



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 John 5:1-5

"The Hostile World and the Conquering Faith"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We are turning to 1 John chapter 5, verse 1 through verse 5 for our Scripture reading today, 1 John chapter 5, verse 1 through verse 5. I'm reading still from the Authorized Version. The apostle writes,

"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and everyone that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. And this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

I'm sure you probably noticed as you listened to these words that the apostle is saying, essentially, some of the same things that he said in his great gospel. You remember he said that the Lord Jesus had done many signs but he had selected certain ones that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that in believing we might have life through his name. And if you'll look at verse 1 he says, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God," and then in verse 5, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

These two great titles, the Messiah, the Son of God, were very significant for the apostle. And at the end of his days, so far as we know, he was still proclaiming the significance of them. We'll say a word about that when we come to the message in a few minutes.

Let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee as we come to Thee in prayer on this the first day of a new year. That we have the confidence that Thou art be with us through this year as Thou hast been with us in the past. We are indeed grateful for the providence of God that surrounds all of our actions, our thoughts, our feeble attempts to serve Thee effectively.

We pray, Lord, that as we seek to honor Thee throughout the days that are to come that Thou wilt continue to be with us in a very fruitful way. Enable us to truly proclaim Christ as the savior of sinners. We thank Thee and praise Thee for the word of God and for the light that it has given to us and we ask, Lord, that our appreciation for the one of whom it speaks the Lord Jesus Christ may grow in the months that lie ahead if Thou shouldst give them to us.

We thank Thee for the whole church of Christ. We pray Thy blessing upon the whole body of believers. Bless each one of them and build us up together as we look forward to the day when we shall enter Thy presence and know the joy of eternal communion and fellowship with the triune God.

And Father, we pray for Believers Chapel, its leadership and members, and especially the friends and visitors who are here with us today. Be with them, bless them and their families, and enable them to serve our Lord fruitfully as well.

We thank Thee for all who make it possible for the word of God to go forth from this place. And we pray for the sick. We ask Thy blessing upon them, give healing in accordance with Thy will, and undertake that they too may experience the joys of the knowledge of the Lord. Give wisdom and guidance to those who minister to them, both family and physicians, we hold them up before Thee, Lord, and pray that Thy wilt deal with them in a way that will glorify Thy name.

We pray that Thou wilt be with us in our service today. May, as we sing, as we listen to the word of God, may we be built up in our faith and entified. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] The topic for this morning as we continue our exposition of John's First Epistle is “The Hostile World and the Conquering Faith.” In a dismal world that of Domitian, the Roman Emperor, Juvenal, the Roman poet, and Tacitus, the Roman Historian, at the far edge of the apostolic age after sixty years of ministry, years that were illuminated by the judgment fires of Jerusalem's overthrow and the mortifiers of Nero's persecution, the venerable apostle on the Isle of Patmos, according to tradition, as lonely as a driver of a DART bus, no doubt, [laughter] seeing the progress of the gospel over the Mediterranean world is able to say most truthfully, this is the victory that has overcome the world even our faith.

In other words, at what may appear to be a very dark hour for the apostle and for the Christian church, victory is the word of the apostle. It recollects and recalls for us the words of our Lord's spoken near the end of his life, "In the world you shall have tribulation be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

One sometimes gets the impression when we read things that contemporaries say about the Christian faith that one should really blind oneself in order to be able to believe. On the contrary, we are to understand the faith as that which goes along with the greatest clear headedness ever revealed to us men. The clear headedness and the realism of the men of the Bible. And we have the promise that as Christians we shall be clear-sighted men who are permitted to know the secrets of God. The Apostle John gives us some great insight into that. He sets forth for us three elements or conditions in which fellowship, his favorite word, fellowship exists.

One is light, the light of holiness, the primary element. Righteousness, the second, the intermediate element. The righteousness represented by chapter 2 in verse 3, "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." And finally the third, the ultimate element, love. Not sentimental love, not human love, but divine love. The love that is represented most clearly and

plainly in the propitiatory sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now he relates the fellowship to the world. The arena of the conflict between the Holy One and the Father of Lies. And he approaches it with the sense of victory.

Beginning with the first verse of our section which is related to the preceding two verses that close chapter 4 the thought of brotherhood the apostle speaks of the new life, it's source, and it's issue, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and everyone that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him." The source of life. Notice how he puts it, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." The Christian confession is rooted in the divine activity, the spirit offering conviction, regeneration, and faith.

If there is one thing that the apostle makes plain in his gospel and his epistles it is this; that the work of God begins in heaven, not on earth. The work of God begins with God, not with men. That what we see in men is the result of the previous working of the Lord God. That's Christianity. What Christianity says is that as a result of the fall in the Garden of Eden, man is unable to turn to God. Therefore if he is to come to God the work must begin with God. The work of divine revelation, the work of divine salvation. Both its beginning and its completion, all belong to the divine area and arena. There salvation begins and it comes to us.

Now looking at the text you might not catch that as you ought if you read simply the Authorized Version, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." Now you might think that all that John is saying is that if a person believes then he has experienced the new birth. And it's true that John is not trying to make a great deal over the order of belief and birth, but nevertheless in his language it's very plain what he says.

You might say, "Well John is not trying to make that point," I agree, that's not his major point. He's not drawing aside and giving us a lesson in Christian theology. But all of the words of the apostle are theological. All of the words of the Bible are theological. And so we're justified in drawing from them what they plainly say.

Now when he says, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God," it will help us, I think, to understand the sense in which this text is written in its original language. Let me translate it for you with a slight change, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God." The apostle uses the perfect tense, "Has been born of God," which all Greek students know generally refers to an event in past time, the results of which persist to the present time. So that when he says, "Has been born of God," he means that this is a past act and the results of it, the participation in the new birth, exist at the present time. That tense doesn't say anything about the future. Other things may indicate that it will persist in eternal life but we'll leave it just at that.

"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God," that is in the sense has been born of God. Now think about that for just a moment you will see that what he is saying is that everyone who believes has previously been born. Now it's clear from that everyone who believes has previously been born that the birth precedes the believing. Now we're not talking about chronology. We're not saying, and there is a group that does say this but we're not saying this; that there are people walking the streets of Dallas or the streets of any other town who have been born of God but who have not yet believed. We're not suggesting that. We're not suggesting a chronological order that one can trace, but we are talking about a logical order. We're talking about what must proceed logically.

Now think about this for a moment, the Scriptures say that men naturally are dead in sins. And if they are dead in sins how can they believe? A dead man cannot believe so he needs an operation of God that will enable him to believe. That's regeneration. That's the communication of divine life. And that divine life that is communicated is responsive to the word of God. Thus in the context of the preaching of the gospel as the gospel goes forth there are dead men present, we hope. Perhaps there's some dead men here. We're talking about spiritual men, of course, spiritually dead. And the Holy Spirit communicates life and they immediately respond by believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, committing their lives to him and receiving the gift of eternal life.

That's what transpires when a person is born of God. So everyone who believes, present tense, has been born of God. And we say John is not trying to stress that, I've been stressing this. The reason I'm doing it is obvious, it's a neglected truth in evangelicalism. In fact, it's an often denied truth. I have a good friend, he's a good friend, he's a good scholar, a New Testament professor in the State of Colorado. I won't to identify him further, but he and I have been friends for some years. I was reading his book on 1 John and of course of reading the book he makes the statement, "Belief must be accompanied by love and obedience," Surely true, "for love can only be produced by regeneration, and regeneration comes only as a result of belief," he said. In other words, he's reversed the order. It's impossible for a person to believe before he's born again. That is unscriptural. The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, they're foolishness to him, neither can he know them, they are spiritually discerned. The mind of the flesh is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God. Neither, indeed is not subject to the Lord God, neither indeed can be so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. And faith pleases God.

The Lord Jesus in speaking to Nicodemus said that it's possible for a man to be born but he must be born of the Spirit. In fact, in the 6th chapter of John he makes it even plainer that a divine work is necessary. He says in the 44th verse, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." The work of the Holy Spirit in drawing an individual to Christ or the Father through the Spirit is the work of efficacious grace, often identified with regeneration or the communication of new life.

Many other passages affirm this. Many other passages affirm it. It's amazing that individuals can read the Bible and not catch this. Listen, the Apostle Paul says, "No man can call Jesus, Lord, except by the Holy Spirit." No man can call him Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

So what we have here is a magnificent spiritual confirmation of the fact that the salvation that God gives begins with God. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ has already been the recipient of a regenerating work of God. He is born of God. That is so plain, taught in our historic Christian confessions, that it's one of the astonishing things today that in evangelicalism as a whole

it's largely a lost truth. Not entirely, but largely a lost truth, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God."

Some years ago I had a discussion of this with a well-known Christian theologian. We had been having some discussions and this became an issue and in the course of our discussion I ask him, "How do you explain, if you hold your view, how do you explain 1 John 5:1, 'Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God?'" Now he had had four or five years of Greek but it had largely fled from him through the years as has happened, as does happen, with so many biblical students. They go as young people in, they read the New Testament, they say, "If I could understand the Greek language I could understand it better," and so they spend four or more years studying Greek and then the rest of their lives in forgetting it. Because, of course, it does require a little bit of labor in order to keep studying the Greek text of the New Testament. One has to keep reading it.

So anyway, he had the necessary tools in the past and I simply reminded him, I said, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, the 'believeth' is present tense and the 'is born' is perfect tense." And he said, "That doesn't really mean anything other than simply that every believer is a person who is born again." And I must confess that is primarily what John has in mind here. He does say that a believer is a person who has been born of God. I don't question that at all. I think that is John's principal point, but in expressing it he makes this other point as well. So I said to this individual, "Well, we have a present tense and we have a perfect tense, and the perfect tense would indicate that that represented by the perfect tense is an event that occurred previous to the other, 'Whosoever believeth,' present tense, 'has been born of God.'" Well after he made the statement it doesn't mean anything other than that they've had both of these experiences, believing in and been born again I said, "Well let me ask you a question. If that is true today, 'Whosoever believeth has been born of God,' was it true of that individual yesterday?"

And he's a very competent man and he immediately saw what I was going to say next. I was going to say next, "Well now if it was true yesterday, was it true the day before that and so on until finally we come to the very day, the very moment, at which he comes to faith in Christ. Is it true that

he has been born of God?" He wouldn't let me get that far, he said, "Well, I don't want to discuss that anymore." [Laughter] That was one argument that I clearly won. I'm not sure I've won many arguments in my life but that was one I clearly won. He totally avoided it. But that's what I was going for. I was going to say, "At the very moment when you believed in Christ, wherever you were, in a church, reading a Bible, listening to someone, at the very moment that you first committed yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, is it true that you had been born of God? Because if that's true then of course regeneration precedes faith." And that's what John says, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God."

You see, this is—what is at stake here is ultimately the finished work of Christ. And that salvation is wholly of God. Robert Law, one of the finest of the students of this epistle has written, "Christian belief, which is essentially the spiritual recognition of spiritual truth, is a function of the divine life imparted to men."

One of the other commentators who's written a commentary on the Greek text of this epistle, a well-known commentator, has made the point, "The writer does not state whether faith is the cause or the result of the new birth," but then he goes on to say, "but incidentally the tenses make it clear that the divine begetting is the antecedent, not the consequent, of the believing." That is true. Everyone one or whosoever has been who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God.

Now letting that rest for the moment, and I hope it doesn't rest in your mind, I hope it's there and it will stay there because it will give you a greater appreciation of what God has done in the salvation of your soul. Let's notice the confession, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ." Now what is meant when we believe that Jesus is the Christ?

Well, some of the things that are meant are these. First of all you believe that the Lord God had a messianic figure, who is a messianic figure known to have fulfilled a divine commission. That's what the Messiah was to do and did. He fulfilled a known and divine commission. You also believe that he was born and that he was crucified. And you believe that he was resurrected. And you

believe that he is the anointed one of the Old Testament prophecies. You believe, also, that he is therefore the savior of the world. You believe, if you believe that Jesus is the Christ, you believe the Old Testament Revelation and you also believe the New Testament Revelation, because you believe the one called Jesus is that messianic figure. So you believe the Scriptures of the word of God. You believe that he is what he claimed to be. You believe that he was truly the Son of God and that therefore co-equal with the Father. And you believe, therefore, since he is a divine person that he has ultimate authority over your life and in fact over the life of every individual in this world and everything in this world. That's what is meant when we read, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ." That's why this is a true Christian confession.

Now of course, we may give incidental meanings to these terms and thus deny the significance of that statement and nevertheless say the words, but John when he talks about believing like this he's talking about personal belief. It must be your own personal confession. Something that you really believe. Something that you affirm with the most realistic sense of what you believe that it is possible for you to have. So, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God."

Now he goes on and says, "And every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him." It is sometimes been said, an exposition of the last phrase there, that what this simply means is that if we love an individual then we will love his children. Well now that is not really true. We may, as a matter of fact, love an individual and find his children very unloving. Now of course, generally speaking, in a family it's true. Generally speaking. That is, if I love my father the chances are I will love my sisters, though they had a hard time finding that out in the early stages of life, and my brother. So it's generally true but it's not always true.

What John is talking about is not in the general life about us, the life of human beings, nor is he talking about family life. What he is really talking about is the divine family, the family of God. And he says, "And everyone that loveth him that begat," that if everyone who loves the God who brought about our new birth and our faith and made us his children, we will love those that have had

a similar experience. The reasons for it, we said in the message last week, is simply this, that in a person begotten of God there is the communication of God's own life. Oh true, we are created in the image of God, but something more significant than that happens to an individual who's been born again. He has a new kind of life. He has divine life, the life of God.

And so if the life of God is the kind of life that my Christian brother or sister has then I must love them. It's impossible for me to love the bulk that is the life of God, love God and not love the sample of it, the clear sample of it, which I see and experience in the individual. That's all John is saying. He's saying, look, 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? That's the apostle's thought, it's not mine. It means simply when a person says, "I love God, but I don't love my Christian brother or my Christian sister." Or put it another way, "I love God," but then silently says, or silently acts the unlove of Christian believers, he's just a liar when he says he loves God. He's not really telling the truth. He's not facing the truth.

Now that's one of the commandments of God, one of the words of God, that we love the brethren. In a moment he will say the commandments of God are not grievous. Sometimes you think they are grievous, don't you? You say, "I've got to love my brother, I've got to love my brother." When a person says that you're quite sure he's not really certain he does love them at all, "I've got to love my brother." The commandments of God appear to be grievous to him. John says they are not grievous, we'll talk about that in a moment. But you can see that in the Bible we have two great commandments, Jesus gave them to us. Love God; love our neighbor.

As a matter of fact, belief must be accompanied by love and obedience, for love can only be produced by regeneration. And it's the regenerating work of God that brings us into the family of God. And in fact, and these two commandments, the second commandment, the commandment to love our neighbor, or as expressed here in the New Testament Epistles, to love our brethren as Christ has loved the church, that's required to make the first commandment comprehensible and intelligible. Love God, love one another. That's how we know we love God, when we love one

another. When we really love our brother who has those many unlovely traits but we nevertheless love them. Whether he has more or less than we do, well that may be a matter of Christian sanctification but no Christian can ever say I love God and at the same time say I don't love my brother or my sister. The apostle says such a person is lying.

Now he continues in verses 2 and 3 with the evidence of the family love, "By this," I think he points forward, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." So loving God and doing the commandments go together. In fact, obedience to God, the knowledge of God, and the love of God are ways of saying much the same thing. And the love of God, incidentally, involves moral obedience. Not simply emotional experience. We don't say I've had a great experience with God and I love God. Some people even tell me that they have visions of times of God and how they are warmed by their visions. Now I cannot deny your vision, I doubt it, but I cannot deny it. I don't have the knowledge to do that. But let me assure you that when we talk about emotional experience we're not talking about love of God, necessarily. The love of God involves moral obedience, that is the obedience of the commandments, the New Testament statements concerning Christian living. Moral obedience, not simply emotional experience.

Now let me hasten to say, I believe Christians should have emotions. And I think it's perfectly proper to express them. But so far as the love of God is concerned, it's something deeper than that. Emotions follow. We should be happy and joyous. We should have all of the things that go along with the sense of assurance and the sense of relationship to God and the fellowship with God that we may have. But the love of God is not simply an emotional experience.

Jesus put it this way, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" That's a very probing question that our Lord asks, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" The apostle and all that he says would be in thorough harmony with him. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments," the third verse says. That's the love of God, the keeping of the commandments. So we are not to talk about love alone. We are to love and to do his commandments as evidence.

Now we don't do it to give others evidence, that isn't our motive, but that is a result of the true work of the Christian life. This is the love of God that we keep his commandments. And John adds his commandments are not grievous. I dare say most of us have at one time or another in our Christian lives felt they were grievous. Just think, I've got to love my brethren. I've got to love the sisters as well. That's a pretty grievous kind of command.

The word grievous means something like burdensome. It's a burdensome command, but John says it's not burdensome. Why is it not burdensome? Well, in the first place it's not burdensome because the Lord gives the strength to bare them. "He who commands gives help," so Augustine said. And that is true here. His commandments are not grievous, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." That is, he gives us something that is an overcoming power. And further, love lightens the commandments of God.

The Lord Jesus, I think, put it so beautifully in Matthew chapter 11 when he was talking about burdens and he said,

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

No wonder John says that his commandments are not burdensome when they are given to the Lord. If we remember that love for him lightens all of the requirements that he places upon us. Several of the commentators at this point in their comments refer to an old story that most preachers have heard and probably most of you have heard before, some may not.

There was once a lad going to school long before the days when it was possible to get in your car and drive to school and he was seen often carrying a little boy on his shoulder. And as one observer noticed, the little boy that was being carried on his shoulder was lame. He walked up to the young lad who was carrying the other one and he said, "Do you carry him to school everyday?" And

he said, "Yes sir, I carry him everyday." "Well that's a very heavy burden for you to carry," said the stranger. And the little boy who obviously was a Scott says, "He's no a burden, he's my brother." And what a difference love does make in the commandments of the Lord God.

Think about it for a moment. All of those things that Jesus addresses us within his gospels and through his apostles are words from the one who has made it possible for us to know our future is secure in the blood that was shed on Calvary's Cross. As any child likes to please his father or mother, how much more ought the children of God seek out ways by which they can please their father? Keeping his commandments. We love him, we obey his words, and we try to keep his commandments because they are his commandments. Not because they are burdensome to us, and we don't find them burdensome when by God's grace we know his will for us and by God's power we do it. That's not burdensome. That's the expression of love and devotion to him.

And finally now in the last two verses the apostle speaks of the climactic triumph of the believing life. Four introduces the cause of the burdenless commandments. With them, as I've said, comes the power to fulfill them, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." In other words, the universal victory of the divine generation is expressed. He puts it, incidentally, in the neuter gender. Whatsoever, not whosoever here. In the next verse he will speak of whosoever, but here it's, "Whatsoever has been born of God overcometh the world." In other words, the power of the new birth is stressed, "Whatsoever has been born of God overcomes the world." It's not so much the man who overcomes the world as it is the divine power within him in the life that has been communicated to him that overcomes the world.

What is the world? Well, I guess that we could say with reference to the world that it gathers up all of the transitory powers opposed to God which make obedience difficult. That's what one commentator has said, sometimes there are moral pressures. The outlook, the standards, the preoccupations of a godless secular society, what John earlier calls, "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." Sometimes there are intellectual things and therefore we have heresies which have harassed the Christian church and today are found in the Christian church in

many of our mainland denominations. Heresy has found a home, not necessarily in every church, but quite often today in the church hierarchies. Heresy has found its way in. The world has come in, intellectual worldliness. And sometimes physical worldliness. That is, persecution.

John, in effect, says Rome does not have the victory, we have the victory, "Whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world." And then he says, "And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Now when he says faith he doesn't mean the personal faith by which we believe, primarily. What he has in mind is that which we do believe. That is the great doctrines of the word of God, that Jesus is the Christ. That Jesus is the Son of God. Because if we truly believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and if he is what we believe, and if it is true that we are united to him as he himself has suggested when he says, "In the world you shall have tribulation, but in me you will have victory, I have overcome the world." If that is really true then, of course, it is also true that we shall overcome the world because we have the life that overcomes death. And what could be more marvelous than to have the life that overcomes death. The life that overcomes death is a life that can overcome anything, as our Lord did when he rose from the dead and overcame death. That's what he meant when he said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me though he were dead yet shall he live and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

Howard Marshall has written a very good commentary on the Epistle of John, he's an Arminian theologian, but there are some very good things in his book. In it, at this point, he refers to our Lord as having defeated death and then cites a couple of stanzas from Wesley's great hymn about life or light. And these stanzas, I think, are particularly appropriate. He says in the citation, "Though the sons of night blaspheme, More there are with us than them; God with us, we cannot fear; Fear, ye fiends, for Christ is here! Lo! To faith's enlightened sight, All the mountain flames with light; Hell is nigh, but God is nigher, Circling us with hosts of fire."

How secure we are, my Christian friend, my believing friend, how secure we are in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God. Here is the appeal to personal experience. Do you believe this? Is that true of you?

You do believe that Jesus is the Son of God? Now I'm not talking about just a little banner to put on your breast like 'Cornhuskers Go!' or something like that, we are talking about a true believing faith that brings union with the Son of God. Is it true that you believe that Jesus is the Son of God? Well if it is, then you are one who over comes the world. Victory of the divine principal is realized in the victory of the Christian. The sole victor in the highest sense, of course, is our Lord who stands for us. But in him through faith, we too overcome.

One of the saddest things in the Christian church today is the way in which the Christian church has watered down its faith in Christ. They even give him a place of prominence but at the same time deny him his distinctive deity. A generation or two ago men would say, "We don't believe that Jesus is God, but we believe he has the value of God for us. But he's not really God." Now if you'll just think for a moment, what that means is that you don't really have any salvation. Because the sacrifice that was offered has been cheapened every way in which we cheapen the biblical identification and description and determination of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every limitation of it is a cheapening of what he did. It's a cheapening of the person of our Lord who said that the Son of Man came to give his life a ransom for many. But it's also a cheapening of what he did, his atoning work. It's no longer what it was, it no longer has the power that it has.

So we have all kinds of ways by which modern rationalizations of scriptural truth, often with a use of scriptural terms, have watered down a faith in a divine savior. Very God, a very God, who sacrificed therefore has infinite power to save men. And let me tell you, my sin is so evil, my sin is so deep, my guilt is so deep before God that I need a divine savior, not a human savior. A divine savior. Only God can save the soul of the guilty sinner.

In reading the life of Robert Bruce, 17th Century Scott, great preacher, St. Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh. An interesting experience of conversion, came from a very royal family but as he describes his conversion over a long period of time he struggled with his sin and his guilt and finally makes reference to the fact that how the Lord chased him to his grace. I like that expression, he

chased him to his grace. Now that's what happens when an individual understands what he is and at the same time understands what Christ has done and comes to appreciate it.

Let me say this, no cheaper blood than the blood of the divine Son and Messiah of Israel can save a soul. That's why we must believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. And that in believing we might have life through his name.

Well, our time is up. John's three tests belong together; believing, loving, keeping the commandments. We emphasize that the loving must be understood in the Christian sense, it's not animal passion as the world likes to use the term love. Nor is it natural sentiment only, having little to do with God's love. Nor is it the love of corporate selfishness, what someone has called the love and devotion that a person has to his family and to his friends and to his clan. We're not talking about that. You may have great love for your family, great love for your friends, great love for your particular body of society, you might even have great love for Texans. But look, that's not biblical love. Biblical love is the love of God that sent the Son to be the propitiation for our sins and the love of those who've experienced the birth as we have experienced the birth.

Let me close with one word of exhortation, I wish I had time to expatiate upon it, maybe in the last few studies we will. Worldliness, worldliness has afflicted evangelicalism. Worldliness fills our churches. Frequently in order to meet the criticism an individual meets it with, if we insist on obedience of commandments then we've turned Christianity into legalism. How foolish, how foolish. It's the apostle's who say to us that the love of God is the doing of his commandments. With the power of God that's all the difference in the world between the kind of legalism by which you do something in order to gain merit before God.

We're talking about responsiveness to the will of God in the power of God. That's what the New Testament sets forth. So I'd like to suggest to you again the definition of worldliness that is really, I think, the best definition of all. And that is this. I'm going to cite it in the words of one of the commentators who I think hit the nail on the head. "Let it be fixed in your minds," he says, I'm putting in the minds of us in Believers Chapel, "Let it be fixed in your minds as a great truth, that the

world to be overcome comprehends all that you come in contact with which has any tendency to awaken in you the feeling that 'God's commandments are grievous.'"

Anything that brings you to the place where you say, "God's commandments are grievous," is from the world. If your friendships are such that you are not able to serve the Lord as fully and freely as you might otherwise, that's worldliness. If your activities, if your aims in life, if your ambitions, if your devotions, if the time you spend to accomplish your objectives are things that make you feel in the necessity by which you must do them, that God's commandments are grievous, that's worldliness. If you have any problem about that, and that still nags you, that I have friends with whom I comport and I do things that I do not think are necessarily wrong in themselves but they do inhibit my service of the Lord God, and do as I compare the joy that I have in doing them with what I would feel with reference to doing the commandments of God, if I feel therefore that the commandments of God are grievous, then something is wrong.

Our associations, our activities, our standards of life are not really the biblical standards. May God help us to look at our priorities and to examine our lives, our activities, all of our personal life in the light of the great relationship we have to the Lord God, whosoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God has overcome the world.

May the Lord help us to truly serve him to that end. If you're here today and you've never believed in Christ, we remind you as the fourth chapter puts it, that the Father sent the Son to be the propitiation for our sins. You may have eternal life, you may enter into the family of God, you may come to understand what it is to be born of God as by God's grace you rest your life on what Christ did in that most expensive infinitely precious blood which he shed on Calvary's Cross.

Let's stand for the Benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for these marvelous words that the apostle wrote near the end of his life. How our hearts are drawn to him and through him to Thee. O God, our Father, how marvelous to be Thy child, a son of God...

“The Hostile World and the Conquering Faith” by S. Lewis Johnson
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