light," someone has said. Skeptics made people hearts tremble. You often hear Christians say, "What do you say about this particular doctrine?" Because they don't have any answer to it, and they feel that the whole church of God is going to

collapse if gospel criticisms succeeds, form criticism, rejection criticism, all kinds of synoptic criticism, existential steeped philosophy, Sinicism, materialism, evolution, communism, all of these forms of attacks against the word of God, and the saints of God tremble. Now, don't you know that as the years go by, the heresies of men are filed away in the archives of ancient history, and the word of God today is just as fresh and vital as it was in the 1st century? Just give it time.

When I was growing up in theological seminary life, men were talking about Chicago liberalism. What do we do about Chicago liberalism? Talk to even liberals today, and they don't even know what you are talking about. That's what they believed thirty years ago. It was against the word of God, but they don't believe that any more. The falsity of it has now been shown. And then along came Barth, a lot of truth and a lot of error mixed up together; and finally, Bultmann, with a lot of error and very little of truth; and then after Bultmann, post-Bultmannianism. And so on down to the present day, all of the heresies of men, and you can be sure that someone is thinking up some new one to attract the scholars of the word of God, but they all, fired against the great rock of ages, don't do anything more than scale off a little bit of the moss that has collected there because we have not preached the word of God as we should.

All of the newest systems and their adherents, they remind me of the passage in Isaiah. Isaiah prophesies of the king of Babylon and the great influence that he's going to have on the earth, and the great heresy that he is responsible for. And then finally, he is going to be overthrown by God. And Isaiah, in that beautiful pictorial passage, pictures the King of Babylon arriving in Hades. "Ah, are ye also," they say, "become weak like we? Art thou also become like one of us?" And so you can imagine Arius arriving in hell, and all of the ancient errorists of the Old Testament saying, "Ah, are ye also become weak like us? Art thou also become like one of us?" And then Pelagius, and Sabellius, and the Ebionites, and Socinians, and the Gnostics, and all of the others arriving one-by-one. And Bultmann following along in more modern times, and so on; Harry Emerson, Fosdick, and

the rest of them all following. And there in hell they are saying, "Ah, are ye also become weak like us? Have you become like one of us?" Let me assure you, my dear friend, that the word of God will stand will all of the philosophies of men have been filed away in research libraries.

It's a vain dream. We want to be like them. Who wants to be like them? I want to be like one of the saints of God. I want to be in the company of the apostles. I want to be in the company of John Calvin and Martin Luther. And I wouldn't even mind being in the company of Wesley, because he'll be in heaven, too; purified of some of his false doctrine, [Laughter] but nevertheless sound in the faith now. Well, our time is up. It's obvious a couple of things stand out. The danger of becoming what people have called gospel hardened; the apostle refers to it here when he cited David. Incidentally, he cites a text from the Law, he cites a text from the Prophets, that is a phrase from the prophets, and then finally from the writings, the three divisions of the Old Testament. And in the citation from Psalm 69, that imprecatory Psalm, he mentions "Let their table be made a snare."

That's a remarkable statement, because it means that the very thing that ought to be a blessing, the place where the altar where the sacrifices were made, he says, "Let their table be made a snare." In other words, the very thing that ought to represent that they were looking forward for the coming of Christ, is a thing which becomes a curse to them. It's almost as if he says, "Let your regular Sunday morning attendance at Believers Chapel be made a snare to you. Let your regular attendance at the table of the Lord be made a snare to you if you have not responded to the word of God. If the truth of God is not real, your blessings have been cursed.

Donald Barnhouse says that when Pearl Harbor took place, the Japanese had done a little research. They had decided that America was weakest on Sunday morning after the Armed Forces had been paid on a Friday night. And if you'll remember, the attack came on Sunday morning after the Army and Navy had been paid on Friday night. In

fact, students of the archives of the Japanese War Department found these very items of research. They spent a great deal of time in this country determining that that's when we are weakest. And when we conquered Japan, there were the archives and the result of their research. And those combined reports concluded just that. Well, it was on a Sunday morning that we were attacked, and it was also after the men were paid on Friday night, because they knew that Friday and Saturday would be drunken debauches for many of them, and they would be least likely to be on their toes on Sunday morning with hangovers. You know, Sunday morning used to be the time of strength in the United States. It was the time when people were responsive to the things of God. "Let your table become a curse."

Well, I say to you Christians, it's a serious thing to hear the word of God. It's a very solemn thing to sit in an audience like this. It's a very solemn thing to have heard the gospel of Christ, even once. We're never the same thereafter. Think of those people that sat around the cross. The four soldiers, indifferent to what was going on, casting dice over who was going to have the garments of the Lord Jesus Christ, sitting down, they watched him there. In a sense, that watch continues, and unfortunately people today don't have any more understanding of what happened at Calvary's cross than those four soldiers did. The Sadducees and Pharisees, intelligent men and religious men, they too stood around the cross, and they watched him. And they said, "If you really are what you say you are, come down from the cross and save us." The women, sincere women, pitying women, the Lord Jesus said, "Don't weep for me, weep for your children. Weep for those that are going to be pregnant, because the time is coming when they will wish that they weren't." The thief on the cross, ah there's one individual, one individual who had the one thing necessary to understand, despair. "We've done many, many things against the Lord. This man, however, has done nothing amiss." And then he looked to the Lord Jesus Christ in the light of the word of God and the standards and what they were saying and said, "Lord, save me. Remember me when you come in your kingdom."

Magnificent statement, but his despair had brought him to that faith. And Jesus, "Today, thou shalt be with me in paradise." And nobody else understood; the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the women, the soldiers. This great transaction is taking place right by the side of them, and they were blind.

I don't think there is anything that troubles me more about Believers Chapel than the fact that we have heard so much of the word of God. We have come to be so closely attached to hearing Scripture...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]