

The Atonement*

By George Otis Jr.

Lecture 1

Lecture 2

Lecture 3

Lecture 4

Lecture 5

* This series on the Atonement given by George Otis Jr. at Youth With A Mission were taped in Tacoma, Washington in the fall of 1981. These tapes were transcribed by Chris Delk.

Lecture I

I think some of you have already gone through this series on the atonement before so it will be repeat for you. And so we'll find out from the very outset how well you remembered what you heard the first time. And for those of you who haven't gone through this series before this will help you to know what we are going to be focusing on the next several sessions. If you've got a piece of paper, I'm going to give you some questions. By the way several people have been asking me when my book "The God They Never Knew" was going to be coming out again. It's out now. They've done a new cover on it. I've added some material to it and one of the things we've added in the back of the book is a series of study questions for each chapter. And so I think it's become really a more appropriate tool for schools like this one. I don't have enough books right now but I do have one that has the study questions in it. So, I'll just go ahead and read them to you and I'm going to allow you to go ahead and put down what you think the answer is. Then we'll go over this same quiz later on after we finish the series and see how you do this afternoon. Hopefully, you'll do a little bit better.

First question. Briefly summarize, as best you can, in your own words, describe, summarize Man's situation apart from God.

Second question is this. What were the four major difficulties God needed to overcome through the atonement?

Question number three. Was it possible for God to accomplish many ends with just one action?

Question four. Explain God's governmental problems in reconciliation and then tell me, how did His problem correspond to that of King Darius.

Too bad I forgot to put the answers in the book.

Question number five. What does law without sanctions amount to?.

Question number six. Now, this is a two part question. What thoughts entered Adam's mind about God subsequent to his initial sin?

Makes you wonder when people get out slide rules for these questions.

Second question in number six is this. How has this erroneous concept been carried on down through human history?

Question number seven. How is this wrong concept transferred to various interpretations of Christ's work in the atonement?

Question number eight, again, two part question. Why did God's love not need to be restored by any propitiation? Why did God's love not need to be restored by anything that Jesus did on the cross?

Second part of this question number eight. Was the cross of Christ a stimulus to bring mercy about or an expression of God's predisposition to mercy?

Question number nine. What is wrong with the statement; "God is a God of Love but He is also a God of Justice"?

Question number ten. Define the two types of justice that are basically covered in the scriptures. Tell me which type allowed for forgiveness.

If you don't remember the exact word to use, just describe it.

Question number eleven. Define forgiveness. And tell me why is it impossible to both receive payment on a claim and to forgive it. Why is it impossible to both receive payment on a claim and to forgive it....after you define forgiveness.

Question number twelve. This is a neat kind of test, it gives you an answer to one of the previous questions. If the atonement, if the atonement satisfied retributive justice to the tiniest iota, if the atonement satisfied retributive justice to the tiniest iota what prospect are we faced with in relation to the Trinity? Second part of this question number twelve. Where in the universe, if this theory be true, can we find an example of pure agape love?

Question number thirteen. Can God relate to man in intimate fellowship when man thinks he's something he's not? Second part of this question. Why is it important for man to see himself as he truly is in a matter of reconciliation?

Question number fourteen. Explain God's motivational problem in reconciliation. Second part of question fourteen. What was the key to maintaining the new God-Man relationship against the magnetism of former inflamed appetites and habit patterns?

Last question, number fifteen. Do we possess any alluring qualities at all which would attract God to us prior to salvation?

In discussing the atonement, it must be done in two segments. The first we need to discuss and understand God's problems in winning man back to Himself; in reconciling man back to Himself; in restoring the ruptured God-Man relationship. In understanding the problems that God faced in winning man back to himself, it will help us to have a much greater appreciation for the solutions that God has offered for those problems. The process that takes place in restoring that ruptured relationship is called reconciliation. The object that is hoped for in that process is reconciliation. The solution to the problems that exist in the God-Man relationship is called redemption. The way that God won man back to Himself is called redemption. And we're going to talk in the next several sessions about both reconciliation and redemption. We want to begin by acquiring a good

hardcore understanding of the problems that God faced in reconciling man to Himself so that as we then later discuss the solution we'll have a much greater appreciation for it. Now I want you to grade your own quiz.

The way that you'll do that is by paying attention during the next couple of lectures where we cover the subject of reconciliation and you will know when we come to each one of these different questions and we'll be discussing the answer and if the answer that is given during the course of the lecture differs from what you put down on your paper then you will want to make the necessary correction.

C. S. Lewis, I think probably summed the whole matter of reconciliation as succinctly as anyone has when he simply stated that "God became a Man in order to turn creatures into sons". "God became a Man in order to turn creatures into sons".

Another Englishman, Malcolm Muggeridge, talking about reconciliation, stated "Through Him, speaking of Jesus, we may know God truly is Father. Through Him, the universal becomes the particular, the imminent becomes the transcendent, the implicit becomes the explicit, always becomes now, it was for this purpose, to open a way for sinners to know God, that Jesus came among us." "It was for this purpose, to open a way for sinners to know God, that Jesus came among us." Galatians 12:1 we read "and you that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works yet now hath ye reconciled".

We want to try and understand to begin with this morning, what man's state was prior to his redemption. What was his standing with God? What was his situation like? In discussing this it is important to go back and recall that Biblical principle, and it's not just a biblical principle that "Grief is proportional to intimacy". "Grief is proportional to intimacy". The more we know someone, the better we know someone, the more we love someone, the more vulnerable we become. And in any earthly relationship, of course, the ultimate in vulnerability comes in marriage, where the Bible says we become "one flesh" and when there is a hurt, it tears our own flesh. The better we know that person, the longer we've known that person, the closer we've become, the more power they have to wound us. If some casual acquaintance, that we've met maybe once or twice in our lives, makes some unkind remark to us it's fairly easy to shrug it off. But when our marriage partner comes up to us and makes an unkind remark, it's not so easy to shrug it off. It hurts. If some casual relationship suddenly leaves, goes somewhere else, it doesn't necessarily wound us to the core but if an intimate relationship is broken up, it can wound terribly. Grief is proportional to intimacy. The more we get to know someone, the more vulnerable we become.

That being the case, then think about the words of the Bible concerning God's knowledge of us. That he knows our going in and our going out; that every one of the hairs of our head are numbered; that God so loved the world, the people in it, the souls in it, that he gave his only begotten son; think of the love that God and the knowledge that God has for humanity, it's awesome, it's beyond anything that we will ever know, in any earthly relationship. The more we can learn about interaction in love and intimacy in this world

on this planet in earthly relationships. All these relationships do really is serve as types or as examples of a much greater relationship that's behind all of those small relationships. And I think that so called atheists and agnostics that deny god or deny the possibility of relating to him who enter into intimate earthly relationships are the greatest fools in the universe. For how could there be, any earthly intimacy that had any meaning whatsoever if it was not a reflection or an extension of a greater relationships that was behind all of that. If there is not some kind of an eternal reference point, then all of our so-called intimacies and loves in interaction down here in various earthly relationships are totally absurd, totally without meaning, totally without foundation, without roots. The only thing that gives any of our earthly relationships any substance whatsoever is the fact that they are rooted in a deeper, more eternal intimacy and love relationship.

Now I believe that people who are non-Christians can love each other, but I don't believe that they can get the maximum out of those relationships without understanding the God-Man love affair simply because that while they may be experiencing love they don't understand why it has meaning. And I just think to myself what it must be like for people who really love each other, who don't know the word. And what must go through their minds sometimes, you know, as they're laying down in their bed at night going to sleep and they are thinking about how wonderful this thing is but why is it wonderful, why does it have meaning. God said, "I am broken with their boorish heart which hath departed from me ". "I am broken with their boorish heart which hath departed from me" and the word "broken" in the Hebrew, the original Hebrew, means to shiver or to shatter, to totally crush, to break into thousands of pieces. And I think that the word that's used here, the word "departed" is very, very important and very, very suggestive, and we'll see.

What's the reference? I'll give you all the scripture references that we'll be going through at the end of the lecture if you like. In fact I'll give you a list for you to copy down, I'll just read them all off to you at one time.

It is man that has done his very best to break, to shatter, all expressions of divine love. And the question that this raises, man has taken God's Love, the love that God has extended, and he has wrapped it up in tin foil and he's deposited it in the garbage can. And he has said in effect to God, "I don't want to have anything to do with you, I want to live on my own, leave me alone".

Man has done this, this is an accomplished fact so the question that we ask ourselves at this point is, if God's heart and feelings have been broken, if they have been shattered, if this intimate love relationship that God originally intended to exist between Himself and man has been severed and has been ruptured is it possible to put it all back together again? Remind you of Humpty Dumpty? All the King's horses and all the King's men couldn't put Humpty Dumpty together again.

What about the God-Man relationship? Does there exist a craftsman anywhere in the universe that is skilled enough to put those pieces back together, in their original form. In answering this question, we have to realize that what God has to start with, if He is that skilled craftsman what he begins with is debris. He doesn't begin with something that half

built or something that is merely cracked a little bit or chipped. He begins with debris, with something that doesn't resemble what he started with at all. And that craftsman who had this beautiful form, this beautiful love relationship with man in the beginning, that has been shattered, it's been atomized, can he take all the little pieces and debris and put it back together again and in doing that you have to understand that craftsman must be able to visualize it's original form. He must be able to recall what it looked like to begin with, what it was to start with. He is not making something different, he is restoring what once was. Restoring the boorish heart that was departed. Okay, so man's situation today apart from God can be summarized very simply as follows: a) Man today apart from God. Man does not like God or even want to know him. And if you read through the first couple of chapters of the book of Romans, it makes this point very, very clear and in the amplified version that says Romans the 2nd chapter, that man doesn't even consider God worth knowing. So man does not like God or even want to know Him. b) despite that fact, that man doesn't like God or consider Him worth knowing, Man needs God for his sustenance and for optimum fulfillment.

I heard a funny thing yesterday. You all know who Madeline Murray O'Hare is don't you? Well, she's gone into hiding because people were driving her nuts witnessing to her. People kept calling her and witnessing to her over the phone..all kinds of Christians would go and stuff her mailbox with all kinds of Christian literature and with letters telling her how much God loved her until she couldn't handle it anymore. And she went, she's hiding now someplace..in between working hours. And here's this woman who swears up and down that God just doesn't exist and anyone who that believes in God is a fool. She doesn't like God and she doesn't consider Him worth knowing. And she's very blatant about it, most people aren't quite so blatant, so militant but Madeline Murray O'Hare whether she recognizes or acknowledges it or not needs God for a her sustenance. What's going to happen to her if suddenly the atmosphere of the earth evaporates? She's going to die very, very quickly. Her heart keeps her blood pumping through her whole body every day hundreds, thousands of times it beats. And it does so because God has allowed it. He has provided for her sustenance; he's provided food for her, provided air for her to breathe, provided water for her, everything that she needs in order to sustain her existence has been provided and continues to be provided by Almighty God.

And you know today we've become a people who somehow think, and even as Christians we think this, that we don't really need God, I mean that we don't need to be dependent on him on a daily basis. We go out to the market, we buy milk and we buy eggs and we buy meat; I mean we worked for that, we worked hard, we got a pay check and we went out and bought groceries.

And we really think in terms of the immediate, we think that we have produced that which we need ourselves. You just stop and think about it.

There are people, there are dairies, there are butchers, there are poultry farms and they think that they supply whole cities with dairy products and poultry and all this, they're the suppliers. To this day, I don't know of a single human being who has ever produced the necessary ingredients for an omelet themselves. No man has ever been able to create an

egg. Or any of these things, no man has been able to produce a stalk of wheat or an ear of corn. No man produces these things.

And we need to sometimes just think back to the very, very beginning of things go back behind the super markets, behind the suppliers, behind the packagers and realize again even in this modern, technological 20th century we are absolutely, day by day, utterly dependent upon the providence of God for our very sustenance and whether we acknowledge that or recognize it or not doesn't change the fact our well-being every moment of every day depends utterly upon God. Whether we like Him or not it's still a fact.

Secondly, the Bible tells us in the book of Ecclesiastes 3rd chapter that God has set eternity in our hearts. And of course this is the scripture that Don Richardson used to formulate the title for his most recent book "Eternity in their hearts" and the Hebrew word for eternity in this particular passage is the word Olam. OLAM. Carries with it the connotation of the love of eternity or the love of that which is eternal. In other words God has set or manufactured into every man and woman who has ever been born into this world a love of that which is eternal. And we cannot experience on this earth optimum or complete fulfillment in our lives until our lives or longing for that which is eternal is met. Our society today is a picture of people who are trying desperately to find fulfillment, they're eternal beings, trying to find fulfillment in a material world while denying God any role in their lives and of course its impossible but they try. And don't ever forget that you and everybody that you know was made with a capacity for God consciousness for God awareness and that we were designed purposely that way by God. To relate to Him and to relate to that which is eternal. And when we try and stuff an eternal compartment with material things of course its never going to bring us to optimal satisfaction or fulfillment. And there are these ludicrous little slogans that we confront....the craziest one of all is cigarette slogan, you know, "the cigarette that really satisfies" and of course if it really satisfied we would only need to smoke one, wouldn't we. Here are these chain smokers smoking the cigarette that really satisfies; you know. Nothing in this world really satisfies and we don't know that that's true until we come to the point when we are born again.

Something enters our lives that we can't describe, that we can't really explain but we are made complete, we are made whole. And as we look at our communities full of thousands and thousands of people who don't know God relationally, we need to view them as walking shells that need to be filled with eternity.

I was invited by girl I met in a class to her home. I was to meet her family and just to be hospitable and sociable and this girl lived in a family in which her father was unsaved but the rest of her family was born again. The wife was a Christian, her mother was a Christian, her brother was also saved and she was a Christian. In fact, she's, some of you will know who she is, her name is Sue Secrest - her husband is Dan Secrest - who for many years was the YWAM director of Spain. And what I suspected was happening when I was invited over to the house was that I was being set up and that her father was also being set up. And that we were going to be maneuvered into a situation in which I

was supposed to, you know, lay some Christian apologetics on him, because they had tried everything you know to get him to become a Christian and he was a real hold out (laughter). So you know we had a great dinner and then in a not so subtle way we were ushered into the living room and positioned right in front of each other in two facing chairs. I thought "Oh brother", I felt, I felt really sorry for this man. Not because I was going to slaughter him with some kind of debate or anything like that but because the situation was so blasted awkward and I felt uncomfortable and I knew he did and I just wanted to come and be his friend and get to know him and not have to start witnessing the first five minutes of our time there.

Anyway they started asking questions that were real set up questions like "George, what do you think about ..."; or a "I know that dad has been wondering about..."; and I wonder if you could share with ..." and a little ways into our conversation he said "Look, I don't have any problem with the fact that my wife and my children have become Christians. I have no problem with that, I think its great. I wish them the best. I'm not going to interfere in that, I think its wonderful, I support them wholeheartedly, I love them. I don't think there's anything wrong with Christianity. I think it's okay to be a Christian. But we're talking about me, right now, and I am happy". Have you ever been witnessing to somebody who says, "Hey, I don't need Christ, I'm happy"?

He said, "I've got a fantastic family, wonderful children a wonderful wife, I love them, we get along fine (and they did) and I've got a great job, I like doing what I'm doing, I get good pay for it, it's fulfilling and challenging. I've got a nice home, I enjoy living here (and they did, it's a beautiful, beautiful place down in Olympia) and on the weekends I can go out and take my motorcycles up into the hills and ride around, you know, I'm healthy, I'm happy. I don't think there is anything wrong with Christianity, I just don't see why I need to become a Christian. Why do I need to go to church and listen to somebody preach? Why do I need to give my life to God? I'm happy. I've got everything I need right now".

Well, I listened to him, he was sharing like this for about ten or fifteen minutes, I was listening and he was so sincere, he really just about had me convinced that he really was happy; and I was saying to myself and to the Lord "Lord, what would you like to say to this gentlemen? What am I supposed to say to him?, you know. There's the typical response, you know " You've fallen short of the glory of God, you've sinned, you're a sinner, you need to recognize that you're a filthy sinner; all your righteousness is filthy rags". I didn't think I'd get too far with that approach and I was asking the Lord for some handle with this fellow and that scripture from Ecclesiastes 3 just roared up into my conscious mind, "For God has set eternity in their hearts" and then the Lord just reminded me, He said "You have an ally inside of him". What he's saying to you cannot possibly be true, he has experienced a measure of happiness.

And those of you who have had the opportunity of reading C. S. Lewis's autobiography entitled "Surprised by Joy" will remember that he made many, very, very similar, statements that were similar to the ones that Mr. Secrest, I mean Mr. Fourier was making.

He was happy and one day C. S. Lewis came to the realization that while that he thought that what he really wanted in life was to find joy, was to capture joy, he suddenly realized that joy wasn't what he was seeking at all, that joy was a by-product of something else. Or of someone else. And there are many things that we seek today for themselves, their own sakes, like humility, like unity, like joy, and all these things will evaporate in our very hands if we try and grasp them. You can never realize any of those things by seeking them for their own sake, they are all by-products of a relationship and a focus on the source of all of those things, which is of course, God himself. Anyway, I said, when Mr. Fourier was finished, I said, "Well listen, if you'll just, let's just use our imagination here." "You've told me that you are happy and have explained some of the reasons why but I'm sure that there must be at least a few little adjustments or modifications that could be made in your existence that would make you even a little bit more happy. You could be a little happier still. So why don't you take the next five minutes or so, lean back in the chair, close your eyes, and just imagine yourself in the most perfect, absolutely perfect, circumstances you can fathom, maybe with somebody else with you, maybe in some other place or with something else added to you."

And I gave him a few minutes to do that and I said "Okay, now that you are in that place and all the circumstances now are in place there's only one thing I can say to you with certainty. And that is that if you ever actually realize that which you are imagining right now, your heart will still long for something more. And once you realize that, your heart will still long for something yet again. And you will always still long for something more because God has manufactured you with a capacity for eternity." And that's all we shared that night and we dropped the subject and we started talking about sports or something else. But two weeks later, he finally went forward in his family's church and gave his life to the Lord.

He's doing great, he's a Christian to this day. And there are, there is again this vital principle here that we as human beings desperately need God not only for our sustenance but for our optimal fulfillment.

So again, going back, and recapping man's situation apart from God is, he doesn't like God and doesn't want to know God. Secondly, but man needs God for his sustenance and optimal fulfillment. Thirdly, God loves man deeply and wants the best for him. We remember God is a God of agape love. And how would we define agape love? Give me a few words, descriptions. Love without any strings attached. Which means that what? Totally unselfish, unconditional.

Now how many of you think you have experienced that kind of love? How many of you have that kind of love in your life right now? To a small measure. How many of you would like that kind of love? Me too, me too. And I hate to say it but I know this morning that I don't experience and live out agape love nearly to the extent that God wants me too. And there all too often, I discover in my heart that, that what I give does have strings attached. Even if they are small ones and even if I try to convince myself that they are not really there.

And because we have such a difficult time with agape love, because so much of our giving is predicated upon what we are going to receive in return, it is very difficult for us to conceive that God is really what he says he is. That he is a being of total agape love. That what he gives, he gives without expecting anything in return, without demanding anything in return. He would like something in return, he longs for his love to be responded to, but even if it isn't, it does not prevent him from loving unconditionally anyway. God loves Charles Manson, God loves Leonid Brezhnev; God loves Momar Gadafy. I'm not sure that I do, really. There are times when I read about atrocities that have been perpetrated by some murderer or by some rapist or some other criminal, either on the international scene or community level. I'll read it in the newspaper or see it on TV and you know what comes into my heart? Rage. The desire for vindication, desire to see that person suffer. And if somebody were to offer me the chance, today, to go on a mission with a hit team to take care of a few people in this world, it would be very tempting.

I find it difficult sometimes to sort out my hatred of sin and my feelings for the sinner. Those same things that produce rage in me, also produce rage in God. But the rage that rises up within God's being is not directed towards the perpetrator but towards that which has been perpetrated. We'll talk a little bit more about this but let me just, suffice it to say here at this point that, there is nothing that you nor I could ever do to cause God to stop loving us. If I murder someone, could God stop loving me? Moses murdered, David murdered, Paul murdered. How about maiming other people? David did it. Peter did it. How about committing adultery or fornication? Lots of people did it in the bible. Not only did God not destroy them, they became great leaders, great spiritual repositories, great examples to you and me today, to this very day. Does that mean that God loves those things, that he doesn't think they are too bad after all, that we can be Christians and do those things?

It's not what it means at all. It means that there is nothing that you or I can conceive in our minds, nothing that you or I can execute, that would cause God's heart or predisposition to love unconditionally to change. We cannot change him. There are times when I have counseled with people who have said, "I just..I just can't make it, I can't do it, I've just messed up too badly. I told God that I was going to get my act together and start living a holy life and I keep going, I can't do it". And condemnation has set in and guilt has set in. And there's nothing wrong with the guilt, the guilt is good. It's when you start doing those things and don't feel any guilt, you need to start worrying. The guilt comes because God is loving and gracious. The condemnation comes after we've confessed the sin. We've really felt sorry about it. We've repented of it and there is still no rest. We still toss and turn after we've made it right. That's not good. And I've talked to people who are suffering from both guilt and people who are suffering from condemnation and you need to deal with them differently.

One person needs to deal with these feelings in one way by taking certain action and the other person needs to take a another action. But the point is and this is the thought that has often come to me in times of despair, in times of frustration because I have really messed up. I think to myself and I think to myself this very moment, right now, this

moment, God loves me. This very moment in history; in my life, God is willing the very best things for me. He wants my highest right now. He wants to see me prosper.

He wants to see me grow. He wants to see me happy. God wants that for me right now. And for every one of us and there will never be a second of my life where God will ever want anything else. God is Love. Agape love. And in spite of the fact that man apart from God doesn't like him, doesn't even want to know him, doesn't acknowledge his need of God; in spite of that God is benevolent. He's wishing the very highest for every single one of those people. He's wanting the maximum for them. The optimum. And so, fourthly, God therefore attempts to win man back to Himself.

So man's situation again, man does not like God or even what to know him but man needs God for his sustenance and optimum fulfillment. God loves man deeply and wants the best for him and he therefore attempts to win man back to Himself. For God's own benefit? Does he do this? Not ultimately. God will derive benefit in winning man back to Himself cause he loves man and he wants the fellowship but man desperately needs that relationship for man to be supremely fulfilled and happy; and God's love is a giving love and that is where God derives his greatest pleasure is from giving. And again, when we use this phrase winning man back it does, in a very real sense, betray the fact that man is lost property; and while there's no mistaking the fact today that man is indeed a rebel on the rampage, even a rebel belongs to somebody and try as hard as he may man cannot deface or erase or scratch off the unmistakable markings of a being created in the image of God. And I have often thought of this as I have been confronting somebody who is unlovely; whose attitude left a lot to be desired, whose physical appearance left a lot to be desired and sometimes the two go hand in hand. And you meet these people and their personality is just totally unpleasant, and they are rude, and selfish and arrogant. Who wants to be around them?

Let them go, let them walk off a cliff, good riddance, you know. We should take all these people...I have often thought we should do that you know; I have often had strong feelings you know that we should put Jane Fonda on Alcatraz and let her spend the rest of her life there. Get all the hippies and all the weirdos and all the communists and all the murders and rapists - give them a whole continent and let them fight it out among themselves and leave the rest of us normal people alone. When we confront these people can we remind ourselves that these very people, these ugly, unlovely people, are the very objects of a great and an undying love. Maybe I don't love them but somebody does, somebody really does. There are markings upon them, they are human beings, God created them for a purpose. He created them as a potential bride, He created them for intimacy with Himself; He created them to be the receptacles of the overflow of His love. And if God loves them with that kind of a love, how can I cast them off in my heart?

So you see, I'm explaining to you this morning how far I am still to this day from exercising and fully realizing the love of God in my own heart; agape love. It's a great and a mysterious love and it's something that we need to learn and that God wants to teach us but can only teach us over a period of time as we spend that time disciplined with him. Where we emulate him. We look at him. We listen to him. We copy him and

suddenly his characteristics, I shouldn't say suddenly, over a period of time his characteristics become ours, he starts to rub off on us.

If we want to become like Christ how can you do that unless you spend time with Him; we become like the people we hang around with. man has in a sense has stolen his life from God and given it to moral harlotry. He's left the one who made him and he's left the home where he belongs. Malcolm Muggeridge, is a British social critic and a very old man now, became a believer in his later years, discussed this phenomena that we've been talking about during the early stages of his own conversion experience. He said "I've never wanted a God, or feared a God, or felt any necessity to invent one; unfortunately, I am driven to the conclusion that God wants me." And that's the bottom line, when we begin to talk about reconciliation, that's the bottom line "God wants us".

Let me explain one more thing, share one more thing, because by giving them the next thing..... It's very, very important to pay attention to the language that God uses in the scriptures to describe things. When you stop and think about how wise God is and about how incredibly intelligent he is He would not unthinkingly or carelessly use a story, an illustration or a figurative expression. He uses words and phrases and pictures to get as close to reality as He possibly can in describing things to us. And God uses a lot of terms relating to the human love relationship when he is describing the God-Man relationship. What it isn't, or what it should be, or what it can be. He uses the word "bride" when talking about us, and not just Christians either by the way.

You know we talk about the bride of Christ and we think that it's just the church but you see the church is not complete yet. And Jesus delivered the story of this wedding feast that was planned, that was organized and nobody came. Remember that, the seats were empty. And so he turned to his servants and He asked them to go out into the world, go out into the highways and byways and find people to come to that wedding feast. Of-course this is a picture of the Great Commission. Going out in search of a bride, to find her and to fetch her and to bring her to the wedding feast. So you see as we go out into the community, whether its Pike Streak up in Seattle, or somewhere here in Tacoma, or Mongolia what were doing is that were going out there and walking amongst the potential bride of Christ. But the thing that's really important is the terminology, the word "bride". And other terminology that God factors in would include harlotry or adultery, in a spiritual sense. "I am broken with your whorish heart". What is a whore? It's someone who gives themselves intimately to people they don't belong to. And then as we'll read later, there is the whole example of the situation with Hosea, the book of Hosea and the type of his life. We'll get into that later on as we talk about reconciliation.

When you think about a bride leaving that's quite a picture and that's the picture that..and we'll give several scriptures to this effect a little later on..probably this afternoon. It's a bride that is leaving, that has left him. It's not a situation where after twenty years of turbulent marriage that finally the woman walks out the door in a huff and says "goodbye". I mean that's been known to happen, in fact it happens quite a lot, usually it's not after twenty years, usually it's after two years but how often does it happen with a bride. You see a bride is somebody that is anticipating, a bride is someone who has been

cleaned and who has been given to who has been invested in, a bride is someone who has a future, a bride is someone generally who has not been wronged at all, there is no record, nothing has nothing happened yet, everything is bright and rosy and wonderful and exciting and new. And what does it feel like to a bridegroom to be stood up. It's one thing again to have a wife walk out after a lot of fights and a turbulent situation. But what happens when you come to the alter, everything is prepared, a wedding feast is there and she doesn't even show up. Not only does she not show up for you but she breaks your heart because she's not at your wedding, she's out in someone else's bed. "Can a bride forget her ornaments?", the Lord asks, "or her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number."

We need to see how poignant this whole God-Man relationship really is. We need to look at the whole thing from Gods perspective and not from our perspective if we look at it from our perspective we miss the full impact of the thing. We can take our definition of love and place them on Gods back if we want to but we are going to undershoot an accurate understanding of the love of God if we do that. We need to allow God to describe the situation in his own terms. And it comes in two ways. First of all we use the descriptions that He provides for us in the Bible and we get the word pictures and we get some imagery there and it helps us to come before him in the right attitude of heart to receive a Revelation of the holy spirit. And you see that's what God is really wanting to do with us here. Concerning our understanding of the atonement; our understanding of the God-Man relationship, he's wanting to bring us a real revelation of the whole thing through the holy spirit. And we can block that through our own choices. We can block it through apathy. We can come and we can say, "Well heck, this is just another lecture in the course of many lectures during the course of this school and I'll learn a few new things maybe about God or about this particular point of theology." And if you do, you'll be getting something good but you'll be missing the best.

The best teaching, the most lasting teaching that you're going to get in this class is going to come by the holy spirit. Not by any lecturer that ever comes here and stands before you; not by any staff member; some of you are going to get an education that goes way beyond others of you because you will come here and you will open up your emotional life, your intellectual life and your spirit to the holy spirit of God to bring revelation. And even those of you who have gone through this whole series on the atonement before, even I, need to come before God, today, during this time and say, "new revelation, need to see it deeper". And we will receive that which we want and that which we've come for. And if we are struggling with our attitudes and struggling with our sin I believe it's simply because you and I have not understood how much our sin hurts God.

We live in kind of a blurry, anesthetized world where sin doesn't really hurt, you know we can commit it, we can do all kinds of things and go and say "Oh, Lord I'm sorry for that, I really am sorry. But how sorry is He, I mean, what is it putting Him through? How disappointed is He, here He is and He has poured out his very life blood for Him and what do we do in return, after that act of love we give him a plate of disappointment. You're big enough God, you're sovereign, you can take it, you can bounce right back, you're agape love, after all, you're going to keep on loving me, it's alright, I'm sorry, I

know I shouldn't have done it." God wants to take us deeper than that, he wants to take us deeper than that, he wants to really take us on in into relationship into intimacy. And again, God wants us not to just talk about this kind of relationship, not just to talk about a quietness a kind of understanding but to experience it to embrace it. So let's bring our hearts before the Lord in a new and a special way. Let's really prepare ourselves to receive revelation of the holy spirit. And just do me a favor, okay, allow God only to use me in these next few lectures as a vehicle; the best thing for you is when your attention is totally focused on the holy spirit, while you're hearing things from me I'll go and ask the holy spirit to give me the right things to say but then as you listen to these things you hand them to the holy spirit to break them into revelation. What I am giving you are buds and you let the holy spirit turn them into blossoms.

Let's take a few moments to change gears. We're complex, people and personalities and the book of Ecclesiastes tells us that there is a time for a lot of things. A time to laugh, a time to be serious. Generally, the two don't mix very well and sometimes when we try to be serious and when it's a time to laugh, it damages us and conversely when we try to laugh when it's time to be serious we miss out and it damages us. So are we all ready to go?

Lecture II

We mentioned this morning that it was difficult if not impossible to appreciate God's magnificent solution to the problem of the broken God-Man relationship until we had first acquired a good understanding of the problems that He faced. Sometimes I think if we really knew the full story behind the blessings and gifts that others bestowed upon us that we would appreciate them far more than we generally do. For example, you will remember that there was a time when David was hiding from Saul. Saul was the King of Israel and was out to take David's life. And David one day just casually said that "I would be so happy if I could just take a drink from this particular well water." But he realized that particular well that had such good water in it was behind enemy line, behind the troops of Saul. A couple of David's loyal colleagues heard that request and they very, very carefully snuck behind enemy lines at great risk to themselves, went a long way and risked a lot in terms of personal safety and drew some of the water that David was longing for out of that well and brought it back to him. And I think that if they would have just come up to David and handed him a cup of water, he would have probably said "Gee, thank-you, I appreciate that" and drank the water and gone on to the next order of business. But when he found out where that water came from he was overwhelmed, instead of drinking the water, he poured it out on the ground as an offering. Because he understood what was behind that gift, that blessing, all the effort that went into the provision of that cup of water, he appreciated it so much.

I think that it's very much the same with our understanding of the atonement, we have become so familiar with various cliches pertaining to the cross, and the lamb that was slain, and to the shed blood of Christ and so forth. And all of those, I shouldn't say all of them, but most of those cliches and phrases that we use are true. But we don't really fully appreciate when we are using them, when we are saying them, repeating them. We haven't made an effort to fully examine all that God did in order to produce or to offer, extend to us salvation. We just kind of take the gift and run with it, maybe once or twice we will be reminded that it cost God his life but even that's a bit of over simplification. We need to understand why it was necessary for Jesus to offer up his life. Why was that required? How hard or how easy was it for God to reconcile man to Himself? All of these things were discussed in great detail in the early church. It was not possible to be a member of the early church and not have an understanding of these things. But today we've become modern and sophisticated and I guess for some of us it's no longer important to take the time to discuss the great doctrines of Christianity. And I think the reason for that is that so many years have passed between the time that Jesus walked this earth, between the time that Jesus hung on the cross and today that somehow it doesn't all seem very real to us.

Some of the "Christian" words we use don't seem to have relevance to the real world, they're just part of an empirical, abstract, spiritual dimension. Because they're relegated to a spiritual dimension, they don't have any real impact on our day-to-day lives. But I'll tell you, if somebody that you knew - that you walked with and talked with and fellow-shipped with - had, a couple of months ago, had given their life for you, you'd still be

thinking about it a great deal, you'd be talking about it a great deal. Particularly, if that person was Jesus Christ whose life was so extraordinary in so many ways. It's just too far removed from the 20th century and so we've become, I think, a little bit glib about it. Trite. I believe that's what God wants to change because when we become glib and trite about the Atonement and Cross, it doesn't work for us anymore. And you see, salvation itself is a matter of being saved from something. And if we're going around talking about the fact that we're saved, don't you think would be a good idea that we had an understanding of what it was that we were saved from?

It's not possible to be saved from our sins unless we've had an effective and real encounter with the Cross of Jesus Christ. So it's really a serious thing that we, today, have not pressed in to the Holy Spirit for revelation of the Cross to us. Without it we just simply cannot be saved. Somebody who is living their lives in sin, isn't saved from their sin. The Angel, in announcing to Mary and Joseph, the birth of Christ and what they were to name the Baby, also made the statement, "Ye shall call His name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins". Salvation is being saved from sin. If we are not freed from the bondage of sin then we're not saved from anything.

If I can't get through a single day without sin raising it's ugly head in dominance over my life then what's the difference between the way I was before I was a Christian and now in real terms? I'm going around talking about the fact I'm saved and what I really mean when I say that is that I'm going to Heaven after I die and that I'm now going to church and I've adopted a Christian exterior but as far as my lifestyle is concerned, I'm still sinning all the time. Maybe the sins that I'm committing are different sins than they were before but we cannot be free from the power of sin until we've had an encounter with the Cross - simply because sin has become, prior to salvation, a way of life for us. We're very familiar with it. We've embraced it. It's part of us and we have actually come to the point where, through our own choices, we have developed sinful habit patterns and actually sin has become our nature. It dictates our every course of action to us.

Paul talks about this state of affairs in Romans - "Is this law?". And Christians, just by virtue of the fact that they have one day gone forward in the church and knelt at the altar and repeated the sinner's prayer, cannot expect that in itself to free them from the bondage of sin because it won't. In salvation is that we're saved from our sins and that we move out of an old life, where sin has had predominance, and we move into a new relationship. It's not a matter of going forward in a church and performing some kind of an act and saying to Jesus, "I accept you into my life", and suddenly God no longer looks at our sin as sin, and now we've got the key to Heaven in our back pocket. When we encounter the Cross it not only deals with the effect of past sin and takes away guilt, it also gives us the ammunition, if you will, to deal with sin that we confront in the future. You see, God doesn't want to just forgive us, He wants to transform us. There are people today who want to be forgiven but they don't want to be transformed. The problem is God won't forgive you unless you allow Him to transform you.

The church today is split right down the middle on this doctrine. There are many, many denominations and Christians who say you can be forgiven of your sin without being

transformed. That it's alright to sin every day in word, thought and deed. That God has positionally sanctified you and that you're standing in Christ is something that is different from your actual state. When you sin, it wasn't the new man who did that, it was the old man. We all have this dirty, old man in us who commits all these sins. You see, we don't do it, the old man does it. Yeah, schizophrenic is right! I remember, it was either an Irish judge or a Scottish judge, who was confronted with a man who had just stolen some goods. He was Christian, at least claimed to be, and came before the judge and he said "Judge, that was my old man that did that". And the judge said, "Well, I'll tell you what I think we ought to do. I think we ought to take your old man and your new man and put them both in jail and let them work it out".

God in the covenant that he gave to Israel...we'll be getting into this in more detail when we get into the subject of Redemption...gave man a two part covenant. The first thing He said He would give them was forgiveness of sins, a pardon. The second thing He said He would give them was a new heart. You can't separate the new covenant down the middle and say, "I'll take half of that covenant but I don't want the other part of it. I like being forgiven of my sins but I also like who I am and I want to still be me. But I want to be forgiven me, I want Heaven but I also want to live the way I want to live here on earth.

I want to have my cake and eat it too." What you're really saying is, "I want to be saved from the results of my sin but I don't want to be saved from my sin itself". Fortunately for us all, God doesn't work that way. God says, "Don't you know that whoever you yield your members to, as servants to obey, you are their servant?" Whether of sin and unrighteousness and death or to God and righteousness and life. You choose. You're either going to be saved through the power of God, through the Love of God as manifest through the Cross, from actual sin, or you're not.

I'm repeating this several times because I wanted to go deep into your minds and I don't want you to ever forget it. Salvation means that you are saved from your sin. Not in an abstract way but you really are. It means if you're saved, you don't go around sinning anymore. I'm not talking about sinless perfection. I'm not talking about the fact that once you become a Christian you never sin anymore. I'm not saying that. Well, that's right. We don't go around making sin a matter of life. We don't go around expecting to sin. If you're living a life under the expectation that you are going to sin every day, not only will you sin every day but you will have to admit to yourself that you're really not saved from sin. You will also have to admit to yourself that sin is the most powerful force in the universe and that the Blood of Christ just is not strong enough to cope with the demands and the power of sin.

Of course, I don't believe that happens to be the case. I think the Blood of Christ and the Love of God causes the power and the magnetism of sin to pale in comparison. When people get saved all things are passed away, behold, all things become new. We think differently and we act differently. And it's not a process either, by the way, in the sense that, Barry brought up the key word here, that we continue to intentionally do that which is wrong. We cannot come to God with a bunch of known sin in our lives and not allow Him to deal with that known sin to the point of salvation. There are a lot of youth leaders

today that are counseling their young people, there are a lot of pastors today that are preaching to their congregations...that we shouldn't be too hard on the new Christian who has got a bunch of raunchy, sinful habits because it's a process - becoming a Christian is a process - it takes time. There's a sense in which that's true and there's a sense in which it's not true at all. When we come to God in salvation, what we are saying is "We surrender." We surrender all the weapons of selfishness that we have been using against the righteous, moral government of God. We have to realize that sin, known sin, it's a weapon. They are like hand grenades and bullets and rifles and we use these things to fight against God, to hurt God, to damage God in His Kingdom.

In the book of Ezekiel, God says "When you're coming before me, cast away from you all your transgressions." Notice he doesn't say some of them - cast away, throw away the worst things you're doing. He doesn't say, "Hang on to a few and I'll deal with those things at a later date." He says, "If you're going to come to Me to be saved, you're going to come to Me, on My terms, not yours". Remember, God doesn't need to be reconciled to man, He never left. Man needs to be reconciled to God, he's the one who split the relationship. And so if it's going to be reconciled, it's going to be reconciled on God's terms. And as I read the scripture out of Galatians, Chapter 1, this morning "Before salvation we were hostile, we were enemies in our mind towards God". We were fighting a war, a moral war with God in His Kingdom. Nobody in their right mind is going to accept a surrender from someone who remains armed to the teeth when they're signing the act of surrender. Would you? God's not stupid. We're coming to Him and we're saying, "We want you to save us from our intention and our desire from the act of using all of these weapons. We're really sorry. We were really wrong that we've been hurting you and we intend to quit", which is what repentance is, by the way, "so we cast away from ourselves, all of our transgressions". We get rid of all of them.

All that we are aware of. Everything that we know that's wrong. We confess that before God at the moment of salvation and as soon as we do that then God accepts our surrender and we can be saved. That does not mean that we are perfect at that point. That does not mean that everything in our life is pleasing to God. But it does mean, at that particular moment in our lives, we are living up to and obeying every bit of moral enlightenment we have. Which means at that point, we begin to live a holy life. Not a perfect life, a holy life which means that we're living up to all the moral light that we have at that time, that given moment.

Now, a relationship is a process. The process of entering that relationship, if there is no process of entering the relationship, that happens at one specific moment, when we come to terms of surrender...but then as we, at that point, when we become Christians our relationship to God changes in a fundamental way. We cease to be just subjects in God's moral government and we become members of His household. And God now lovingly begins to reveal to us new ways that we can please Him. New ways that we can adjust or modify our life or our attitudes or our behavior. And the more time we spend with Him in relationship, the more we become like Him.

And in the course of that relationship we read the promise that if we sin, we have an advocate with the Father and if we're willing to confess our sin then He will be faithful and just to forgive us that sin and to cleanse us again not just forgiveness but cleansing, transformation, from all unrighteousness. So the big difference before and after salvation is that before salvation, sin is a manner of life, after salvation, it's the exception. Just like in any love relationship.

I've shared this illustration before and I'll share it again now. I have grown up all my life in a Christian home with a mother and father that loved each other and cared for each other and that served one another. There's no doubt in my mind now nor has there ever been that my parents were living in a love relationship. That does not mean that I have never seen my parents argue.

That does not mean that I have never seen them do things that hurt one another because I have. But even during those incidents, they weren't always pleasant, I didn't conclude in my heart that they had suddenly fallen out of love. However, if after that incident they had not gone back to one another and made up and asked for forgiveness and then gone on and they continued to behave in a way that they knew was designed to hurt the other person then I would have to begin to say to myself, or admit to myself, as painful as it might be, "I don't think my parents love each other anymore. I don't think they have any relationship anymore."

So it is in a relationship with the Lord God. If we make sin a way of life, a practice, if we persist in sin, then there is no relationship at all. We have embraced sin and we have begun again to live for ourselves supremely. We have made ourselves and our own wishes and desires king. And you don't point to a person who over a long period of time is persisting in sin, living and making choices that individual knows is designed to hurt God and then describe that person as a Christ-one, a person who is walking in the Spirit, who is walking with the Lord. What do they have? They have nothing. They have nothing. Now we need to be very careful in this area, in observing others, to not slip unwittingly into an area of judging our brothers in the body. I think we need to be very careful and withhold our judgement because we may catch that person at a bad moment. They may love the Lord with all their heart. I think to the best of his ability the disciple Peter wanted to please the Lord but he did some really unintelligent things at times. If we had approached Peter during the time he was denying the Lord, what would we have concluded, "This guy doesn't have any relationship whatsoever with Jesus. I heard him deny it. Boy, that guy needs to be cast out or delivered or something." And we would have been wrong if we had come to that conclusion. The Lord confronted Peter over that denial in a very gentle but in a piercing way. Peter's heart was broken, you'll remember, when the Lord dealt with him over that denial later on. But we shouldn't go to the other extreme and watch somebody languishing in sin over a period of months.

Obviously their heart has grown cold, their relationship with God is going nowhere and then just to refuse to say anything to them because we don't want to be judgmental. What we're doing is we're saying we recognize the fact that this person is no longer relating in love to the Father at all. We can tell it. By the way they're talking, by their attitudes, by

the way they're living, their choices, they haven't got anything going with God anymore. They're not living like a Christian lives. They're not free from the bondage of sin. Sin is taking its toll on their lives....but we don't want to judge them. Well, that's ridiculous. If we really love them as members of the body of Christ, what we need to do, is we need to get alone with them, put our arms around them, tell them that we love them and that we've noticed that changes have been taking place in their life and that their heart is apparently been really growing cold towards the things of the Lord and how can we help minister to them. No parent or brother or sister or family member who saw another member of their family that they loved destroying themselves in some way would refuse to go and talk to them about it under the pretense that they loved them and they didn't want to say anything judgmental. On the contrary, the person who truly loves their brother or sister in Christ is going to be the one who will confront.

Not in a haughty, arrogant manner but in a way that will perhaps prompt them to do some evaluation, to do some auditing, that might put them back on track for eternity. We're not just talking about somebody that might be screwing up here for a couple of months on earth. We're talking about somebody that's playing with fire, that's playing with their eternal existence.

So salvation is a profound thing, it's a very real thing. It's not an abstract thing, it's a real thing. Salvation is something that we live. It's something that we experience. It's something that becomes part of our lives. Who we are as people is transformed. It's nothing less than that. And if we're preaching a gospel that identifies salvation as anything other than being saved from the bondage of sin then what we are presenting is not very good news. To oversimplify the problems that God faced in restoring the ruptured God-man relationship, reconciliation, is to face the prospect of missing the full impact of His solution. By the way, to reconcile, in case you want to write down a brief definition. To reconcile means to restore to favor; to adjust our differences; to cause one thing to cease and another to take its place. The reconciliation outlined in the Bible is twofold; firstly, between man and God; and secondly, between man and man. That's outlined in 2nd Corinthians 5:18-20.

I'd like to take a preliminary look right now and we are go into, into some length in discussing all four of these problems but I'd like to take a preliminary look right now at the various problems that God faced, the obstacles that needed to be overcome in restoring a mutual, loving, happy relationship between God and man.

The first thing is that the individual, the one that God happened to love, the one God had chosen to love was a criminal on death row. God had said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall surely die". And man, prior to salvation, had sinned, had chosen to sin against God and was thus living under this sentence of death, eternally. And this made, if God was going to restore the relationship, if reconciliation was to take place, that meant that God's first order of business was to remove the just consequence of death from a law violator He loves. To remove the just consequence of death from a law violator He loves. This is a problem here.

This matter of God, in effect, rescuing man the criminal, on the moral death row, is called God's governmental problem. That's the first problem that God faced in reconciliation. The governmental problem. Now I'm just, I'm giving you a preliminary look at the four problems and then we'll come back and look at each one in depth.

The second problem that God had in restoring the broken God-Man relationship was that man by virtue of his moral drift away from God had lost his concept of God. He didn't know what God was like or what God thought. And God, therefore, in order to restore a mutually happy relationship needed to reveal Himself to man. God needed to reveal Himself to man in some way. And this is the personal problem. Man not knowing who God was, who God's person was, what His character was like. By virtue of man's moral drift, he'd missed that, he'd forgotten, he'd lost that concept. So God's second problem in reconciliation was the personal problem.

Now, we could say I guess, just this first problem, the governmental problem in itself problem enough. But added to that were three more problems. The personal problem and then thirdly, there was the problem of man's pride. And believe me, that is a problem. I am speaking starting this evening and the next couple of sessions about pride and I think I've shared with some of you on that subject in the past. Pride is a horrendous thing, it's a real cancer. Man had been away from God so long that he totally lost all perspective with regard to his own importance and ability. In other words, man began to think he was something that he wasn't. He was actually under the impression that life itself revolved around him. Because there could be no meaningful relationship as long as man had and maintained this self-centered opinion of himself, it became necessary for God to reveal man to himself.

The second problem was that God was going to reveal Himself to man. The third problem was to find a way to reveal man to himself. Man needed to see himself for what he really was. This third problem was the hypocritical problem.

And finally, the last problem that God faced after he had resolved the first three and man had moved back into relationship with God, back into fellowship with God, man had a complete pardon in hand and the renewed ability to see God and himself accurately there still was this problem. In order to induce man, to provoke man, to urge man to terminate his love affair with sin and to prevent this new relationship from reverting to its prior state, to the way it was before salvation, God had to find the right formula to maintain the restored relationship by establishing a powerful sin deterrent barrier. This is the fourth problem or the motivational problem.

This is part of reconciliation. If and when God found a solution to these problems, all four of them. A way to free man from the just consequence of death; a way to reveal Himself to man, show man who he really was, God; and then show man who man really was, show him his heart; and then find a way to keep this new relationship from breaking apart again and reverting to the way it was before. If and when God could solve all of these problems then that same tender relationship that God enjoyed originally in the Garden of Eden would once again grow and flourish. And I need to say at this point, it's

very important once again to repeat, that there were many things that were to be accomplished by the Atonement. There were many things that God was going to accomplish in the Atonement. A solution to just one or two of these problems that we have written on the board would not have been adequate or sufficient. Many theories today on the Atonement will provide a solution maybe to this problem or maybe to this problem or maybe another problem.

But if God had only solved that problem it wouldn't have been enough. He could have freed man from the just consequence of death so that man could continue to live but he would not have continued to live in intimate love relationship because he didn't have the foggiest idea of who God was and he still would hold these superficial opinions of himself. And if God had merely through the Atonement revealed what He was really like to man that wouldn't have been enough because He wouldn't have been able to uphold the law or His moral government. He would have said, "The soul that sinneth it shall surely die". Then how could he turn around and say "No. I changed my mind. The soul that sinneth it shall surely live." and have anybody respect the integrity of the Law or the Law Giver. And even if God revealed to man what His heart was really like, man still has his own problems. He's not looking at life accurately. He's still deceived. Even if somehow the Atonement solved all three of these first problems, we don't just want a change, we want a change that lasts. That's going to work through our whole lives. It can't be just a momentary experience, where we come to an altar one day and we see our sin and we go "Oh, that's horrible. I really am dirty." And we see just momentarily the love of God and we think "Oh, how wonderful."

And there are people that teach today that's what salvation is all about and the problem is that when people teach others that's what salvation is then the chances are excellent that they'll go out and from that point on and in the next two or three weeks they'll be living in sin again. See God wants to provide us with a powerful sin deterrent barrier through the Cross so that it takes away our desire to continue to sin. It's not just that He wants to deal with the results of the sins we have already committed, which the Cross does. The Cross is also to help us deal with future temptation. So God wanted to accomplish many, many things through the Atonement and it's important that we have an accurate understanding of the Atonement as being many ends accomplished through one solution. Pretty brilliant plan. The plan of salvation is absolutely perfect. God accomplished everything He needed to do.

It is God's design often times not just in reference to the Atonement but in reference to many areas of life that many ends will be accomplished or fulfilled or met by one solitary action. God did not generate light, for example, only that we should be able to see. Did God create light so that we could see? How many of you think He did? Yes, He did. God created light in order that we should see. But that's not the only reason that He created light. There are numerous other ends that we're aware of and perhaps there are many that are unknown to us in the creation of light.

Light is directly responsible for color, warmth and time, as well as having an indispensable impact on the development of agriculture. So God accomplished many things through the one act of creating light.

So it is with the Atonement, God accomplished many ends through one action. And keeping this in mind we want to now move on to examine the four major difficulties that God faced in his effort to reconcile the God-Man relationship. I don't know how far we're going to get here. We're going to at least cover this first problem, the governmental problem and if we can we'll cover the second problem as well or at least part of it today and then tomorrow morning we'll continue.

Now an understanding...let me just erase...you've got these down here. Let me just erase these last three and let's just concentrate for the last few moments on this first problem. God's governmental problem. Let's take them one at a time so we can understand and appreciate each one.

In understanding God's governmental problem, which I think some people find the most complicated of the four to understand. I think its helpful again to remember the story, the Old Testament, of Daniel in the lion's den.

Daniel had been selected by King Darius the Great as his virtual second in command. And Darius the Great at that time ruled over a kingdom that extended over all of the civilized world of that day. And the administration of the kingdom was handled by a hierarchy of 120 princes which in turn answered to 3 presidents of which Daniel was the chief.

Daniel didn't just...you know...he wasn't just born the chief president of Iran, or Persia, that day. He earned favor, the grace and favor of Darius the Great. Because he was a hard worker, because he was honest, because he was loyal, he exhibited those qualities that any king would want to have in a right hand man. The king loved Daniel and he trusted Daniel. But Daniel's fellow leaders didn't like him at all, for the simple reason that they were jealous that he was preferred, that he was special to the king, and they weren't. And they were scheming and maneuvering to try and get him out of the way. And so they came before the king, played on the king's pride and said "Oh king live forever". Stupid saying really when you stop and think about it, nobody's going to live forever. "Oh king live forever". You know I think it would be much more realistic if they would just come and say, "Oh king have a very long and healthy, fruitful life" . "Oh king live forever. We have an idea. We just think you're the greatest, Darius. There isn't another leader on the face of the earth that can possibly compare with you. And it would be in everybody's best interest in your kingdom, if they have any problem or they have any need that they should come to you, and you alone, to petition you, and you alone, for the next thirty days."

Now that should have made Darius suspicious right there. I mean if I was Darius, I would have thought to myself, "Hey, if I'm really all that great, why make it thirty days? I mean, if I'm going to live forever, let's just make this thing last forever, for perpetuity. Anybody

wants to petition anybody, then they can just come and petition me. They need my consent and my decree and my blessing." Well, of course, these colleagues of Daniel's knew darn well that Daniel prayed to a Being or a personality that was higher than Darius the Great and he called him Jehovah. So this king, in his pompous arrogance, signed this idiotic decree and then these other leaders sent their spies out to peek in on Daniel's quiet time. And promptly came back to the king. You know, like a bunch of tattletales. And told the king that Daniel was...I mean, here they'd got Polaroid shots of it, the whole works, they've got the proof, the evidence, hard evidence. Here was Daniel praying towards Jerusalem, towards Jehovah God, and he was not petitioning you, Darius. He was petitioning someone else, who he considers to be greater than you. Do you consider that very loyal? Consider Daniel's position in the kingdom. I mean if the number two man in the kingdom is caught worshipping or petitioning somebody other than you...you're going to have big problems, you'd better deal with this. And it wasn't until that moment the king realized what had happened...he had really screwed up. The king, who loved Daniel so much, became ensnared by the words of his own mouth. He trapped himself. And see, they had a big thing in those days about law.

We have a big thing about it today. You know the Americans for Civil Liberties Union, for example, they've got this big thing about the letter of the law and they are going to enforce the constitution, the letter of the constitution upon all of us, even if it destroys the will of the framers of the constitution, and the way of life that we enjoy in this country. It's a demonic, satanic controlled organization that we need to be praying against. The Americans for Civil Liberties Union has nothing to do with civil liberties whatsoever. They're anti-God, they're anti-righteousness, they're anti-everything that this nation was founded upon.

Well, the Medes and the Persians had this big thing with law too and they would sign their various decrees or their various legislation with this phrase.."According to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which altereth not...". Which means, you know, once you say it you don't back out. And then the king would sign that and would make a mark on the paper or document with a signet ring that only he had. Once that ring went on to that document, it was, I mean, the law was poured in concrete. And it was a big thing, I mean, law is important. Law without sanctions is..? Advice.. Mere advice. And even back then they understood that much. And Darius is thinking to himself.. "My gosh, what am I going to do? We have passed a law and maybe it's a stupid law but it's a law. And people in this country, in this kingdom, need to know that when we pass laws we mean business. We're not just doling out advice. But I've passed this law, I've signed it and Daniel has violated this law. What am I going to do? Especially, with all of these leaders in here snipping at my heels right now." I'm sure feigning the greatest degree of grief over this unfortunate predicament. Oh, no...probably weeping over Daniel's fate. How sad it was..the king really didn't have any choice.

He had no choice at all. And it says, in fact I'll read it to you. "...and then they answered and spoke before the king. Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Juda, pays no attention to you, oh king." That's an interesting way they start...Daniel pays no attention to you. Now was that true? Do you think that was true? If anybody was more loyal to the king,

Darius, in all of his kingdom than Daniel, I don't know who it would have been. They didn't come and say, "Oh, Daniel just..we saw him praying to his God", they came and they started by saying "he doesn't pay any attention to you". When I get to heaven, I kind of hope that God has kept a film archives because there's a whole bunch of things in the Bible that I would like to put on a projector and watch. And one of those things was this event, where these leaders were going before Darius. I want to see the expressions on their face. I'd like to see the whole scene. "He pays no attention to you, oh king. Or to the injunction which you signed. But he keeps making his petition, three times a day." And then as soon as the king heard this statement, he understood what he'd done. As soon as the king heard this statement, he was deeply distressed and set his mind on delivering Daniel. And even until sunset, he kept exerting himself to rescue him. Darius was really hurting.

Talk about a guy who kicked himself. I think Darius was probably furious with those people that had brought this information to him - I think he knew the whole thing all of a sudden. It was all clear to him what was going on. But he was more angry with himself than anybody else because he'd been duped. And he thought and he thought and he thought, "Man there's got to be some kind of escape clause in this legislation. There's got to be some way out of this." But he couldn't find it. And he waited until the last possible moment but in the end, he put Daniel in the lion's den. And I think it is just beautiful the way he comes in, probably the crack of dawn the next morning and said, "Daniel, was your God able to deliver you?". Hoping against all the odds that Daniel's God really was who Daniel thought and said He was. Now this was the problem or dilemma that Darius faced. Again, how was he going to balance justice and mercy. The age old dilemma. If he doesn't put Daniel in the lion's den, he is exerting mercy to the maximum. Then what hurts and what's going to suffer? Justice. Yes, and beyond that the law, right. The law of the Medes and the Persians which altereth. And what happens if he puts Daniel in the lion's den what suffers? Daniel. That's right, Daniel suffers but what else? Mercy. Mercy, but what else? The kingdom suffers, doesn't it? You're losing you're best administrator and your best friend. Sure.

So, he's got to chose, "Am I going to lose my best administrator and my best friend or am I going to lose the whole law of the kingdom." Boy, talk about a time to start wringing your hands and biting your fingernails.

This was exactly the position that God was placed in after Adam and Eve had sinned by partaking of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which God told them not to partake of. God loves man, He loves him so much, He wants this intimate fellowship with him. But he also recognizes that sin is a horrible, powerful thing and he doesn't want it to start spreading out of control in the universe. And to allow man, to help man to understand how he viewed sin and how terrible sin really was, He attached a sanction to it and that sanction was death. So what is God going to do? Is he going to, in effect, condone sin? And say "Okay, I know I said, The soul that sinneth it shall surely die but in this case, the soul that sinneth it shall live because I really like you and I really don't want you to die." but then what's going to happen when the next person sins? God really likes him too. And the same with the next one and pretty soon nobody's going to

die for their sin. But the other alternative, of course, is that everybody dies. And that's not to hot an alternative either. So this is God's government problem. How can God, as the righteous moral governor of the universe, whose responsibility it is to uphold the law of the universe and to uphold righteousness and to protect society. How is He going to get out of this dilemma? This is God's governmental problem.

How does a government balance justice and mercy and wisely dispense their consequences for the good of society? The purpose of laws and of courts in this country and, of course, in the whole universe is to dispense justice, not mercy. I think we make a big mistake, and I, you know this past couple of weeks I've seen program after program it seems, just the last couple of weeks on television dealing with rehabilitation.

And about poor prisoners, poor criminals who are just put in these warehouses and about what happens to them when they're in these warehouses and how they're made worse and when they come back out into society they're worse than ever. We need to put more money into rehabilitation. We've got to make the prisons a nicer place, they've got to become schools, they've got to become training centers. Free education while the rest of us have to pay for ours. You can go out and murder somebody or rape somebody and then the taxpayers in return will pay for your free education. And we must not hold people in prison indefinitely because that's inhumane. The purpose of penal institutions today in a lot of people's minds is rehabilitating, it's mercy. No it isn't. It's never meant to be merciful. A prison should be a rotten place so that people who go there don't want to go back a second time. The purpose of prisons is to get people away from normal society.

If people are out murdering and stealing and raping by their own choice, which is, of course, the big debate isn't it because we're told that people don't do these things as a result of their own choice, they're forced to do them, they can't help it. I was born in a certain neighborhood and I never could get a very good education and so therefore that made me go out and rob banks. Or I grew up and my mother and father they got divorced at an early age so that made me go out and commit rape because I was so angry against women. No, the purpose of prisons and the purpose of laws is not to protect the violator. It's to protect the rest of society from being violated. You know there might come a day when prison becomes such a nice place that people start committing crime so they can go there. Do you think I'm kidding? Some people join the army for that reason. And they'll go to prison for that reason, too. I've heard people say, even now, that they'd rather be in prison than out. So the purpose of courts is not to protect the person who has violated the rights of somebody else, it's to protect the rest of us who chose not to do these things from being victimized. And every just penalty, every just penalty, the lawbreaker pays strengthens moral government and almost every mercy he receives, weakens justice. Unless the government finds a method of blending mercy and justice.

Only the gospel can reconcile the two concepts without damaging or misusing one or the other. And had Darius been able to figure out the answer to his dilemma, what would he have had to done? He would have had to go to the lion's den for Daniel. He loved Daniel but not that much. Not that much.

Now, how would you feel if tomorrow morning you turned on the radio, assuming of course you had access to a radio, I realize that these people here are depriving you of all news from the outside world. What would you feel like if you turned on the radio and suddenly you heard Dan Rather or somebody saying, "We have a news flash here. The President of the United States has just issued a blanket pardon for all prisoners currently incarcerated in American prisons, effective immediately." How would you feel about that? When the prison doors all across the country began to swing open and all of these prisoners, all of these criminals, who had violated the law started to march back out into society without serving their terms, or their full terms, what message would be on their lips or in their minds? "Crime pays". That was quick. That's right. Crime pays. You can break the law and get away with it. What happens to the law? What has happened in our country, folks, to the law? You can break the law and get away with it. You sure can. The law in this country no longer has much in the way of teeth, it's become toothless. It's no longer become a deterrent to people contemplating violating the law. And what has happened to the integrity of the law giver? Well the courts in this country of course some people are saying today have made a mockery of the constitution and the wishes of the legislators and the lawmakers.

God could never sacrifice the welfare of His government in such a way. Knowing full well that law without consequence or sanction is merely advice, God had to find a viable way to demonstrate to every moral being His respect for the law. For if God didn't respect the law who else could be counted to do so. If God Himself didn't respect the law then nobody else could be expected to think that it was very important. God's law is important to you and to me today because God has demonstrated to us that it's important to Him. And if God had demonstrated otherwise, that the law wasn't all that important to Him, it wouldn't be very important to us. Compromise on a such an issue of such immense importance was simply out of the question to God. He would uphold His law. God would remain just and righteous in His solemn responsibility to hold the moral fabric of His Kingdom in tact.

So, an expansion now on God's governmental problem which was again how to remove the just consequence of death from a law violator He loves reveals the following dilemma for God. This sums up God's governmental problem: 1. Man had sinned violating God's moral law. 2. The consequence of this violation was death. To underscore the seriousness of sin. 3. Yet, God loved his creation and did not want to see him die. So again to recap. Man had sinned violating God's moral law; the consequence of this violation was death; yet, God loved his creation and did not want to see him die. So, therefore, God's problem was to find a way to: a. Uphold His law. b. Show His hatred for sin. c. Set the man He loved free. d. Without encouraging others to sin. That was the first - this is the first of God's four problems in reconciliation to be solved in the Atonement. How would you get out of just that one?

Do you think at this point that you have a pretty good grasp or a pretty good understanding of what God's governmental problem was in reconciliation? Does anybody have a real question, a real block on that before we go on to the next problem. Good.

The second problem that God faced in reconciling man to Himself, in restoring the ruptured God-Man relationship was the personal problem. God had to find a way to accurately reveal to man what his heart was really like.

Now, we're going to perhaps not finish our discussion of this second problem that God faced, the personal problem, before it's time to eat. If not we'll continue on in the morning. I believe that it's this second problem, the personal problem that has been more confounded and more confused in the minds of Christians than any of the other problems. This is where more Christians derive erroneous concepts of the Atonement and what the Atonement's all about than any other area. So I want you to pay particularly close attention to what I am saying and what I am not saying. Okay?

We deal with the personal problem, we need to start by defining the difference between grief and wrath. We're told that God experiences both. How are these emotions manifested in the death of Christ, in the Atonement, and in God's heart?

They're what conditions. In order for humanity to be reconciled with God, it's necessary obviously that we know God. How can we be reconciled and move back into an loving relationship with somebody we don't even know? So God, recognizing this problem and wanting to win man back to Himself, goes out of His way, strives, to reveal to man what His heart, God's heart, is really like. We need to know what God's character is like, we need to know how He's disposed towards us and how He feels concerning sin. And we must further take time to study God's love memos represented in this book, the Bible, dealing with His thoughts and His attitudes. Or, if we don't, if we fail to take time to study those memos, then we'll be destined, as a result of our moral drift away from God, to misinterpret Him entirely. Have you ever been in a relationship with somebody, and in the course of that relationship, and I don't know what degree of relationship necessarily we are talking about here, it can vary, you're in a conversation with somebody and at the end of making a statement that person shakes their head and they look at you and say "You just don't know me at all. You just don't know me." God does that all the time. And you know when He does it I think more than any other time? After Sunday morning sermons - on the Atonement.

Now, we go back to the Garden of Eden. God has told Adam and Eve that they are not to partake of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and if they do they would surely die. They did. What did they do after they had sinned? After they had partaken of that fruit? They hid themselves. They sewed fig leaves together. Why do you think they hid? They were afraid, they were ashamed, they were embarrassed. They had changed. They were afraid. Why were they afraid now? They had never been afraid of God before. They were expecting wrath. They thought God had changed. Now what really happened when they ate that fruit? Who changed? They changed. And they assumed that because something had happened inside of them and suddenly their eyes were opened and they were thinking thoughts they hadn't thought before, it was a profound alteration that had taken place in their minds. They thought because they had changed, that God too had changed. And God, all they had known about God including His sanctions, that He had expressed to them was that it came out of a heart of benevolence, of love. They loved

Him and He loved them. And they walked together in the cool of the day and shared fellowship and intimacy.

And now we see this profound alteration has taken place in the heart of man and there Adam and Eve aren't out there obeying the Lord doing what they're supposed to do waiting for God to come down and walk with them in the cool of the day sharing fellowship and intimacy. They're cowering and hiding behind bushes. What a picture. Adam thought because his heart had changed that God's heart had also changed. And this very concept then, from that point on, carried on throughout the entire race of rebellious men and women. From that moment on they began to imagine, in their minds and in their hearts, a God of wrath filled with a desire for vindication. Suddenly this lovely Being who wanted fellowship is now coming with an iron mace, ready to destroy.

And people have wondered if perhaps the wrath of God that has been kindled by their sin and their actions and their disobedience might not at least partially be appeased by gifts or by their suffering. And so we've see, in pagan societies and not so pagan societies, throughout the history of the world and all over the world, people coming before idols bringing food, bringing all kinds of things, even the fruit of their own body, even their own children. They cut themselves and they bleed and they put spears and needles inside themselves and the Hindus, they'll do all kinds of horrible things to their bodies to appease the wrath of God. "Okay God, I know that I've hurt you but see I'm bleeding now. I'm hurting too...so now you won't be so mad against me. And I'll bring you gifts. Please don't be so mad."

The tragic spectacle of man worshiping God from fear, rather than out of love and intimacy, is heightened by these pitiful rituals of self-inflicted torment. And the world wide hope is that God will somehow be soothed in His own heart as He watches the sinners suffer.

The founder of the covenant denomination, P. P. Waldenstrum said in his book , *Be Ye Reconciled to God*, "Many dear children of God view this as the very essence of Christ's work. They think they never can escape the wrath of God unless it has been poured out upon someone else in their stead. In their opinion, the chief significance of Christ is that He be a shelter to shield against God or, so to speak, a lightening rod for His wrath in order that they may feel safe before Him."

The old hymn writer, Isaiah Watts also highlights this misconception in one of his hymns, "Rich were the drops of Jesus's blood that calm His frowning face. That sprinkled over the burning throne and turned the wrath to grace. Thy hands, dear Jesus, were not armed with a revenging rod like the Father's were. No hard commission to perform the vengeance of a God. But always mercy, always mild and wrath forsook the throne, when Christ on the kind errand came and brought salvation down."

Albert Barnes, whose written a book published by Bethany Fellowship entitled simply, *The Atonement observed*, "...in such language as this, while something may be set down to mere poetry, into the overflowing emotions of gratitude to the Savior for the part

which He has performed in the work of Redemption, it is undoubtedly implied by a fair interpretation of the language that a change has been produced in God by the work of the Atonement and in some way a Being before stern, severe and angry has been made mild, forgiving and kind".

So you see that this false concept about the heart of God that entered into Adam immediately subsequent to his sin and then passed down throughout human history to all of these societies where all they could think of is that when they did something wrong suddenly God was filled with this anger and this wrath and this desire to be vindicated. God has been hurt therefore He's on the warpath to hurt those who have hurt Him. God is not going to forgive the sinner until somehow He has been paid back for what sin has done to Him. God is not going to forgive until He sees somebody suffer first. He is going to see blood shed. And when He sees blood and when He sees suffering then God will forgive. So you see, we have totally lost our concept of who God is. We've totally thrown agape love out the window. We've said God loves with strings attached. God wants to be paid back. He wants vindication. We don't know Him. And God shakes His head and says, "You don't know me. I didn't love Adam any less at all the moment he sinned. I was grieved about what he did but I didn't love him any less". This serves to illustrate the tremendous need to discuss God's attitude and approach in the process of reconciliation.

Christians have grasped hold of scriptures pertaining to God's wrath and in the midst of all their theorizing, they've missed a very, very important point. That point is that it was not God who needed to be reconciled to man. It was not God who needed to be reconciled to man. It was man who needed to be reconciled to God. God's disposition of love towards man has never changed. It has not been diminished by the fall or by any other subsequent event. And as we mentioned earlier there is, in fact, no sin which you or I could commit capable of severing God's love. There is nothing one can do to make God stop loving. God hates sin but He loves people. The love of God never needed to be restored by perpetuation because it was never lost. The Atonement could not have changed God for He tells us plainly, in James 1:17, that His character is unchanging.

The essential idea in the Atonement is and I'm quoting here from Barnes, "...not that God was originally stern and inexorable and that He has been made mild and merciful by the Atonement but that the Atonement itself has its foundation in His willingness to pardon. Not that He has been made benevolent by the Atonement but that He was originally so disposed to show mercy that He was willing to stoop to any sacrifice but that of truth and justice in order to that He might show His willingness to pardon the guilty. He gave His son to die, not that He might be bought over to love but as the expression of love." Do you understand the difference? When the Bible speaks of the wrath of God to what does it refer? Everywhere, that's right, everywhere the object of God's wrath is described as sin and unrighteousness, not people. God has a hatred and a fierce wrath for sin and for unrighteousness. But not for you or for me or for anybody else. If God started hating other moral beings it would pollute His character and He certainly wouldn't be a Being possessing agape love.

How would the universe survive if God should one day cease to hate sin? So, God never hated us and He was never filled with wrath toward us. If that's not why Jesus died, to replace that wrath with love, and if, the death of Christ did not appease the wrath of God towards sin, then what was the nature of His death and His sufferings. Fortunately, it, the Atonement, didn't take away the wrath of God towards sin. Can you imagine that? The day after Jesus died, God no longer hates sin? That would be something wouldn't it. So it wasn't the wrath of God; it wasn't the wrath of God's heart or desire to be paid back or vindictiveness that was changed in the Atonement. That has nothing to do with the death of Jesus. But boy, have we been taught that.

The Bible speaks of "a wrath to come" in Luke 3:7 and man's preparations for that day are also included in the scripture in Romans 2:5 where Paul says "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasureth up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God". Now the first time the word "wrath" appears in this scripture it can be interpreted to read or to mean guilt. You treasure up or you horde up or you harbor guilt in your heart because your heart is impenitent, you refuse to repent of it. And the second time the word "wrath" appears in this verse it's the painful duty of a righteous God; it's the consequence levied against unrepentant sinners. We've already seen or talked about the incredible grief that sin brings to the heart of God but we must also understand that the execution of judgement brings Him even less comfort. Let me say that again. Sin itself brings grief to the heart of God but the execution of judgement upon sinners brings Him even less comfort. God pleads and pleads and pleads with men to change their hearts so that He can withhold judgement - all throughout the Bible.

Ezekiel 33:11, "Say to them, as I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked..." Could He make it any clearer? "I have no pleasure", I, God have no pleasure, " in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn back, turn back from your evil ways for why, will you die, Oh house of Israel ?"

Lamentations 3:33, "For He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the sons of men"

Isaiah 1:18-20, "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet", alright, we accept that fact, "they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you be willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land:" even though your sins have been red as crimson, "But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

No desire to destroy. No desire to judge. No desire to see suffering or affliction. If we like Nineveh, will be willing to repent of our sin, then we will in the words of Jonah, "...find a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness, and one who relents concerning calamity." That's pretty nice isn't it? One who relents concerning calamity, gracious, slow to anger, abundant in loving kindness. That's the God of the Bible. We must not take our theology out of hymns but out of the word of God. Let God speak for Himself. Let Him reveal Himself to us. If we staunchly refuse God's offer to, as He says, "...come and reason together", then there will eventually come

a time when in Gordon Olson's words, "God is regretfully conscious that the means at His disposal to secure man's obedience have been exhausted". And that's the worst moment to God. He pushes that moment off and off and off and off until He comes to a point where He's regretfully aware of the fact that He's done everything He can possibly do to secure our obedience and that now to protect the rest of society, to uphold His world government He must execute judgement. But He doesn't do it with a smile curled up at the side of His mouth. It's at this moment that God's grief reaches a climax. For He knows for the highest good of all involved He must judge the unrepentant sinner.

Probably several, how many of you have listened at one time or another to the Agape land Album put out by the Agape Chorus..a children's album. There is a song on that album that I think illustrates God's attitude toward the judgement as well as anybody ever has that I am aware of. It's a song about Noah and about the flood and it goes like this.

" But as the Lord was speaking, He then began to cry. He wept and wept for forty days and He wept for forty nights. And though it had never rained before in all of the earth's long years, now up the ark began to rise afloat upon God's tears." That is the Bible God. That's the God that we have relationship with.

What if we break here with a word of prayer and then we will go ahead and continue discussing this second area..the personal problem..and how our understanding of the heart of God has gotten all confused over the years not just other pagan societies but even we as Christians and how its affected the way that we relate to God and honor God and understand His nature and character.

Father, we thank you for this time together this afternoon. We thank you for the privilege of allowing us to come together and to talk about something that is so meaningful. Lord, I just ask that this truth would be burned into the depths of our souls; that we would be changed by truth; that we would become new men and women who are cleansed, who embrace both parts of your new covenant; your forgiveness of sin for which we're so grateful; but also Lord a cleansed and transformed heart which we also need and want. Lord show us who You really are and show us ourselves as well. In Jesus name.

Lecture III

We covered yesterday completely the first of God's four problems that He faced in reconciling the God-Man relationship. That was the governmental problem, the problem of balancing justice and mercy. How do you uphold the law, show your hatred for sin, set the man you love free without giving license to others to sin? I think most of you have been able to grasp fully the dilemma that God faced governmentally as the righteous, moral governor of the universe.

And then we began to talk about his second problem which we said was the problem out of the four that most Christians, that have trouble understanding the Atonement or who have misunderstood the Atonement, find difficulty is with the second problem, the personal problem. We have been away from God, relationally for so long, speaking when I say we, of the human race, subsequent to the fall that we have lost all concept of who God really is. It started with Adam's sense that because he had changed that God's heart had also changed. You would think that his relationship with God to that point would have been such, would have been close enough, that he would have known that God would not have changed and that God could not have changed. And the reason that he was confused and the reason that he began to hide along with Eve really illustrates the profound alteration that really took place in his soul as a result of his, for the first time in his existence, for the first time in the history of the world, taking on a knowledge of good and evil. Moving from a place where he was getting understanding and revelation, you might say, by the drip-feed method, God not wanting to increase his revelations and his understanding faster than there was an increase in character, for obvious reasons. And suddenly this drip-feed method is transformed into a raging waterfall and there's just knowledge everywhere. And his whole outlook, Adam's whole outlook on everything, changed, profoundly. And we said that this sudden feeling or sense that perhaps God who yesterday had walked with him in intimate fellowship in the cool of the day was now stalking him with vindictiveness in his heart and this sort of understanding, this warped understanding of the character of God was then passed down through the ages into many, many different societies who did all kinds of things to themselves, cutting themselves, offering all kinds of gifts of appeasement to God in hope that God's anger might be diminished at least slightly so that when He slugged them in the jaw as the result of His anger over their sin at least it wouldn't be quite so hard.

And how this concept of God moved right into our theology concerning the Atonement itself. Concerning the act that Jesus performed on Calvary. Suffering and shedding His blood for us, for our sins, that the reason Jesus did that was to appease the angry heart of the Father and that once God's heart was soothed and was appeased by the suffering and blood which He saw that He would be willing at that point to look at man and extend forgiveness. We also mentioned one thing at the very end yesterday illustrating that God does not have a vindictive urge. That God never wants to judge if He can possibly help it. He doesn't want to see suffering. He doesn't want to see calamity. He doesn't want to see pain. The only time those things are visited upon men by God is when He comes to the point that He has absolutely no other choice and that if He doesn't visit that judgement

upon man then greater pain would result. So He's, in taking these actions of judgement, not increasing but reducing the amount of pain and suffering in the universe. Along these lines God thought to Himself, the sin of man, there had to be some kind suffering or some kind of action, some kind of demonstration, that was unpleasant that would reveal to humanity the degree to which God hated sin and the degree to which sin was an abomination, a dangerous thing. But without visiting suffering and judgement on a lot of people, on sinners, because then we'd all be in grave danger of being the recipients of whatever God decided to do.

He decided that He Himself would bear that suffering. And in that act God profoundly reduced the amount of suffering the universe would contain by containing it within His own body, being, as far as He could. We stated that, if we refuse to respond to God's offer to us to come and reason together, then there would come a time when God was regretfully conscious that the means at His disposal to secure man's obedience had been exhausted. We went on to say, that it was at that moment that God's grief would reach a climax because He realized at that point that He had to send judgement. Then I read to you the words of that song in the children's album about the flood in Noah's day.

I remember also in 1975-76 somewhere around there attending a scriptural leadership conference in central California at which Lauren Cunningham joined us and Campbell McAlpine was speaking. In the middle of this conference, Campbell McAlpine delivered a powerful, powerful sermon on Moses, just one of those that leaves you sort of sitting in your seat after the speaker's finished, just not wanting to say anything but just think and contemplate what you've heard. But at the end of his sermon, Campbell went directly into a prophetic utterance. I'm assuming that most of you believe that that's something God can do today if He so chooses. I think God can do anything He wants to do, including speak through human agency to a larger group of people, if it's scriptural. I've seen it in operation, I've seen it abused. But in this particular case, it wasn't abused. Campbell began to speak with the voice of God to us and within I would say the next thirty to sixty seconds that entire auditorium of people were either on their knees or on their faces on the ground including Campbell himself up on the platform lying there prostrate. Rarely seen anything like it. Delivering a very hard word, a word, a warning of judgement, absolutely sobbing and weeping as the message was delivered.

My mind flashes back to people like Jeremiah, who was known as the weeping prophet. And so many others in the Bible. When it came time for God to deliver the hard word, the word of warning, the word of judgement it always came through sobbing and weeping. God never enjoys that.

We often hear the statement God is a God of love but He is also a God of justice. What is there about that statement that is wrong? What is wrong with that statement? They way that most people deliver it? How many of you like this word? Give you a warm feeling? Non-threatening. Happy word. Happy word. How many of you sometimes find this word just a little bit scary?

Sometimes it's good, I mean, if you're the victim, this is what you want. David was crying out to God to bring justice to him all the time because of what his enemies were doing. Sometimes we look at this word and we think, "oh, no thank you." This is a nice, cute word. God is a God of love. He's happy, warm and nice. But He's also a God of justice. Cold and calculating and stern and ready to pummel his enemies. When people make that statement, they are, consciously or unconsciously equating justice, God's justice, with everything that is negative. As the opposite or the inverse of God's love. But God's justice, on the contrary, is the product or an attribute of His love. If God were not a God of justice; He would not be a God of love. People who have suffered; people who've been victimized really are the ones that understand this better than anyone else. They know they can ultimately turn to God to balance the scales, to be just to them, to be fair to them. God's justice is not and will never be in anyway separate or divorced from His benevolence or His determination to will our highest good.

We also alluded to the fact yesterday, although not in any great deal detail, that the primary function of law is to secure the happiness and the well-being of society. The primary, the first function, purpose of law is to secure the happiness and well-being of any given society.

Laws are never intended to be ends in themselves. We don't have law for the sake of having law. But laws are rather a means to an end which is the happiness and well-being of society. So laws, when we look at them in that light, are important, but they are not all important. They are not as important and should never be made as important as the end which they are meant to uphold or maintain. Laws can be replaced or dispensed with, only if, in so doing, the end which they uphold is not damaged in any way. So, if what we really want, our ultimate objective is the happiness and well-being of society and there is some way we can obtain that and dispense with some law, that's okay. The law is not the ultimate, it's a means to an end. It's only something that we use to help preserve that which we really find important which is the happiness and well-being of society. But if in removing that law or dispensing with that law, our ultimate objective, the happiness and well-being of society, is damaged or threatened in any way then we cannot dispense with that law, we have to keep it. And an effectual substitute, a worthy substitute, a working substitute, for the normal execution of the penalty for lawbreaking is what King Darius labored earnestly, but failed to find. God, on the other hand, was able to find and provide an adequate substitute for the normal execution of the penalty and satisfy the demands of public justice. Which I'll describe to you in a minute. And so, in God's case, an exception would be made to the normal execution to the penalty. A pardon would be, could be granted. The biblical word for this substitution, finding something else to replace the normal sanction or the normal execution of the penalty, the biblical word for that is Atonement. So, God's solution to His "lion's den" problem was the governmental substitution of the sufferings of Christ for the punishment of sinners.

No, we're not going back here to discuss the governmental problem we're still on the personal problem and you'll understand in a minute how this relates to that. Won't you just for a minute, for those of you who don't have this definition already in your notes

perhaps from a previous lecture, I'm going to give you the difference in the definition of retributive justice and public justice.

Retributive justice is when the person or persons who are responsible for executing the penalty of the law look calculatingly at every individual situation and then exact strictly in accordance with the deed. In other words, they will look at what you have done and they will select a penalty or sanction that fits the deed exactly. In other words, if you put out somebody else's eye then the penalty for that will be that your eye will also be put out. But if somebody in putting out your eye, also chops off your nose, then you will have the right to go and chop of their nose so that everything is equal. That's retributive justice. There is no mercy and no pardon shown where retributive justice is concerned. We should also say that most of the time retributive justice can never be fully or exactly satisfied.

For example, there are all kinds of ways that people can hurt us that are non-physical. Things that people can say to us or do to us that hurt us inside, not outside, and it is very hard to find a way under retributive justice to deal with that kind of a situation. How do you know if in dispensing the penalty for what they have done to you or to someone else that that penalty will be less than what they have done to you or more than what they have done to you? How can you monitor the degree of hurt or punishment or suffering that they are going to feel compared to what they had doled out earlier? Very difficult. And how would it ever be possible for God to punish you and I, physically, for what we have done to God and His kingdom morally? And this is something that I think a lot of Christians and a lot of theologians and pastors really need to think about. It's a very fundamental point. How in the world is God going to get satisfaction for all the moral, emotional feelings, the hurt that sin has caused Him by simply eliminating one or more physical lives? They don't match, it's like comparing apples and oranges.

And if God were satisfied on a personal level by somebody dying and suffering, what does that say about what kind of person He is? If I am able, when somebody wrongs me, to put that hurt aside, to absorb it, and to say, "Hey, listen, I forgive you. You don't owe me anything. I forgive you.". If I can do that, how come God can't? If I don't have to be paid back, how come God does?" If God is requiring some personal satisfaction for the hurt that sin has caused Him and the way He gets satisfaction is by watching suffering and death and blood. Then I have to say that my own moral sensibilities are more virtuous than His are because I don't always require that. Sometimes I think I'd like to see that but there have been times in my life when I've been able to absorb hurt and I'm sure many of you, probably most of you, have been able to do the same - say, "Look, you hurt me but I forgive you, it's over, it never happened". Under retributive justice forgiveness is impossible. Forgiveness can never be granted. There must be an exact response, an exacting of a penalty that is equal to the violation. The emphasis in retributive justice is not on the end but on the law.

Public justice, however, is basically concerned with the overall interests of the public or society as a whole. Public justice is basically concerned with the overall interests of the public or society as a whole and justice is administered with the highest good of those

involved as its end. Even those who are being punished. Penalties under public justice are executed the same way they are under retributive justice unless something else is done that will be equally effective in securing the public's interests. So there is no difference really between retributive justice and public justice except the one focuses on the means to the end and the other emphasizes the end itself. And the one, public justice, that focuses on the end itself is not always that all concerned with the means to the end. The person who is administering public justices doesn't care particularly how the happiness and well-being of society is being preserved, only that it is. Therefore, unlike retributive justice, public justice will allow the normal penalty for a crime to be replaced with a substitute if that substitute will be equally effective in upholding or securing the public's interests. So public justice regards the spirit of the law instead of the letter of the law. Under public justice, forgiveness is permissible if, and its a very, very important if, that forgiveness, that doing away with the normal execution of the penalty, is administered wisely.

It is critical to our discussion of reconciliation that we don't confuse these two types of justice because if we do confuse these two types of justice it will really, really confound and confuse our understanding of one very, very important subject and that subject is namely forgiveness. Which is what we want to talk about and define right now. We're still talking about this second problem, this second area, God's personal problem. And we're describing, we're trying to describe how God really is and how many men, including religious men, including Christians think He is.

Have you ever heard the phrase, or the concept, that Jesus paid for our sins? Anybody that hasn't? Let's look into this assertion, this phrase, and let's try to understand what that really means and what it doesn't mean. I believe that this flat out assertion, that Jesus has paid for our sins, has been delivered too glibly, and it's caused a great deal of confusion within the body of Christ as to the true nature of Jesus's actions in the Atonement. It's pretty well accepted today that what took place on Calvary, that our salvation itself, hinges somehow, somehow, on a legal transfer of some sort between two members of the Trinity, between Jesus the Son and God the Father. When we ask the question, following the assertion that Jesus has paid for our sins, when we ask the question, whom did He pay? The answer that we receive, more often than not, is that He paid the Father. Jesus, the second person of the Godhead, the second person of the Trinity, paid the first person of the Trinity for sin. Now there's a couple of observations we want to make if that truly is the case.

If Jesus, indeed, paid the Father for sin, then it was retributive justice that was served and not public justice. We should remember here, at this point, that under retributive justice, no forgiveness was permissible. There had to be...the penalty had to be executed. This is what most Christians think that Jesus did. God demanded that there be a penalty; there had to be this penalty; there had to be a repayment and then forgiveness could come. There is an element of accuracy in this and there is an element of error. That is why it's been so confusing.

Let me give you a definition of forgiveness. A real simple definition for forgiveness. Forgiveness correctly defined is "the relaxation of a legitimate claim". Does that definition make sense to you? Does that go along with your sort of intuitive understanding of what forgiveness really is? Haven't you always thought to yourself that forgiveness was something that you offered without necessarily being paid back for something that was done to you? See, God has put things inside of us. He's made us in many ways like Himself. His truth is deep within us and it will take our own basic understanding of what God is like and what His principles are like. And then we'll go into the Word of God and really search the scriptures, we're going to come up with concepts that are different than what are normally taught today in theological circles. According to this definition of forgiveness, that it is the relaxation of a legitimate claim, then it would be impossible for God to have, as one hymn put it, "paid the debt and forgave me all my sins".

To illustrate this again, for some of you this will be a repeat, some of you it will be new, but I think at this point it is so critical to our understanding accurately the nature of forgiveness that it's good to go over it several times. Let's suppose that I borrowed from you \$100.00 on the condition that it be paid back. You will give me the money. You will transfer it from your possession to my possession, on the condition, that I will when I've finished spending it I'll give it back to you. No. On the condition that I am able after a certain amount of time to give you that \$100.00 back. Now, after I've borrowed that \$100.00 - now a gift is something totally different, you have to realize that, it's something totally different, it's when you're giving something and you never expect it back, you don't care what they do with it - but when you're borrowing something, especially \$100.00 on the condition that it will be repaid generally speaking people are remembering that you have that \$100.00 and are counting the days until they get it back. Now, if I've borrowed \$100.00 from you on the condition that it be repaid, you have then a legitimate claim against me. Right? Now what happens then after two weeks when I come back to you and I put \$100.00 in your hand. How many of you would say, "Thank you, George. I forgive you." And how would I respond to that statement, "Why? What for? What did I do?" When that money is returned to you, your claim has not been relaxed, it has been fulfilled. No forgiveness takes place whatsoever. There's no place or room for forgiveness. Now taking this illustration one step further, let's assume that after borrowing that \$100.00 from you, I find that for one reason or another I am unable to repay that money that you have loaned me. But, someone else, a good friend of mine maybe or a good friend of yours, comes to you and says, "Here is a \$100.00" and you take that \$100 bill and put it in your pocket. What would you say then? Would you then say to me, "I forgive you."? No. Why would that be inappropriate to say that you forgave me? The claim was satisfied. The claim was fulfilled. You got your \$100.00 back. You're out nothing, you lost nothing. The claim was fulfilled. It was not relaxed. And again no forgiveness whatsoever takes place.

Now the Bible gives some teaching on this very illustration that I'm giving you in the book of Matthew the 18th chapter. And I'm going to read to you a certain passage out of the New American Standard Bible and you can just follow along and listen very carefully

to this sequence of events. If you don't have the American Standard Bible it might be better not to follow along because the word differences might be confusing.

"...For this reason, the kingdom of heaven may be compared". What does that tell us right there. This story, this illustrated principle, that I am going to give you is the way that I operate. This is the way heaven operates. "The kingdom of heaven"...the way God does things, "may be compared to a certain king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. And when he had begun to settle them, there was brought to him, one who owed him 10,000 talents". That was a great deal of money, in the millions. "But since he did not have the means to repay, the lord commanded him to be sold along with his wife and children and all that he had and repayment to be made". If the story ends there, what kind of justice are we talking about? Retributive repayment. And again, if this certain king, or nobleman, had done this to the slave, if he had sold him and all his family and all that he had to get repayment could he have then gone to the slave as he was being carried off and said, "I forgive you." Well, I'll tell you one thing, if I was that slave and the king had come up to me at that point after he'd sold everything that I had, my wife and kids and me, and said "I forgive you", I would have said "Thanks a lot". Those words, given that set of circumstances, appear utterly ridiculous, preposterous. Obviously, there's no forgiveness. But after the king had decided that this is what he was going to do, at that point, the slave, therefore, falling down, prostrated himself before him saying, "Have patience with me and I will repay you everything". No way. He'd maxed out on his VISA and Master Charge, there was no way he was going to ever be able to repay that debt. He was going to the poor man's house. When the lord of that slave heard that, he felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. What do you think this parable is trying to teach? What principle? What's it teaching us about forgiveness? The true nature of forgiveness. The way that God and the way that heaven look at forgiveness and the way they operate concerning forgiveness. And what's it saying further? It's the way we ought to operate. The sole reason for the slave's release in this parable, was what? Compassion. It was the only reason given for the slave's release was the fact that the master felt compassion. Forgiveness in this parable is certainly the relaxation of a legitimate claim. No third party intervened. No bargain was made. The debtor was simply released from his debt.

I'm going to make a statement here. Something that you should write into your memories, not just onto your notes. It is possible to receive payment on a claim and it is possible to forgive a claim, to release a claim, but you cannot do both. You can have your choice but you cannot do both. And the Bible portrays a God who's completely desirous and willing to forgive sin without receiving any payment to satisfy a vindictive urge. A 19th century theologian by the name of Dr. Nathan Beaman put it this way, "The existence of the attribute of mercy was, like God Himself, eternal, and no new and super added motive was necessary in order to elicit this attribute in action. The Atonement was operated not as a bribe or reward or original cause influencing the Divine feelings nor as a moral persuasive to the exercise of compassion hitherto unfelt, but it opened a channel in which existing affections might freely flow, and at the same time it rendered the pardon and the salvation of the sinner consistent with every principle of the Divine government and every attribute of the Divine nature. In one word, the Atonement was not the procuring

tithe of mercy but it was the mode in which mercy was defined for itself in illustrious expression in the system of the Gospel."

Now one school of thought, theological school of thought that is, states that the Atonement satisfied retributive justice and it's called the satisfaction doctrine. The Atonement consisted in a complete and full satisfaction of retributive justice - the satisfaction doctrine. In other words, every drop of Jesus's blood that was shed on the cross paid for 'X' number of sins that were committed. And, of course, since it was Divine blood we're told that it counted for more and all this weird abstract business.

So there's a little pool of blood down underneath Jesus's cross and that represents payment for say, 13,500,000,000 sins; the blood up on the crossbeam, there wasn't that much there so it only paid for 3,000,000,000 sins; the blood on Jesus's arms, there was quite a bit there so that paid for maybe 4,500,000,000 sins; the suffering of Jesus, that paid for some sins. And God added up all the sins that were ever committed or that ever would be committed and somehow that was factored into all the blood that Jesus shed and all the suffering that He went through. And that suffering, and that blood, and that pain paid God back for this large debt of sin that mankind owed Him. It's called the satisfaction doctrine.

Now, if this doctrine is true, if this is really the case, then we face the very interesting prospect of having a divided Trinity; where the second person in the Trinity is more loving than the first. And even Augustine, who I think sort of veered out over the ozone layer in his theology in his later years, at least had some concern over this same point. In his book, "Christus Victor", biblical scholar, Gustaf Aulen shares Augustine's early concern over this concept of a divided Trinity. "He seems to intend (Augustine) a pointed rejection of any such idea. He denies that God the Father can in anyway be placated by the Son's death for in that case there would be a difference of some kind, even a conflict, between the Father and the Son, but that is unthinkable, for between the Father and the Son there has been the most perfect harmony". So again we're saying, the death and the sufferings of Christ were not meant to buy God over to mercy and forgiveness but were rather an expression of mercy and forgiveness. There's another implication of this total satisfaction or payment theory, that's even more scary, if it's true. If God demands repayment for what sin has done to Him; if He requires full vindictive satisfaction before releasing His claim, then we find ourselves facing the conclusion that there is no truly loving, moral being in the universe, as far as agape love is concerned. There is no being who loves with no strings attached. Whose love is really unconditional. So if the payment theory; if the satisfaction theory as it relates to God's personal feelings is true, then He is not what He says He is. This fortunately is not the case.

The Bible explains clearly God's purposes in the death of Christ. Yes, God desired that Christ should suffer and die but not so that He personally might be paid back for sin in some way. We are told in the book of Romans, that being justified is a gift, by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed. From

the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. In other words, what God needed was some kind of public demonstration, some substitute for the normal execution of the law, or the penalty, that would cause God, or that would make God just and wise in forgiving man. This death, the shed blood of Christ, was to demonstrate His righteousness, His rightness because in the forbearance of God, He passed over the sins previously committed. In other words, the Old Testament sacrificial system is what he's talking about. Men sinned and instead of "the soul that sinneth, it shall surely die", an animal was put to death instead. There was a forbearance that God demonstrated, He passed over all the sins, before Calvary, that had been committed. Now, how can God justify that when He said "the soul that sinneth, it shall surely die?" The sufferings and the death of Christ on the cross was exactly what God needed to allow Him to do what He wanted to do all along, which was to release the claim, forgive man, show mercy. God wanted to show mercy, just like Darius did, He just needed to find a good way to do it.

The right way. And He did basically what Darius couldn't do. He went into the lion's den Himself. As I said a moment ago, Jesus's death was a public demonstration. He was displayed, as it says in Romans 3:24-26, He was displayed publicly.

This type of public demonstration was the substitute that God needed to satisfy public justice. Since public justice did allow for pardon, this public demonstration of the sufferings of Christ solved God's governmental problem by revealing the Lawgiver as just and wise in dispensing with the penalty and at the same time it allowed Him to do what His heart really wanted to do all along.

Okay, we're going on a little bit here and talk about virtuous love. Virtuous love could also be described how? What's another word we could use for virtuous love? Agape love. We struggle to gain an understanding of this kind of love. A couple of you were in here last night during the lecture when we were discussing pride and we were discussing one particular gentleman by the name of Robert Ringer who has written this book "Looking Out For Number 1" and some other books whose attitudes... He gives in his book some good advise on how to be a truly giving person. He says "Simple reasoning tells you that you must regard the interest of others in order to obtain your objectives. Fellow human beings represent potential values to you, in business or personal relationships, and the rational individual understands that to harvest those values, you must be willing to fill certain needs of others. In this way, the most rationally selfish individual is also the most giving person." Then he goes on to say, "don't do something for the reason that it's 'the right thing to do', if there is no benefit to be derived from it". Now, we say to ourselves, "Yeah, that's Robert Ringer, he's a jerk. He's selfish. He likes selfishness. I don't like selfishness, I'm a Christian. I never use circumstances, or other people, for my own benefit or for my own interests. I never give to anybody else in order that I might receive." Well, I can think of a few times that I have. And when God begins to reveal our hearts to us as He sees them suddenly we realize that we do that a lot more often than we think we do. Oh boy, that's where the tears come or should come. After God has shown us what we are really like. How we've deceived ourselves into thinking that we are so virtuous and that we've blessed so many people just because we wanted to bless them.

Do we sometimes still feel a little tinge of resentment when we do something really nice, go out of our way for somebody who doesn't even say thank you? Does it bug you when you let somebody cut in front of you on the freeway and they don't wave their hand or say thank you? It bugs me. The ungrateful jerk. I've said that a few times. Here I am stopping. I let somebody pull out of the side street in front of me. They don't even look at me, don't acknowledge me, don't say thank you, as if it were their right. How dare they? We still have a lot to learn about virtuous love and about agape love. Our whole misconception about what true love really is carries over into our attitudes and understanding of the teacher of Christianity. And today, we're taught from the very, very beginning that Christianity is really something that is supposed to be for our benefit and to serve us ultimately. Healing, salvation, blessings, revelation - all for us. So many evangelists today, pastors and other Christian workers are highlighting in their messages everything that appeals to man's self interests when they're presenting their messages. God is presented to us as our servant. He'll do this for you, He'll do this for you, He'll do this for you... When you add up all the benefits there are to becoming a Christian, you've got to be crazy for not to become one. He's going to take care of your grades, your business, provide this for you, healing for your body, salvation, peace...don't we all want those things? All that appeals to our self-interest is highlighted so that our reaction to salvation becomes merely in effect nothing less than a purely selfish exercise. Nothing less than a humanistic invasion of Christianity. So when all of our thoughts of salvation center on the question, "How do I come out? What's in it for me?" is it surprising that we view God's attitudes and intentions and actions in the same light? Here is God in the Atonement thinking to Himself, " How do I come out? What will I get out of this?". This is where this whole attitude of repayment comes in. We take our concepts and we apply them to the character of God and we make God in our own image.

You see God was never worried about receiving some personal satisfaction for the hurt that people's sin caused Him. He was never worried about it. He was grieved, He was hurt but He was never worried about receiving some personal satisfaction. God's love is purely virtuous. Pure agape love, giving, unselfish. And it's out of this mysterious love that God's only concern flowed. How will they come out? What can I do to save them, to help them, to transform them, to cleanse them, to keep them from destroying themselves? How will they come out?.

Now we understand how God needed to reveal to human beings what His heart was really like. God looks down from heaven. You know, several decades or centuries after Eden, and man's heart, well it got to the point where during Noah's day when there wasn't anybody who was righteous, who was obeying Him except for Noah and his family. The only ones on the face of the earth, think about it, one family. And man had drifted so far away from God that God had to write down man's obligations and responsibilities. That's how far the heart, remembrance or understanding of God had been erased, had been changed. Men didn't know what God was like anymore. You go out the door of this church and start walking through the streets of Tacoma and you'll find how far mankind has drifted from and understanding of what God is really like. These people don't have the slightest understanding of what God is really like anymore. They don't know Him. They don't know Him. And God looked down from heaven and He saw all these people

cutting themselves and bringing these gifts to idols and doing all of these things. God was grieved by this. God needed through the plan of salvation to slowly and progressively reveal to man what He was really like and who He really was; what His heart was like. And show man that there was no vindictiveness in Him at all; that He was not a God who was this stern, meany up in the sky. But a loving God who wanted to be intimate and personal; who wanted to forgive; abundant in loving kindness; one who relents concerning calamity. Somehow through the Atonement, besides solving God's governmental problems, God had to show man once and for all ultimately who He really was and what His attitudes really were. That was the second problem because if God and man are going to be restored, relationally, intimacy, then man had to really see God for who He really was. He had to really know Him. So that understanding had to be restored with the Atonement to bring that ruptured relationship back together.

The third problem is the hypocritical problem. God needed to deal with man's pride; with his superficial opinions of himself; God needed to find a way to...again, God's ultimate objective in the Atonement was not rescuing lost souls from hell. Almost always when we present the Atonement in our witnessing dialog, we tell people that they were lost but that Jesus died for their sins so that now they are no longer lost and they are now able to go to heaven and have eternal life because Jesus died for their sins. It's the by-product again. It's true but the real ultimate objective in the Atonement was not rescuing souls from hell but the restoration of a ruptured relationship, love relationship, between God and man. Jesus came to this earth to seek and save that which was lost. What was lost? The intimate God- Man relationship. That's what was lost from Eden on. It's kind of wide scale. From what were we lost? We were lost from the truth of God. We were lost in a world of abstract theorizing, misconception, misunderstanding. All of us like sheep have gone astray and each of us is turned to his own way. Humanity has left God and in the process become vain in his imaginations or empty or superficial in his imaginations about life and about God and about themselves. And apart from God men lose all sense of proportion about their own importance. Their opinions about themselves become subjective and they become superficial and they become grossly inflated. But this isn't any profound revelation. As I said earlier any of us could walk out of this building, begin to walk around the streets of this community and we can see this arrogance and this vanity and this conceit and egotism everywhere.

Go to the nearest drugstore or market and pick up some of these popular magazines, 'People', the movie magazines and look at the pictures in those magazines. Look at the expressions on the faces of these people in these magazines. Go to a movie, some new movie, and look at the faces of the people standing in line, talking to each other or at some little drive-in, fast-food place with guys sitting on the hoods of their cars - look at their faces, or in shopping malls or in health spas. People exuding arrogance on every hand, in every conceivable setting and what does this all of this look like from heaven's perspective? I was, maybe you have had this experience too some of you, I was flying to Minnesota, Minneapolis last week to speak to a group of pastors and I was flying over the state of Montana. We were really high, I think something like 38,000 feet or maybe it was 40,000 feet - really high. I looked down and I had a window seat and it was high enough so you could just begin to see the earth's curvature and you could see, what if you

were on the ground, were these huge deep valleys, and they just seemed like tiny threads. You know the contours of the earth topography, and then sometimes you would catch this little glint of a little city or town or community and it looked so small. And the roads, you could just barely make them out these little threads.

You could go out even further, take an even more wide angled look at the whole planet earth. Pretty soon you go further, further back in the galaxy and you don't even see earth at all anymore. Oh, we are so small. We are so small. We are all the same too, by the way. We are all the same. Nothing special about us. We're all alike. We have the same feelings inside. Our bodies function the same way. Anything that's special or unique about us, comes and flows out of our relationship with the God of the universe, with our souls. And cut off from God, all of this arrogance and all of this conceit is so ridiculous. And I believe that our planet stands out in contrast to the rest of God's greater universe in conspicuous absurdity as the Angels look at this planet. At the attitudes - little puny human beings that live on it. Why does God love us? Why does God love humanity? A bunch of these tiny, little, ant-like jerks running around making a mess of things. If you were an advisor to God what would you suggest to Him that He do with humanity? Of course, get rid of them - start over. The universe is a clean place except for that idiotic place - Earth. Start over. You need them like you need a hole in the head. God has fallen in love with us - the great and powerful creator - God of the universe.

How can God relate to man in intimate fellowship when man thinks he's something more than he is? Can reconciliation occur while man is preoccupied with the false opinions that he has created? The answer is obvious. I saw a movie, a TV movie, probably about a year ago. I don't remember what the name of it was. I don't remember who starred in it or anything. I just remember the story, the plot. There was a married couple. The husband in this case was, oh I didn't like him from the very beginning at all, he had one of those real smug expressions, it just, he's a good actor, to me you just hate him from the very beginning of the program - just thought he was hot stuff. Again, the kind of guy you want to go up to the wife and say "dump city - move on". And he cheated on her. He treated her like dirt - I don't mean he slapped her around or anything like that - he just thought he was too good for her or for anybody. Everything revolved - he just couldn't stop thinking about himself - of course, you can't have a relationship with somebody like that. So he was going to go out and pursue what he wanted to do and if there was some benefit to having her a part of it she would be, if not she wasn't. Finally he left altogether, sickening-sweet, you know, he'd come back and tell her how much he loved her and all of this and you knew he was lying through his teeth that he would say what he needed to say to get what he wanted. Finally, he left. And then this woman on her own, forced to be on her own, started to become successful. Making money, becoming well-known. So he comes back and turns on all of his charm and wants a relationship again now with her. And this happens repeatedly. Several times he would come back. First time she gives in - she takes him back. Then it's the same old pattern, he splits again.

Ultimately though, she comes to the realization that unless he fundamentally changes there's no way they're ever going to have a relationship. There's no way. He has a

relationship with himself and there's no way they can enter into a mutually, happy, loving, intimate relationship while he has these false opinions of himself.

Of course, this is the way God views our situation. He loves us. He wants us back. We've left - He didn't leave us, He didn't walk out on us - we walked out on Him - never forget that. People blaming God for their situation today - you know; "well, God if you really loved me you wouldn't let this happen or that happen"; hey, you walked out of the house and slammed the door. Don't blame it on God - you made your own bed. God wants us back. He's doing everything He can to win us back but God is not going to enter into an intimate, love relationship with us until we come to the point where we acknowledge who we are, until we're confronted with our own moral bankruptcy and we see ourselves as real heels. And no matter how rotten we've been in our past, that doesn't matter to God so much. What matters to Him is that somehow we see what we were, we acknowledge what we are, and we come back into relationship with Him as real people. All God wants us to be is real and He'll take care of the rest.

He'll overlook the past. We've been committing spiritual adultery, been involved with all kinds of other idols in our lives. God can handle that, He can overlook that, He can forgive that as long as now we will be real. So, if God and man are going to get together again then something must humble man so that he's willing to dispense with his hypocritical facades. Before reconciliation can occur, we must come to the place where we see ourselves for what we really are.

Paul admonishes us in Romans 12:3, "I say to every man among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to have sound judgement". Be real. Align your thought processes with reality. Don't think less of yourself. Don't think more of yourself. Think of yourself as you are. And His blessings have the tendency of increasing our concept of our own importance, things like salvation, various gifts, various ministries. And God wants to give us blessings but God in order that He not add to our moral delinquency must humble us before He can bless us. He must reveal us to ourselves. This is the third problem that God faced. He needed to show man to himself before intimate, personal love relationship could be restored.

The last problem - the motivational problem. The Bible tells us that as long as we are estranged from God - separated from God - that we are totally and completely corrupt. It's not a matter when we do want to come to God cleaning up this sin or that one. Our whole personality, everything that we are is enslaved, we've become involved in a life of total and absolute bondage. Romans 8:7 says, "Because the minds set on the flesh, he is hostile toward God", the minds set on the flesh, ruled by the flesh, is hostile toward God. It does not subject itself to the law of God for it is not even able to do so. Back to the tree parable; good tree cannot produce corrupt fruit; neither can a corrupt tree produce good fruit. Everything about our lives, all of our actions, everything is corrupt, as long as our supreme or ultimate intention in life is to live supremely for ourselves. Everything that we do then grows off of or flows out of that root. That's what we are; "our righteous is as filthy rags before salvation". How do we deal with a lifetime of learned selfishness with it's myriad manifestations. How do we deal with it? How can we maintain? How can God

maintain a relationship, a new one, against the magnetism of former inflamed appetites and habits? How can He keep the new relationship from reverting to what it used to be? The key is the mind. A total, absolute change of mind is the necessary objective to be achieved in the process of reconciliation.

A transformation has to take place in our thinking. As I read to you yesterday in the beginning of our session, a quote from C. S. Lewis, "God became a man in order to turn creatures into sons. For mere improvement is no redemption." He is not wanting just to improve us but to totally transform us. We think totally differently. And do not be conformed in this world but be transformed by the renewing of your minds that you might prove what the will of God is that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Somehow, we chafe at the idea that prior to salvation there was nothing good about us. We think to ourselves, "Hey, wait a minute, alright, I was bad but not that bad. I had a few aces up my sleeve, there were a few clean spots on my suit."

There's a story in the Old Testament which gives us a glimpse at the amazing role that God played in the process of reconciliation. It's the account of the prophet, Hosea. I'm going to read to you part of that passage from the book of Hosea and then we'll talk a little bit about it. The Lord said to Hosea, go and take yourself a wife of harlotry. So he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. And the Lord said to him, name him Jezreel. And she conceived again and when she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, a daughter, she conceived and gave birth to another son, and the Lord said, name him Lo-Ammi.

And later, in a tragic and heart-rending conversation with his first son, Jezreel, Hosea offered this lament. "Say ye to your brethren, Ammi and to your sister Ruhamah, plead with your mother, plead, for she is not my wife; neither am I her husband. Let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight and her adulteries from between her breasts for their mother hath played the harlot. She that conceived them hath done shamefully for she said I will go after my lover's that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink. Therefore behold I will hedge up thy way with thorns and I will make a wall that she shall not find her paths."

Sounds like a mean thing to do. Why did he do it? "And she shall follow after her lovers but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them but she will not find them. Then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband for then it was better with me than now. And then the Lord said to me, 'go again and love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet an adulteress, even as the Lord loves the sons of Israel though they turn to other Gods. So I bought her for myself, for fifteen shekels of silver, and a homer and a half of barley. And then I said to her, you shall stay with me for many days; you shall not play the harlot; nor shall you have a man; and so will I also be toward you.'" Now here's a woman who has left her husband and gone out as a harlot. She didn't even charge money for what she did. All she got was enough substance, various things to live on. Clothes, to eat, to sleep. Wasn't even greedy. You can imagine how you might feel if you were placed in a position like this. Where your mate left you and started living with everybody else in town. Not even for money, just for room and board. And then the Lord comes and

says, go take her back. Come to the point where, and this was the case, and still is to this very day, unfortunately in some middle eastern countries, they had an auction of women who would be sold as prostitutes or harlots. And here her husband goes and he buys his own wife back. So Gomer comes back home. And they sit down in the living room and there's Hosea and there's his wife. What do you say? What do you start talking about after this has happened? What kind of conversation are you going to have? Now, if reconciliation is going to take place between the two, doesn't it seem logical to you that Gomer, the adulteress, would seek the favor of the husband she has wounded. That she would fall at his feet, wrap her arms around his ankles and weep and say, "Forgive me. I'm so sorry." Doesn't it seem right or logical that the guilty party ought to seek the forgiveness of the innocent?

Sadly, the Bible again reveals to us the fact that no man is seeking God. No man is initiating reconciliation with his God. As it is written, there is none righteous, not even one, there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God. All have turned aside. Together they have become useless; there is none who does good; there is none who want. We, like the adulteress, we come before God, we have nothing but our shame. We have no aces up our sleeves, nothing to attract God to us. The Bible again clearly reveals that as long as our ultimate intention is bent on the pursuit of selfishness then all of our righteousness is as filthy rags. Even the best things we do, we do for rotten motives. It's like this man in this movie I was telling you about earlier. He comes back to this woman that he's left with a new diamond necklace or a new mink stole or something like that. Well, that righteousness is as filthy rags; its not real, nothing behind it the motive's wrong. If only there were some virtues, at least a few alluring qualities in our lives prior to salvation that would make it easier for God to overlook our liabilities. You know what I'm saying? It's easy to be reconciled to people who have something about them that's nice. Not a lot but just something - some place to start. But there wasn't anything about us that would have attracted God or would have allured Him. There's nothing clean about us. Not only that, but we weren't even paying any attention to Him. We weren't coming knocking on His door, dirty as we were, we were dirty and rotten and we were going in the opposite direction. We were ugly. We stunk. We were covered in our own filth. And it wasn't just the nice guy who started pursuing us, it was the God of the universe.

She forgot me declares the Lord; she forgot me. Therefore behold, I will allure her. Bring her into the wilderness and speak kindly to her. Hosea 2:13&14. So this is quite an amazing display of love and of grace and of mercy isn't it. Ever seen anything, know of any story that matches this. The powerful God of the universe forms the earth, gathers a handful of newly created soil, forms a man and falls in love with him. That's incredible to contemplate. Over and over and over again but the magnificence of the whole story of the God-Man relationship is that the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us and while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Saying, "I will call them my people, which were not my people and I will call her beloved, which was not beloved." God came a long way to bring us to Himself. The Gospel story makes no logical sense. I don't understand the love of God; I don't know why God pursued us like He did; I can't fathom in my mind and I can't explain it to you.

But of course, as Andre Croats would say, "Oh, but I'm glad, I'm so glad He did". This afternoon, we'll begin to talk about how God solved some of these problems that He faced in reconciling man to Himself through redemption.

Lets pray. This afternoon, reaffirm our great love for you. We thank you Lord for one another, we thank you for the body of Christ. For the privilege of being part of it. We thank you Lord for the tremendous transformation that you've brought into our hearts and our lives. Father, I pray this afternoon that you will better help us to understand all that's behind those transformations that are taking place. Father, as we begin to turn our attention now to redemption. Oh Father, we just are so grateful that you have redeemed us - that we belong to you - that you have in fact a solution to these monumental, cosmic problems and that solution has the potential of working its way into our everyday lives and changing the way we think, the way we act, the way we chose. We bless you Lord. I pray that you would give us a very, very productive time this afternoon.. In Jesus name.

Lecture IV

How many of you think that at this stage of things that you have a pretty good grasp now on the problems that God faced. It's maybe a little bit more complex than what you had thought. God was able to, in a marvelous way, accomplish many, many things through that one act of His suffering and death on the cross. Hallelujah. Charles Finney said that if the benevolence manifested in the Atonement does not subdue the selfishness of sinners then their case is hopeless. It's that moment when God becomes regretfully conscious that the means at His disposal to secure our obedience has been exhausted. If He can hang on a cross and pour out his life blood for us and that doesn't move us and that doesn't motivate us, what else can He do? And that's why, in the book of Hebrews, the writer of Hebrews reminds us, that if we sin willfully, as a matter of life, we make sin a matter of life, after we have confronted the words of truth, that there remains no more sacrifice for sin. If the sacrifice that Jesus made doesn't work, nothing will. We need to understand this afternoon, how important this subject is that we're discussing. Not only in understanding and making it work in our own lives but in working the message of the cross effectively and accurately into the message that we share with others who don't know the Lord. If that message, if this message, doesn't work. That's it. There's nothing else that we can say.

God's ultimate solution to the many, many complex problems that He faced in the matter of reconciliation was, of course, the life and the death of His Son, Jesus Christ. And as Malcolm Muggeridge, observes, one thing at least can be said with certainty about the crucifixion of Christ and that is that it was manifestly the most famous death in history. No other death has aroused 100th part of the interest or been remembered with 100th part of the intensity and concern. Of course, we're all aware of the fact, I'm sure, that even history itself was split right down the middle as the result of the death of Christ. There are more plays, more remembrances, more memorials to the death of this one man than anyone else who has ever lived, by far. And if you think about that, that in itself was extraordinary, who was this man, Jesus? I mean at that time in Palestine, it was just a provincial outpost of the Roman empire, nothing really all that special. He was just a Jew who came from the city of Nazareth in upper Galilee. And He was crucified at a time when thousands of Jews were being crucified. Why do we remember His death? Why does the whole world know about it and remember it and think about it?

The death of Jesus Christ and the events which surrounded His death, were extraordinary, not in the fact that a man died, but rather in who it was that died. If Jesus's life had not registered revolutionary significance and notoriety, then His death would have gone unnoticed. As just another victim of the Roman epidemic of the day. His death became meaningful because of His life. On several occasions in the New Testament, God declared His good pleasure over the manner of life that His Son was leading. And Jesus was referred to in the Bible as being the second Adam. Only two people have been born directly, well yeah, I guess that's true, by God, from God, even Eve was really taken out of Adam's side after he had already been created. But Adam and Jesus were born directly of the Holy Spirit. And God had great plans and hopes and ambitions for Adam which to

certain degree, to a certain extent, were unfulfilled, were disappointed. But as a result of Christ's obedience, He as the second Adam was able to bring to God's heart what the first Adam never did. The pleasure and the joy of somebody who obeyed Him perfectly and completely. And this beautiful portrait of Christ's obedience has been marred by a theological concept called impeccability. In a nutshell, this theological concept teaches that Christ could not have succumbed to temptation; it was impossible for Jesus to have given into temptation.

Can you explain to me the nature of temptation that is impossible to comply with? Describe it for me. That's about it. If I can't give in then how can I possibly be tempted?

There are things that I realize are impossible for me to do. As a result I'm not tempted to do them. I've never been tempted to fly over the roof of my house. Never. I've never been tempted to swim across the Pacific Ocean. I've never been tempted to bear a child. A temptation that is impossible to succumb to or to comply with is really not an honest temptation at all. And the work of God refutes this concept of impeccability. In Hebrews 4:15, "For we do not have a high priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Jesus' life was intended to serve us as an example of how we are to overcome and if it was impossible for Christ to exceed or given into temptation then he was certainly not tempted in the way that I know I am. He could not have served us as an example since there was nothing for Him to overcome. If Christ could not have succumbed to temptation then he could not have loved us either for love is a proper choice between at least two alternatives.

Then there are others who believe that the essence of Christ's Atonement existed in His obedience to the moral law on behalf of sinners. Christ obeyed during his life the moral law for us and that's really the essence of the Atonement. This is also questionable for several reasons. First of all, the moral law required the obedience of Christ Himself. Had He not obeyed the moral law then He would have disqualified Himself as an affective substitute. Secondly, if Christ had obeyed the law as our substitute then why should we be required to obey it if it's already been obeyed for us? Thirdly, had Christ obeyed the law for us then why would God require Him to die also, as if there had been no obedience, and then go on further to require us to repent and obey as well? I think the person who wrote the song, Amazing Grace, must have been thinking about this because it's certainly amazing grace that requires a debt to be repaid repeatedly before an obligation is discharged.

Now, I'd like to take a minute, a couple minutes actually, if you don't mind, and give some thought to this concept of payment. Where do we get the idea, the concept, that Jesus paid for our sins? That's pretty good right there. We pick up on phrases and words like this and it's pretty easy to come to the conclusion that the Atonement or the the work of Christ on Calvary was some sort of a payment, some sort of a legal business. It's very easy to come to that conclusion. The important thing when we confront these kind of words, phrases and passages in the Bible, and it's not just on this issue with regards to these words and phrases but with any subject, we would want to interpret these words and phrases and passages in light of the overall teaching of the

Word, in this case on the subject of salvation. What does the whole council, the whole Word of God, teach on the subject of salvation? Then it's easy for us to see how these words and phrases fit in to the overall teaching of the Bible on the subject of salvation. The payment theory, which is also sometimes referred to as the satisfaction theory, originated with a man by the name of Anselm of Canterbury. He became a major Catholic theologian. And he taught what was called, and still is, an objective Atonement. An objective Atonement is a theory of the Atonement that's very widely held today, that God is the object of Christ's work on the cross. That the Atonement, that the death of Jesus Christ was for God's benefit, that He was the object of the Atonement. Jesus dies on the cross for the benefit of His Father in heaven and God is the object of the Atonement and God is reconciled through the satisfaction made to His justice. He's reconciled to us, poor sinners, through a satisfaction that is made to His justice.

The difference between an allegory and a metaphor has caused much confusion between these two types of communication. It has produced problems in the body of Christ - not just on this doctrine but on a number of other doctrines, as well. For those of you who aren't sure or don't know let me give you the difference between an allegory and a metaphor. So that you'll know.

An allegory is a story that is created, we're talking about biblical allegories now, an allegory is a story created to portray a spiritual truth. It can be taken literally with the details pressed for meaning. An allegory is a story that is created to portray a spiritual truth and it can be taken literally with the details pressed for meaning. A religious metaphor, on the other hand, while it is also intended to convey a spiritual truth, is not to be taken in a literal, physical way. Can you give me some examples of a metaphors, biblical metaphors. That He is the door. That He is the door.What are some other metaphors?

A Camel going through the eye of a needle. They are stories that are meant to convey or word pictures meant to convey some spiritual truth but we don't press these metaphors for some kind of literal or physical meaning. And if we do, well, we're going to have to recreate the universe. Yes. The camel going through the eye of the needle is literal. That's what some people think, that's a possibility but even so it would still be a metaphor. There was a gate near the walls of Jerusalem that was called the eyes of the needle. Maybe so. Let me give you another metaphor. You are bought with a price. That is a biblical metaphor that is very often interpreted as an allegory. Another thing that you might find interesting, is that in that scripture where we are told that we are bought with a price, the word price can be translated to read honor. Now there's a concept here, there's a cost factor that God is trying to convey. He's trying to say, "now listen, it cost a great deal to bring you back to Myself, it wasn't cheap, it cost a lot". But He is not trying to convey some exact literal transfer, some legal transfer again where 'X' number drops of blood paid literally for 'X' number of sins. Let me read a quote from another book on the subject of the Atonement. "Where ever analogies from legal procedure are employed (in the Bible), they are usually assumed to prove the presence of the objective or judicial view of the Atonement. There is need, therefore, of the greatest caution in the exegesis of the language used in the Atonement". All of this legal terminology, these words that we put

down that we have to be very careful about how we approach these words and phrases and not just immediately jump on them and begin to form this whole concept of a legal transfer between the first and second members of the Trinity. It will mess up our understanding of the character of God and it will also fail to provide a powerful sin deterrent barrier in our lives in the future.

I'd like you to write this next statement down. Christ has not redeemed us by giving His life as a ransom for our sins in order that He might release us. Put a big dash now. For God never kept man captive in sin. On the contrary it was He who wanted to make us free. Christ has not redeemed us by giving His life as a ransom for our sins in order that He might release us - for God never kept man captive in sin.

Let me read you another description from Dr. Beamon's book on the Atonement, the nature of the Atonement. I'm just going to read you kind of a lengthy quote here, so you don't need to copy anything down unless it strikes you. Just listen carefully. "The scriptures frequently describe the Atonement in language of a figurative character, and the literal construction, or interpretation, which has been put upon this language has no doubt sometimes misled the honest inquirer. We are informed by the pen of inspiration that Christ hath purchased the church with His own blood. Christians are said to have been bought with a price. These and many other passages of similar import are often pressed into literal exposition while their figurative character is entirely overlooked."

When the scriptures tell us that Christ hath purchased the church or that believers are bought with a price, they do not intend to teach us that salvation of sinners through Atonement is a pecuniary transaction, regulated according to the principles of debit and credit, but that their salvation was effected in the moral government of God by nothing less than the consideration, the stipulated consideration, of the death of His beloved Son. To these figurative expressions are super added others of human origin, such as Christ has paid our debt, has answered the demands of the law and satisfied the justice of God in our behalf." The Bible doesn't say that. "If we say that Christ has paid our debt, it is true only in a figurative sense and can be no more nor less than this; that the sufferings of Christ accomplished the same purpose in the divine administration which would have been accomplished by our rejection and punishment. Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." We need no other proof than that suggested in this passage that Christ did not pay the debt or literally suffer the penalty of the law for His people. He prepared the way for our debt to be remitted. Or in plain language, dispensing with all metaphor, He made it consistent and proper and honorable for sin to be forgiven according to the prescribed terms of the Gospel.

The truth is Christ paid no man's debt. It is true indeed that our deliverance is in scripture sometimes called a redemption And this word refers to the deliverance of a prisoner from captivity which is often affected by the payment of a sum of money. Christ is also called a ransom and we are said to be bought with a price but again it must be remembered that these are figurative expressions. They are designed to communicate this idea; that as payment of money, as the price of liberty, is the ground on which prisoners are released from captivity; so the Atonement of Christ is the ground upon which sinners are pardon

or set free from a sentence of condemnation. Do you understand what we are saying here? These passages, thus understood, appear intelligible and consistent, where as understood literally they would contradict other plain declarations of the word of God. It is evident therefore that these are metaphorical expressions and were never designed to be taken in a strictly literal sense. What God is saying is, He's likening the payment of a debt in a ransom situation, to what he did on the cross. He's saying "what I did is similar to this but you are not to take this thing and press it literally." You've got somebody who is being held captive, they're bound, and they can't help themselves - somebody needs to intervene on their behalf and offer something of value so that they can be released from their bondage. And that's what God is saying that Christ did for us. And that's all He's saying.

If we press this literally, now let me ask you this, when you read in the newspaper or you hear on television about a kidnapping and a ransom what do you think about? You think the person who has been kidnapped is being held against their will. Who receives the ransom? The person that's holding them in bondage receives the ransom. Whose holding us in bondage? Is it God, the Father? It's sin isn't it? And Satan and sin? That's what God is wanting to free us from. So you can't press it literally, there are differences and we've got to see those differences. He's just saying again, that this matter of ransom, this payment idea, is a figurative expression to help us understand that God came and intervened on our behalf when we were held bound by the kidnapper of sin. And God offered something of great value that we might be released from the power of sin. That's true. But it is not true that God was the one that was holding us captive in sin and therefore He should receive some kind of literal payment in order to release us. God wasn't holding us captive. In fact, the whole time, all along, He was the one trying to set us free. And if He wants to set us free, why does He need any kind of payment. Only in His role as a governor, the righteous moral governor of the universe, does He have certain requirements. Not on a personal level or a personal basis.

On a personal basis God could say the second after a sin is committed, "hey, I forgive you". He doesn't hold any grudges or bitterness, He doesn't need to be paid back before He can forgive. There are no strings attached to His love. But He's got to be careful in His role, not as our father, but in His role as righteous, moral governor of the universe, that He's not careless in extending forgiveness so that it encourages others to sin. He can't do that. What we are saying is that while we're bound by sin, we are not able to help ourselves. We needed some external agency, something or someone, some force outside of our situation to come with some great power with some great value, to set us free. And of course, the value was the life of God's own Son. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..." The only way that we can get this exact, literal, commercial transaction theory is to divide the Trinity. We have to divide the Trinity. One member of the Trinity paying back another member of the Trinity . God paying Himself. But we have to see that Jesus and the Father are one; their thoughts, their intents, their purposes are always one they're not divided. Jesus on the cross was only an extension of the Father on the cross. Jesus is the heart of God hanging on the cross.

There's a very real sense in which salvation did cost something. There was a very high price for the Father to pay. For the Father it cost His Son; For Jesus it cost his Life. C. S. Lewis said, "It cost God nothing, so far as we know, to create nice things but to convert rebellious wills cost Him crucifixion." There's another cost factor that we need to talk about. Another aspect here. And again, we go back to this spiritual equation that intimacy is proportional to grief. The more you love someone, the deeper that you can be wounded. Simply because God deeply loves us and wants us back and has expressed His willingness to take us back in welcome, open arms, does not mean that his forgiveness is without cost. I'll give you another quote along this line. "In the first place, it isn't always that simple to forgive other people. If someone hurts you in a small way and apologizes, it's easy to accept the apology but the greater the wrong or the injury the harder it is to forgive." Isn't that right?

If a husband is unfaithful to his wife but comes back and asks forgiveness, she may be willing to forgive, but the forgiveness will not be an easy or a casual thing. It will cost a great deal; it will hurt. For the essence of forgiveness is that you accept the wrong or the injury that has been done to you and you bear the consequences of it without retaliation and without being bitter or resentful. And there is this sense in which our spiritual whoredoms and our moral harlotry has hurt God deeply and He wants to extend forgiveness, His love is unconditional, but our sin has been deep and grievous and He must accept the consequences of the hurt that sin has caused Him without retaliation, which He does, He's willing to do that but as we'll see that cost Him His life. It was that hurt and that grief that took Jesus' life in the end. The danger lies in this matter of discussing payment and so forth, in the redefining of God's personal effort and sacrifice in the Atonement to indicate some type of commercial transaction.

There was a cost; there was a payment; but we're talking about God's personal effort, His personal sacrifice, when we're talking about payment and cost and so forth. We're not talking about some kind of a commercial transaction between two members of the Godhead. If we accept the premise that Jesus literally purchased, that He literally purchased our salvation with his blood...and He paid the Father...then this approach, first of all portrays God the Father as being vindictive and blood thirsty and totally incompatible with biblical forgiveness. It also presents another grave difficulty. If Jesus literally paid for our sins with His blood, and a paid debt is no longer a debt, and He died for the sins of the whole world, then we can only come to one conclusion and the theological word for it is Universalism. Which means that everybody will be saved. That means you'd be saved as soon as you were born. That's right. Every man woman or child has had their debts paid.

Jesus literally purchased our salvation with his blood. It is done. He's paid God the Father back. God has that \$100.00 in his hand again. We don't owe Him anything, it's done, it's taken care of. And whether we know that or not is irrelevant, it is done and we've all had our way paid. Everybody - there are people who believe this - there are whole denominations and cults based on Universalism. If salvation is basically a legal transaction, a legal transfer, then I have no debt or obligation remaining. It's been done and my ignorance of the situation would not alter the fact. So, you know, some people

look at the situation, they believe in a legal exact literal payment, but they look at this situation and say, "well yeah, there's a problem there." And so they offer an alternative, it's called the limited Atonement; the doctrine of limited Atonement. And it's part of the main five points of Calvinistic theology. And this view holds the same premise as the Universalists; that the Atonement was an exact, literal payment for sin but the limited Atonement adherence differ with the Universalist, in that they are willing to concede that not all are being saved in the world. Therefore, according to them, the Atonement was not made for all but was limited to the elect. The elect is a neat group of people.

One day, God didn't have anything better to do in Heaven so He just sort of arbitrarily started pointing out people that He was going to save and they were called the elect. You understand? Jesus blood that was shed on the cross literally paid for 'X' number of sins and a paid debt is no longer a debt. If Jesus then died for the sins of the whole world then everybody's going to be saved. The limited Atonement people look at the world and say "Hey, everybody's not being saved but we still believe that Jesus' Atonement was an exact literal payment for sin therefore He must not have died for everybody. He only died for the elect", the limited Atonement - it's what all Calvinists believe. But since the concept of a limited Atonement is conspicuously absent from the scriptures then we can only conclude that this is the result of man's presumption.

The doctrine of election is clearly refuted in the Bible and let me read a few scriptures here, the limited Atonement. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life"; and 1st John 2:2, "And He Himself is the propitiation of our sins and not for ours only but also for those of the whole world"; Revelations 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him and he with me"; Timothy 2:3&4 "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior who desires all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the Truth". So God's approach in the Atonement was to everybody. He was wanting to open up a way to a new relationship to every human being in the world. No question about it. Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. A general Atonement. We also, you know, those of us who would fool around with the doctrine of election, we also face the problem with knowing whether or not we happen to be one of those fortunate enough to be elected to salvation. It's a rather dreadful thing to contemplate the fact that we might be commanded to repent of our sins under penalty of death with only the possibility that an Atonement was made for us.

Now, I'd like to take a couple of minutes to talk to you about the difference between suffering and punishment. A lot of people say, "Hey, what's the difference; if you are punished you suffer."; that's true, but if you suffer you are not necessarily being punished. Adherence to the commercial transaction theory of the Atonement rightly believe that guilty sinners deserve to be punished. They do. The theory falters however when it represents Christ paying the Father an equal amount of suffering in His own person that sinners would have otherwise be liable for. It's impossible that Christ was punished to purchase our salvation for the following reasons:

1. If Christ was punished to purchase our salvation this would require satisfaction of retributive rather than public justice. And we need to remember this fact. No amount of punishment will render a sinner less guilty. No amount of punishment will render a sinner less guilty. Guilt can only be forgiven, it cannot be punished away.

Second reason, why it is impossible that essence the Atonement was in Christ being punished to purchase our salvation is that punishment implies guilt and it would be unjust for God to punish an innocent person. Again, the difference between suffering and punishment is simply this: one is involuntary while the other can be voluntary. The Bible clearly teaches that Christ willingly suffered and died for our sins.

John 10:17-18, "Therefore doth my father love me because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me; but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father; and then in John 19:10-11, Then said Pilate unto him, speaking of Jesus, "Speakest thou not unto me: knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?" Jesus answered, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above; therefore He that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." It's all part of the plan. Jesus was voluntarily giving his life; was voluntarily suffering for our sins. Do you understand that difference between suffering and punishment?

I'd like to go back into the Old Testament for a little while now and look at trying to get some understanding of the Old Testament sacrifices because we realize that there is something that we can learn about the Atonement by going back into the Old Testament and examining the sacrificial system. The death of Christ, The Lamb of God, on Calvary, was only the capstone of the long process of revelation and we want to also understand the significance of the blood. As we consider the Old Testament procedures relating to offerings and sacrifices we can learn a great deal about God's method of forgiveness. These offerings and sacrifices in the Old Testament can be divided into two categories. How many of you who went through this session before remember what they are? Sin offerings and thanks. Two types of offerings and sacrifices basically two categories in the Old Testament. Offerings and sacrifices for sin and offerings and sacrifices for thanks. The offerings and sacrifices for sin were generally bloody while the offerings and sacrifices for thanks were generally bloodless. We need to notice immediately that these sacrifices did not represent a substitutionary suffering for the sinner.

These sacrifices did not represent a substitutionary suffering for the sinner. We draw this conclusion for the following reasons:

1. When an animal was offered as a blood sacrifice, it was not tortured slowly but was put to death very quickly. So if the offering or sacrifice, if the essence of it was in the suffering, they would have tortured these animals. And dragged it on and on and on and let them writhe there and let the suffering do its work but they put them to death swiftly and quickly.

2. The second reason why the sacrifices did not represent a substitutionary suffering for the sinner was that no sacrifices could be offered for crimes that deserved capital punishment. Anyone guilty of a capital crime was executed. So no substitutionary suffering could take their place, if their crime was one deserving of capital punishment. Third reason was that in a case of poor families a bushel of fine flour was accepted for a sin offering in place of a blood sacrifice and it's obviously impossible for flour to suffer. Remember this passage in Hebrews; and it's been quoted like this, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins". Remember that scripture? How do you quote it accurately?

" Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins"; "For one may almost say 'without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.'" And the word almost was a reminder that in the case of poor families an offering of something other than blood such as flour or foodstuffs that also produced the cost recognition could also be brought.

Of course, if God were the bloodthirsty, vindictive being He's often made out to be this would never be satisfactory. Neither was the death of the animal or the sacrifice a vicarious payment for sin. It wasn't the suffering of the animal, it was the essence. Neither was it the death of the sacrifice that was a vicarious payment for sin. For several reasons:

1. Again no sacrifice could be substituted for someone deserving capital punishment, their life was taken no other life could be substituted.

2. The second reason the death of the animal was not a vicarious payment for sin was that on the day of Atonement, this is the second reason, on the day of Atonement confession of sin was made while the priest placed his hands on the head of the goat; this goat to which the sin was confessed onto was called the scapegoat and that goat was released; while, later another goat was slain; thirdly, and this is key; the Atonement was related to the blood of the sacrifice not to the death that produced it, the blood, but to the life that is in it. The Atonement is related to the blood of the sacrifice not to the death that produced it but to the life that is in it. We'll come back to that and talk about it a little more.

The Old Testament system of sacrificial offerings accomplished two important functions. First the blood sacrifices were especially designed to allow God, again according to public justice, to pass over the people's sins and set aside the penalty. The blood sacrifices were especially designed to allow God according to public justice to pass over the people's sin and set aside the penalty. Again, God had said "The soul that sinneth, it shall surely die". That was the law, He was the Lawgiver. And the blood sacrifices were designed to allow Him to change that and to pass over the people's sins. In order for pardon to be granted under public justice, the normal execution of the penalty which upholds the law or gives it its teeth must be replaced with something equally as affective in upholding the law. The sinner needs to see how awful his sin is in God's eyes and he must have a realization of his own guilt and all of this could be accomplished on a limited and a temporary scale in the Old Testament sacrificial system.

You'll remember when a sinner was ready to offer up a sacrifice for his sins, it was necessary in the case of an animal that it be without spot or blemish. Why was that? The killing of anything less than perfect would diminish the impact of the event in the eyes of the beholder. I'm sure you can think of certain animals that you wouldn't mind seeing killed at all. Good riddance. You know, wolves, snakes, sharks...get rid of them. There are certain animals that we view as being predators and being tormentors as being kind of evil or mean. Nobody has, or very few people that I know, have warm feelings about sharks or about rattlesnakes or wolves. Farmers will go out and kill wolves that prey on these innocent sheep...lambs. And then there are other animals that are..you know..they need to be put out of their misery. They're just old and crippled, they're hurting and you just want to end it for them. When you kill certain animals, it just doesn't do anything to you, or very little, they either deserve to die or they need to die. That's why God chose animals like doves or like lambs that were almost universally viewed as being innocent, helpless not hurting anybody or anything. And not ones that were lame, or that were halt, or that were discolored, but that were in the prime of health. There was no reason for them to die. When an innocent animal, in the prime of life, when it's life was taken it did something to people who were watching. So the sacrifice was to be without spot or blemish so that the impact on the beholder would not be diminished. The lamb was to be a picture of health and innocence prior to slaughter. This again is undoubtedly due to the fact that our inclination to see sin as a cruel and reprehensible phenomena is in direct proportion to the goodness and innocence of the victim.

If Charles Manson's are executed, they deserve it. If Idi Amin, somebody does him in, he deserves it. Adolph Hitler was done in, he deserved it. But when we see some young child, in the prime of life, happy, the picture of health, happy-go-lucky, struck down and killed by some maniac or some drunken driver, doesn't it make us feel angry? Our inclination to see sin as a cruel and reprehensible phenomena is in direct proportion to the goodness and innocence of the victim.

Malcolm Muggeridge recalled in his book, *Jesus Rediscovered*, an experience that he had at a sheep shearing in Australia. "As the lambs looked up with their gentle, frightened eyes, it quite often happened that the mechanical shears drew blood and the sight agitated me abnormally. The blood so red against the wool so soft and white. And why did I feel as though I'd seen it before long ago? Why was the sight somehow familiar to me?"

Do you remember the story of Uriah, Bathsheba and David? Remember that story? It is a sad story, all the way around. Uriah was the husband of Bathsheba that David decided he wanted as his own property. And while Uriah was gone, David took her and committed adultery, and she became pregnant. David had big problems on his hands. He wanted to cover his sin. Of course, he forgot at that point that the Bible says, "Who so cover his sin shall not prosper". And he decided he was going to bring Uriah home from the battlefield. You can imagine if you're Uriah out there fighting, you're just an average private or sergeant, and somebody comes with a message that the king wants to see you. "Huh? Me? What? You must have made a mistake. Not me."; "No. Aren't you, Uriah?"; "Yeah."; "King David wants to see you." Can you imagine how he must have felt? Comes back to Jerusalem and meets with the king. Man, privileged audience, he must have been

so excited. And David says, "Why don't you go on home and spend some time with your wife." See, of course, that way, nobody will know what had happened. She delivers a child and everybody will think, including Uriah, that it's his." But see, Uriah was a man of real integrity and that was something David hadn't reckoned with. Instead of going home to his wife, who wasn't too far away... He'd been out in the battle, he gets that close and instead of going home and sleeping with his own wife, he sleeps on the steps of the palace, saying, "I'm not going to come here and enjoy what my colleagues on the battlefield can't." Oh, boy, David was trying desperately, trying to get him drunk. Nothing worked. So finally he sends Uriah back to the battlefield carrying a message to Joab, the captain, that in essence says, "put him on the front lines and then pull back." And here's Uriah out there on the front lines, after this audience with the king, fighting like a patriot, more loyal than ever before. He doesn't even notice, perhaps, that his own troops are quietly retreating behind him and he's open prey for the enemy and he's killed.

We read a story like that and it really stirs our emotions. If Uriah was some kind of a cad, a snidely-whiplash type, then who cares? Good riddance. He deserved it, he was a schemer anyway. He was a selfish man. But here's this man, so righteous, so full of integrity...and again our ability, our inclination, to see sin for what it really is...as a cruel and reprehensible phenomena is in direct proportion to the goodness and innocence of the victim. It doesn't mean that if the victim is not good or innocent that sin is not cruel and reprehensible. It still is. But we don't see it unless the victim is really good and innocent. Then we really see it. That's the whole point of the Old Testament sacrificial system. God wanted us to see what sin really was.

The Bible, unlike many of us does not associate blood with death but with life. In Leviticus 17:11&14 we read, "The life of the flesh is in the blood..And I have given it to you upon the alter to make an atonement for your souls. For it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul. For it is the life of all flesh. The blood of it is for the life thereof."

The Bible associates blood with life. It's common, many different passages in the Bible, for the word blood to represent life. For example, when Jonathan declared to his father that David was innocent, his father Saul, said, "wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood to slay David without a cause", 1st Samuel 19:5. "Wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood to slay David without a cause." He was saying, "Why will you be taking an innocent life for no reason?" In the New Testament, the words "life" and "blood" are often interchangeable. Mark 10:45, "The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many." And yet, in Ephesians 1:7, he says the same thing in a different way saying, "We have redemption through His blood." or through his poured out life. The one means the same as the other. God intended to put a premium on the concept of life through the blood. And this was one of the reasons, by the way, that Israelites were forbidden to eat blood. Life is a prize of ultimate value and when taken, the sinner is brought to a sobering realization of the significance that God places on sin. The combination of the sacrificial lamb's perfection, it's innocence and it's death, was to make a profound impression upon both the individual and the nation.

I'm going to go ahead and reread a story to you that I think helps to illustrate this. It is a fictional story but it is based on Old Testament descriptions of the day of Atonement in Israel. I think it must have been about the third or fourth time that I went through these concepts that God began to shed revelation in my heart about what His death really did and what it really signified. So, I'm going to reread this story that I've shared with you, some of you, before, about the day of Atonement. And, again, try as hard as you can, to place yourself there, in space and time, in your imagination. It's your family, it's your life, it's your experience in the nation of Israel. Very, very typical. I spent a lot of time researching this fictional story. Looking at customs and practices of ancient Israel and I think it is probably very, very close to the way things probably happened in those days. This story is meant to help illustrate the effects of the sacrifice upon the sinner in ancient Israel. You'll remember, you've heard me say this before, some of you, and no doubt you've read this, it was very typical of many families in that day to keep different kinds of animals as pets. Some of them kept birds and this is still very, very common in the middle east today in Arab countries, as well as in Jewish homes. Today, in the United States, we have pets too, usually we'll have a dog, or a cat, or a parakeet, sometimes a hamster, or something like that but there they didn't have really those kind of animals, so they kept, almost invariably, Jewish homes would keep lambs, young lambs, as pets. Most every family had sheep or goats and they would keep goats and sheep as pets, sometimes birds.

In the Old Testament, in old ancient Israel, the children of these Jewish families would grow very, very attached to these lambs and to these goats. And goats are alright when they are little, when they're young, they're kind of cute. Still, today, just last October I was over in the middle east on a month long research trip and I saw lots of little kids playing with animals, with sheep, with goats, just like they did hundreds and hundreds and thousands of years ago. So, I am going ahead and read the scenario to you to help you understand how the Old Testament sacrifices had an effect on children and adults in that day so you can just kind of use your imagination here and help me, maybe close your eyes and put your pens and pencils down, and put yourself in one of these Jewish families in ancient Israel as one of the children.

One evening as you and your brothers and sisters are running around outside your house, your father arrives home to put a halt to all the horseplay and after hustling you in for dinner he snatches up your favorite lamb and ties it inside the door. On most days Dad's arrival is a highlight but today something must have gone wrong. He's too serious tonight. It's not like usual when he throws you up on his shoulders and carries you through the door.

And then tomorrow, you discover the family is going to the temple but what's really great this time is that lamb gets to go along too. Early the next morning, your mother wakes you up early, very early, tells you to clean up and put on your best clothes. The fact that breakfast was skipped this morning for the Lord wasn't new but again Dad has just never looked so serious, so sober. Anyway your guess is that he's tying the lamb's feet together so he won't get lose in the temple during the meeting. Finally the family is on it's way. Dad's in front with the lamb on his shoulders with Mom and all your brothers and sisters

in tow. As you near the temple, you notice that some of your friends are arriving also but Dad won't let you talk to anybody. Once inside the temple all you can see are the back of the legs of a forest of grownups. Nobody's talking, they're all just crying and moaning and wailing loudly. And every so often a family or group of people press their way through the crowd and head for the door of the temple. It's hard to figure out what's happening exactly. You'd never really noticed the peoples faces the other times and this was the first time too that Dad had ever let the lamb come even though many other people had brought theirs before. And after a very long two hours you've crept up near the front and occasionally you can see the priest's legs and bare feet around the alter through a crack in the crowd. The wailing and the moaning near the front is almost deafening. Finally your family is standing in front of the alter and there is blood all over the ground and it's splattered on the priest's clothes. While your attention is fixed on all the blood, Dad has handed the lamb over to a priest. After saying something to Dad he lifts his head and speaks again, probably praying. His hand's are both resting on the lamb when you notice for the first time the long, menacing knife at the side of the alter. The lamb anticipates it's future with a meek struggle that the leather cords hold firm. And after the priest finishes praying he picks up the knife and puts his hand under the lambs jaw pulling its head back and horror struck you watch the priest plunge the knife into its throat and the blood spills out onto the breast of the lamb, and the priest and the alter. And after one last spasmodic convulsion the life of your lamb is over. As the priest spreads the blood around, of your lamb, the reality of the whole gruesome spectacle begins to melt your frozen stupor. As you leave the temple, as others before you, the tears flow uncontrollably pressing through other Jewish families waiting their turn to approach the alter. And nothing at all was said on the way home. But that evening, Father lifted your little frame off of your tear stained pillow and gently explained, as he had to your older brothers and sisters in prior years, how a lamb could die instead of you.

Now one might suspect that the child in our story, began to grasp, began to grasp, how revolting sin is to God after he saw the event in the temple. There may not have been a thorough theological understanding in his little mind, or her little mind, but it can doubtless be said that at least for a while sin would not be taken lightly by that little child. Blood signifies a cleansing agent - not a peace offering to an angry God. The blood when it was sprinkled on the alter and on the mercy seat was a sign to God that men had seen a life taken and that they, like this youngster in our story, had realized the awfulness of sin and were not inclined to hurry out and commit more. So, the Atonement was in the bloody realization of God's view of sin and His law and in it's ability to humble the sinner, who recognized his own guilt and responsibility in the death of that good and innocent victim. If I hadn't sinned, my lamb wouldn't have had to die. When a person came to that point. When they were confronted with this horrific spectacle. They were sobered; they became serious; they were reminded that sin was death and that to keep them alive, life had to be poured out, which was represented by the blood. They realized that they were responsible; they were guilty and; they were humbled and broken by the event. When they were in that condition; when they were humbled and broken and accurately viewing sin, they were not inclined to go out and commit sin. And when they were in that condition, that frame of mind, then God could pardon them and reconciliation could take place. And the Atonement became the At- one-ment.

And so we said that again, according to the law one may almost say that all things are cleansed with blood. What was cleansed? All things are cleansed with blood. It washed away our inclination to go out and commit sin. If blood was shed but it didn't take away our desire or inclination to go out and commit sin then it didn't work and we weren't forgiven. Without the shedding of blood there couldn't be any forgiveness because people did not accurately realize how serious sin was. When life was taken, an innocent life was taken, it produced an awareness in the mind of the beholder that was critical to God justly passing over their sin. God could not issue forgiveness to somebody who wasn't seeing things the way they really were. He'd be adding to their moral delinquency. He would be saying, "Hey, go ahead and continue to live in sin and I'll give you forgiveness to boot." He could only give forgiveness if it was done very carefully and very wisely. And see that substitute there for the normal execution of the penalty which would have been their own life had the same result. They saw sin accurately, they saw how God viewed sin. It did the same thing but the problem with this system is that it could only do that temporarily for short periods of time and then the whole procedure had to be repeated all over again. Poor families who didn't have any animal to bring, they would bring foodstuffs. Now, when you're poor and you just have a little bit of food that represents life to you. That represents existence and when you gave that up it, like blood, produced a powerful cost recognition in your mind and you realized that it was a serious thing that you were dealing with.

There are many interesting scriptures in the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament, minor prophets which indicate that if there is no hard realization, no contrition, and no impact on the one who offers the sacrifice, that blood or no blood, it wasn't pleasing to God. Blood wasn't magic, it was a means to an end. It was a tool that God could use to produce what He wanted in our minds and in our hearts.

Hosea 6:6, "For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings";

Hosea 8:11-13 "Since Ephraim has multiplied alters for sin they have become alters of sinning for him. Though I wrote for him ten thousand precepts of my law, they are regarded as a strange thing. As for my sacrificial gifts, they sacrifice the flesh and eat it. But the Lord has taken no delight in that. Now he will remember their iniquity and punish them for their sins. They will return to Egypt." Even though they had actually sacrificed to God, blood sacrifices, He didn't accept them and He wasn't pleased with them. Blood isn't magic. They sacrificed blood on the alter of God; God saw the blood; He wasn't satisfied.

In Amos 5:21-27, God makes it very clear, he says, "I hate, I reject your festivals, nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer up to me burnt offerings and your grain offerings and I will not accept them. And I will not even look at the peace offering of your fatlings. Take away from me the noise of your songs, I will not even listen to the sound of your hearts. But rather, let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream. Did you present me with sacrifices and grain offerings in the wilderness for forty years, Oh, house of Israel? Yet, you also carried

along Sicrah, your king and Kiah, your images; the star of your God which you made for yourselves. Therefore I will make you to go into exile beyond Damascus, says the Lord, whose name is the Lord of Hosts.

Micah 6:6-8, "With what shall I come to the Lord and bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, with yearling calves? Does the Lord take delight in thousands of rams, in ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my first born for my rebellious acts, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

He's told you O man what is good and what does the Lord require of you? But to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly before your God."

Hebrews 10:5-6 "Therefore when He comes into the world, He says "sacrifice an offering thou hast no desired but a body thou has prepared for me and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast taken no pleasure."

For many, the sacrifices had become nothing more than a tiresome ritual and people grew hard and callous and eventually began to engage in deceit and profiteering in the temple. What was going on was, the sacrificial system had been instituted now for so long that people were getting used to it and they were coming before and offering sacrifices and it no longer was making any hard impact on some of them. There was no contrition, there was no breaking, there was no humility, there was no hard realization of what sin really was. It came to the point where people, greedy people, in order to make some money would bring animals in cages and pens into the foyer of the church or the temple so that men on their lunch breaks from work; they could call home and say "Honey, I'm going to run over to the temple and offer a sacrifice this afternoon during my lunch hour." They could buy a sacrifice; no attachment to it; and sometimes they were lame and hurt; they weren't pictures of health and innocence; it was just an animal. Let's just get it over with; go in before the alter, have the priest kill it, walk out; did my duty. The problem was that when people came with their sacrifices in this manner; when there was no hard contrition, no impact; that there was also no forgiveness. God didn't accept; He could not wisely issue forgiveness because their minds and their hearts were not where they should be. Twice, Jesus had to drive out merchandisers from the temple who were there just to make enormous profits from animals sold to sacrifice. And it was against this perversion that Jesus burned with indignation when he went in there with His leather cord.

But this practice, however, was nothing new, as we know from the book of Malachi, "Oh, that there were one among you that you would shut the gates, that you might not (interesting word here)..that you might not uselessly kindle fire on my alter. I am not pleased with you," says the Lord of Hosts, "nor will I accept an offering from you. From the rising of the sun even to its setting My name will be great among the nations and in every place incense is going to be offered to My name and a grain offering that is pure, for My name will be great among the nation," says the Lord of Hosts. "But you are profaning it, My name, in that you say the table of the Lord is defiled and as for its fruit, its food is to be despised (because they were bringing lame and halt and blemished animals). You also say, my how tiresome it is, and you disdainfully sniff at it," says the

Lord of Hosts, "and you bring what is taken by robbery and what is lame or sick and so you bring the offering. Should I receive that from your hands?" says the Lord. "Cursed be the swindler who has a male in his flock and vows it but sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord for I am a great king," says the Lord of Hosts, "and my name is to be feared among the nations." Malachi 1:10-14

So the point was, the point is that God is not a blood-thirsty being. That just seeing blood and just seeing suffering and just viewing death was not what God was after. It was the sacrifice was not to have an impact on God, it was not an objective atonement. God was not the object of the act. The sacrifice itself, what was done, what was taking place was to have an impact on man. Man needed to change. Man needed to be affected. If man was not affected, if his heart was not changed, if there was no impact, no humility, no contrition by the blood sacrifice, it didn't work. So, it is. The poured out life of Jesus Christ must have an impact on our lives and on our hearts or else it doesn't work and we'll talk about that tomorrow morning.

Let's pray just briefly. Father, thank you, for the wonderful plan of salvation that you've instituted. That you've worked so hard to reveal to us what our actions ought to be and what your heart is really like. Help us to work through some of these concepts and these truths to understand how you really feel.

I pray Lord you prepare our hearts for this tremendous climax tomorrow morning of Calvary. Show us Lord what a marvelous thing it was that you did. In Jesus name.

Lecture V

Today we are going to complete our mini-series on the Atonement. This morning we're going to come to the climax of God's plan of salvation where everything culminated in the death and resurrection of Jesus. The greatest single act that was ever performed in the history of the world. Sometimes I think that the deepest, most profound revelation comes when, not when we're listening to a lecture or reading a book, but when we just get into a quiet place, alone with the Lord and ourselves. Just close our eyes and begin to meditate on a particular event or truth and think about it in all of its detail, all the little tiny parts of it that we never considered before. Every time I begin to think about the Atonement and about the fact that the Son of God actually came to this earth and died and was buried and then rose from the dead, there's all kinds of new little things that I see and I'm made aware of. And the Holy Spirit can reveal truth to us better than anyone else. He knows how to make that truth stick too; He knows where to put it inside of us so that we'll find it again.

Yesterday afternoon we talked about the Old Testament sacrificial system and about the significance of the blood; that it was symbolic not of death but of life; and that as God saw the blood on the alter and on the mercy seat, it was a sign to Him that men had seen a life taken or a life poured out. A life again was something that men considered to be a commodity of ultimate value and when life was removed, when life was taken, it ushered the beholders to the sobering realization of what sin really was. In addition, when men saw that blood, it also symbolized to them that life had been taken. A life had been taken, not just a body but a life, an existence, had come to an end because of their sin; and the life that had been taken was innocent, was prime and there was no reason for that existence or life to end except for the fact that they needed to be reminded that their behavior was unacceptable to the righteous Moral Governor of the universe.

We talked about the fact that this process had the capacity to really break the heart of the beholder. To humble them. It had a lingering effect for perhaps weeks or months but the unfortunate part of the old testament sacrificial system was that it didn't have much in the way of staying power. The act of sacrifice had to be repeated over and over again to continually usher that person back to the place of realization and it was only when they were in that place of realization and contrition and really truly seeing themselves for what they really were, only when they were in that place, could God wisely forgive them and dispense with the penalty. We also said that sometimes the sacrifice or act of offering before the Lord was not acceptable nor was it effectatious or in other words it didn't work, it did not accomplish that which it was supposed to accomplish. They would offer sacrifice, they would shed blood but no forgiveness would be forthcoming because that shed blood, that taking of a life, made no impact on their hearts or their minds. Hebrews 10:3 tells us something, reminds us that the sacrifices are limited, when it says "But in those sacrifices, there is a remembrance again made of sins every year". But in those sacrifices (the Old Testament sacrifices) there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. Had to be repeated. What we really needed desperately was a system whereby we

could be totally and permanently changed from within. A system whereby our sin wouldn't merely be covered but it would be removed.

I mentioned yesterday that there were two functions that the Old Testament sacrificial system accomplished. The first function we said was that it allowed God to cover our sin - to temporarily pardon us. Looking forward to the writer of Hebrews reminds us a better promise, a better way, a better system, a better service. We might say that the first function of the sacrificial system really majored on God's governmental problem to a limited degree; it focused on solving that temporarily although it did deal somewhat with man's hypocritical problem, helped man to see himself and to some extent it helped with the personal problem, revealing the heart of God, but even that was to a limited degree or scale.

What it did not do very well was solve the fourth problem, the motivational problem, except for the shortest period of time.

We've also discussed earlier the fact that because man had strayed so far from God that he had lost his concept of God, what God was like, what He thought and felt, it became accordingly necessary for God to slowly and progressively bring man back to a place of complete fellowship. You cannot take somebody who has drifted out of relationship over a long period of time, years and years, and then expect instantaneously to move right back into the relationship that you originally had expecting that person to have an understanding of who you are and who they are instantly after that long separation. God realized that. So He began, many, many centuries ago, through various ways and means to reveal to us as the human race what He was really like. And we can say that the old covenant, the old system was really a foreshadowing of an awesome event. It was to build anticipation, to build expectation, to get our attention, to get our mind on tract to begin to expect something to happen. All of this Old Testament sacrificial system, all the old covenant was pointing towards Calvary and the whole solution of the problems of reconciliation in the person of Jesus Christ.

At this point, I'd like to have you jot down a few scriptures. We won't spend a lot of time on this but it may be something you'll want to look at later. We want to compare the Old Testament sacrificial system with the Atonement of Christ and see what each was able to do and how they compare to one another. You might want to draw on your notes two columns; divide your paper down the middle with a line; and on the left hand side you might want to entitle that column as follows: Blood sacrifices could not take away sin. On the right hand side: the Atonement of Christ did take away sin. Underneath the left hand title; jot down the scripture reference Hebrews 10:11 and Hebrews 10:4 on the right hand side Hebrews 9:26.

Blood Sacrifices could not take away sin	The Atonement of Christ Did take away sin
Hebrews 10:11 and Hebrews 10:4	Hebrews 9:26

The repeated ritual of blood sacrifices:	The one time, voluntary sufferings of Christ:
Hebrews 9:9	Hebrews 10:22
Hebrews 10:1	Hebrews 10:14
Hebrews 10:2	Hebrews 9:14 and Hebrews 10:16

Let me read these scriptures to you.

Hebrews 10:11 "In every priest stands daily ministering an offering time after time the same sacrifices which can never take away sin."

Hebrews 10:4 "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins."

But the Atonement of Christ did take away sins;

Hebrews 9:26 tells us "But now once at the consummation (the consummation of what? The consummation of the old covenant) of God's whole glorious plan to reveal himself to us. He (Jesus) has been manifested or revealed publicly to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

We want to make some further comparisons between the old covenant and the new covenant here.

So underneath those scripture reference you might want to make a horizontal line across your page and make some new subtitles in each column. On the left hand side as follows:

The repeated ritual of sacrifices: On the right hand side, The one time, voluntary sufferings of Christ: Here are some future scripture references that you'll want to jot down now in each column. Left side Hebrews 9:9; Hebrews 10:1 and Hebrews 10:2; Parallel on the right hand side: Hebrews 10:22; Hebrews 10:14; then Hebrews 9:14 and 10:16.

I'll read you the essence of these scriptures here to compare the repeated ritual of sacrifices, in the Old Testament with the one time voluntary sufferings of Christ.

First of all the repeated ritual of sacrifices in Hebrews 9:9 cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience. Basically, what it's saying is that it can't take away guilt; it can only cover it, pardon us for a time but not take away guilt. Nor can it bring us to a point where we're able to effectively understand and combat sin but the one time voluntary sufferings of Christ cleansed our hearts from an evil conscience and an evil conscience we could call a superego (for those of you who have had some psychology).

The repeated rituals of sacrifices secondly can never make perfect those who draw near but the one time voluntary sufferings of Christ perfect for all time those who are sanctified. Think about that. The one time voluntary sufferings of Christ perfect for all time those who are sanctified. That, you must understand, is not some kind of instant, ultimate perfection. It means that we enter into a type of holiness whereby God forgives all of our past sins so we have a clean slate to begin with and then He helps us from that moment on to live up to all the moral enlightenment we have. Doesn't mean our actions are perfect but it means from that time on we can live with a perfect heart, perfect motive, perfect conscious.

Thirdly, the repeated ritual of sacrifices, Hebrews 10:2 "...cannot remove consciousness or guilt of sins" but the one time voluntary sufferings of Christ Hebrews 9:14 says "it cleansed our conscious" and Hebrews 10:16, "puts His laws in our hearts and our minds". Rather than being written down on tablets of stone now through what Christ did, they're written in our hearts and our minds, inside of us. We know what that is because most of us have experienced that.

Hebrews 10:9, "Then say He, "Lo, I come to do thy will Oh God. He taketh away the first that He may establish the second".;

Hebrews 7:19, "For the law made nothing perfect" It didn't mean that the law was bad, it just didn't make anything perfect, "but the bringing in of a miracle did by that which we draw nigh onto God".

We could say this, to oversimplify the matter, the old covenant was an external system whereas the new covenant is an internal system. The blood of Christ opened, as the song says, "a new and living world." No longer would we need to relate to God on the basis of an external set of laws; not just sacrifices. Sacrifices were only part of the old covenant. There were lots of laws and regulations too. Something presumably happened to us when we saw Christ die under the weight of our sin. It was at that point when we encountered the cross, all of us in some way, that we were won by the love of Christ back into the relationship. He put His laws into our hearts and minds. Those of us who have moved back into a relationship with God, a love relationship, keep His laws still today to the best of our ability but not because we have to, not because there are any rules and regulations but because we want to. That's the big difference between the old covenant and the new covenant.

In the end God got what He wanted through both covenants but the second covenant was so much more effective had so much more lasting power.

You'll remember, I'm sure those of you, who heard me share in your homes before, this story of this woman, this is a true story, I shared with you, who had moved very hastily into a marriage arrangement that was, that was something she would later regret because the man who she married turned out to be a real tyrant, very unkind and unthoughtful and the situation deteriorated very rapidly. He rarely spent any time at home, was out in the

tavern with his friends, drinking, would come home drunk, beat her, wouldn't help in anyway around the house.

One thing he managed to do faithfully, however, before he left the house for his job, which somehow he'd manage to keep, every morning he would hand his wife a list of chores to do, to accomplish. If she did not accomplish that list of chores, if she didn't finish them completely or if she didn't finish it to his satisfaction then he would start wailing on her when he got home. But the Bible says what the way of the transgressors are and that man died, a very bitter, very broken man. Shortly thereafter this young woman remarried and she married a man whose character was diametrically opposed that of her first husband. He's a very, very gentle and sensitive man who spent many hours holding his wife's understandably wounded personality in his embrace and in time there was a remarkable emotional healing that became manifest. One afternoon she was going through the house, singing and cleaning while he was away at work. She sat down on the sofa and found this scrap of paper wedged in the sofa, between the cushions, pulled this paper out, unfolded and began to read it and tears began to trickle down her cheeks. Do you remember what it was she had found? It was a list that her previous husband had given her. She didn't cry because she remembered how horrible it had been before, she wept because as she read the list she realized she was doing everything on the list without even thinking about it because now she was in a love relationship. Nobody told her to do those things, she wanted to do those things, she loved doing those things. That's really the basic difference between the old and the new covenant. That list had become written on her heart.

Paul sums up in the New Testament, Hebrews, the effect of the new love relationship when he says, Hebrews 10:14-16, "...for by one offering, He God has perfected for all time those who are sanctified and The Holy Spirit also bears witness. "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them"" That's fantastic, absolutely fantastic. Remember the Old Testament verse in Hosea, or Malachi, I remember now. The Lord says "What does the Lord require of thee"; Micah 6:8. Everything that we need to know in order to please God, in order live lives that make sense, in order to live lives of great fulfillment to God and to ourselves and to others, God is willing to reveal to us. We don't have to guess, we don't have to grope, we don't have to assume, we can know exactly precisely what God's expectations are because He's revealed them to us. The blood of Jesus, as one writer put it, is no admission fee which God has accepted to let sinners into heaven. "The blood of Jesus is no admission fee which God has accepted to let sinners into heaven. It is the means that He Himself has given to sinners to cleanse them from sin. Jesus blood was not shed for the purpose of inducing God to let the unclean stand for the clean but to make the unclean, clean."

That's the basic difference between the commercial transaction theory and the biblical teaching, the true biblical teaching on the Atonement.

We're told through the commercial transaction theory and those who believe in it and who believe in positional theology that there was this cosmic transaction between the first

and second member of the Trinity, at the time that Christ died, and from that moment on God looked at sinners as righteous. In other words what Christ did on the cross was to induce God to allow the unclean to stand for the clean.

That would be really I think a band-aid job, don't you think so? Isn't the love of God strong enough and powerful enough to not just technically remove our sins but really remove them from our lives. If it only technically removes sin from our lives and it doesn't really remove it from our lives then aren't we in fact still living under the bondage of sin? Isn't the Christian somebody whose released from the old man and the former life? Old things are passed away and all things become new and it doesn't mean we become perfect and we never sin again but that we start sinning a lot less than we used to but that we think differently and we act differently, we are different?

Sometimes, a lot of teachers today, Bible teachers, when they're talking about the old covenant and they are reading out of the book of Romans particularly and sometimes out of Hebrews during the teaching. They take the Law, the old covenant, and they just beat it to death. They castigate it as if it were something that was the brain child of, concocted of Lucifer, rather than God. Some horrible, horrible prayer.... Remember David's words Psalm 119:77, "Thy Law is my delight. More desirable than gold." He said, "More desirable than gold. Sweeter also than honey." Moses words, Deuteronomy 6:24, "So the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always and for our survival." There was a lot of good things about the old covenant and about the Law - a lot of good things. When the Bible talks about an imperfect law, in the New Testament, which it does, and a replacement of the old system, it refers to ceremonial law, not the moral law. If we fail to make a distinction here between what is being dispensed with here in terms of the law then we're going to develop very serious difficulties in our lives, not to mention our theology. God dispensed with the ceremonial law and all these rules and regulations and the letter of the law and moved into an era, the spirit of the law, the laws become internalized. God didn't do away with His moral law, ever, and He never will. That law will never, ever be dispensed with.

Alright so how did God through the death of Christ ultimately solve all of these problems? This is a critical question for us to be able to answer and understand if we are ever going to be able to fully understand the inner workings of Jesus' atoning death. What killed Jesus? If we were talking about anybody else's death the question might seem somewhat academic but when we are talking about the death of one who claims to be the Son of God the implications are far too demanding. Remember what Malcolm Muggeridge said about the death of Christ. "It's manifestly the most famous death in history. No other death has been remembered with 100th part of the concern, the intensity, as the death of Christ has been remembered." His death has been remembered with a great deal of passion for a very, very long time. A martyr's death, there have been other martyrs, people who've given up their lives or had their lives taken for a cause, we remember them.

The revolutionaries have their Che Gueverras. We have our Patrick Henry's, "Give me liberty or give me death". Patrick Henry. The thing about every other martyr's death is

that while their deaths might temporarily stir a great deal of emotion and might be remembered for some time, their death's, other martyr's death's are prone to fade into the expediency of modern day living. We don't think so much about somebody who...for example, some fellows over in Ireland who starved themselves to death some weeks ago, in prison caused a tremendous stir for a while, it was in all the media..everybody was thinking about it.

How many of you have thought about that in the last few weeks. You have? Surprising, that still one of this roomful of people and as more time goes on, I mean its been with in the year, five years from now, ten years from now, who's going to even think about it anymore? We may remember one, Bobby Sands, do you remember the names of the other nine guys who starved to death, do you even know who they were? I don't even remember their names. Now I'm sure there are people in Ireland who still remember their names but as time goes on lifes got to move on. Get involved in the expediency of life and the memory of these martyr's deaths, if they are martyrs, disappears. But Jesus Christ was no mere martyr. For while a martyr dies to support a cause, the death of Christ began a movement that has swept to the earth's four corners.

While it goes without saying that the blood of martyrs, incites and inspires, it is perhaps even the seat of the church, who would be so brass as to claim that their blood had the power to forgive sins? That's what really set Jesus apart. That's what made His blood different. He didn't die to support some cause but to begin a cause. He kept talking about this kingdom and people entering that kingdom through His blood, bore His poured out life. What killed Jesus? Most people when you ask them that question would immediately tell you that Jesus died as the result of being crucified. He was crucified to death.

People could be killed by being crucified. There were thousands and thousands and thousands of Jewish men, and women, who were crucified on the hills of Judea during the time of the Roman empire. When their bodies were taken down, they were hauled down off the cross, nobody asked "what killed this person". The answer was obvious, they were crucified. But it wasn't crucifixion that killed Jesus at all if the Bible can be taken as a reliable source - if you're willing to do that. If Jesus died as the result of crucifixion then it follows that Jesus was murdered, His life was taken from Him. Murder is simply not consistent with the scriptural revelation because murder is the taking of a life and Jesus's life was never taken from Him.

Jesus's life was, in biblical terminology, laid down. Willingly given. And Jesus again Himself made this point clear in John 10:17-18 when he said, "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me" that's clear right there. No one has taken it away from Me, I lay it down myself, I lay it down on My own initiative. Now, the two questions on the death of Christ on which most theologians are pretty well agreed encompass first, where He died and second, when He died. Few people will dispute the fact that Jesus's final, physical demise came when He was suspended from a Roman cross. There is likewise very little controversy over the fact that His death was unusually rapid. Pilate himself, you read in Mark 15:44, was amazed and astonished that Jesus died as quickly as He did. Piilate

wondered if He (Jesus) was dead by this time in summoning the centurion he questioned him as to whether He was already dead. The point was that Jesus had died abnormally fast. He expired before, more rapidly, than a normal victim of crucifixion. Jesus died quickly on the cross. The real issue and question that has been debated by theologians and has been debated even more so in recent years as a result of very extraordinary and unusual piece of cloth in the city of Turin, Italy, called the shroud of Turin, which many people have come to believe is the burial shroud of Jesus Christ.

I think there's a good chance that it is. I started a research project, it was assigned to me, it wasn't something I would have ever chosen to do several years ago on this thing that to me seemed to be almost bordering on the occult. I spent a couple of years researching it and gathering research and data and have continued to gather information and data. I first thought it was one of those weird Catholic relics.

Catholics love to build shrines around things and I saw this gaudy gold work around this thing and I thought "what is this" but when I took a look at this image, it was really astonishing. All of the evidence points to the fact that there is an excellent chance that the man, whose image is on this burial shroud, is Jesus. The man has been determined by the best ethnologist that we have in the world to be a seraphic Jew. They have used computer enhancement techniques on this image to determine that on the eyelids of this man there are coins.

And those coins, and this was a very typical practice in those days when they were burying people to put coins over their eyelids after they closed their eyes when they died, those coins bear the image of Pontius Pilate. They date from the time of Christ. There is a wound in his side. There are puncture marks around his head that could have been made by a crown of thorns. There are wounds in his feet and in his wrists. There's both a front and back image. It was wrapped around the man. There are all kinds of whip marks all over his shoulders and back and there is one shoulder there is a varied abrasion where he would have carried a heavy wooden cross on his shoulder. Now, nobody has ever found anything else like this. These scientists from, the list of experts that have studied this thing is incredible, from major universities like USC, Princeton, the University of Rochester, from the major scientific laboratories in the United States. US weapons laboratories where they have some of the most sophisticated computer gear like Los Alamos and Sandia Labs. They have pulled pollen off this cloth that comes from plants that are native to Palestine. None of these members of these scientific teams, none of them have been able to say we know how this image was made on the cloth. All they have been able to do is say we know it wasn't made this way. There is no paint, it wasn't painted at all. And they've eliminated every single possibility that they could possibly think of how this image could have been formed and the conclusion they have come to is that the image was formed on this cloth from some type of radiation. The first group of scientists that were really convinced and moved that this was genuine and not some kind of forgery were pathologists who said there was no way any human being could ever have duplicated so perfectly these wounds, all of these wounds in this body. So people today are looking at this thing and theologians are getting involved and scientists and everybody's debating. How did Jesus die?

There are some people who feel, believe, that the soldier who took his spear and pierced Jesus side, did Christianity a real favor. It is probably doubtful that anyone who was there that day, any of the spectators at Calvary, sympathetic or otherwise, paused to interpret that subsequent blow that came out of Jesus's side but today in retrospect when the account is read from John's Gospel, one gets the instinct impression, from John's almost impassioned emphasis on the event, that it is a clue that in time will bear some kind of noteworthy significance. John 19: "...but one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear and immediately there came out blood and water. And he who has seen has borne witness and his witness is true and he knows he is telling the truth so that you also may believe." John is making a big deal out of what he saw. That's an important clue in helping us determine the cause of Jesus's death. With one fateful blow, one single Roman legionaire opened up a channel for position in theologianal life to gaze straight into the heart of the Savior. For Christians it merely substantiates what they have intuitively known all along and as for medical men it gave them an opportunity to have their mini-autopsy.

The plan of salvation didn't begin at Calvary, it ended there. Where did the plan of salvation begin? In Genesis 3:15. What happened in Genesis 3:15. It's the first time that we know of, that blood had ever been shed in the history of the world, up to that point. That was the first sacrifice, really, to provide a cover for man. So, God began that very moment, the process of salvation, the plan of revelation, of what He thought about sin.

Because man, at that point, Adam and Eve needed, God needed to show them how terrible it was. You can imagine if you've been living in this paradise condition situation and all of a sudden and I believe, this is my own personal opinion, that the animals talked in those days, and you'll remember that God looked through all of the animals to see if there was an adequate helpmate for man. He didn't form Eve right off the bat, He checked out all these different creatures that He made to see if there was an adequate helpmate and decided there wasn't.

The point is, that he'd never known any violence, he'd never known anything but peace and serenity and holiness and suddenly God Himself takes the life of one of these other creatures and then takes the skin of that animal and puts it on Eve. I think that had a very profound impact on their minds. Then later on, God begins to reveal himself in many other ways; through the Old testament sacrificial system; though the prophets.

Finally we come up near the end of the old covenant or the first covenant. What happened at the very end of that first covenant? John the Baptist. John the Baptist was called a forerunner. He was a very, very unique and very special man. The Bible tells us he was filled with the Holy Ghost while he was still in his mother's womb. That doesn't happen very often. Sometimes you wonder what Elizabeth thought was going on in there, I don't know whether he spoke in tongues or not. Not only did he kick, he spoke in tongues in there. I said this was a very unique situation. This man John was called the forerunner. And his purpose, his role, his function, was to further stimulate man's anticipation of a stunning climax to this long historical process of revelation. And all the things that happened were turning man's head forward, looking into the future, anticipating something to come and John the Baptist was the final voice provoking

anticipation. And, of course, this stunning climax occurred when the Word became Flesh and dwelt among us.

John bore witness of Him and cried out saying, "This was He of whom I said. He who comes after me has a higher rank than I for He existed before me." Everybody knew that John was at least six months older than Jesus and here's John saying He existed before him. But this man, John described was also the man that the prophet Isaiah had written about many, many centuries earlier, saying, "He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was despised and forsaken of them; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face he was despised and we did not esteem him, surely our griefs He Himself bore and our sorrows He carried." That's so sad, that's such a sad passage. Speaking of the Son of God. He was the humble servant who came to earth to identify with our situation. The one that John recognized from the beginning as the sin bearer. John 1:29, we read "...the next day he saw Jesus coming to him and he said, behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world".

We look at the life of Jesus and we examine what happened to Him and what was going on inside of Him. This climax to this long drama that had been building begins to unfold and we begin to understand the significance of Isaiah's words, "surely He hath born our griefs and carried our sorrows." In the beginning was the Word, Jesus, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the world and the world was made through Him and the world did not know Him. He came into His own, the Greek word for own, is, His own things, His own possessions, His own dominion. He came into His own and those who were His own did not receive Him.

Now, you stop and meditate on this. This is where the revelation really has to come. To understand what was happening in Jesus. I believe that the Trinity discussed creating man before they created him. They decided what the advantages were and what the dangers and risks were. But they so badly wanted to share of the overflow of their love with somebody else that they decided to create man to serve as further receptacles for the overflow of their love. They're totally giving beings. Those original thoughts that God had about man when He was contemplating man's creation were beautiful, they were wonderful, they were perfect. And God had very high hopes. He had real ambitions for man. To see man flourish and grow under the nurturing and admonition, the tutelage of God the Father. Jesus Himself made the world that we live on. The world was made through Him.

He created all that was created by the Word of His powers, through His authority, things came out of nothing. He created man and man was so special. Man was to Him what any of our children would be to us when they are born. They're precious, they're our own, they're special, they're unique, they're wonderful. And man grew and man multiplied and God Himself came to live with man, to walk amongst them, to come to His own, His own possession, to walk amongst the men that He had made. And as Jesus walked through the marketplace of Jerusalem and walked through the hills of Galilee and He looked at all the multitudes of people, He walked by hundreds of them, thousands of them, and they did

not even notice Him, they didn't know who He was, they didn't know that He was the one, the being who began it all. That He was the one who made them, that He was the one who made their country, that made the air and sky above, that created the sea at Galilee. That He was the source of all life that existed anywhere on the planet. As Jesus walked amongst these people and He wanted to reach out and embrace them. And say, I'm your Father, I'm your Daddy and say remember who I am. It hurt that they didn't recognize Him; they didn't care about Him. He was despised, rejected of men, a man of sorrows.

As Jesus treasured God's original design, His original intentions for man deep inside His heart. That was compared against the reality of what He saw and encountered each and every day. Here's this one who knew the original plan, saw the original blueprint, knew the intimacy and love that God had intended, the blessings He wanted to give and what men were supposed to be like. The way they were supposed to harmonize with one another and with the rest of nature. Jesus would walk down the street and see a couple of lepers sitting there on the corner, their flesh rotting. And what did that do to Jesus? He looked at that, it was unnatural, it was abnormal, He'd never intended that. He walks by through the marketplace maybe and He hears these men cursing at one another, hating each other, cursing at one another, cheating each other, stealing from one another. And then maybe He'd come across a group of men who had circled a woman who was caught in the act of adultery preparing to stone her to death. Looking at the woman, to what she had done with herself and with her mind, grieving thinking that it was never supposed to be that way and then looking at the men with stones in their hands and the stones in their hearts.

Everywhere He went he saw what sin had done to the human race. What it had done, how it had scared people, how it had destroyed them. It doesn't destroy us to see sin or view sin like it destroyed Jesus because we don't know, we can't compare what is with what was originally in the mind and the heart of God. The closest we can come is when we have our own children and when they are born, these little bundles of innocence and potential, they are part of us, they exist because of us, our choices and our desires. We have such high hopes for them. Sure Jeff we do. Your two little ones. What would you feel like, if ten or fifteen years from now, they left, they walked out on their own and you saw Katie walking the streets as a prostitute?

What would you feel like? What would that do to your heart? You can't picture it now. And that's what God saw. He saw His own, He came to His own and His own received Him not. They said, who are you? Who are you? As I said, Christ treasured God's original design for man in His heart and mind and although Jesus was in human flesh, He was, as Paul reminds us, the exact representation of God's legion. From the multiple marriages of the woman by the well in Samaria, to all the deceit and profiteering in Jerusalem's marketplace and temples, the rotting flesh of Lazarus, the unnatural perversions of sin, the broken blueprint began to weigh upon the soul of Jesus, who is repeatedly described throughout the Old and the New testament as the sin bearer. And when evening had come they brought to Him many who were demon possessed and He

cast out the spirits with the word and healed all who were ill in order that it might be fulfilled He Himself took our infirmities and took away all our diseases.

And they brought to Him one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty and looking up to heaven with a deep sigh, Jesus said to him, facta that is Theona. And when Jesus therefore saw her weeping and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled and said where have you laid him and they said to him Lord come and see and Jesus wept. And He sighed deeply in His spirit and said "why hath this generation seek after a sign, verily I say unto you, there shall no sign be given to this generation. Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee. How often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth together her chickens under her wings and ye would not." And when He was come near He beheld the city and He wept over it. I believe that Jesus's heart was growing heavy before He ever got to the cross. I believe that Jesus began to bear our sin before He ever got to the cross. That His identification with our situation with our sin began to weigh deep inside of Jesus before He ever got to Calvary. He sighed, He groaned, He wept time after time before He ever went to the cross. It hurt, He was hurting for us. Reality just wasn't measuring up, wasn't matching His original design.

It's been many years since grief was openly recognized as a cause of death. Yet, today, a growing number of physicians are once again giving attention to the relationship between various socio-psychological factors and heart disease. Dr. James Lynch, wrote in his highly acclaimed book, *The Broken Heart*, "stress, pain, anxiety, fear and rage sometimes appear in indexes of textbooks on the heart but never love." And yet, he goes on to say, "in surprising number of cases of premature coronary heart disease and premature death, interpersonal unhappiness, the lack of love and human loneliness, seem to appear as root causes of the physical problems. We have learned that human beings have varied and at times profound effects on the cardiac systems of other human beings. Loneliness and grief often overwhelm bereaved individuals and the toll taken on the heart can be clearly seen. As the mortality statistics indicate this is no myth or romantic fairy tale. All available evidence suggests that people do indeed die of broken hearts." Colin Parks, who is a grief researcher wrote a book entitled, *Bereavement*, he notes in his book that in 75% of the cases that he studied the cause of death in bereaved individuals was coronary thrombosis or arterial sclerosis. Dr. Arthur Brown of the University of Texas, has been involved in extensive research on nervous and ionic factors of sudden cardiac death and his findings which are acknowledged today in more than sixty publications and medical journals, his findings also strongly suggest a significant relationship between emotional stress and heart disease.

Another endorsement of the socio-psychological link in heart disease comes from Dr. David Jenkins, who after reviewing some of the psychological and social precursors or preliminary events or factors in the lives of those who come down with some kind of coronary heart disease stated recently in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, "that a broad array of recent studies point with ever increasing certainty to the position that certain psychological, social and behavioral conditions do put persons at a higher risk of clinically manifest coronary disease." You remember the principle that grief is

proportional to intimacy. Grief is proportional to intimacy. The greater degree of knowledgeable love that one has toward another, the greater is one's potential for being hurt. But this is something that shouldn't come as a profound revelation to us. It's something that we've all experienced, or probably most of us have experienced at sometime in our lives. Hurt, or grief, is something that you will rarely find in casual relationships or encounters. Hurt or grief is the product of intimate relationships. Hurt or grief is the product of intimate relationships. Dr. George Ingle, of the Rochester University Medical School, ran a carefully controlled six year study in which he reconstructed the backgrounds of 170 sudden deaths and he was able to document that in the great majority of cases some type of intimate personal loss preceded those deaths. The high coincidence of grief and loss that surrounded many of the deaths noted by Dr. Ingle is really striking.

There have been further laboratory experiments involving various clinical studies in psychiatric wards, hospital shock-trauma units and coronary care units that all suggest that the human heart is profoundly and sometimes mortally affected by human emotions. I'm sure you know what all this is leading up to.

Jesus prior to Calvary was hurt very, very deeply. Talk about intimate relationships. Think about the emotional toll that the fact that He came into His own and His own received Him not took. Jesus identified with the sin and the sorrow of humankind in a way that you and I probably could never experience. He was in a unique position to fully understand and fully identify with our sin. And finally the load that Jesus was carrying in His heart, deep inside Himself accumulated to the point, where He took His disciples aside one day and said, "Behold, we are going up into Jerusalem and all things that have been written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished" and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said "Father, the hour has come". How did He know? How did Jesus know? Was He praying to the Father and suddenly the Father said "Okay Son, it is now time to go to Calvary. It's now time to give your life". Is that how He knew that the hour had come? You'll remember there were several other times He said my time has not yet come. How did He suddenly know that it had come? I don't believe that the knowledge came externally from the Father at all. I think that Jesus knew that His hour had come, came from deep within. I think that there is a chance anyway that, that inner time clock was regulated by the pressure upon His heart. That Jesus sensed within Himself that there were physical things happening inside His body as a result of the emotional stress of identifying with, of bearing the sin of the world. When the Bible tells us that Jesus encountered a situation and groaned deep within Himself, or He sighed or He wept.

We are talking about someone who was sinless, who had total control over themselves, someone who wasn't given to extremes, someone who really had their act together. When Jesus groaned deep within, when He sighed, when He wept, you can be sure of the fact that deep and profound emotional things were going on down deep inside of Him. I think there came a point where Jesus was smart enough to realize the fact that He was dying, that His heart was at a straining point, that He could not take much more.

And He would soon undergo, what one French doctor described and I quote, "as an appalling mental agony produced by the foreknowledge of His physical passion and the knowledge of all the sins of man. The burden of which, He was Himself assuming for their redemption."

He Himself had said to the apostles, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful"; not full of fear because I'm going to be crucified but "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." Such deep distress can bring on a phenomena which is known to medical man. This phenomena, which is also extremely rare, is provoked by some great mental disturbance following on deep emotion or great fear. The phenomena that this doctor is referring to is of course the sweating of great drops of blood in the garden of Gethsemane. You remember that? That's not a metaphor, that's literal. Jesus recognized within Himself at that time in the garden that He was soon to face that moment for which He had come into the world. This was the moment of truth; the moment of destiny; for all humankind for all of heaven; the climax to which all of God's prophets, covenants and forerunners had led was just about ready to unfold on Calvary.

Now, I'd like to share with you my personal theory. I don't know for sure that this is the way it happened but it is the way I think it happened. Jesus made two very significant statements when He was in the Garden of Gethsemane. The first I just read to you when Jesus turned to His disciples and He said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." And then, He said to the Father in prayer; "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me".

I've heard different speakers and preachers say, that what Jesus was thinking about was crucifixion and Jesus was saying, "Father, if I don't have to die on the cross in the next day or so, I'd rather not." I find that absolutely, utterly preposterous. Why go all that way, to all that trouble, to come all the way up to the very end? To give up the glories of heaven, become a man, suffer all that agony and then say I'm not sure that I'm willing that I want to go through with it? The Bible says Jesus endured the cross, endured the suffering for the joy it would set before Him. I think that what was happening in the Garden of Gethsemane was that Jesus thought He was dying there in the Garden. You can imagine, I mean, here He was sweating great of blood coming out, He's got this tremendous pressure inside of His chest, this exceeding sorrow from bearing the sin of the world, from carrying our sorrows, from carrying our grief. And Jesus is thinking to Himself, "I'm going to die too early. I need to go to the cross. I need to be publicly displayed." And He's praying to the Father, Jesus is so absolutely obedient to the Father, He says, "Father, I think I'm dying. Now, it seems to me that this death, if I die now it will be premature. If it's possible, let this cup pass from me, keep me alive, but nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done, if it's Your will that I expire here, I'm willing to do anything."

It's an interesting scripture. In Hebrews 5, I want to read it to you, I'll start at verse five, "So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made a high priest, but He that saith unto Him, Thou art My son today have I begotten thee and He saith also in another place, thou art a priest, forever after the order of Melchizedek. Who in the days of his flesh when He had

offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto to Him that was able to save Him from death and was heard in that He feared." I believe that's describing the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus crying out with strong crying and tears unto the Father unto him that was able to deliver him from death, and He was heard, His prayer was answered because He feared God. We know Jesus was not delivered from crucifixion but He was delivered from death - premature death. As Jesus took the sins of the whole world deep into His heart and mind on the cross, the anguish of His soul at that point reached a climax. He became one who has recognized the full terror of sin. A separation of God. A separation of fellowship. And at the ninth hour, Jesus called out with a loud voice, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" And that was it. That was the final straw. The increasing weight of our sin could be born no longer and Jesus who had identified so long with us died of grief, with a very broken, very heavy heart.

And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. 1st Peter 2:24 and then in Isaiah 53:11&12, we read again, "As a result, as a result, of the anguish of His soul He will see it and be satisfied. By His knowledge the righteous one, my servant will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great and He shall divide the booty with the strong because He poured out Himself unto death."

Much of the excruciating agony that's connected with crucifixion, as most of you probably know, centered on the victim's incessant quest for air. Initially when the nails would be pounded into the extremities, the hands and the feet, the victim would be laid out on top of the cross on the ground, arms extended at a ninety degree angle, parallel to the cross beam. But as the cross was hoisted up into a vertical position with this pendant or hanging flesh on it, the arms with the weight of the entire body dragging on them, sagged to approximately 65 degrees. You just try hanging in that position for a little while. Even standing on something where your feet are supported. It is...God, it's agonizing. As these crucifixion victims were hanging on the cross for a few minutes, they would begin to contract muscle spasms, violent muscle spasms. Have you ever had a muscle cramp or spasm? Hurts like the dickens doesn't it?

Well, these cramps would begin in the forearms and then move to the upper arms and then the shoulders and then they would move quickly into the lower limbs, the legs and then to the trunk, to the body, until the whole body would be in a cramped position, everywhere. And soon, the spasms which caused the fingers and the toes to curl inward, would become generalized into a state of tetany and the stomach muscles would begin to tighten involuntary to form a hollow beneath what would become a grossly distended rib cage. The lungs would fill with air but due to the contraction of those muscles used to expel the air, the crucifixion victims were unable to expel that air. And asphyxiation would begin to set in, which was the way the crucifixion victims would die - not from shock, not from loss of blood, but from asphyxiation. And the thing is, the best way to really appreciate this is to just sometime do a little experiment, like I was telling you, and find some way to hang at a sixty five degree angle where you feel all of the weight of your body hanging on your arms. It's just a matter of sixty seconds before you want to get out of that position. It's hard to breathe even if you can move yourself around but if you

can't if your feet and your arms are nailed to the wall or to the cross and you're just hanging there and suddenly your body starts cramping up and it starts getting harder to breathe and you feel yourself suffocating.

What these crucifixion victims would do to remedy this situation and to stave off death by asphyxiation was to relieve the drag on the hands and on the arms, which incidently in Jesus case was estimated to have been about 240 pounds of drag on his arms and hands, that's 240 pounds per arm, per hand, that's the amount of weight, the drag weight. What they would do is use the nail that was through their feet as a fulcrum and the victim could with considerable effort raise himself to an upright position and this maneuver would relax the effect of tetanization within the muscles, at least some of them, and it would unload the air that was trapped in the lungs and they would temporarily avoid asphyxiation. But the relief was only temporary and within moments the victim would sink inevitably back into a state of tetanization.

This sort of macabre struggle, you would see people on crosses pushing up and down, up and down, to try and get some air. You have to remember the nail was drilled right through the wrist, not through the hands like Sunday school pictures show, it would rip right off the cross and fall on the ground.

Only the wrist could support the weight of the human body, a little place where the bones in the wrist would move aside and it would perfectly hold somebody. The problem is that, that nail would rub against the median nerve which is the main nerve. Like a violin string, it would bow across the violin string. And the pain from that was absolutely excruciating, a raw nerve exposed to this metal nail and every time they would move to push up the pain was dimming, their faces would be contorting in agony. Depending on how much physical strength a man had and whether they were nailed to the cross or tied to the cross, some were tied, it could take a strong man up to ten days to die. Generally it didn't but it could. It was the most cruel, hideous form of torture. You could walk around the hills of Judea in that day and everywhere you look you could see these poor, wretched human beings in this macabre up and down death struggle. Til finally they just ran out of energy and they couldn't push up anymore and they would suffocate to death.

Now the Jews had a great dread about the overnight presence of corpses and this was a particular worry on that weekend that Jesus was crucified because it was the eve of the Passover - high holy day. Since few, if any at the time, recognized Jesus Himself as that Passover lamb, His presence along with that of His two fellow victims was construed in the holy city of Jerusalem at that time, to be an unsightly nuisance, an unclean nuisance.

Accordingly, the Pharisees, those rule-keeping, power-brokers in Jerusalem approached Pilate with the request, as John records in his gospel, "That their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away." The breaking of a crucifixion victim's legs was merciful because it speeded up death for the obvious reasons that with broken legs they couldn't push up anymore to get air. So when they would break the legs of victims on the cross, they would die very quickly. But Jesus's bones weren't broken, as the prophet said, there wouldn't be a bone broken because when the soldiers arrived to end it all they

discovered, probably much to their chagrin, that Jesus had already expired, He was already dead.

One legionaire who was no doubt frustrated that the fun had ended prematurely. You're wanting to torment somebody and they die on you - it's no fun anymore. They had a lot of fun with Jesus, plucking the hair of His beard out, smacking Him around, spitting on His face, whipping Him and then crucifying Him, thrust his spear, or his lance, into Jesus side, as kind of a parting coupe de gra and out of the wound, as John's gospel records, flowed that blood and water that we talked about earlier. As we've already mentioned, crucifixion was a slow lingering kind of death that could take a strong man up to ten days to die. Thus when after only a matter of hours the body of Jesus was requested from Pilate, the Roman governor was astonished, he marveled that Jesus had died so quickly. In fact, he couldn't believe it until he sent a centurion out there to verify it, that He was really dead. But again, Jesus did not die of crucifixion but rather from the internal agony of his own soul. He poured out his soul unto death. Crucifixion merely facilitated His death. No man took the life of Jesus. Jesus died as a result of a voluntary identification with the sin of the world crushing out his life.

You see, crucifixion was really, in a sense, the ideal means of death for Jesus because it provided Him with a prolonged period of consciousness necessary for His voluntary death. Jesus's conscious identification in death with and death over our sin would have been frustrated had he been drugged which He refused pointedly to take the drug - remember, they offered it up to Him. In addition, had Jesus been executed in any other way, by sword or more likely by the Jewish method at that time of stoning, then He would have lost consciousness and would have been murdered rather than pouring out His soul unto death. Plus, crucifixion was a public display.

During a time, as we've said, in Israel's history when all the hills, and there are hills that totally surround and encircle the city of Jerusalem, were literally blackened with a forest of crosses even a hardened and calloused Roman executioner recognized as he watched Jesus die that he had never seen a man die like that before. He was just like all the other victims, looked just the same, nails in His hands, hanging from a cross like everybody else, just another Jew. But as Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed His last, and when the centurion who was standing right in front of Him saw the way He breathed His last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God."

What was it that he saw? What was so unusual? That Centurion knew what people looked like when they died of crucifixion. He knew how they died. And when he looked at Jesus and saw the way He breathed His last; saw the way He died; he knew He wasn't dying from crucifixion and he looked into His face and His presence and knew there was something terribly unusual going on. And no doubt, he'd been told and there was a sign above, "Jesus, King of the Jews", he knew that He claimed to be the Son of God and when he saw the way that He died, he believed that truly this man was who He said He was.

And as on the Holy Day of Atonement, the sacrifice of Jesus had a profound impact on all the beholders. Luke 23:48, we read, "And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned."

" It is finished." As Jesus uttered those memorable words, it signified, of course, the veil of the holy of holies was also ripped simultaneously from top to bottom, both of those things signified that an answer; a solution had been found to history's most complex set of problems. How did the suffering, the life and the suffering and the death Jesus fully solve the problems of the broken God-man relationship? Well, first of all we need to realize that one does not solve an unlovely problem with a lovely solution.

When we take somebody who has been guilty of some heinous crime, like murder, and then we slap their wrist or we sentence them to work for a week in a florist shop, that's not going to help him to understand the severity of what he has done nor is it going to protect society. But if all we desire to do is to protect society then full punishment is sufficient. If somebody goes out and commits a crime, we execute them. That protects society from them forever. God wanted to protect society but he also wanted the reformation of the sinner. As Jesus with all his rights to dignity and greatness died in that gruesome manner, the entire spectacle took on an overwhelming impact because this wasn't just a mere bleating lamb but the man who claimed deity and who had substantiated His claim with numerous miracles and an impeccable life style. Nobody had ever met anybody like Jesus before. The moral force that was generated by the life and the passion and the suffering of this Lamb proved to be a far greater intensity than the threat of eternal punishment had ever been.

You'll remember the well known story of the Greek king Zalucus. It's a prime analogy of God's remarkable solution of problems of reconciliation and balancing justice and mercy, His governmental problems and all the other problems that God solved on Calvary. Zalucus was a great king, an historical king not a fictional character, whose kingdom was plagued with chronic adultery. For some reason, King Zalucus didn't like this and he issued an edict that anyone caught in the act from that day forward would lose their eyesight and as you might expect the result of that edict was that there was an instantaneous decline in the incidence of adultery in his kingdom. Either that or the people were very, very careful about what they did. But with a tragic twist of irony, the king's own son was the first, the initial violator of the new edict, who got caught. Suddenly, Zalucus was placed in the same shoes as God and Darius. What was he going to do? So he wrestled with the situation, I am sure for a long time, before he made his decision. After some time went by, after he decided even, making sure there wasn't some other way, he assembled all of his people together and in the audience of all of his subjects he proceeded to put out one of his son's eyes and then one of his own. In this act, King Zalucus was able to uphold his law, reveal conclusively his hatred for the evil of adultery, and "free" the son that he loved, preserving at least part of his eyesight. Also, in that kingdom, the sight of a one-eyed king was a far greater moral deterrence than that of a totally blind son.

And so in the universe it is today, that the sight of a nail scarred guide is a far greater moral deterrent than the full punishment of any sinner. In the Atonement, God revealed Himself to man, in the clearest possible terms. The Bible tells us again that Jesus was an exact representation of God's nature. Jesus states "He that has seen me, has seen the Father". It was really the heart of God Himself that was up there on the cross, in front of the eyes of the watching world. And here are all these people saying "God is vindictive. God is blood-thirsty. God has to be paid back Himself" and God is saying, "No, I don't need anything. I'm not going to take anything. I don't need to receive anything. I've come to give life and to give it more abundantly. I've come to give." So we look, the heart of God lifted up on the cross, watch Him suffer, agonize and finally break, under the weight of our sin.

It was evidently a new and a deeper revelation of the depth of God's love to the host of heavenly beings and God and that act not only provided for our salvation but He destroyed the works of the devil through crime who argued in heaven and on earth that God was selfish, that God was trying to hold all of them in a life of bondage and subservience. In this revelation, God's love, the ultimate revelation of His love, the depth and nature of His love would have been lost had there not been an opportunity for Him to pour Himself out in such a manner. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

Malcolm Muggeridge, in his book, *Jesus Rediscovered*, sums things up in this way, "What then does the crucifixion signify in an age like ours? I see it in the first place as a sublime mockery of all earthly authority and power. The crown of thorns, the purple robe, the ironical title, King of the Jews, were intended to mock or parody Christ's pretensions to be the Messiah. In fact, they rather hold up to ridicule and contempt all crowns, all kings, all roses. Look under the crown and you see the thorns beneath. Pull aside the purple robe and there is nakedness. Look into the grand, eloquent titles and they are seen to be no more substantial than Christ's ribald one of King of the Jews scrawled above his cross. It was that sort of incidence, a man dying in that slow, public way which must have generated its own immediate attention in the beholders. Even though they were unaware of the nature and magnitude of the stupendous drama being enacted before them in some vague way they expect something to happen and so it does."

The power of the cross, today, does not lie in some vague, abstract, ethereal cosmic transaction but rather in the literal subduing of the human heart. Do you understand what the difference is? The power of the cross does not lie in some vague, abstract, ethereal cosmic transaction. The power of the cross, the power of the blood of Christ, lies in its ability to literally, literally, literally, literally subdue the human heart. God's desire was never just to suppress rebels - he had no problem doing that - but to subdue their pride and then once again enjoy their fellowship. The exertion of force although generally speaking will result in rapid submission does not subdue the heart. You can force somebody to do what you want but you cannot force them to love you and to respect you. Consequently, true fellowship devolves to respect based on fear whenever we use force to get what we want. God's ultimate goal has never been, as we've said many times before, to save us from hell.

He came rather to save us from ourselves and from our sins. Matthew 1:21, "...she shall bring forth a son and thou shall call His name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins."

When we fully understand the cross of Jesus Christ, everything that happened there and all that it means, it provides us with the greatest, the most imposing barrier to the contemplation of future sin. Jesus was able through His suffering to do what the Old Testament sacrifices never could. Provide a lasting moral force to alter our entire outlook on sin. Perhaps in time, like the death of a martyr, the death of a lamb, or some perfect animal might fade in our minds and be forgotten. But when we consider, contemplate, what it was that God did for us...neither heaven nor earth...has ever to this day nor ever will be able to forget the day when God left the splendor of heaven and came to earth to wash the feet of his enemies. And while we were enemies, while we were enemies, we were loved and we were reconciled to God through the death of His son.

Next time we contemplate sin, when you are tempted to sin, and you see that road stretching out ahead of you toward that house of mirth, toward the pursuit of some kind of sin or inequity, remember there is a cross standing right in the middle of that road with Jesus on that cross. As you start walking, you're going to find your gaze looking in two directions.

You're going to be looking straight ahead at that temptation, that desire for gratification and you're going to be looking at Jesus hanging on that cross and he's going to be looking at you. And what we have to do now, after we have come to a knowledge of truth and what Christ has done for us, if we want to go down that path and get involved in sin, what we have to do, we have to lower our gigs and refuse to look in the face of a loving savior who knows where we're going. As we walk underneath that cross, we have to brush off his blood that drips down, and we have to say, we don't care. You see, there are too many Christian's today who don't have that cross in the road. It's not a road block for them because they don't understand. They don't pursue it. They don't ask God for revelation. They don't meditate on what Christ did for them. So there is no breaking them and they are hard, they're hard people and they love their sin. If that act of love does not subdue our resolve, as Charles Finney says, then our case is hopeless. If that doesn't move you to tears, then

The full impact of what we have been talking about the last couple of days is something that only God's Holy Spirit can bring to your heart and I'd like to encourage you to take sometime here in the next day or so, to get alone with God and say, "God, if I have not yet received the full impact of the cross, I want it". Jesus didn't pay for our sins, He bore our sins. It's not some kind of slick, little commercial transaction. The heart of God broke over the choices that you and I have made. Let's reverse things and let's tell the Lord Jesus that when He comes to us, when He comes to his own, that we will receive Him, that we will take Him down off that cross. Remember the words, Paul, that if we sin willfully after we come to the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, what we do is we crucify Him afresh. We crucify Him afresh; we put Him through even more grief. I believe that Jesus has suffered enough. The non-Christian

world is going to be putting God through grief every day. But you and I have the opportunity to give Him some breathing room. We expect them to put God through grief but let's not us do it. Let's not, members of His own household, crucify Him afresh. After we've received revelation and light and truth. After all that say, no, we chose sin and put Him right back up there again. No, let's not be those kind of people. Let us pray.

Father, in a sense, what we've done here in the past few days has been take communion together.

Even though there's been no wine, or grape juice or bread, we have remembered your body and your blood. Lord, I believe that you want to reveal to us all that you did and all that it meant in a far more deeper way than we yet understood. And Lord Jesus, I can't do that, I am a human being with limited faculties, and that breaking and that revelation is something that only you can bring into our hearts this morning. Holy Spirit of God, only you can take these truths deep into our inner most being, into our hearts and lay the cross out open before us. Only you have the power to save us from ourselves. And I pray for this class, and I pray for each one of these students Lord, right now, that you would give them a revelation Lord like they've never seen before. I pray Lord that you have invaded their minds and their with the truth, that you take them into a dimension that they've never known before. To the most intimate moments with you that they've ever experienced. Lord they want to gaze at you on that cross, they need to see you that way. And Lord, we need to say thank you; Jesus, we need to say thank you. And Lord there are no words I can think of to express my gratitude. Father, I pray that what you have helped us to do, would be to thank you with our lives. With the choices that we make and by giving you everything that we are not because we have to but Lord because after what we have seen and what you've done for us, we want to. You didn't have to die for us, we don't understand fully why you did. We love you, we appreciate you, and you have definitely won our hearts through your selflessness. God we want to be like you. Break down our hardness, break down our callousness. That we might become soft before you and before others. I pray this Lord for your sake because you deserve this result. You deserve to have what you've done for it. I pray Lord this prayer in Jesus name. Amen.