



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 John 2:12–14

"In the Light—A Three-fold Assurance"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Well, thank you, Howard, for not going over all of those announcements there. [Laughter] I've always felt that announcements in a bulletin ought to be read by you, and it's perfectly legitimate to mark out some as deserving special attention, but I think that you in the audience, you do read those calendars of concern. We hope you do, and especially that you notice the section in which we have had prayer requests over the years who have requested that we pray for specific individuals sometimes themselves, sometimes their family members, or friends who are having difficult times, and we hope that those of you in the chapel will realize that those requests are requests that you should take home and during the week remember them as well.

We're turning to 1 John chapter 2, and we're looking at verse 12 through verse 14 for the Scripture reading today. And the message that follows will be upon the three verses that we now read. We are going very slowly through 1 John, but so far, I think, it's been very worthwhile, at least for me in the study of this epistle, to take it rather slowly. This is a very interesting section, as you can tell the apostle, at first glance, appears to repeat himself almost entirely. There are some significant differences, and I'll comment upon them, at least the significant ones, as we go through.

Now he has just warned and admonished his readers that the person who hates his brother is in darkness and doesn't know where he's going. Darkness has blinded his eyes, but now a different tone emerges, and he states,

"I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one." (Now, my text which I'm reading, which is the Authorized Version, has, "I write unto you." The original text says, "I have written unto you." So notice the change, he has said I write three times, now he saying, "I have written.") "I have written unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one."

It appears to be, at first glance, a repetition, but there are some significant differences and what John means by saying, "I write," "I write," "I write," "I have written," "I have written," "I have written," the finest interpreters of the New Testament original text have puzzled over ever since this book has come into their hands, and there are a number of explanations, perhaps the one that carries a little more weight, but is not necessarily true, we don't know exactly what John meant, is that when he writes the, "I write," he's writing from the standpoint of himself and in the present time, that is the time of the writing, but when he says, "I have written," he may be referring to the gospel, which had preceded this and which contains very much of the same theme or themes that he speaks about here. At least that's possible. It has been suggested that he finished the third, "I write," and then laid down his pen and came back later on. Now I don't know whether they drank coffee in those days, but it's conceivable [Laughter] that he went off and had a cup of coffee and then came back and looking at his three "I writes," there he says, "I have written," and goes on from there. That viewpoint, incidentally, does have some scholarly support, but it's not the view of the majority of the interpreters.

May the Lord bless this reading of his word, and we will now turn to the Lord in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the privilege that is ours today to meet in the name of the Lord, Jesus Christ and to open the Scriptures, to read them, to ponder them, to hear the word of God, to sing the praises of the redeemed, to our Lord and Savior, to the triune God in praise and adoration. We thank Thee for the blessings of life and especially for the blessings of the forgiveness of our sins through Christ.

And we praise Thee for all that is ours by virtue of the word of God. Nothing withheld, the blessings of heaven poured out upon us through our covenantal head who has offered the covenantal sacrifice by which the new covenant has been ratified. And we thank Thee for those sins forgiven and the life that has been granted to us in a risen Savior.

We thank Thee and praise Thee for the blessings of life which are ours day by day which we enjoy, the blessings of common grace, this life, physical life, that Thou hast given to us, the health that we have, the friends that we have, the relationships we enjoy on earth, the provisions of life for rain, for our food, for our daily sustenance, all of these things Lord are of Thy bounty. And Thou hast been marvelous to us. We thank Thee for all who name the name of our Lord and for the oneness that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray for the whole body, the whole church of Jesus Christ redeemed by his blood. Bless each one of the assemblies and the local churches in which our Lord's name is lifted up.

And we pray Lord Thy blessing upon Believers Chapel, its leadership and its members, the friends and the visitors who are here with us today. We pray Thy blessing upon each one of them. May our spiritual needs be met through the word of God and the work of the spirit in illumining it for us. We are grateful for the privilege of proclaiming the word, for sending the word of God over the face of this globe. Bless those who carry on the tape ministry and the radio ministry and other forms of outreach here and in other places as well.

We pray for our country. We pray for our president. We ask Lord Thy blessing upon him and others who are responsible for government in this land. In this year of critical decision, may O God, in Thy grace, the decisions that are made be decisions that will work for the good of this great

nation. Now we ask Thy blessing upon us as we sing, as we listen to the word of God for Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] I want to express my appreciation to many of you who were here yesterday for the meetings with Dr. Hannah and, in which I participated, concerning John Wimber's Power Evangelism Movement, or Signs and Wonders. It was gratifying to see how many of you came out in order to listen, show your interest in the issue, and we're particularly grateful to Mark McCracken, who thought up the whole thing. And if you knew Mark's background, you'd understand why he was interested in that because many, many, many years ago, [Laughter] see he's an old man like me, he likes to talk about it too, so, he came out of that movement or the precursors of it. So he has had very much of an interest in it through the years. And so it was his idea to have our meetings yesterday. And we are grateful to Mark and to Arthur for letting him do it. [Laughter] To make the suggestion, and then to follow through, and he followed through on it and was responsible for the whole thing. Mark we are grateful to you for that.

We're turning now to 1 John, and our subject this morning is, "In the Light—A Three-fold Assurance." John's purpose, he has told us in the opening verses of this epistle, is to bring his readers into fellowship with God through the knowledge of the atonement by our advocate, the Lord Jesus Christ. He has told us that there are ways by which we may test our relationship to God. He has said, for example, that there is a moral test, and just to pick out one of the verses in which he has sat that forth, in the 6th verse of the 1st chapter, he has said, "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth."

So the test, this moral test, is that we walk in the light, that we do not walk in darkness. He will, in the 2nd chapter, define that more specifically as keeping his commandments. He states in the 3rd verse, "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." These are expressions of the moral test of our discipleship in our Lord Jesus Christ. Then he has called our attention to a social test, and in verse 9 through verse 11, preceding the section that we are talking

about today, he has stated, "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now." He states the reverse and then states the positive again in verse 11, "But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes."

Now, one can see that a person with a tender conscience might be tending to discouragement at this point because, if you feel as I do, and I don't say that I have a tender conscience, but sometimes I have something like that and when I read some of the statements of Scripture that say we know that we know him if we keep his commandments, I recognize that in my life there are many of those commandments that I have questions about whether I'm really keeping them.

And I'm not always sure that I'm always walking in the light. In fact, at times, I know I'm not walking in the light. We talked about that and how the Christian life is a sin-judged life, and that characteristic of the Christian life is the necessity of continual confession of sin. So I can understand that a person with a tender conscious might have problems, and then when this apostle says that, "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now," that really comes home because I must confess that I have had problems with some of my brethren, that is my professing brethren in Christ. And I have often had to get down upon my knees, and ask God to give me the strength to love, and the mind to love this brother or sister, as the case may be. So I can see that someone with a tenderer conscious than mine might have questions about his salvation.

He might really say, "I don't think I'm keeping the commandments. I know I fail in loving my brothers and my sisters. Perhaps I'm not a Christian at all." And so, I think that what John writes now is a kind of interlude in which he wants to encourage people like me and maybe even more so those whose consciousnesses are even more tender than mine. I think, therefore it's very fitting that in this brief paragraph, this apostle of love, the elderly apostle, the last of the apostles still living, the apostolic age is drawing to its conclusion, assures the ones to whom he writes these very strong words of test, Marlin Social, that he is confident of their faith and life.

And further, if you examine these words even more closely, you'll see that what is implied in all of this is that there is a necessary growth beyond the forgiveness that is set forth, for he talks about forgiveness, and then he talks about overcoming the evil one. He talks about the word of God abiding in some of the believers and their strength thereby. So he talks to assure and at the same time to encourage us to go on in Christian growth.

There's hardly been a preacher who has preached very long who hasn't told the story of the little boy who was just a little fellow, three or four years of age, whose mother put him in bed, or rather told him to go up to bed, and he traipsed off up the stairs, and evidently got in his bed and then later on, thirty minutes or an hour later, she heard this loud thump upstairs and realized something had happened. She rushed up, she found the little fellow on the floor, and obviously he had been asleep. And she said, "How did this happen?" And he said, "Mommy I don't know. I guess I fell asleep to near where I got in." [Laughter] Hardly a preacher has failed to tell that story. I hate to tell you how many times I've told it. If you've been in Believers Chapel and you've forgotten it then your memory is bad. [Laughter] At any rate, the point of the story is, for many of us in the Christian faith, is getting saved, becoming a Christian, receiving the forgiveness of sins, and then the rest of the Christian life is just appearing at the meetings, and growth is something that we really don't have any personal acquaintance with.

Now the Scriptures set forth very plainly, that our conversion is the beginning of our life, and the joy and the happiness that attend a person's entrance into fellowship with God through Christ, is just the beginning of enjoyment of the Christian life which ought to increase as the years go by. Growth is so important for us, and John will give us some hints about how we may realize it here. The other apostles very plainly tell us that we are to go on, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews in his epistle, just a few pages back in your Bible, in the 6th chapter says in the 1st verse of that chapter, "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ let us go on unto maturity." Well those words express a responsibility that believers have. We are to go on to maturity. So John

will have a word for us, I think, that will be helpful if, by God's grace, we're able to pay proper attention to it.

Now he has talked about little children. He has talked about fathers, and he has talked about young men. The relationship between these addressees is not altogether clear. It's possible that all of the people to whom he's writing could be called, in one sense, a little child, in another sense, a father, in another sense, a young man. But it's probably more reasonable, in light of the fact that John uses the expression little children commonly, with no indication of any differentiation between his readers, that that term is intended to embrace all of the believers. All of them in one sense are his little children.

Then the other two terms, father and young man, these are terms that do express stages of growth in the Christian life. Normally those who have been in the Christian life for a lengthier period of time have made more progress, not always true, of course, but that's the normal thing. And those who have been believers for a fewer number of years have made less progress at that time. So we're going to take it that way. That is the common way, most common way, in which these words are taken. And it makes sense to me because elsewhere the apostle does use the term little children of all of the believers.

So we're going to look first at a word for all, then a word for the fathers, and finally a word to the young men. Now the word addressed to all is found in verse 12 and verse 14, for in the two verses he refers to the little children. Now if you have an Authorized Version, the second occurrence is not in verse 14, but in verse 13, but there is some difference due to questions of where verses begin and end in the manuscripts. But at any rate, in verse 12 we read, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake," and then in verse 13 of the Authorized Version, at the conclusion of it he says, "I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father." So he calls them little children.

In the original text, there are two different words that are used for little children, referred to in my text by the same English words. One of them is a word that comes from the Greek verb that

means to begat, and thus it has the idea of a community of nature, it's a word of affection. So it's almost as if he were saying, and incidentally, this is not very good philology, you'll get the sense of the word if I were to render it something like, "I write unto you little begotten ones." In fact, we might even use the Scottish word "bairns" which expresses that idea, so little children, an affectionate term, expressive of the communitive nature, because many of them no doubt were converted through the Apostle John's ministry. The other word is a word that suggests moral training, discipline, disciplinary guidance. That's the word that's used in verse 13, "little children because ye have known the Father." Both of these ideas are very suitable for those who are believers in Christ, whether we are old believers or young believers, we are still little children of God. We are born ones. We are those who need disciplinary chaining all of our lives, not simply at the beginning.

Now, the apostle goes on to say there are two reasons why he has this word for them. First of all because you have, well verse 12, "because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." Now that's something that's true of all believers. Every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has had sins forgiven. The striking thing about this is that he says, "for his name's sake," because the tendency of our day often is to think that we have the forgiveness of sins because of our good works, or we have the forgiveness of sins because we are religious, or we have the forgiveness of sins because we have undergone some religious ritual, such as baptism. We have sat at the Lord's table, or we have been confirmed, or we have joined churches, things like that. But the apostle says that the sins of the little children are forgiven on account of his name's sake, not by reason of your intelligence, not by reason of your education, not by reason of your culture, not by reason of your religion, but on account of his name's sake, or for his name's sake.

Now in the Scriptures, when the term "name" is used that is a term that refers to a person in a deeper sense than we use that term "name". It's not simply a moniker. It's something that expresses the nature and attributes of the individual. We run into the tower of the name of our Lord, the Old Testament uses the term frequently in the Hebraic or Semitic sense. When he says, "for his name's sake," he means all that Christ is and all that he has done for us.

Now let me say right at the beginning, this is where we begin our Christian life, forgiveness on account of his name's sake, not by reason of anything in us. The total reason lies in what Christ has done in accomplishing an atonement for sinners. What he states in verse 2, "And he is the propitiation for our sins." So it's on the ground of what Christ has done and we receive the benefits of it freely by grace, through the instrumentality of faith, that's where we begin. And it's a marvelous beginning for the enjoyment of life as God would have us live.

There's a wonderful little story in the Old Testament about David and Jonathan and a man by the name of Mephibosheth. I use to preach on this particular topic quite a bit because it's such a beautiful little illustration of salvation by grace. You know the story of David's love for Jonathan, Saul's son, and how their love was a love that is described as greater than a love of a man for a woman. And further, later on in life, you know what happened to Saul and Jonathan. And in 2 Samuel chapter 9 and verse 1, the writer says, "And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" his soul having been knit to Jonathan in love and in desire to express his gratitude to Jonathan for the loving relationship that they had for one another. He asked one of his servants is anyone left of Saul's house, Jonathan was of that house, I want to show them kindness for Jonathan's sake. And word came to him there was a fellow by the name of Mephibosheth who was still living of Saul's house, the son of Jonathan, and that he would be an object of David's gracious activity. Incidentally, you'll notice David initiates this because the love of God and the grace of God is by the initiative of God, not by our initiative.

Now Mephibosheth was an individual who was lame. This morning in the 8:30 service, I read 2 Samuel 9, but I didn't do any particular study on it, I haven't preached on Mephibosheth in a long time. I use to have a Gospel preacher friend who said he loved that story, but he never preached because he never learned how to pronounce Mephibosheth. [Laughter] Well I learned how to pronounce Mephibosheth, but it's been a long time since I've preached on it. And the morning service, we had pest in the audience who came to me afterwards and said you said that Mephibosheth was lame from his birth. And it's true, I did. And he said, "That's not true." And he

reminded me that Mephibosheth had been dropped by a nurse or someone when he was very, very young and his lameness came out of that.

That pest, incidentally, was Howard Prier [laughter] in case you want to know who the pest was. So anyway, Mephibosheth was lame from his youth not from his birth, and David engages in a marvelous work for him because he didn't have enough to live on, but as a result of the kindness of David to him, for Jonathan's sake, he was given back the properties that belonged to his family. He was enabled by the grace of God to spend the rest of his life at Jerusalem, eating continually at the King's table, at David's table. And the writer of the particular chapter ends the chapter with these interesting little words, "and he was lame on both his feet."

The whole thing is a picture of the fact of the goodness of God manifested on account of someone else and we even our lameness, translate that spiritual lameness are enabled by God to enjoy fellowship with the King even though we are lame spiritually, lame on both our feet, marvelous story, and I'll tell you when I use to preach on this, quite a bit traveling around I use to always turn to 1 John 2:12 and draw the parallel, where John writes, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." Mephibosheth had no reason for blessing other than the fact that David loved Jonathan and it was for his name's sake that he received the bounty that he did. So to all your sins are forgiven for his name's sake.

Now John goes on to say in verse 13, "Because you have known the Father." Now, that's a very interesting expression because you expect little children to know their father. In fact, little children know their parents first of all. You'll notice how they withdraw from other people for a lengthy period of time. You try to be friendly with little children of young parents and they are properly cautious. We had an illustration of this, I told it in the 8:30 service. When Ray Coble was here, but Martha's granddaughter, Aubrey Mayo [phonetic], comes in on the Wednesday night meeting occasionally and this may have happened Sunday morning, I've forgotten which. At any rate, Ray was there as one of the ushers, he was standing and when Aubrey came out of the nursery, I believe, and saw her grandmother, and she rushed up to her and kissed her and there were others

there, her mother and her father too, and then Ray said, as he was standing right by, as Ray is inclined to do, he said, "Well, don't you have a kiss for me?" And then she was heard to say as she walked off, "I don't even know where that fellow lives." [Laughter] So kids [laughter] have an affection for mommy and for daddy. [Laughter]

The apostle says here, "I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father." Paul in Galatians chapter 4 says God has sent the spirit within our hearts, and as a result of the spirit being sent within our hearts, we are able to say "Abba", the Aramaic term emphatic form for father, "Abba" which he translates in the Greek as *patēr* or father. It's a very interesting word because "Abba" came to be something like the common papa among us, and the reason it was so common no doubt is because you don't need any teeth to pronounce something like that. That's true of mama. Kids say mama right at the beginning, it's easy to teach them because you don't need teeth to say that. In fact that's why NFL players when their on TV [laughter] and they say, "Hi Ma!" [laughter] I won't say they don't have any teeth. Some of them don't have any teeth. [laughter] But I'm waiting for the day when they say, "Hi Papa!"

Well the world's conceptions of God are very interesting. It's amazing some of the things that the world has said about God. The world has conceived of God as Malluch, as Mars, as Jupiter, as Neptune, Abacus, as Shiva, a Juggernaut, Buddha, Allah, Tor, and Oden. The best poet, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, called God, "A skillful mathematician." Sir Thomas Brown called him, "The unconcerned spectator." Bacon called him, "an unutterable sigh planted in the depth of the soul." Richter called God, "the President of the immortals." Thomas Hardy called him, "The most significant mind of our generation." H. G. Wells called him [laughter], "the force, not ourselves that make it for righteousness." McCauley called him, "The great mathematician." Sir James Jeans called him, "the eternal." Judaism has frequently referred to him in that way.

Now in the Christian faith, one of the things that stands out, not altogether unique, but the thing that stands out is that we call our God by the grace of God, Father. Nothing could be more significant than, "You have known the Father." Known him in the interment way in which

knowledge is spoken of. The Father, that name filled so much through the New Testament with Christian content, the Kingly majesty of God, our Father, who art in heaven, his providential care, the Father knows that you have need of such things. The reconciling plan of God, the Father sent his Son to be the savior of the world, John will say in the 4th chapter.

The Father has a world redeeming purpose. Jesus said it's the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom, his personal tenderness toward men. The Father himself, in the upper room discourse, Jesus said to the eleven, loves you, his gift of eternal life. "In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you," all of these things suggested by the provision that a Father has made for us. What a pleasure, what a blessing, what an unusual insight into the nature of God and his relationship to believers is the fact that we may call him Father, the source of all of the blessings of our spiritual life.

The Paulinian Apostle, Paul himself says in the 1st chapter of Ephesians, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenlies in Christ," a Father. About three or four months ago, I went to Toronto to hold some meetings in the Toronto Baptist Theological Seminary, I was lecturing through the week and this church there is a very famous old church. The man associated with it was a man by the name of T. T. Shields, well-known all over Canada. And I can remember as a new Christian reading the papers that that church sent out every week, which included a copy of T. T. Shields' sermon. I have a friend who's in the ministry and he was in Shields' church, and he heard Shields preach one time and he said he gave an illustration that I have never forgotten.

He said that he grew up in Northern Ontario where they had stone fences around the farms, and one afternoon a group of children were returning from school and among them was a cripple. And they were walking down the street, and the boy was dragging himself along with his crutches trying to keep up with his classmates. And as they came near our farm, Mr. Shields said, the boy became to heckle this young boy who was a cripple, and when they reached the stone fence of his yard, they went over and took away his crutches from him and stood him up against the fence. And

then they stood off and began to pepper him with stones. Across the field, in another nearby farm was a fellow who was hoeing out in his farm. And as this was going on, hurt and weeping, looked off and saw them man and recognized him and shouted, one agonizing word.

And my friend said when Mr. Shield came to this point, he shouted out, "Father." And the man in the field dropped his hoe, rushed to the wall, bounded over it and the boys scattered right and left. He picked up the boy in his arms. He went out, picked up the crutches, gave them to him, kissed him, and then Mr. Shields went on to say, "I've so often been like that little boy, pestered and troubled by various trials of life. And my solution has been to lift my voice to God in heaven and say, 'Father.'" What a magnificent statement that is. "I write unto you little children," inclusive of all of us who have known the Father. You have known the Father. Nothing could be more wonderful than that. If you want further exposition, read Luke chapter 15.

Now the word to the Father has given us in verse 13 and 14, and here we have spiritual age distinctions indicated. These are, I think, those of more spiritual maturity and they are encouraged. And so we read in verse 13, "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning." And then again in verse 14, "I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning." So twice he has said, "You have known him that is from the beginning." In the light of the fact that the epistle begins with a reference to Christ as one who is from the beginning, this is probably a reference to the Lord Jesus and refers to the knowledge of the more mature of the Lord Jesus himself, and the knowledge as expressed by the verb that he uses since it's the verb of experiential knowledge. It's great. It's progressive. It's intimate knowledge of him, of his mind, the way he thinks as set forth in the word of God, and the things that interest him, as set forth in the word of God. So they "have known him who is from the beginning."

I love that story of Ned Weeks, who is from North Hampton in England. He had a marvelous Christian testimony in the town in which he lived, and when he died, the people of the community were so impressed by the life that he had lived that they had a public funeral for him, and his casket in a long cortège was taken through the city, and the whole city participated in appreciation

of Ned Weeks. A stranger happened to be there, it is said, and turned to one of the natives and said, "What's happening?" And he had explained to him, by this native, the reason for it, that he was a man of a great big heart. The people loved him. He had been a blessing to the whole of the community. And the stranger asked him again, "Well, what essentially was the real reason why they've done this?" And he said, "Well," and then to use the language of North Hampton at that time, he said, "Ned Weeks was wonderful thick with the Almighty," to know the Father, in that sense, how wonderful that is to be "wonderfully thick" with him.

A final word is given to the young men in verses 13 and 14, he says, "I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one." And then in verse 14, repeating that and added some other things, he says, "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong," (that's point one,) "and the word of God abideth in you," (point two,) "and ye have overcome the wicked one." I think it's striking that he spends so much time with young people that is young Christians. And I wonder if this is not really a reference to individuals who have entered into the Christian life, but they still are relatively young in years. They're climbing in the Christian life and climbing outside the Christian life as well. But they are beset with trials and tests.

George Morrison had a sermon on Psalm 91:6, a little clause that says, "The destruction that wasteth at noonday," and the title of his sermon was, "The Perils of Middle Age." Well there are perils that young people face particularly. And I think the reason that John singles them out and says what he says about them, "that they are strong," "the word of God is abiding in them," "they have overcome the wicked one," is because he is referring to the fact that when we are in our relative youth, the critical decisions are made. Think about it for a moment. The really critical decisions, for most of us, there are always exceptions, are made when we are relatively young. That decision concerning marriage, for example, generally made when young. The decision of a life's calling, generally made when one is young, and normally determines so much of life. I think I will be a physician, the training, the rest of the life, the decision made when young.

In my case, I determined to go into the insurance business. I hadn't consulted the Lord about this. He had other plans written in his book. And so, when I was twenty-five and the word of God came home to me through the preaching of Donald Grey Barnhouse in the South Highlands Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, my life changed, but it was a critical decision. In fact it was a decision that has determined the rest of my life. And then when two years later, I was led by God, I don't say God told me, I think I was led by the Holy Spirit to come to the theological seminary, that was a further step along the way which determined my existence and my whole life. Those critical decisions made in the early stages of one's life. And in the Christian life, that's often the case, it was in my case, when I decided that God was calling me to the ministry of the word of God.

But notice the things he says about the young people, he says they are strong. There are so many things that young people can do that those of us who are older cannot do now. They're strong, incidentally, a weak Christian is a contradiction in terms. If he's a Christian, he's not really weak, he's strong. But at any rate, he says you're strong. Guy King says some of us need to go to the "Great Physician's Clinic" for diagnosis, problems with the food that we are eating, problems with the breathing system, prayer, or problems with exercise, such as the kind of work she should do in the service of the Lord. But we are strong young men and women.

And secondly, he says, "the word of God abideth in you." Well really, this is the secret of strength. It's the source of victory. And it's generally true that all of the great Christians have been men of the word of God. That's always true. Those that have lasted have been men of the word of God. Apollos, a man mighty in the Scriptures, that's the reason for his great success. That's why I'm not so much impressed by those who tell us today that in the preaching of the word of God, it's not the preaching of the word of God that's so significant, it's the signs and wonders that we must do prior, or along with, that determines the response of people. That's foolish. In fact, John says you're strong because the word of God abides in you. That's the secret of strength. So they are strong because the word of God abides in them, and because the word of God abides in them, they have

overcome the wicked one. So different from the way in which so many people define the things of the Lord.

After all, how did Jesus overcome? Did he overcome by performing signs and wonders, which he did, and did perfectly, and always did what he tried to do? Even when he healed one person in two stages, the very first stage was a supernatural stage. He always healed those that he was led to heal. Why did he? Well in his greatest temptation, he made the point plainly and clearly for anyone who reads. He answered Satan and the tests of life by saying, "It is written, it is written, it is written," three times he appealed to the word of God and the victory was his. He was strong. The word of God abode in him, and as a result, he overcame the wicked one. And that's what John concludes in his word to the young men. The victory is by virtue of our union of course with our covenantal head and representative the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look my friends who are Christians, we have overcome already. Jesus said he had overcome the world. And when he had accomplished his work of redemption, he accomplished it for his people who are in union with him. And by virtue of what our covenantal head has done, we participate in the victory, just like a cowboy fan leaping at a winning game in Texas Stadium saying, "We really whipped them today, didn't we?" Poor fellow could barely get up out of his chair and walk to his car, but, "We" whipped the Redskins. "You have overcome the wicked one."

This is something we ought to enjoy. I saw a funny cartoon the other day. I clipped this out. I haven't found anyplace I could use it, and I don't even know whether I want to use it now, [laughter] but it's been on my desk so long, I've got to get rid of it. [Laughter] There's a fellow standing behind a desk. He's obviously addressing some business people, and he says, "And in closing I leave you with three thoughts, one, no problem, two, not to worry, three, have a nice day." [Laughter] And I put down there, four, Enjoy. [Laughter] These are all the things that the world invites us to do but doesn't know how to do them. So to you Christians, enjoy what you have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is a thrilling assurance. I think that those who are reading John's Epistle couldn't help, at this point, but be encouraged because to be reminded that our sins have been forgiven, that we have known the one whose from the beginning. And we have known the Father, and that we are strong. And the word of God abides in us, and we have overcome the wicked one. Why, that's marvelous, and at the heart of it is the Lamb, the word of God, the word of God abiding in them.

I took a wonderful little statement from George Finley, a professor and interpreter of the word of God a couple of generations ago, which I thought was so true, and which is so applicable to us today. Professor Finley has this to say, "Holy Scripture holds the lamp for the path of each new generation. Its light has guided the leaders of mankind for ages past. In the Bible, to say the least of it, is treasured the best spiritual experience of sixty generations of our race, and the young man who scoffs at that is ignorant and vain beyond all other folly. As safely might the mariner crossing unknown waters leave his chart upon the shelf, and mock at the familiar beacons, as may the new voyager on the sea of life discard the word of God, or the men of the coming generation attempt to stir by other lights."

One of the saddest things is the fact that our generation does not listen to the ancient wisdom of the Scriptures, Old and New Testament. How much better we would be. Forgiveness is the entrance into the fellowship, the means of admission. Knowledge of the Father is the means of continuance, with overcoming the sure result. I hope that, by God's grace, you know the Lord and you know him as your personal Savior, and that it is your desire and intent to enjoy the Christian life. To go on, to grow, to come to know the Lord better, and in the experiences of life, some of which will be very unpleasant, very difficult, very hard, still by letting the word of God abide in you, you will discover again how great our God really is. My wish for you is that you all enjoy that.

And in Believers Chapel, so often, probably falsely, I get the impression we individually are happy we're saved, happy we have the forgiveness of sins, but we think that's all in the Christian life. It's not. Let's go on and really learn to grow. It's better as it continues. If you're here today and you've never believed in Christ, we invite you to trust in him. He died for sinners. Recognize,

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acknowledge that you are such, turn to the Lord within your heart, give him thanks for revealing to you what you are and what Christ has done for such sinners and receive the invitation, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, I will give you rest." Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for the word of God that the Apostle John has written for us in the 1st century. Words of magnificent wisdom so suitable for our day and for us individually, help us Lord to follow that word...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]