



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 John 4:17-21

"Boldness in the Day of Judgment"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Speaking for Mr. Prier, our elder, who is sick this morning and his wife has been sick. And then forgetting the admonition to love our brother in Christ she gave her disease to him [Laughter] and so he's unable to be here this morning. I have not had a chance to talk to Ann in detail, was happy to see her here. Whether she did that because he didn't take proper care of her while she was sick, [Laughter] but at any rate Howard's not feeling [well] today and so I'm speaking for him by proxy.

We welcome you to the ministry of the word service in Believers Chapel. We hope that through the ministry of the word you may in your Christian life grow. And if you are here and you do not yet know him whom to know is life eternal, that this may be the means by which you do come to know him.

The announcements are in the bulletin. The two that perhaps should be mentioned are the Wednesday night meeting at 7:30. Kurt Daniel will be speaking then and giving a Christmas message. And then next Sunday, Christmas Sunday, we will not be having the two morning services but the one service on Sunday will be at four o'clock in the afternoon. It will be a service in which we remember the Lord in communion at the Lord's table. And then there will also be shorter time for the ministry of the word of God. I will not be speaking my customary forty to forty-five minutes,

but will be a bit briefer so that our service will be a reasonable length next Sunday afternoon at four o'clock. We welcome each one of you to that service, as well.

The reading of the Scripture this morning is in 1 John chapter 4 verse 17 through verse 21. This is the concluding section of the fourth chapter of John's first letter that we have been studying for a number of weeks now, and the apostle concludes largely his discussion of the doctrine of divine love. We have said, and I think probably the most important thing that we have said is that our thoughts concerning the love of God should be primarily theological. In fact, for John the definition of the love of God is not a definition that has to do with sentiment, sentimentality, the affectional kind of treatment of love that is so common in our society but totally, almost totally, theological. For example he says, "Herein is love not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." To say that God is love is to say that he sent the Lord Jesus Christ to be the propitiation for our sins. That's the apostle's definition of divine love. And of course he goes on to say, as we will see in this subject, that the divine love should be represented also in the lives of those who claim the Lord God as their own God.

So we turn to verse 17 of chapter 4 now, and I'm reading from the Authorized Version, and this is one of the places where the Authorized Version is more correct than some of our modern versions. For example, in the New International Version there is no connecting phrase, or particle, or conjunctive phrase as verse 17 opens in chapter 4. The Authorized Version reads, "Herein is our love made perfect." That makes very plain that that text and that thought is related to the preceding thought, which is in verse 16, the last sentence, "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him. Herein," or "in this" that is "in this mutual indwelling in love". That's one of the failures of the New International Version, which is a good version, one that many of you use and many of you know I participated in the translation. It's an excellent translation in modern English but occasionally it misses some of the kinds of connective thoughts, and phrases, and clauses that I think are very helpful in reading and understanding the word of God in an exegetical or interpretive way. And this is one of the cases.

"Herein, (that is in this mutual dwelling in love. God in us, we in God) in this is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment." (Or perhaps but a punishment.)

Incidentally, notice when he says, "There is no fear in love," we're not talking about sentiment again. We're not talking about sentimental romantic love. We're talking about the kind of love that apostle has been speaking about, the love that sent the Son to be the propitiation for our sins. There is no fear in this kind of love. "He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love because He first loved us." The Authorized Version has the pronoun "Him" after "We love" but probably that is not something that the apostle wrote and so we translate it "We love because He first loved us." Of course, we love him because he first loved us but also we love the brethren because he first loved us. So we love because he first loved us.

"If any man say," I'm always afraid when the apostle John says something like this because so often what he goes on to say, men say, is something that some of us have at one time or another said or thought. "If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar." Don't you love the way this apostle speaks so definitely to the point? I have expounded in forty years of preaching, I think, every book of the New Testament except 1 John. This is the first time I've expounded it in detail. I've been so impressed that the apostle, near the end of his life perhaps as old as eighty-five or ninety, speaks so definitely concerning truth. As we've often said citing others who have made the point with him, it's light or darkness. There is no twilight. So, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" We'll talk about that because I know that you probably can think of some illustration where you might question his reasoning and logic.

And he concludes and says, "And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." May the Lord bless this reading of his word. Let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are indeed grateful to Thee for the blessings that ours through our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. We thank Thee and praise Thee for the preservation of the word of God and this marvelous little document from the Apostle John's hands. We give Thee thanks for it. We thank Thee for the way it has ministered to us and we pray that as we continue to read it, it may continue to build us up in our faith.

We desire to be pleasing to Thee. We desire, Lord, to be delivered from the ways in which we have failed to live up to the confession of faith that we have made. We pray Lord that Thy wilt forgive us for those things that are displeasing to Thee, that do not represent the divine truth as it should be represented and especially the things that bring reproach to the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We are grateful to Thee Lord for the way Thou hast reached down and lifted us up and set us upon the solid rock with the forgiveness of sins, with justification of life. We thank Thee for the high priest that we have in heaven who ever lives to make intercession for us and to secure, through his intercessory work, all of the blessings that he has won by the blood that was shed in the propitiation on calvary's cross.

We pray Thy blessing upon the whole church today, not simply Believers Chapel but the whole body of believers who have confessed, in the genuine sense, the Lord Jesus as their own savior and Lord. We pray Thy blessing upon this local manifestation, upon its elders. We pray Thy blessing upon each one of them physically, above all spiritually. As they minister to us, as they have the oversight, give them wisdom in their work. And give us, Lord, the submission to them as our leaders that we should have submission in the word of God.

We pray for our country, for the president, for the president elect. We pray for our state and local governments. We remember the apostle has called such ministers of God. Help us to be responsive to them in that sense.

We pray for the sick. We especially remember them. Some are in the hospital at this very moment, we pray for them. Undertake of them, protect and keep them and give the sense of Thy presence.

And Lord for those who've especially requested our prayers, we pray for them, for the physicians who minister to them, for their families and give healing if it should please Thee. Be with us Lord as we listen to the word of God, as we sing a hymn, and as we remember the Lord this evening in the Lord's Supper. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Our subject for today as you notice from the bulletin is "Boldness in the Day of Judgment." Many interesting and significant things have been said about fear. For those who are approaching my age, perhaps one of the most famous of the 20th Century sayings by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was a saying about fear. In his first inaugural address, March the 4th of 1933 the President said, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." It sounded as if it were very original to those of us who heard it, but it's doubtful that it really was a very original saying. You might recognize it in the words of Henry David Thoreau who said, "The thing I fear most is fear," in 1851. And then Francis Bacon said something very similar back in the 17th Century when he said, "Nothing is terrible except fear itself."

In divine things matters are different. There is such a thing as proper fear. For example, the Apostle Peter says, "Love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king." The Apostle Paul says much the same thing, "To those to whom we should render fear, we should render fear." That is those who are our governors, and presidents, and even mayors believe it or not. Job was one who was commended for the fear that he exhibited toward God, that kind of fear is proper, a reverence for

God. And for those who are his ministers, I'm speaking of governmental ministers, and there is a proper lack of fear both of the divine person and of his enemies.

For example the Lord Jesus Christ in that great incident in which he walks on the water, as Matthew records it, when he comes to the boat and the apostles are there, no doubt very much afraid he says to them, "Be of good cheer, it is I. Be not afraid." So it was proper not to have fear in that incident. And then of those enemies of God, we are told by many writers in the word of God that we should not fear the enemies or the things that are hostile to us. For example in the twenty-third Psalm the psalmist writes concerning this in the 4th verse of that great familiar psalm in which he says, "Ye though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me." And then the psalmist says in Psalm twenty-seven, a few psalms later, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

So there are things for which we should have a proper fear or persons, there are persons, and incidents, and times when we should have a lack of fear and the word of God speaks to those details. Among pagans the things that they fear includes such things as death itself. Publilius Syrus, who in the 1st Century wrote in one of his maxims said, "The fear of death is more to be dreaded than death itself." And Robert Burns, the well-known Scott in his epistle to a young friend said, "The fear of hell's hangman's whip to hoard the wretch in order." Alexander McLaren said something rather interesting in connection with this. He said, "There are only two motives that rule men in regard to God. Only two emotions, either love or fear. There is nothing between the two. Love, liberty, and joy are on the one side. Fear issuing in torment on the other. If I may burden you with one other quote, Bertrand Russell whose name was, so far as I know, never on any orthodox Christian church. If it was he was—a hypocrite—because he was anything but a believer and publicized the fact that he was not, once said, "Fear is the main source of superstition and one of the main sources of cruelty. To concur fear is the beginning of wisdom."

Now, I must say that Professor Russell, a philosopher, mathematician, and various other things, a very brilliant man, one of the most brilliant of this century, was not talking about divine things specifically but talking simply about fear, that to concur it is the beginning of wisdom. The psalmist said something with which one may contrast Russell's comments. The psalmist says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." To concur fear is not the beginning of wisdom, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. In other words, to have that fear is the beginning of wisdom so that to keep a healthy fear of God is part of wisdom. But on the other hand, the Apostle John says, "There is no fear in love but perfect love casteth out fear."

So how shall we resolve this little dilemma? Well, we look at our passage and I think when we come to the conclusion of it we'll have some ideas about how we may say there's a sense in which we have fear and there's a very wonderful sense in which we should have no fear. We'll look at verse 17 first where the apostle writes concerning love and confidence. There are two marks of the love of God, he will say in this section, confidence before him. When a person has that he has the evidence of the possession and enjoyment of the love of God, confidence before the Lord God particularly with reference to the day of judgment.

And the second mark of love for God is love of the brethren. In other words, one can see one's love for God by his love for the brethren. Now I ask you, could someone see by your love for the brethren love for God? That's a legitimate question, I think, for all of us to ask ourselves. Could someone really see the love of God as reflected in my love of the brethren, or does my attitude toward the brethren raise questions about my love for God?

Now, he begins by saying, "Herein (that is in this) our love is made perfect." "In what?" we might say. Well, in just what he's been speaking about in the preceding sentence. "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him." So the person who dwells in love, now mind you this is divine love, the love that sent the savior to save mankind, the love that sent the savior that we might live in him. Those are two statements he makes above. And the love that sent

him to be propitiation for our sins, it's in that love that God is seen as love and he that dwells in that love dwells in God and God in him.

Now, that mutual love that we enjoy, that is God's love of us, our love of God and the union that we have in that love. That leads to boldness, boldness in the day of judgment. We have no fear of the day of judgment. If it is true of us that we dwell in love for we dwell in God and God dwells in us. Divine love, mind you, not romantic love, not sentimental love, divine love, the love that sent the Son to be the propitiation for our sins. I keep saying this because I really believe that many of us fail to grasp the significance of that point when we think about God's love.

Now the purpose of this, the love of God, the purpose of our mutual indwelling in love, he says, is to give us confidence. He says, "That we may have boldness in the day of judgment." Perfected love climaxes in boldness in the day of judgment. That's the crown of blessing for the saints, boldness in the day of judgment. Not simply for that day but in that day to have boldness, because that's the day of shame and terror for the wicked, but it's the day of boldness for the saints who dwell in divine love. And the ground of their confidence? Well, he explains it in the final statement of the verse, "Because as He is so are we in this world."

In other words, our great covenantal head, the Lord Jesus Christ who acts for the people of God in his life and death, who stands of the people of God in his resurrected glory is the ground of our confidence. As "He is", incidentally it's not as "He was", not as "He shall be", but as "He is" at the right hand of the Father completing the aspects of his representative covenantal work for us that has to do with forgiveness of our sins at the right hand of the Father. To realize that is great, of course, because that means that our confidence rest upon a secure foundation. But, "as He is," John says, "we are in this world." He's not in this world now. We are still in this world. But, "as He is," in the full acceptance of the Father, at the right hand of the Father having completed his work, so are we in this world. It's not illegal in Believers Chapel but it's not customary I want to say, "Hallelujah." "As He is so are we in this world."

The Apostle Paul puts it in his way. He says, "We are accepted in the beloved one." When the Father looked down at the baptism and said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I'm well pleased," he was not saying something too different from what John says when he says, "Behold, what manner of the love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God. He's the Son in the preeminent since but we are the sons of God also. He says in his 3rd chapter 1st verse, he says, "We're the children of God," "as He is so are we in this world."

It has been commented that John Bunyan who wrote the story of his life in grace abounding to the chief of sinners said something that pertained specifically to this. Mr. Bunyan went through a long experience of attaining peace with God. He was up and he was down, and has down and he was up. But finally, he traced his coming to a sense of the assurance of the forgiveness of sins, not without its later questions, but he traced it to the time when as he was in the midst of his troubles there came to his mind the verse from the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 3 and verse 24 where the apostle states, "We're justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." He said that text came to him as if from the Lord and was expounded to him as he was in his trouble state as though it came from a voice of heaven.

Now, you can see a man deeply troubled, anxious for assurance, and it was as if God spoke to him from heaven. Not audibly, Bunyan doesn't say audibly but he means to his spirit and in his consciousness it was as if God spoke to him from heaven. And this is what he heard as he puts it down his book. He says he heard the voice from heaven in his heart saying, "Sinner, thou thinkest that because of thy sins and infirmities I cannot save thy soul. But behold my Son, (capital 'S') my Son is by me and upon I look and not on thee and will deal with thee according as I am pleased with him."

"As He is so are we in the world." So the Lord looks not upon me. What a failure, what a sinner, what a rebel against God. How many times have I deserved eternal hellfire? But by the grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing me to regeneration in faith after the conviction of is; now the Lord God does not look at me. I could never stand in the judgment, but he looks at his

Son by his side, my covenantal head, my representative, the one who stands for me, the one who has my name effectually written up him like the high priests in the children of Israel who had the tribes written upon them. My name stands there and the Father looks at the Son by him, and there it is, "S. Lewis Johnson, Jr." Maybe it's, "Samuel Lewis Johnson, Jr."

So, "As He is so are we in this world." He doesn't look on me. He deals with me according as I'm pleased with Christ. That's what Paul means when he says we are accepted in the beloved one, so no wonder that an individual may have confidence in the day of judgment. As Isaac Watts put it in one of his hymns, "When I can read my title clear to mansions in the skies I'll bid farewell to every fear and wipe my weeping eyes." Well, there it is. There's your title clear. If by God's grace you've been brought to Christ as he is so are we and you and every other believer in this world. That's your title. That's your title to mansions in the skies. That's your title to all of the blessings of the redeemed. So bid farewell to your fears and wipe your weeping eyes. Watts would exhort us.

Now, the apostle in verses 18 and 19 he goes on to speak of love and cringing fear. Boldness suggests the opposite, fear. And so he writes, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear." Look, my Christian friend, love and fear are as incompatible as oil and water. They cannot exist together. "Love," as Robert Law says, "flings fear out of doors." That's really the sense of the original text which strongly suggests just that. Perfect love casts fear outside, throws it out the door. That's the love of God. Well, you might say, "Perfect love?" There's nothing perfect we know, nothing perfect in this world, as the young lady said to young man when asked her if she thought him a perfect fool. She said, "Well nothing's perfect." [Laughter]

Actually, John says, "Love is being perfect in us." He recommends that completion of it. But nevertheless, he talks about it as something that is going on. Why is love and fear incompatible? Well, fear brings with it punishment. He states, "Because fear hath torment." As the Authorized Version renders it's probably better rendered "punishment". In other words, the fear that we possess from time to time is painful chastening kind of discipline. It brings the sense of punishment. But the purpose of the fear that we do have, which we should not have if we know the perfection of our

standing with the Lord God, the purpose of it is that we might not be condemned. As Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 32, in the context of the chapter on the Lord's Supper he states, "We ought to judge ourselves, but we should not be judged, but when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." So of the chastening we experience, the sense of pain that we experience from time to time is designed ultimately so that we might not be condemned with the world.

Now, those two things are incompatible. The sign of imperfection is that we have fear. And we should remember that when it does come and often come legitimately because we have displeased our heavenly Father, the communion has been broken. Never forget that even when he disciplines us and chastens us it is because he loves us. "God loves us," some teacher has said, "as much when he strikes us as when he strokes us."

And finally in the 19th verse of this section on love and cringing fear the apostle writes, "We love because He first loved us." I want to ask you a question. Do you think that Apostle John is an individual who thinks that we conjure up our acceptance to God by the exercises of our free will? Do you think so? Do you think that he loves us because we have of our free will begun to love him? Do you really think that? I see a lot of smiles on faces and I know what the reason that some of them are smiling cause I can pick you out. The others of you are like poker faces. [Laughter] I don't really know how you feel about this. But those of you that are smiling, I know exactly how you feel. I feel the same way. And if Martin Luther were sitting here, he wouldn't be sitting he'd be standing up here and I'd be sitting there if he were here, [laughter] but nevertheless if he were here he'd have a broad smile on his face. And he would say, "That's for you Erasmus."

No. Look, the apostle has already stated in verse 10, "Herein is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." We love because he first loved us, first loved us. The beginning of all of the work of God in our hearts is with God. Never forget that. When we exercise our will, and we do exercise our wills, do not think for one moment that I'm suggesting we don't have a will or that it should not be exercised. I'm just saying, when

Dr. Barnhouse used to like to say, "We exercise our wills for God when he first jiggles our 'willer'".

[Laughter] So we love because he first loved us. We learn the art of love from God's love. We love whether it's God, or our brethren, or sisters. We love because we learned the art of love from the Lord God. He's the fountain of love. He first loved us. The initiative in the great reconciliation lay entirely with him, as the apostle has said. It's not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. The love began there.

As a matter of fact, love was dead in our hearts, dead to the Lord God. Someone has said, "The love was dead in many hearts, fevered and spotted with corruption in many others. The fresh stream of life and love must be poured from the primal source into the shrunken veins and disordered frame of humanity that it might know health and joy again." God first loved us, after that we learn to love him and each other. The exchange of love begins with him but it doesn't end there. It includes the brethren.

Now, we're talking about something that's difficult, to love the brethren. Look, my Christian friends, you've got to love me. And even you Arminians out there, and there are probably a few lurking around in the corners of this room somewhere. [Laughter] If not knowingly, unknowingly, you must love me. And as difficult as it may seem, I must love you too. [Laughter] We're in the family of God.

And let me say this, many of us who think we're on the right track have long way to go. And many of us that we think are on the wrong track have many useful and right things to say to us. We want our love and your love to be as wide as the body of Christ. We're not talking about Believers Chapel, we're not talking about independent churches, we're not talking about the Presbyterians or the Baptists, we're including all genuine believers whatever they may be by awkward profession. Denominationally the body of Christ is Christ's body and we love one another. We must. And when we do not we have sinned against our Father in heaven. Calvinists and Arminians both sin. And when we do not love our brethren we confess that we still have a relationship with Cain who did not love his brother but slew him.

Finally, the apostle states in the 20th and 21st verses that love must, must, must include the brethren. "If a man say I love God and hateth his brother, he's a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" There's but one way by which our love may be tested and certified among men. If it be God that you really love then you will love his image in another man. Cannot be anything but that, you will love his image in another man. Just as Jesus said if God were your father you would love me, so in the believing man there is something of the Lord God there. Of course, he's in the image of God as a human being. And that's enough for us to have a feeling of affection for him. But when we realize that we are speaking of a brother who is the recipient of the love of God, to whom we are related, who is precious to Jesus Christ, who is loved with a love that is as his love for me, and undeserved kind of love surely with all of us then we cannot look at our brethren and not love them. There is the evidence of the Lord God there.

I love this statement. I think it's so true, "If you do not like the visible sample, it's idle to say that you approve the invincible bullock." The sample is there. It may be hard to see in many of us but it's there. If we are talking about true brethren, true believers, brethren and sisters. It's there and we cannot say we love God, we do not love them. In fact, the cardinal hypocrisy is the fane love of God and not really love those who belong to the Lord, who have been loved by him, to whom he has exercised his love and who have received the forgiveness of sins, whose lives have been changed, have been set upon the solid rock. We must, my Christian friend, we must love them. To say you love God and you don't love the brethren is self-deception. Your love is make-believe love. It's not the real love. You need confession of your sin and reception of the real source of love, the Lord God himself, the cardinal hypocrisy. The apostle goes on to say, "And this commandment have we from him that he who loveth God loveth his brother also."

You know, you can see what he's saying is it's logical for you to love the brother who is loved by the Lord but we also have an addition, an order from the Lord God. We're under orders and we cannot take the first commandment, "Thy shall love the Lord thy God with all our heart,

mind, and soul," and [don't] forget the second about our neighbor in Israel. The two commandments define love. One toward God, the other toward our brethren and you cannot take one and forget the other. So I don't love my brother because of what he is or because of what I am by the grace of God, a child of God. Not because he deserves to be loved, I surely don't deserve to be loved, but because the love of God goes out to the undeserving. It went out to me and it goes out to my brother. I love him because he belongs to Christ. I love him because he's been bought with the precious price, the precious blood of our Lord. I love him because his name is in the lamb's book of life. And I love him because I love the Lord. I love him because it's the divine nature to love and Scripture tells me I've received the divine nature. So I must love him if I have truly received the divine nature.

Now, I said there was an eccentric argument that has been often brought against this reasoning of the apostle that if you don't love your brother how can you love the God whom you have not seen. You don't love the brother whom you have seen, how can you love the God whom you have not seen? Someone has asked the question. An answer to that is, "Is it easier to love someone who we have never met or someone who we've met and disliked?" And if we met them and disliked them isn't easier to love the person you've never seen?

Well, some of you I know probably enter into that argument. You think that's a pretty clever argument. The only thing is it doesn't have anything to do with divine love at all. It's merely human affection that we're talking about. And maybe you can say, "Yes, I dislike that brother so much I could love the brother that I've never seen yet." Well, wait until you see the brother. Then you'll find that his "brother" in quotes because if it's a real brother, you can be sure of this, you'll love the real brother better than the other person that you've never seen. So the sample is there before us. You cannot talk about the love of God if you have not responded to the sample before us, you cannot say I love God. You're not like, as Kurt mentioned the other night, Simeon Stylites who in the 5th Century sat on a pillar for thirty-five years to express his love of God.

But that's contrary to the biblical discussion of love given by the apostle right here. For the love of God is not one way, is not directed toward one way it's directed toward the rest of those who have acknowledge the Lord, too, the arrows, this way and that way. And so consequently, John says, that's impossible. That kind of love is not love at all. It imputes to God a kind of exclusive love that he would be happy with me if I paid not attention to anyone else but him, if I got off right by myself and just for the rest of my life spent it in devotion to the Lord. And if I were to say that that is representative of the love of God what am I saying about God? That he's the kind of God who likes exclusive love? Selfish love? That doesn't pertain to others at all? What a false idea we have concerning God.

Now, I must say something in conclusion. What John has said, essentially, is there is no assurance for the loveless heart. Love God, love his children is what the Scriptures say. We live in an age of anxiety and we live in an age of fear, they're closely related. We know the love of God in the propitiation and if we know it, my friend, then that settles our future. That settles all of the experiences of our life if we really know the love of God in the propitiation.

Very striking to see some of the epitaphs on pagan tombs in the early centuries and compare them with the things that are found in the catacombs written by the Christians. For example, on one of the tombs at that time among the pagans there is this epitaph, "To the unrighteous gods who robbed me of my life." "Our hope was in our body now all is ashes and lamentation," another epitaph. A third one, "I Procope lift up my hands against the gods who took me hence undeserving." That's the attitude of the pagan. That's the attitude of the world to their death.

But listen to some of the epitaphs in the catacombs. "Turrentiana [phonetic] lives." "Marcus, innocent boy, thou art now among the innocent." "Agape," well you can tell something by her name, "Agape, thou shalt live forever." The sign of the fish, Jesus Christ, Son of God, savior gives you something of buoyancy of the serenity that marked the early believers. The sign of the dove, the anchor, the palm branch, the vein, the phoenix, these are some of the favorite symbols of the early believers, tell you a great deal about their faith.

There's a marvelous written by Matthias Claudias, one of the great German devotional writers, he said, "He that will not believe in Christ must see to it how he can get along without him. As for you can me we cannot. We need someone who will lift and hold us up when we are alive and who will lay his hand beneath our heads when must die and this he can do abundantly according to what is written bout him and we know of nobody whom we'd rather have do it." How true that is.

Now, one final thought. You know I'm convinced that I don't read the Bible as carefully and as deeply as I should. I think some of my Christian friends do not either. I want you to look at the statement, "There is no fear in love." There is no fear in love. The Lord Jesus said, "In the world you shall have tribulation but be of good cheer I have overcome the world." But the statement, "There is no fear in love," raises questions. Well, in the first place it seems to me he might well have said there is no fear in will power. There is no fear in fortitude. Or to put it another way, there is no fear in courage. Those are two things that seem to contrast with each other, fear on the one hand, courage on the other. But he said there is no fear in love. No fear in love, not willpower, fortitude, heroism played off against anxiety. He doesn't say there is no fear in self-esteem. There is no fear in a good personal image. Or there is no fear in a good sense of one's self-worth.

How substandard, biblically speaking, are these things. "There is no fear in love," he said. What love? Romantic love? No, there's a lot of fear in that. People break their hearts over that and that's shallow, of course. What he's talking about is, there is no fear in divine love, the love that sent the Son to be the Savior of the world, the love that sent the Son to be the propitiation for our sins, the love that sent the savior that we might live through him. There is no fear in that love. When we understand that love, when it is truly come to us as the love of God for me, there is no fear in that.

My future is in the hands of the Lord God. The Lord Jesus hanging on the cross in the greatest experience of anxiety that he might ever have had. Anxiety is the sense of a broken tie, a failed relationship. In the midst of the greatest trial of his experience he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" But note it's "My God, my God." Not, "Oh God, oh God." "My God, my God," even in the depths of that experience the faith in the Lord God did not break at

all. "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" And furthermore, in control of the circumstances he takes a text from the Old Testament and offers it up as a prayer to the Lord God.

"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

By his work the future is no longer, as someone has said, the fogged landscape. He who possesses the last hour no longer needs to fear the next minute. My Christian friends, we possess the last hour. As he is, so are we in the world. We don't have to worry about the next minute, the next hour. We have the last hour and the last hour is glorious victory through the propitiation which Christ has offered and in whose loving person, as our covenantal head, we stand at this very minute.

Luther, when he talked about faith once said, "Faith is the right use of the personal pronoun." In other words, it's not God loves the world, it's he loves me and gave himself for me. Can you say that? Is that your experience? If that's your experience, if you can really say that then you can be sure of this, there is no fear in that love that shall overcome you. You have the last hour. The next minutes are inconsequential in the light of that fact.

Some of you, I see in the audience, I know you've had deep experiences, troubles, trials. But comfort yourself by these great faithful, infallible words of our Lord God through his apostle, "There is no fear in love. As he is so are we in the world." The love of God is not that we loved Him but that He loved us and gave Himself for us."

If you're here today and you've never believed in Christ we invite you to come to him, and trust him, and know to that as he is so shall you be from that moment on in this world. As an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ, we invite you. Come to him. Believe in him. Trust in him. Don't leave this auditorium with any doubt about your response to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Our heavenly Father, we stand amazed at the greatness of the word that Thou hast spoken to us. Most of all Lord, at that greatness of him who perfectly carried out the will of God

and won for us and the people of God an eternity of communion and blessedness in the presence of the God of this universe, the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

O Father, if there are some here who have never believed in Christ, young or old, may at this very moment from their hearts there go up the petition, "Lord I need Christ. I know my guilt, my sin. I know my failures. I sense that I am a lost being. Christ died for sinners, the Scriptures say..."

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]