



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Isaiah, Isaiah 53:7-9, 1 Peter 2:20-25, Revelation 5:5-14

"Submissive Messiah"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We have been studying, in our series of Sunday morning ministry of the Word messages, the great prophecy of the suffering servant of Jehovah. In Isaiah chapter 52, verse 13 through chapter 53 in verse 12, and today we are turning for our Scripture reading to the fourth section of that prophecy. Isaiah chapter 53 verses 7 through 9, and then we are going to turn, as we have been doing off and on, to passages in the New Testament in which this Old Testament section is quoted, and we are turning now to Isaiah 53:7-9 for our Scripture reading, and then we are going to turn to 1 Peter and the book of Revelation for two more sections, but will you turn in your Bible to Isaiah chapter 53, and will you listen as we read verses 7 through 9?

Now, remember this great prophecy is the confession of the nation of Israel, which they shall make in the future as they have come to know that the Messiah whom they crucified was their God given Messiah. This is their confession,

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his

generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken."

Now, I would like to read this verse again, and I'm going to translate it from the Hebrew text, as I understand this Hebrew text to read. Now, this verse is very important, and I want to particularly notice the slight change that I am going to make when we come to the second clause of verse 8.

"He was taken from prison and from judgment: and as for his own generation, who shall complain that he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth."

And again if you will allow me, I am going to make a slight change in that 9th verse, which I think more adequately, represents the Hebrew text. Now, will you listen as I retranslate it? "And they appointed his grave with the wicked, - yet he was with the rich in his death- although he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth." Let me read it again, and you will notice the tremendous transformation that is expressed by the prophet Isaiah as he, speaking for Israel of the future acknowledges, how God intervened in the affairs of men. "And they appointed his grave with the wicked, - yet he was with the rich in his death- although he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth."

Now, we are turning the New Testament to two passages, the first in the first letter of Peter, the second chapter verse 20, through the end of that chapter. 1 Peter chapter 2, and verse 20, and you will notice, as we read, and I will try to point it out, that the Apostle Peter is, in his writing reflecting upon the 53rd chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah,

and specifically he refers to the section that we have just read. 1 Peter chapter 2, in verse 20 reads,

"For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Messiah also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile or deceit found in his mouth:" (Now, you'll remember the statement that we have just read, "because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth." Peter has made the identification. He has stated that Jesus of Nazareth is the suffering servant of Jehovah as referred to in Isaiah chapter 53, verse 23.) "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:" (And you'll remember that in the 7th verse of chapter 53, Isaiah had written, "he was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers in dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." Verse 24.) "Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." (And you'll remember that in the 5th verse of Isaiah 53, we read, "He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our inequities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes, we are healed." And finally Peter concluded the section by saying.) "For ye were as sheep going astray;" (And Isaiah had said,) "remember all we like sheep have gone astray. Ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." The only Shepherd of the sheep, the only bishop of the flock is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, for the last passage, will you turn with me to the last book of the Bible? The book of Revelation, it has been said, that John the Apostle wrote the book of Revelation when he was senile, and that accounts for all of the strange things that we read in it.

Now, let me assure you, if a person says that, he has never studied this great apocalypse, which is undoubtedly the outstanding illustration of this form of literature in all literature, and in the 5th chapter of the book of Revelation the Apostle John is given a vision of the throne, and of the one who sits upon the throne, and of a little book in his hand, and he notices that no one is able to come and take the book, and he's very much disturbed over this because he recognizes that this little book contains the destiny of the affairs of men, and if no one is able to open the book, then man's future is black, and at this point we read in the 5th verse of Revelation chapter 5,

"And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the scroll, and to loose the seven seals. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain," (Now, may I retranslate that very simply so that you may catch the connection between this chapter and chapter 53? Isaiah 53 said "He is lead a lamb to the slaughter." Now, let's read this text.) "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slaughtered," (That's the meaning of the Greek word, sphazo which is used at this place.) "having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the scroll out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the scroll, the living creatures and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb," (He is lead as a lamb to the slaughter.) "having every one of them harps, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of saints. And they sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the scrolls, and to open the seals: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed

us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." (And have you noticed by the way, as we have been reading this, that the four and twenty elders fall down before God and express their praises to the lamb, then the voice of many angels, ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands add their voices in praise, and finally every creature in heaven and on the earth, and even under the earth, send for the praise to the lamb. It's like a Roman candle, which you shoot up in the air, which explodes, and then explodes again, and then explodes a third time. This is the praise of the entire creation of the lamb that was slaughtered. And then finally.) "And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever."

May God bless this reading of his word. Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the ministry of the Holy Scriptures to our hearts. We thank Thee that they come home to us with great power as the Holy Spirit uses them in our lives, and we pray, oh, God, that as we listen to the Scriptures that our hearts may be open to the teaching of the Word. We pray that the truths concerning the ministry of our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ may come home so definitely to us that our response may be that of adoration and praise and thanksgiving as that which the

angels at this very moment are giving to him who as the lamb of God was slain and yet is alive forever more.

And we pray, O God, that in this congregation there may be the sense of the reality of the work of God, and that whether we recognize it or not, Thy plans and purposes shall reach their fruition, and in the end Thy name shall be honored and glorified throughout the earth, and throughout the heaven through the Son of God our lord and our redeemer Jesus Christ. We thank Thee that through the Holy Spirit these truths have gripped, and, oh Father, may the grip us even more definitely and more deeply. In the 20th Century in which we live, O Father, by Thy grace enable us to represent him to the glory of Thy name. We thank Thee for each one present. For the problems and trials of life, through which we must pass, and we thank Thee that Thou art a loving heavenly Father and that we can turn to Thee with our problems and know that Thou doest hear us, and Thou doest answer us, for Thou doest love us through Christ.

We pray, oh God, for our great country. We pray that the ministry of the Word may continue freely in this land. We pray for President Nixon, for his administration, for those who are associated with him, his cabinet, and we ask, O God, that amid the unrest and the confusion and the disturbances of the present day, that Thy purposes may be fulfilled, and in the end Thy hand may be seen on this earth. We commit him and others to Thee. We thank Thee for the ministry of the Word and pray Thy blessing upon every faithful minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Use their words and their lives to accomplish Thine ends.

Now, Lord, we particularly pray for this group here, and we pray that through the consolation of the Spirit, those who are troubled may find that comfort which Thou art alone able to give. For those who are perplexed, wilt Thou solve their problems through the Scriptures. For those who are deeply disturbed over the present trends of our day, help us to look off and up to the consummation, and may our hearts be at peace in the

midst of this troubled world. Now, we commit this meeting to Thee and pray Thy blessing upon it, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] For you who have not been with us during the entire series on the Golden Passional of the Old Testament evangelist, we commented upon the fact that this great prophecy, which begins in verse 13 of chapter 52, and concluded with verse 12 of chapter 53, may be divided into five parts. And we have already spoken on the three subjects. The Startling Messiah, in chapter 52, verse 13 through verse 15, the Misunderstood Messiah, chapter 53, verses 1 through 3, and then the Vicarious or Substitutionary Messiah, in verses 4 through 6 of chapter 53, and today our subject is the Submissive Messiah, and we are looking at verses 7 through 9 of chapter 53 again.

Amid the ferment of the academic world, the unrest of the political world, the confusion of the religious world, and in spite of the fear of the Christian world, there never was a greater need for the preaching of such old fashion doctrines as the doctrine of sin, as the doctrine of the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ, and of the doctrine of salvation, by the blood and by the cross in electing grace. Today, it seems to me, that a great deal of the church is ashamed, or perhaps fearful of so preaching. They do not like to speak of sin. They seek to avoid the doctrine of the atonement. It seems that they are very unhappy about speaking of salvation through blood and cross, and particularly in the electing grace of God.

Now, this is not a new thing. In the days of the New Testament the Christian felt the same sense of reproach when they identified themselves with Jesus Christ that we do today. The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 said, "But we preach Christ crucified." Unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles, foolishness." No one likes to be identified with foolishness. No one likes to be the cause of stumbling, and yet the Apostle preached Christ crucified. He does not say, by the way, that he preached Christ as the example of love. He does not say that he preached Christ as the great friend. He

does not say that he preached Christ as the great teacher. He is all of these things. He does not say he preached Christ as the greatest philosopher of his day, though the surely was, but we preach Christ crucified.

In the 5th chapter of his letter to the Galatians, Paul wrote, "And I brethren if I yet preach circumcision, salvation through the ordinances, why do I still suffer persecution. Then is the offense of the cross-ceased. If men are told that they are saved, if they become acceptable to God by what they do, such as joining the church, such as being baptized, such as receiving communion at the Lord's Table, such as doing good works, this appeals to the natural man. There is no persecution for the man who preaches salvation by works. There is persecution for the man who says that men are sinners and that we are not saved by works, but by the grace of God who provided his own way through Jesus Christ who suffered for us, then there is the offense of the cross. For men do not like to be told that they are sinners.

One of the outstanding Scottish theologians, about ten years ago, not a conservative by any means. Sir George McLeod commented, "The most ominous aspect of the church in the United States, Canada, and Britain at present is that no one wants to crucify it." And then he added, "Perhaps, this is because there is nothing to be crucified about." When I studied in Scotland, I heard a man who made this comment, "It's a terrible thing when the church is content to cultivate inoffensiveness." And we are living in the day in which the church is content to cultivate inoffensiveness. We are not preaching the great doctrines of the faith upon which the church was built. My *Reader's Digest* came this past week, and I turned to the page that said, "Quotable quotes," and one of the quotes was this. "Insecurity is resetting your wristwatch each time you see a clock that disagrees with it." [Laughter]

Now, it appears to me that almost all of the Christians with whom I come in contact are insecure because they reset their theological wristwatch with every new voice, every new theological clock that they hear. If they hear about the new theology they

want to reset their own theology. If they hear about the new morality, they want to revise their own. Everything new affects them. And they reflect their insecurity.

I heard a sermon this last week, preached by the man who led me to Christ, Donald Grey Barnhouse. In the midst of it, he said, "If nobody thinks you are a queer, then you are not a good Christian." And then he went on to add, he said, "You know I went around the country saying this and finally my wife, after I finished one morning, saying, 'If nobody thinks you are queer, you are not a good Christian.' She said, 'Donald, I think you ought to add if everybody thinks you are a queer, you are not a good Christian either.'" And that is probably true, but still we come back to the other, if nobody thinks you are queer, then you are probably not a Christian who is traveling against the current to the age, you are with it.

Now, this great section that we are looking at this morning, which has been called the gospel in five words, emphasizes all of these things. It emphasizes sin. For example in the 6th verse, we read, "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way. "All we like sheep have gone astray." Richard Nixon has gone astray. Mr. Cocegan is gone astray. I know you knew that. [Laughter] Rap Brown has gone astray. "All we like sheep have gone astray. Everyone has gone astray. We've turned everyone to his own way." Sin is stressed. Salvation is stresses, and substitutionary atonement. Listen, the 5th verse states, "But he was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our inequities. The chastisement of our beasts was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." Not by the church. Not by the ordinances. Not by good works, but his stripes we are healed, through the work of Jesus Christ. There is also proclaimed here salvation by the blood and cross in electing grace.

Will you notice, for example, the 8th verse says, "For the transgression of my people was he stricken." And in the 11th verse, "He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied, by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many. For he shall bear their inequities."

Now, we are studying an Old Testament passage as you know, and I'm claiming that this Old Testament passage is a passage that by prophecy concerns the Lord Jesus Christ, who did not come on the scene for eight centuries after the time that Isaiah wrote. The New Testament gives an almost unanimous attestation to this. And for those who have spoken on the subject it gives unanimous attestation, that Isaiah chapter 53 is a chapter that concerns Jesus of Nazareth. For example, in the 8th chapter of the book of Acts, when Phillip the Evangelist is called by the Holy Spirit to leave Sumerian, to go down to the desert to meet the Ethiopian eunuch, and the Spirit as Phillip sees the eunuch in his chariot tells Phillip to go and join himself into that chariot. You'll remember we'll spoke about this two weeks ago. When he came to the chariot he heard him reading from the Old Testament scroll that the eunuch possessed, and he was reading these verses. "He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment and who shall declare his generation, for he was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people was he stricken." And Luke then adds, "And Phillip went up into that chariot, sat down in the drivers seat and began at that place, an preached unto him Jesus." At that place, Phillip interpreted the 53rd chapter of Isaiah as reference to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, we read in 1 Peter chapter 2 in our Scripture reading, and there again Peter, using the words of Isaiah 53, refers them to our Lord Jesus Christ, and finally for the attestation that is absolutely final in the book of Revelation we have the attestation of God himself, for remember the book of Revelation is the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him to in turn give it to us through his servants, and specifically his servant the Apostle John. The book of Revelations is a book that comes from the hand of God, though the hand of Jesus Christ and the hand of the Apostle John, and in that 5th chapter of the book of Revelation, drawing upon Isaiah 53, God himself, in the vision given to the

Apostle John refers to the lamb as it had been slaughtered, and thus there reaches the climax of the Revelation of God, the attestation of the fact that the suffering servant of Jehovah, as referred to in Isaiah chapter 52 and 53 is none other than Jesus of Nazareth, who lived among us and walked among us almost two thousand years ago.

Now, this morning we want to take a look at the three verses, the 7th the 8th and the 9th verses, and we want to look at them in a somewhat different manner from the way in which we've been at the preceding verses. We want to look at them this way. First of all, I want to take a look at the Old Testament statement as it is found in Isaiah, and then I want to look at the New Testament significance of that statement, and so we're going to look at the first the 7th verse in which the prophet Isaiah writes of the Messiah's voluntary sufferings.

The prophet begins to speak, it seems to me in the 7th verse, but he speaks for the people, and he states, "He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter and as sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." And the great truth that obviously comes forth as you read this verse is that the suffering servant of Jehovah is going to be silent in the midst of his sufferings.

Now, that's an amazing fact. It may not seem so to us in the 20th century, but if you have read the Old Testament at all, you will discover this. In the Old Testament when the men of God suffered, they were not silent. Silence unto suffering in the Old Testament is absolutely unique. In the Old Testament when a prophet or a man of God suffers, two voices are heard. Sometimes the voice of guilt and the prophet or the man of God confesses that the reason that he suffers is because he is guilty before God, but then some of the prophets, and some of the men of God do not seem to know anything specific in their life that maybe accounted the reason for their suffering, and they complain. They say to God, "Why do the godly suffer, and the ungodly seem to have everything wonderful?" It's as if you in the 20th century, as a believer in Jesus Christ,

related to God through him personally knowing him should find the going very difficult, whereas down the street is Mr. and Mr. Jones, and they have everything wonderful. Their house is paid for they have a beautiful Continental out. They have two summer homes and winter home and large salary, and no one is ever sick.

Now, in the Old Testament men puzzled over this, and they complained, so the voice of guilt and the voice of doubt was heard. Read David's psalms. He was a great man, but he also could complain. Read Jeremiah, he was a great prophet, but he could also complain. Read Hezekiah's experience, and listen to his words. Read the book of Job. This idea of silence unto suffering is something that is unique in the Old Testament. The servant of Jehovah will not express resentment. He shall not argue with God. He will not complain, but he will not be a stoic. He will simply say, "Thy will be done."

Now, that's an amazing fact. Further he states that he shall be like a lamb lead to the slaughter. And I pass this by merely saying this, that when we read in Isaiah chapter 53 that the suffering servant of Jehovah is going to be like a lamb to the slaughter, that in this text we have the interpretation of all of the references of the Old Testament to the Lamb of God. In the book of Exodus the 12th chapter, we read of the lamb of the Passover, which Paul tells us was Jesus Christ in type. It's as if in Exodus chapter 12 we read in type or pageant of a lamb the represents something or someone who is to come, but when we get to Isaiah we are told by prophecy, not by type, but by prophecy that it is the suffering servant of Jehovah who is the Lamb of God. Exodus is like the overhead projector, which enables us to see, visually, but Isaiah the prophet is the one who interprets the significance of that fact, and all of the references to the New Testament to Jesus as the Lamb of God grow out of Isaiah chapter 53, which is the interpretation of the Passover reference and others.

Now, when we turn to the New Testament and think about the silence of Jesus. I must confess I am amazed by this. Do you know what Jesus is called in the New Testament? He is called the word of God. "In the beginning was the word, and the word

was with God and the word was God, and the word became flesh and dwelt among us." And at his Second Advent, John the Apostle, given that great revelation of his coming to the earth, he states among other things, "That his name shall be called the word of God, and yet the word of God is silent. He spake as no other man spake." The New Testament said, but yet he condemned their hopeless moral condition by the baffling silence of his actions. When he stood before Herod, he said nothing. Finally before Caiaphas, the high priest of Israel, he was reduced to silence, and finally before Pilate he also said nothing. That's very amazing. I've often said this. Some of you will remember that I've said it here, that one of the most amazing this is the silence of Jesus.

Now, we would never act as our Lord has done, if we had not reflected upon this fact. If you attend meetings in which you are told how to speak to those who are outside of Christ, never do you find the teacher say, "Now, remember there are times when you must be absolutely silent. Say nothing." But that's what Jesus did. Pilate said, "Whence art Thou?" What a wonderful opening question. Jesus might well of said, "Well, now I want to give you the four spiritual laws, do you know them?" He was silent. "Whence art Thou?" What a wonderful opening. "Why I am the Lord of glory. I have come from the side of the Father, to earth. I have lived and moved among men in order that they might see the Revelation of God and in a few hours, Pilate, there I shall hang upon a cross, and there I shall hang for the sins of the people of God, and, Pilate, if you believe, you may have life." But he was silent. Why?

Well, for one reason Pilate had already had words from God and had rejected them. Herod had already had words from God and he had rejected them. Caiaphas had read the Scriptures, and had had words from God, and he has rejected them, and the time comes when even God is silent to the questions of men, when they have refused the light that he is given. Oh my dear friend, if you've been sitting in Believer's Chapel for month after month, and you have heard the gospel of Jesus Christ proclaimed, and I know I may not be a great preacher, but there is one thing that goes forth here constantly and that is

the good news that Christ has died for our sins, and we may have life through him, and if you have heard that week after week and month after month, and you have not come to him, oh my dear friend let me remind you that God himself is silent, and we cannot hear because we will not hear. Silent.

We read of the lamentations of Jeremiah, but we do not hear about the lamentations. He opened not his mouth, submissive to the will of God. Even the Apostle Paul, great though he was when struck by the high priest retorted quickly, "God shall smite thee thou whited wall." But you never hear anything like that from Jesus. I am not saying that Paul was out of the will of God, but you do not hear that from our Lord.

Now, the 8th verse, which speaks of his violent death. "He was taken from prison and from judgment." May I translate that a little more freely? "Out of the midst of arrest and legal judgment, he was taken." Oh, what does that mean? Why, it means simply this, that Jesus of Nazareth did not die a death on the hilltop of Calvary by a stroke from heaven. True he was put to death by God. "Thou hast brought me into the dust of death." The psalmist said. It was God who was responsible for the death of his Son, but not completely. It was God who was working out his plan through the death of his Son, but Peter says, "Ye also with wicked hands have taken and have crucified him, so Jesus did not meet death on the hilltop by a stroke from heaven, but in the forms of human law and by men's hands.

And then the writer of the prophecy states, "And as for his generation, who uttered a complaint?" It was the custom according to Jewish law, when a man was ready to be put to death, for a time to be given for someone to speak up for him, but who spoke up for Jesus? They all forsook him and fled. The gospel records say. And as for his generation, who uttered a complaint? Ah, there was no one to offer an explanation for Jesus. There was no one to stand in the witness chair for him. They all forsook him and fled. And finally, as he was uttering his last gasp upon the cross, one of the apostles at least had drifted back to the hill called Calvary. The rest of them went into hiding like

wounded animals, and of his generation, who was there to offer a complaint? No one. You know it states here, "He was cut off out of the land of living. For the transgression of my people was he stricken."

About a year and half ago, one of the Supreme Justices, of Israel's court, a man by the name of Hyam Cone, read a very learned article in the Israel law review and in it he claimed to have a reinterpretation of the death of our Lord Jesus. He said the Jews were not really responsible for his death. Let me hasten to say that I do not believe the Jews were wholly responsible for the death of Christ. The Gentiles were as well. For once, Jews and Gentiles agree. Jesus should be put to death, and we all have the blood of deicide upon our hands, Jew and Gentile, but this has been upon the conscience of the nation since that day, and it's upon the conscious of humanity, and Justice Cone wrote a very learned article, in which he said that actually the Sanhedrin did not really want to put Jesus to death, that actually they were trying to keep from dying. His reason, well, it was contrary to Jewish law for him to be put to death as he was, but that's precisely what the New Testament sets forth. It was contrary to law. It was illegal. It was unjust. According to their own principles of law. It was illegal and unjust. Frank Powell, the magistrate of London, studied the gospel records very carefully, and came to that conclusion legally. It was illegal, and it was unjust and furthermore it was prophesied by Isaiah the Prophet who said, "Out of the midst of arrest and legal judgment, he was taken." Why did no one speak up in the midst of the illegality of it? Nicodemus uttered a quite little voice like, "Our Lord does not condemn a man before it gives him a chance to be heard." But then Nicodemus vanishes from the scene unit the burial of our Lord. Why? Because men did not care that's why.

They trooped out to Calvary's cross, and they stood round the cross, and the looked as if they were looking at a spectacle, but then when the storm came and the clouds became darker and darker and it became obvious that Jesus would die, and the lightening began to flash, and the darkness came over the earth, they fled. They might

get wet. May I ask you a question today? Where do you stand? I am appalled by the fact that there are Christians who say that their eternal destiny rests in the hands of one who shed his blood upon Calvary's cross, I am appalled by the fact that we are unwilling to bear the reproach of Jesus Christ in the 20th century, and I am afraid, that many of us, if the cross were reenacted, many of us would join the apostles, and forsake him and flee.

Now, the 9th verse speaks of his victorious burial, and I love the way in which God has overthrown the aims a purposes of men, and let me express it by translating again this 9th verse. The verb *utayn* in Hebrew can mean, "and he made," but it can also be made impersonal, "and they made," or they appointed, and I am convinced that that is the way that it should be rendered and I am not alone in this, so I render it this way, "and they appointed his grave with the wicked." That was according to Jewish law. A blasphemer should be buried, Josephus, says in an ignominious way. They appointed his grave with the wicked, yet as God overruled the plans of men, yet he was with the rich in death. They appointed his grave with the wicked. They intended to crucify him, and take his body out and throw it upon Tophet, and let it be consumed, but God overruled, and took the body of the blessed Lord through Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, and placed that body in the tomb of a rich man in his garden where in never yet man had been laid, in token of the fact that God will permit no further indignities, to his Son. "They appointed his grave with the wicked, yet he was with the rich in his death." Although, "they appointed his grave with the wicked although, he had done no violence neither was any deceit in his mouth."

Now, when we think about the New Testament burial of the Lord Jesus, what an amazing thing it is. Who were the men that buried him? Joseph of Arimathea, listen the Scriptures say he was a rich man. It's possible to be a Christian and to be rich. I wish I were. Joseph was a rich man. He was a counselor. He was a member of the Sanhedrin. He did not consent to the death of Jesus, either he stood up in the meeting, or he was not present, since he lived in Arimathea the latter is probably true. That illegal meeting he

was unable to attend, but he was a timid cautious disciple, and the text of Scripture says, that for the fear of the Jews, he had not identified himself openly as a disciple of Jesus.

And then there was Nicodemus. Every time Nicodemus is mentioned that old man, I love him you know because he was converted as an old man. Since I am old man now, it's good to know that old men can be Christians too, and you can be converted when you become old too. He's one of the most lovable characters in the Bible. Every time he's mentioned it said, that he's the one who came to Jesus by night. Why? Because he was a timid, cautious man, and these two timid cautious men, Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, they nervly, bravely audaciously come forward after the death of Jesus, and ask for themselves from Pilate the body of Jesus and give it a royal burial.

How can you explain that? Two naturally timid, cautious men break with their own nature. Defy themselves, and defy the Jews. Defy everyone and stand forward boldly for Jesus. How can you explain that? There is only one way to explain it. Those men had now stood round the cross of Jesus. They had been taken captive by him through his words or through his miracles in a weak and feeble faith had been born in them, but the words of Jesus, and the miracles of Jesus were insufficient to give them the depth of faith that would enable them to take their stand for him, and finally, as they stood around the cross, they saw the significance of this great event. They saw the Son of God hanging there, and they realized that this red love of his, as expressed there was an expression of their sin, and of his death for them, and there gripped the heart of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, that timid man, there gripped their hearts the spell of our Lord Jesus and his cross, and those men were never the same.

The Son owned him by veiling its face, and darkness was over the face of the earth for three hours. The earth trembled at its heart, and in its earthquake owned him too. The temple with its veil was wrent in two from top to bottom. The temple had owned our Lord Jesus. In a few hours, the graves themselves responded by opening up and out of them came some who went back into the city of Jerusalem and lived out their

lives, and so as Joseph and Nicodemus saw this spectacle with the sun confessing him and the earth confessing him, and the temple confessing him, they said, "We shall confess him too." And these men did their bold and daring deed. Stood out for him through the cross of Jesus Christ.

Mr. Spurgoen, many years ago made a tremendous statement. I'll never forget it as long as I live. When I get to heaven I am going to say, "Charles, thank you very much for that statement. It meant a lot to me." He said, "The cross is a wondrous magnet, which draws to Jesus, every man of the true medal. The cross is a wondrous magnet, that draws to Jesus every man of the true medal." Are you of the true medal? Are you of the true medal? Is there something about the cross of Jesus Christ that speaks to your inmost being and draws you out of yourself to him? Is there something as you stand around that cross that so grips you that you say, "Oh, by the grace of God, I will serve him. I will not allow the reproach of the cross, the offense of the cross, to so stifle me that I shall not represent him fully and effectively. Is there something about the blood of the cross that speaks to your heart, and in the quietness of our own closet that causes a tear or two to course down your face, as you reflect upon what he did for you?

I wish I had time to finish all that I had to say to you about that. May I just remind you of the fact that it is wonderful for us to know all of these great things, but it isn't enough for us to just know them, they must be personal possessions with us. John Wesley was one of our great men. There is no question about it. He was one of our great men. In spite of the fact that he was Armenian in his theology, he is a great man used greatly by God, and thank God he's a Calvinist now. [Laughter] But nevertheless he was a great man, and I greatly admire Mr. Wesley, but you know he had an interesting experience. He was not converted until he was about 36 years of age. After he had been a minister. After he had been a missionary. He went up to Georgia. That's a good place to get converted too. He went out to Georgia, and he said that while he was a missionary in the United States, it was there that he learned that he was a sinner. He met a godly

Moravian pastor by the name of August Spangenberg, and Spangenberg seemed to notice that Wesley did not have the root of the matter in his heart, and he approached him one day. And Mr. Wesley describes it in his journal. And Spangenberg said to him, "My brother, I must ask you one or two questions. Do you know Jesus Christ?" "I know he's the savior of the world." Wesley replied. "True, but do you know that he has saved you?" Mr. Spangenberg said. "I hope he has died to save me." Mr. Wesley said. The Moravian was not to be put off. He said, "Do you know yourself?" And then Mr. Wesley said, "I said I did, but I fear they were vain words."

So I ask you this morning, do you know him? Not do you know he is the savior of the world? Not do you know that he has died to save you, but do you know him yourself? Is he a person to you? Has he dies to save you, and do you have that salvation personally in your heart? That's the question. That's the question of the day. That's the question of the hour. That's the question of the 20th Century. That's the question of all the centuries. Is he your Savior? You alone can answer that question in the quietness of your own heart. May we stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Now, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the suffering servant of Jehovah who opened not his mouth. The blessed communion of the Holy Spirit who brings men to Christ, the love of God the Father, who gave his servant for our sins, be in abide with all who know him in sincerity, until Jesus comes. We ask in his name. Amen.