



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 John 3:10-12

"The Two Fatherhoods"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] I think since this is the first time I've had the opportunity to preach in Believers Chapel, I need to say just a word of Thanksgiving and appreciation for each of you who have prayed for me in my illness. I am grateful indeed when I received so many indications from you that you were thinking of me and bringing my name before the Lord for his attention, and I'm very thankful. Some of you have gone out of your way. This morning, John and Mary Pearaman were in the 8:30 service, and almost every day in the hospital I got a card from John Pearaman, and John is retired, and I've often wondered what men do when they retire, and now I know. [Laughter] I told John that this morning, he had a laugh over it too. But I appreciated it very much.

However, like most preachers there is a strain of rebuke in them, and I must offer a rebuke to Believers Chapel. You're not always as forthright as you should be. In fact, so far as I know there is only one honest person in Believers Chapel, and that's a terrible judgment to make, but when I came back after being in the hospital for about ten days, every one that I talked to, with just one exception, said "You look great. You look wonderful. You don't even look like you've been sick." Of course, being an exegete, I had a problem when about a month later they were saying, you look better. [Laughter] Better than great, or better than wonderful, or better than if you had never been sick, but Betty Siple is the one person who was honest. When I came back, and she met me out in

the parking lot, she said, "You look a little peaked." [Laughter] So I want you to think of her as a very honest lady.

Perhaps you are wondering why I am speaking this morning, and the reason for it, if you'll think about it a little bit, is obvious, the elders could not think of anyone who could handle the change of time better than I could. [Laughter] And so, they have asked me to speak this morning. Max Beerbaum once said, "I believe the twenty-four hour day is here to stay." But today is twenty-five hours, and in the spring it was twenty-three. So the twenty-four hour day is not here to stay. And I know also, some of you who are discerning, will also notice that I am dressed differently. Probably you've never seen me wear, on Sunday morning, a striped shirt.

Now, if you did not know that, you see how inattentive you are to the important things, [laughter] but I am wearing a striped shirt, almost always, so far as I know always it's been a solid, but this morning it's a striped shirt. And this shirt is the gift of Mike Black, many of you know, when he heard I had a heart attack he sent me a shirt and a tie, and this is his tie, and he said, "I'm going to give you this shirt," it's a very nice shirt, so I wanted it, and he said, "but you have to wear on the first day that you preach after your heart attack." [Laughter] So that's why, and Mike if you ever hear this on tape, I want to thank you too, again.

Well, let's turn to 1 John chapter 3; we are at chapter 3, in verse 10. I know you have forgotten, because I had almost forgotten where we were. In fact, I had to look at my notes to be absolutely sure, and we read verse 10 through verse 12 of 1 John 3. The apostle writes, and remember he is the Apostle of Love, many Bible interpreters have called him that, and the early church spoke of him as the theologian, that may surprise you, but they knew him as the theologian, because so theological are his work. He writes, "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked

one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous."

It certainly is a fact, as we can see that when a person's works are righteous, that is a convicting matter. All of us who are believers can recognize that fact. May the Lord bless the reading of his word, and let's bow together for a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are indeed grateful to Thee for the blessing of the word of God. How wonderful it is to turn to the Scriptures and know that we have a sure word, a word given by our great triune God through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and his ministry as Messiah carrying out the will of the Father. How wonderful it is, how marvelous it is to recognize that the sure word contains a remedy for our sins and the promise of eternal life. O God, we pray that in our day the word of God may go forth in such a way that many may have an opportunity to think again of their own condition before Thee, and of the marvelous remedy of the blood of Christ shed on Calvary's cross. We pray that in our meeting that may be made plain and clear.

We pray for the whole church of Jesus Christ, and ask Lord, for each individual member, young and old, may today we experience the edification of the Holy Spirit and Thy providential care. We pray for Believers Chapel. We pray for its elders, and for its deacons, and for the members, and for the friends, and the visitors who are here today. Lord, may there be a spiritual response from all of us to the word of God.

We pray for our country, and in these critical days in which we are living, in which we must, as a nation, make political decisions, may Lord, these decisions be decisions that are in harmony with Thy will. And we especially pray for the sick. We thank Thee for them. We pray that Thou wilt minister to them, those mentioned in our calendar of concern are especially upon our hearts. May the physicians who minister to them and their family and friends, may God, Thy blessing be upon them. And give healing in accordance with Thy will. We thank Thee for each one of them; we pray for them very earnestly that Thou wilt minister, out of the riches of divine grace, to them.

Be with us through this service. Bless the singing of the hymns, the fellowship we have with one another, and particularly the fellowship that we have in the word of God. We pray in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject today as we turn again to 1 John is, "The Two Fatherhoods," verses 10-12 of 1 John chapter 3. One of the characteristic things about John, and in particular his first epistle, as you have no doubt noted in reading through 1 John, is that the apostle sharply divides humans into two classes. That I think is one thing that stands out as we think about what he has written in these five chapters. In fact, we can include his second and third epistle as well, because it's those who are the children of God, it's those who are the children of the devil as he puts it here.

I guess that it has been put about as well as anyone by Brooke Foss Westcott who said, "For him," that is the Apostle John, "there is only light and darkness and no twilight. We are either the children of God, or we are the children of the devil." Now the Apostle Paul might be thought to be a bit more sophisticated. The Apostle Paul divides, just as John does, men into two classes. That is, they are those who are the children of God, and there are those who are not. He doesn't, as I remember, use particularly the expression, "children of the devil," although when he was on the island of Cyprus and when he met with opposition on that island, in the Acts chapter 13 the story is told, he does use that term with respect to an individual. In chapter 13, in verse 11 of Acts, the apostle, confronted with Elymas the sorcerer says, "O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" So I guess that we can say that the apostle would have used the same terminology and would not have been embarrassed by it.

But Paul went on to say that amid the saved there are different kinds of saved individuals. He spoke of those who were carnal but yet were babes, and were in Christ. And he spoke also of those who were spiritual. As a matter of fact, it is possible, I say only possible for you Bible students in the audience, it is possible that that term carnal may be further divided into those who are fleshly

because they are simply new Christians, or fleshly because they have persisted in willfulness, that is willful disobedience to a certain extent after they have come to the knowledge of the Lord. But at any rate, the apostles as [a] whole divide men into these two categories, and so our Lord Jesus Christ does himself, from John chapter 8. So there are two classes, light and darkness, no twilight, for the apostle in this epistle.

Now, there is another thing that John has been doing, and I remind you of this because I need reminding, too. He's been setting before his readers several tests, and these tests are significant as revealing things about us as individuals. In fact, I think you can say there is a doctrinal test; there is a moral test; and there is a social test that the apostle sets before his readers. The doctrinal test is a very simple one. It is, do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Christ, the Son of God, "for that Jesus is the Christ," to use his expression. Now when he says "Jesus is the Christ," of course he means something more significant than just the acknowledgement that he is the Christ as a term. That term is to be understood in the light of its origin, and in the light of the usage that it finds in Holy Scripture. In other words, to be the Christ, one must be the Messianic king. He must also be the God-man, for the Messianic king in the Old Testament Scriptures in specific places, is set forth as being a divine person. He may possess a human nature, but he is a divine person with a divine nature. So when we say Jesus is the Christ, we mean more than simply the affirmation of words. We mean what is meant by those terms. That's the doctrinal test, and if we do not believe that Jesus is the Christ in that sense, we are, of course, in darkness not in the light.

A further test the apostle lays stress upon is a moral test. He states for example, to give one of his references, in chapter 2, in verse 3 "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." So the moral test of obedience is a test that all of us who are believers must be exposed to, must face, so the apostle tells us. It may seem very difficult for us, in our day, when we often don't like to face these questions, to have an apostle say that, "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." For so often as we look at our lives, we realize that we

have shortcomings, and shortcomings even in our best hours. And yet he says, "We know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." That's a difficult test.

The social test is also very difficult. Now, the apostle will lay stress upon it in these verses, but he has already made reference to it. It's the test of loving the brethren, loving one another. He says, for example, in the 10th verse, "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."

Now, this will be the stress of these verses, the social test, the preeminence of Christian love, which is the *summum bonum* of the Christian life -- the highest good. And the apostle grounds it in the love of Christ. He does this following the lead of our Lord, who in the upper room discourse called upon the apostles to observe the new commandment, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you." And he repeats it in the 15th chapter still to that same body of apostles to lay stress upon it, that we love one another, as he has loved us. So the new commandment is a commandment of love one for another, but grounded in the love of Christ, expressed a few hours later in the saving cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, not only is that the ground, but there flows out of it the distinctive family likeness of the children of God. What does that mean? Well, that means essentially, first, that the children of God are characterized by law-abiding, sin-hating obedience. Let me repeat it, they are characterized by law-abiding, sin-hating obedience. Now, when I say law-abiding, I don't mean abiding under the laws of our land, though of course, that is a responsibility of all believers in Christ. I'm talking about the word of God, law-abiding, that is the moral law as found in Holy Scripture. Law-abiding, sin-hating obedience, true believers hate sin. It represents rebellion and enmity against God whom they love, and to whom they owe their life and salvation. So believers are characterized by the family likeness of law-abiding, sin-hating obedience, and the second thing, a love of the brethren. Those are characteristics of the children of God. They are obedient to the law of God. They keep his commandments, in other words. And further, they love the brethren.

The natural state of man is selfishness; that involves enmity to others whose claims clash with those of ourselves. To love others proves that the natural state had been left behind. To love others is contrary to our nature, with which we were born, to love ourselves more than others. So Robert Law has put it, "There is not clearer proof of the great transition from death to life, than love of the brethren, but the absence of such love is not only the absence of such proof, it's the proof that the transition has not taken place." So to not love the brethren is evidence that we are not truly the children of God. That's very, very significant. In fact, that's very strong. That's something over which we all should have some words with the Lord about.

But now, as we turn to the passage, we'll see this underlined by the apostle, and further explained. He starts out by just talking about the spiritual affinities of men in the 10th verse. It's the conclusion of the preceding. He's reached his climax in verse 9 by saying, "Whosoever is born of God doth not go on sinning; for his seed," that is God's seed, the new birth which transforms, "remains in him: and he cannot go on sinning, because he is born of God." He has the divine nature. A Christian man, born of God, who falls into sin cannot help but be unhappy. He has displeased his Father. And further, he cannot persist in that as a way of life. Oh, he may continue for a short while, but family discipline takes place, and family discipline even may be so severe as to cause the loss of our physical life. So the apostle states, "Whosoever is born of God does not go on sinning." This is the conclusion; the criterion for testing is given. Are we doing that which is righteous, and are we loving the brethren?

Now, let me hasten to say the criterion for testing is a criterion in the judgment of men, not in the judgment of God. Obviously, God does not need to see the results of our lives in order to know what we are in heart. He knows that. John is talking about the criterion of testing in the judgment of men, not in the judgment of God. In this, the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. So in order to see what we are there is justification for asking the question, does righteousness characterize the acts of my life? Do I really love the brethren?

Now, mind you we're not talking about perfection. Please remember that. We're talking about the bent of life. Many other passages make qualifications that are necessary, limited qualifications, but the bent of life is doing righteousness, loving the brethren. These are the things that must characterize our life. You say these are stringent requirements -- yes, but they are apostolic. And there are things that we must keep before us; particularly in our day when in the evangelical world it is very doubtful that many of these things play much of a part in the evangelical churches of today. Love has come to be sentimentality. Righteousness and righteousness in life is certainly a neglected virtue. So having now made his statement in verse 9, this is the conclusion. There are two types of men, the children of God, the children of the devil. And the distinguishing marks of the children of God are the doing of righteousness, the loving of the brethren.

Now, if you look at these two words or two statements of description, doing righteousness, loving the brethren, you'll see why they both are mentioned by the apostle. In the first place, if we were to say of the saints that if doing righteousness characterizes them, we might get the idea of something that is coldly judicial. There are those who do righteousness, and we can think of someone as being very withdrawn from life, very stringent in his attitudes towards others, almost self-righteous, although that of course is not what John has in mind, but the doing of righteousness can come very close to exposing one to that kind of criticism. So we not only have doing of righteousness which might seem coldly judicial, but we have loving the brethren for its transforming warmth.

On the other hand, if we make loving the brethren only the test, then loving the brethren as seen in our society today, our Christian society, has come to be something that is very close to sentimentality. In other words, we can really love the brethren, but not necessarily accompany it with the doing of righteousness. So the two are necessary. They compliment one another. They enable us to understand just exactly the kind of love of the brethren that is valid, that is it must be love of the brethren in righteousness. And on the other hand, the doing of righteousness must be in the spirit of Christian love. The apostle has certainly made the point.

There is one other thing that I think we should notice before we pass on to the 11th verse. And notice, he puts this in the negative, "Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." Now, if you'll think about this for a moment, the fact that he has put it in the negative enforces the universality of what he is talking about. Let's suppose he should just say, "Whosoever loves the brethren is born of God." Well, I could understand a person who might express love to some of the brethren, but disdain towards the others, and you could say of them, "Well, he loves the brethren. He doesn't love them all, and he doesn't love them all the time, but he loves the brethren. And so doesn't he fulfill the word of the apostle?" Or "Whosoever doeth righteousness," if it were put that way, we could see a man performing certain acts of righteousness, although they are also accompanied by other acts of unrighteousness, and we could say, "He does righteousness, doesn't he? Not all together but he does righteousness." We see the apostle puts it in the negative, he says, "Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God."

In other words, the person who does some righteousness and some unrighteousness doesn't qualify, because it's "whosoever does not, whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God." In other words, to persist in righteousness is what he is talking about, and "neither he that loveth not his brother." He's not born of God. So by putting it in the negative, he enforces the universality of it, characterizing the person's life. It must be a life characterized by doing righteousness, characterized by loving the brethren. This apostle's a difficult person to deal with, isn't he? Called the theologian, called the Apostle of Love, well those are the spiritual affinities of men. We are related to the devil or we're related to the Lord God.

Now, in the 11th verse he clarifies the last part of verse 10 where we read, "neither he that loveth not his brother." You might think this is something new, John says no, it's not something new. This is something that's the message of Christianity. "For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another." The message of love is a message that is found in Holy Scripture from the very beginning of the book of Genesis on through to the divine revelation. Now, the reason that he mentions this, of course, is because he wants to make plain the

idea that the message that they have heard from the beginning aims for the creation and development of brotherly love. So, "This is the message that ye heard from the beginning," the command to exercise mutual love is the aim of the entire history of God's revelation of himself.

In the Old Testament, it is expressed in passages like the apostle's in Romans 13, in the 9th verse where referring to the Old Testament, he says, "For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. So the Old Testament inculcated love, Christian love.

The New Testament follows along with that, our Lord further enhancing the beauty of it with his, "Love one another as I have loved you." But this is the message they have heard from the beginning. It's not something that is new with the New Testament. It's something they have heard from the beginning. Notice the underlined word, as I emphasized it, "For this is the message that you heard from the beginning." As a matter of fact, he goes on to say; in Christian experience it's as old as Cain and Abel. The earliest chapters of the Bible, Genesis chapter 4 record the breaking of what was the intent of God from the beginning.

Now, that intent is that we should love one another. Family likeness is necessary. The Father's love is reproduced in his children, and the cross is the necessary means by which it may stand. It's necessary for the simple reason that we are a band of outlaws, that's what we are naturally. That's what all of us are. We are born in sin; we're born outlaws. Some of you are looking at me as if, "Well I know of some people who probably qualify, but I'm not sure about myself." Well, no, you don't qualify either, you are a born outlaw, and you've proved it. You proved it in your life before you came to the knowledge of the Lord. You did not live in law-abiding, loving obedience. We are a band of outlaws.

I know that people like to say that there is honor among thieves, but there is no honor among thieves either, and there is no honor among outlaws. We are outlaws. So we need the new commandment, and the cross with the necessary foundation, for something must be done about our

sin. That's why we preach Christ's satisfaction of the sins of sinners, and his death on the cross.

That's what the Lord referred to when he said that he was giving them a new commandment, that we love one another as he has loved us.

Just before I went into the hospital, I received a letter from a person who listens to our broadcasts from Arlington. She is a woman who has lived a few years, I don't know her exact age, but from her letter it is obvious that she is at least middle age, not even speaking biblically. I hope she won't laugh at what I'm saying and will understand the spirit in which it is said. I know I'm older than she is. But she wrote me a note, and you may remember before we started the series on 1 John, I had given some messages on the necessity of Christ's death, and there was a series of about five or six messages in that series. She wrote and she asked that we send her the tape of "The Necessity of Christ's Death, which she heard over WRR broadcast on July the 17th, but she also in this letter said, because she knew this was the first in the series, she said "I want you also to send me the tape of "The Necessity of Christ's Death' that is to be broadcast on the 24th."

And she went on to say that she had never heard the age old problem of why Jesus Christ and his murderous death, so clearly and simply and understandably answered as in that tape. And she said she predated the second tape, because she was going into the hospital, and she wanted to be able to listen to the second tape, which she might not be able to hear on the radio. But in the course of the letter, near the end of it, she said something that I thought is a very interesting comment on the condition of our churches today, our Christian churches, our professing Christian churches.

Now, if you were, as a believing man if you were to be sure that a Christian church that supposedly stands for the gospel of Christ should preach that gospel, what would you say should be the fundamental doctrine set forth? Well, I'm sure most of you in this room would say, they must preach the person and the work of Christ, other things are secondary to that. That is, who Christ is and what he has done. Can anything be more fundamental than that?

But listen to what she said, "I predate the second tape since at that time I have to be admitted to the hospital for the third operation in thirteen months and would not like to miss this

faith-changing theme which I, and several of my next relatives and friends," now mind you she is a person who has attended church all of her life, "which several of my next relatives and friends have waited for over half a century." Think of it, waited in a Christian church to hear the message of why Christ dies for over half a century. That's pathetic. Not pathetic that she found it, because of course, she finds the explanation in God's time, we understand that, but it's pathetic that a Christian church should exist and this simple message, why Christ died, should not be known by everybody in the congregation. Well, everything that John writes here, when he says, "Love the brethren. Do righteousness," is grounded, of course, in the fact of the death of Christ.

Now, the apostle gives us an illustration of why this is the message that they heard from the beginning. It's not something new. He says, "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's were righteous." Now, most of you know I read the funny papers. If you want to know exactly when I read the funny papers, it's my favorite time of the day, eating breakfast, which is my favorite meal. And now, since I've entered the hospital I cannot have bacon and eggs. [Laughter] I want you to know I am suffering. [Laughter] Here I am eating cereal. [Laughter] And I'm eating English muffins without butter. [Laughter] That's not a tear. [Laughter]

Anyway, I eat breakfast, and Martha's nice enough to allow me to look at the funny papers. And one of the things I always look at is, it's not my favorite but I do look at it, is Miss Peach, and particularly when Arthur answers the eternal questions. Now, Arthur answered the eternal question back in July, a couple of days before I went in the hospital, and Miss Peach says, "Arthur, the eternal question is, why?" And he said, "Right, and the eternal answer is because." [Laughter] Well, I thought about that when I looked at this 12th verse, "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother." Why? "Wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous."

Now, this was a violent slaughter, you know the story of Cain and Abel. We don't have time to talk about it, but you know the story. The word that he uses to describe slaying him is the word

that is used in the New Testament more than once for slaughtering, for example, slaughtering the lamb, the lamb slain; so, "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slaughtered his brother." And why did he did he slaughter him? Well, "Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." Convicted by Abel's righteous deeds, he rose up and slaughtered his brother. Now, mind you this archetype of all murder was a religious dispute. You know the story of how Abel had brought the firstlings of the flock, and Cain had brought the works of his own hands, and how God had responded positively to Abel's offering, and had responded negatively to Cain's, but nevertheless had given him a promise that if he should do that which was right, well there would be acceptance for him as well.

The ultimate consequences, the story teaches, of failure to love the brethren is murder. In other words, all hatred of the brethren is embryonic murder. That's what we are taught right from the beginning, from the beginning of the book of Genesis, the 4th chapter. That's the archetype of all murder, and it comes as a religious dispute, that is God has accepted Abel and his offering. God has rejected Cain and his, and there's conflict, and there is the ultimate of murder, slaughter. His brother's works were righteous, Cain's were evil. What was the source of Cain's failure? Some people like to think of Cain as just a born loser. He's the kind of fellow who will take an exam, the professor will give out fifty questions, the exam to be taken from them, he'll study forty-nine of them, get them down pat, give out of time for number fifty, and come in the classroom and find number fifty on the exam. That's bad luck, isn't it?

Or like, Martha and I the other day, we wanted to go somewhere, we were a little late, so we decided we would try another way, and every light we met, it seemed, was red. Or, for you young people, you go to a party, and you would love to be with the beautiful, attractive girl and you find that when things finally work themselves out, you're with Plain Jane, the one girl you didn't want to be with, and it seems to always happen. Was Cain just a schlemiel, a born loser? No, the Scriptures make quite plain, the thing that was Cain's problem. He evidently was a proud works man, and thus envious. His brother's works were righteous, his were evil, and he hated his brother, Abel.

There are different ways in which we might explain this. Gerhard von Rad, one of the best-known of the Old Testament scholars said, "Look, there isn't anything said in Genesis chapter 4 about why God accepted Cain, and why he rejected Abel." Professor von Rad and others make the point that it was simply "God's sovereign good pleasure in blood sacrifice, and he doesn't have to explain himself, he just took pleasure in it." He sovereignly did. He liked what Abel had done. He did not like what Cain had done, because what Abel had done was in harmony with his sovereign good pleasure. And if you say well, that's unfair, he gave the promise to Cain, if he changed his mind and did that which was good he'd find a sin offering. But Cain, obviously, his attitude was wrong, and further, he persisted in his rebellion, and finally did the deed that he did. In other words, Cain had no respect for God's freedom, or to put it in Scripture, "I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy, and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious." That's God who says that. That's what he says. He has the sovereign right to do that. You don't like it, it's Cainitic not to like it. And if we don't like it, there's a remedy, so we'll see of what stuff you are made of. That's Professor von Rad.

As a matter of fact, I believe that there is truth in saying that here lies the hidden cause of anti-Semitism. I don't think I'm anti-Semitic, not since I know the sovereign grace of God and his divine election, unconditional, free; merciful to me. But the reason, the fundamental reason people are anti-Semitic, often, is in my opinion, this is my opinion mind you, is that fundamentally they don't like the idea of God's sovereign choice of Israel, God's people. We really think deep down within, many of us, all of us probably at one time, others of us may have changed our opinion, that God doesn't really have the right to do that. My friend, he has a perfect right to do that. He has announced it. He's announced it plainly. He's persisted in it, and Israel is still with us. Where are the Parthians? Where are the Babylonians? Where are the rest of those ancient nations that you read about in the word of God and in history? But Israel is still with us, God's sovereign, eternal choice. So maybe Professor von Rad is right, it's God's freedom that we are reacting against.

Another commentator said, "Abel went out of his way to please God," that's why he was accepted. I don't know what that means. "He went out of his way to please God." How would he know if it was just "He went out of his way to please God"? One must be more specific. Strictly speaking, Genesis 4 doesn't give us any specific source of Cain's attitude, but one can see rebellion in his response to God's actions, anger, murder, lying, denial of responsibility, all with religion, all with religion mind you. His cultic duties he does, but they are displeasing to God. He evidently thought he would gain merit by his deed of bringing the wrong sacrifice. He's the kind of person who thinks God must dance when I play my little trumpet. No, no. The word of God has set forth precisely that to which God responds.

Well, these are different explanations, but I think there may still be some truth in the ancient answer, it still makes a bit of sense to me. I know that in Genesis chapter 3, after Adam and Eve have sinned and after they have been brought before the Lord God, and he set forth his judgment upon their sin, he took animals and slew them and made coats of skins and clothed them. That was a vivid object lesson, that is that animal sacrifice pleased him, and from the animal sacrifice their nakedness might be covered. And if that is true, then Cain would have known of that as well as Abel. They would have heard that from their parents.

And further, the writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews in chapter 11, he seems to understand something like this himself, because he says in chapter 11, in verse 4 that "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice." And Paul tells us that "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." So Abel must have heard some word from God, some way or other. So by faith he "offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying," not of his character, but "of his gifts."

Now, mind you his character also was involved, because it was his character that caused him to offer that particular gift that he did. That is, it was the belief of faith, produced by the Lord God. So I like to put these things together, and when we read, "because," Why did he slay him? "Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." It was because God had, in his marvelous

grace, communicated to Abel faith, and out of the faith, he brought the right offering, and out of the faith also, his works were righteous; whereas Cain's works were evil.

Well, the consequences of Cain's failure are seen in what follows. Our civilization, my friends, is a Cainitic civilization. We're still the followers of Cain. In fact, Jude talks about the way of Cain. It's a road, it's a journey. It begins in unbelief. It leads through rebellion to struggles with the sovereign Lord God. Our society, as Genesis 4 makes very plain in the history follows Cain's sacrifice of Abel, is a Cainitic society divorced from God, and the evils of our society abound amid religion, amid religion. In fact, some of the greatest of the evils cloaked with religion. That first bloodshed was a kind of omen; Abel is the proto-martyr, slain as a testimony to the truth. This significant omen for subsequent human history is the slaughter of Abel. Marvel not if the world hates those to whom God shows special respect. The world loves Ishmael rather than Isaac. The world loved Esau rather than Jacob. The world likes Haman rather than Mordecai. The world also, always, likes that which is contrary to the word of God, because as John says in the 5th chapter, "The whole world lies in the wicked one." That's what you're dealing with day by day. Don't be surprised by what you find. The curse of fratricide is woven like a blood-red thread into the web of human life, even in its highest forms.

Let me, I know I've gone over time. I was reading a story of Billy Dawson, one of the great old preachers before Spurgeon's day. Mr. Spurgeon said that he was a very unorthodox man. He went in the pulpit, and nobody ever knew exactly what would happen, but they loved to hear him preach. One day, he was preaching along, and as he hesitated, they had a clock just like that one. That's a silent clock, but the clock was one that struck the hour, 12:00, and as he was preaching, he stopped and the clock struck, and Dawson said, "You may speak clock, but I'm not through." And he went on. So it's after twelve according to that clock.

But just let me say this in closing, there is a fine, plain, pointed question for us. Do we not have some Abels among us as well? This morning after the meeting, someone said to me, "I sure do have a lot of Cain within me." That's a good response, we do.

Let me put it this way. Is there a troubling, godly person who bothers you, that is a Christian, and you cannot really say you love them? Like Micaiah, the prophet that Ahab called but told Jehoshaphat, "Now when we call Micaiah," all of his other hundreds of prophets told him, "Go up against Ramoth-gilead, you will overcome them." Jehoshaphat from Judah said, "Do you have a prophet of the Lord?" He said, "One, Micaiah, but he prophesies evil of me and not good." So Jehoshaphat said, "I'd like to hear him." So they get Micaiah and he comes and Ahab says, "Are we gonna win?" And he says, "Oh yes, Ahab, you'll win all right." But he said it in a sarcastic voice and Ahab knew he wasn't giving him an honest answer, so he said, "Really?" And then he said, "Look, if you go up against Ramoth-gilead, the children of Israel will be scattered like lost sheep all over the hills of the land." And Ahab said, "See, he prophesies evil of me, and not good. I hate Micaiah." Think of that, "I hate him."

So the germ of Cain's murderous mood -- are there some Christians you evade his company or you evade her company if you can? You want to shut him out of any fellowship that you have, or shut her out of any fellowship that you have. And when whispers are passed around about this person, you want to listen to them. In other words, you are happy over anything that will make this person not so immaculate as others might think them to be. How about it, my Christian friend? The children of God are characterized by doing righteousness, by loving the brethren.

May God help us, by his grace, to fulfill in greater measure, at least, the apostle's picture of what it is to be a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. May we be enabled by his grace to love the brethren. That means to love one another, love in the biblical sense. That is, with the doing of righteousness, and the doing of righteousness with love. Not the hard, unloving kind of self-righteousness, nor on the other hand the sentimentality of that which is merely a show. May, by God's grace, the apostle's words be true of us. Let's stand for the benediction.

If you're here today, and you've never believed on our Lord Jesus Christ, such a thing is impossible for you. For you may not know, you will not know, you never can know what it is to do that which is righteous and to love the brethren, if you have not by God's grace been brought to the

acknowledgment of your sin and disobedience, and the realization that Christ has died for sinners and that you've come to him and received as a free gift what you cannot earn, eternal life. May God help you to make that decision. Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for the apostle's words for us, which we so need, all of us. We give Thee thanks for the cross...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]