



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

2 John 1-13

"The Hazard of All New Theology"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] I have one announcement that is to be made. [Name redacted], many of you know him and his family, recently had surgery for cancer, but on Friday was placed in the coronary care unit and his condition is serious. His family has asked for special prayer for him. So if in your time of prayer you have time to pray for [name redacted], please remember him.

"We have not begun," as Wilford said, 2nd John, but the Lord willing we are going to begin and finish it today. So let's turn to John's second epistle and our Scripture reading will be the entire thirteen verses of the epistle. The apostle writes,

"The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us forever. Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father. And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it. For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth,"

Now I know that many of you, who have for example, a New American Standard Bible or New International Version, have something different. The reason for that as we have tried to explain many times is that the manuscripts of the New Testament are in the Greek language. There are many, of course, in other languages such as the Syriac language, the Latin language, and other of the languages of the day.

The Greek manuscripts differ on this point. The great majority of the manuscripts that are later manuscripts have the Greek word, *parabaino*, but the earlier manuscripts and generally, textual critics regard them as better, that is a debatable question, but nevertheless, they do have a word that means, "to go before" and so we could render this "whosoever goeth forward and abides not in the doctrine of Christ" or "whosoever advances and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ hath not God." That is the way we will expound it. So when we come to this text, incase you have an Authorized Version that has "transgresseth" remember that we are reading it in a different way.

"He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed: For he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds. Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen."

May the Lord bless this reading of his word and let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Our Heavenly Father, we approach Thee in this public meeting through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We acknowledge, Lord, we have no right whatsoever to offer petitions to

Thee apart from him as our mediator in whom we have the privilege of fellowship and communion and access into the grace that he has in his marvelous saving work introduced us.

We thank Thee Lord that we are able to call Thee our Father and know that by what he has done we have an access that is eternal unto Thee. We praise Thee and we worship Thy name. We desire Lord to understand even more fuller and to rejoice more completely in all Thou has accomplished for us through our Lord Jesus Christ. What a magnificent mediating Savior that we have who has introduced us to the God of heaven and earth and of the whole creation.

We praise Thee for all of the attributes that characterize Thy being, omniscience and omnipresence and omnipotence and justice and righteousness and goodness, all of the things that Thou has revealed to us as integral parts of Thy nature. We worship Thee and thank Thee for a God such as Thou art. We thank Thee Lord for the promises that have been made to us as the children of God who have believed by Thy grace in Christ. We thank Thee for this access that we have. We thank Thee for the assurance of answered prayer.

And we would pray particularly today Lord, for the whole church of Jesus Christ. Bless each individual member as the word of God has gone forth already on this Lord's Day. Bless that ministry and for that which is to go forth continue Lord by Thy grace to bless it, not only to the salvation of souls, but also for the building up of believers who belong to him.

We pray particularly for those who are in our calendar of concern. We pray that Thou would give healing in accordance with Thy will, encourage and strengthen and bless family, physicians, and friends. And Lord, we would pray particularly for [name redacted]. We ask Thy blessing upon him and upon his family. Would Thou by Thy grace minister to him for his spiritual and physical good? We commit the family and the physicians to Thee at this very moment.

And Father, we pray for our country. We ask Thy blessing upon the new administration in Washington. And may, if it please Thee, we have a time of freedom for the proclamation of the word of God. We thank Thee for this beautiful day that Thou has given to us. We thank Thee for

the rain of these past few days, and we acknowledge Lord that in the physical world Thou has richly blessed us as well. Be with us now as we sing, as we hear the word of God.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Song] Our hymn is number 279, "How Firm a Foundation." And as usual, you turn to this page you will find there is a 279 on the left hand side of the page and there is a 279 on the right hand side of the page. We'll sing the words from the left hand side and the tune from the right hand side, which is the more traditional. Sometimes it is difficult to follow along, but I think you won't have any problem. We'll sing the first, second, third, and fifth stanzas of number 279; please stand with me as we sing. [Singing]

[Message] Finishing 1 John last week I thought after reflecting on it a bit that it might be a good time for us also to take a look at the second and third epistle that the apostle wrote. And so today we're looking at 2 John, and next Sunday, the Lord willing, we will be looking at the third of the apostle's epistles. Our subject for today is, "The Hazard of All New Theology". We have noticed in the exposition of 1 John that while all of the aspects of truth, such as, faith, hope, and love are presented by each of the well-known apostles, that it has been thought by the Christian church that one could say that the Apostle Paul was the apostle of faith; the Apostle Peter, the apostle of hope; and the Apostle John, the apostle of love.

These are some of the emphases that the epistles of these three great apostles set forth. We must not, however, we tried to point out, think of the Apostle John as the apostle of a weak, insipid, mockish, cloying, sentimental kind of love. That is very evident from his first epistle. For example, in chapter 2 and verse 22, where he states, "Who is a liar? Let he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ, he is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son." He does not hesitate to speak very strongly. In the 26th verse, he says, "These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduced you."

And in chapter 4 and verse 1, he says, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

It was perfectly harmonious with Paul's concept of love to speak of lying, seducing, and false prophets who have gone out into the world. As a matter of fact, you may remember that the Lord Jesus called James and John giving them a name, *boanerges*, which means "sons of thunder". Perhaps suggestive of the future place of the Apostle John in the church, when one thinks about the book of Revelation and the great judgments that are set forth in that book, one could speak of the Apostle John, as a son of thunder, because it is he who announces the great judgments that are to come.

The apostle of love then is a great denouncer of error. And he says why, love must be in the truth to be Christian love. It's not Christian love to think of love as something, as I've said, something sentimental, something cloying, something mockish; the kind of love that the world thinks about as love. Last night I was reading in a work in which Dorothee Soelle, a Continental Theologian, was quoted, and her views have become rather significant and views that many regard as quite important. These are some of the things that she says.

She says first of all that, "We do not really need God any longer." She said, "To live, we do not need what has been repeatedly called God, a power that intervenes, judges, rescues, and confirms. The most telling argument against our traditional God is not that he no longer exists or that he has drawn back within himself, but that we no longer need him. We do not need him because love is all we need, nothing more. This is to Professor Serly, this is the chief idea of the Bible. "Tradition," she goes on to say and I'm quoting her again, "has added Christology and ecclesiology to it; the virgin birth, the resurrection, the ascension, the Trinity, original sin and eternity. She goes on to say we cannot restore, "this house of language. I think we will have to leave this house fall apart. That we will have to abandon it in the condition that it is in and build a new one on this one simple foundation, all you need is love."

Now that is, I think, the perfect illustration of what we mean when we say, the apostles when they speak of love do not speak of a sentimental love. We look at this epistle and I think you

will see as the apostle unfolds his messages to the elect lady that his conception of love is quite a bit different. He has told us in chapter 4 and verse 10, in what I consider one of the most important verses that he ever wrote, that love consists in this "not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." In other words, if you want to talk about Christian love, you must talk about the propitiation that Jesus Christ accomplished in his death on the cross. That is the manifestation and the unfolding of the true significance of Christian love. What it is. It's something related to Christ's sacrifice on Calvary's cross. And to explain that sacrifice then we unfold the nature of divine love. For that is the expression of divine love.

In the salutation the apostle writes, "The elder unto the elect lady." I will not talk about who the elder is, we'll assume that he is the John traditionally assumed to be the elder, the author of this epistle. He describes himself as "the elder". Why? We cannot be absolutely certain about it, but perhaps because he was the last surviving apostle. "The elder unto the elect lady," incidentally, you will notice that the gift of apostleship as an apostle stayed in one locality, merged into the office of elder. The Apostle Peter speaks of himself as an elder in 1 Peter chapter 5. So, "The elder unto the elect lady and her children." Again, the elect lady it is possible to understand this as a reference to a local church. If that is the apostle's sense, then he is writing to a church. It is possible to understand this as a reference to an individual. And again, Christian scholarship is divided on this point. It is probably impossible for us in our time to know plainly and clearly without any question. We will leave that. I hope you will read the epistle and make up your own mind from your studies.

At any rate, I am going to treat it as if it's an individual, "The elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth." You'll notice that the apostle says that he loves the elect lady, church or individual, and that all that have known the truth love her. And you can see immediately that the communion of love as Henry Alfred put it, "is as wide as the communion of faith." In other words, those who belong to our Lord are the objects of the love of all of us. We do not exclude anyone who is in the family of God. "Also, all they that have known the truth," they too, loved the lady in the truth as he has set forth.

Now he goes on to say in verse 3, "Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love." Grace covering our guilt, mercy covering our misery; guilt must be covered first, thus the order in the epistles usually grace, mercy, peace, the result of the exercise of grace and mercy on the part of God. Simple salutation, underlying it are some great truths that all belong in the family of God who have believed in Christ and the love that he calls upon us to exercise is a love that is to be addressed to all of them. We are, as our Lord pointed out, to love one another as he has loved the church.

Now coming to the subject matter of the epistle in verse 4, the apostle says, "I rejoiced greatly that I found of Thy children," (Now that is an expression that means not all of the children but some of them.) I rejoiced greatly that I found of Thy children. (He doesn't say I found Thy children, but some of Thy children; a partative expression.) "Of Thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father. And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it."

Now you can see right at the beginning that Professor Soelle's expression, "All that we need is love," is not true to the apostle. He points out that love is walking in his commandments. So that true Christian love is to walk in the commandments. We cannot really say that we love God if we do not walk in the commandments. Love expresses itself in following the divine guidelines. It is foolish for us to say that I love God, but then do not keep his commandments. The apostle is very strong on this point. All through his first epistle and from the person from whom he derives his truth is the Lord Jesus Christ himself who expresses the same thing in the 14th chapter of John. In the upper room our Lord emphasized the point that if we love him we'll keep his commandments.

So it is ridiculous in the spiritual sense to say that we love God, we love our Lord and live in disobedience to the commandments as they are expressed in the word of God. This is love that we walk after his commandments. Obedience without love would be servitude; the kind of obedience that a servant would render, something that is done for money, something that is done because of necessity, but not arising out of any relationship of love in the heart. And love without obedience is not love, it is unreal.

So obedience without love is just like servitude. Love without obedience is not really genuine love at all. These are things that are very important to keep in mind because, well if you are such as I am, I often find myself asking myself am I really following the things that our Lord has said I should be following him as he has set out in his word.

Now he says the reason for this is, "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." Love in the truth would prevent and should hinder the progress of the false doctrine. So at this point he turns from the wheat to the tares, as someone has put it, and speaks about deceivers and antichrist who do not make the Christian confession that "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh."

Now let's stop for a moment. I would like to lay some stress on a couple of these points which I think are the major points the apostle makes in 2 John. The denial of the incarnation and its possibility is what John appears to be speaking about. They "confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh". Now you'll notice he does not say Jesus Christ coming "into" the flesh. To suggest that Jesus Christ came into the flesh, that he the divine second person came into the flesh would suggest that there was flesh in existence before he came. That would be contrary to what we read in the word of God. He says very correctly, theologically, after all we derive our theology from the apostles, don't we? He says, "Come in flesh", so not "into" the flesh, but "in" flesh. It is possible that he has in mind the lasting union that our Lord's incarnation sets forth.

The second person is not only come in flesh, but the truth is, he is still in flesh at the right hand of the Father. He is in flesh, not such as our flesh, but such as our flesh shall be, because he is

there in glorified flesh. Having been resurrected, the only person who has ever been resurrected at this point, now remember, when I say a statement like that, I mean resurrection according to the biblical teaching of resurrection. There have been individuals who have been restored to life, such as Lazarus, for example, and a number of others in our Lord's ministry, and even in the apostle's ministries. But resurrection means brought back in glorified bodily form.

The resurrection in Christian teaching is the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. Other kinds of resurrection are not resurrection in the biblical sense. Our Lord is the only one who has been resurrected. He is the first fruits. Then Paul says, "Then they that are Christ's at his coming." We'll wait the coming of our Lord when we too shall enter into the resurrection of the body. So for our Lord to come in flesh does mean and involve the fact that he comes and he's still in flesh as the glorified Son at the right hand of the Father.

Now what is implied in this that makes John so concerned about it? He has said something of the same thing in the first epistle, "Confess not that Jesus has come in the flesh." Why is it so important that we should confess that Jesus Christ has come in flesh? Put it another way, why is it so important for us to affirm the incarnation of the Lord Jesus? Well, let me try to set forth some of the consequences of denial of the incarnation. In the first place, if there is no incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the second person of the divine and eternal Trinity, then we have no revelation, reliable, truthful, revelation of the Father. Now that is a very significant thing. We cannot know God if there is no incarnation of the second person of the Trinity. It's through him that we have come to know God. "No man has seen God at any time," the apostle wrote in his gospel, "But the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he has led him forth into full revelation." So if we do not have an incarnation, we do not have a revelation of the Father.

We would not even, to put it in another way, we would not even know what God is like had Jesus Christ not come. That is in reliable form. The prophets have told us a great deal about God. Moses has told us a great deal about God, but after all, the prophets and Moses were men. Our Lord's coming is the seal upon the divine revelation and it is he who sets his seal upon the previous

revelation and in his own life and ministry unfolds the significance of the divine Father. In John chapter 8 and verse 19, we read words like this, the apostle writes; our Lord is speaking, "Then they say unto him, where is Thy Father? And Jesus answered, Ye neither know me nor my Father. If ye had known me you should have known my Father also." And then the great and familiar passage in John 14, where the Lord Jesus speaking to Philip with reference to him, John chapter 14 and verse 9, "Philip, have I been so long time with you and yet has thou not known me? He that hath seen me has seen the Father and how saith thou then show us the Father?"

So first of all then, if there is no incarnation there is no revelation of the Father. Please keep that in mind. The apostles thought that was extremely important. If we do not confess Jesus Christ coming in flesh, we do not really know for certainty what God is like. And secondly, if there is no incarnation there is no mediation of Christ; for there would have been no real contact with our nature by which he is qualified to be our substitute. So if there is not incarnation there is no propitiation made for sins that is sufficient for our salvation. There is no mediation. We do not have a mediator. As Paul said, "There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." We would not have such a mediator. Second, as obvious, we would not have salvation if we have no mediator who has died for us.

Furthermore, the apostles call upon us to follow the example of our Lord. Peter does that in 1 Peter 2:21, he says we should walk in his steps. But if we do not have a mediator who has come in flesh then we do not have and cannot follow the exemplary nature of Christ's life as if he was one of us, whose example we are to follow. How are the exemplary acts, the exemplary acts if there is not a real incarnation? We are not going to follow a ghost or some particular person that someone saw as a vision, but a real man; the man Christ Jesus. In fact, our Lord lays stress on that, he says, "I am the man who has told you the truth."

Furthermore, we would not have a high priest who is sympathetic with us. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews makes that point over and over in his letter. And consequently, a denial of the incarnation means that we do not really have a high priest as a mediator who stand for us and

who understand us. That would take a great deal away from his work as high priest and a great deal of confidence would be lost on our parts if we did not know that the Lord Jesus is truly one of us. And finally, and most important, of course, we would have no redemption in the work that he did on Calvary's cross. If his sufferings were not the sufferings of a man, the God-man, they would be factious. His death would be an illusion. If there is no death of a God-man there would be no redemption for our sins.

Now I think you can see that if all of that is true, and it is true, I think I can understand why the apostle writes, there are deceivers that have come into the world. They confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. He describes this as a deceiver and an antichrist. Do we have such today? Well, we do have such today. We have many. In fact, many people who stand behind the pulpit in our mainline churches and some in our independent churches deny this very truth, that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.

Let me give you a shining example. I wish it were possible for you to read these pages, but I am just going to pick out a few things. This is from a British Professor of Theology in one of the universities of Britain. In the University of Birmingham, now a few weeks ago, I quoted Professor John Hick, and I said the University of Birmingham. You must remember I was born in Birmingham, Alabama. And one of the men in the tape ministry came up to me afterwards and said you mispronounced a word this morning. You said Birmingham and you should have said Birmingham. That's what they say in England. It's true. That is what they say, Birmingham. For example, if you go into a restaurant, you don't order ham and eggs, you order ham and eggs. [Laughter] Or you want a ham sandwich. Now that is all true, but I was born in Birmingham, and we emphasize that "ham" over in Alabama. Not because of ham and eggs, but because we just cannot speak like those British. We try to speak pure English. [Laughter]

At any rate, Professor Hick was professor for many years of Christian theology at the University of Birmingham. He is now teaching in Southern California, an ordained Presbyterian minister in England. His ordination after a long fight was denied in Southern California because the

Presbytery there was conservative enough, after a long fight and a fairly close vote, to refuse his ordination. These are some of the things that Professor Hick says. You'll just have to touch the high spots. He speaks of the doctrines of the Christian faith in the way in which we have understood them "as a kind of verbal flag which we are expected to salute. And we are told that Jesus is the unique Son of God," and further, "is the sole doorway to salvation."

Now he goes on to say, "The incarnation according to traditional teaching was nothing less than that God became man and more precisely, he was God the Son, the second person of the holy Trinity, living a human life." Professor Hick does not like that doctrine, though he has in his ordination affirmed that he believes that. He does not like it because today if you make an affirmation in your ordination, you don't necessary have to live up to it at all. You don't have to live up to it, because so many who have made that affirmation do not live up to it and you know they are not going to say anything about it because they too would be involved in the contradiction. He says that Jesus was not unique in that sense, nor is salvation in and only through him. But he was, I quote his words, "A man marvelously open to God, who lived conscientiously in the divine presence and responsively to the divine purpose."

In other words, all that he is is a man such as you and I are, but he was marvelously open to God. Now he said, "There are people who say that he was God incarnate, so that you must either believe him or reject him as a deceiver or a megalomaniac." Mad, bad, or God went the argument, which C. S. Lewis and J. B. Phillips and others have used with great effect. He considers, of course, that that is not true at all. That we don't have to settle that trilemma of whether Jesus was mad and said he was God incarnate, or evil and tried to deceive people by saying that, or whether he was really God, because it really doesn't make scriptural sense. He said these things that are said about Jesus, that he is really God, are found in the Gospel of John.

And if they are found in the Gospel of John, you and I might think, well, if they are found in the Gospel of John, I guess we are to believe them, but not Professor Hick. Nor as he says, and I think wrongly, but nevertheless, he said, "Very few New Testament experts now hold that the Jesus

who lived ever actually spoke those words found in the Gospel of John, like, 'I and the Father are one,' or 'No one comes to the Father, but by me.' Those are not words that Jesus said. Those are words that the church put in the mouth of our Lord years later when the Gospel of John was written. He never said those things. The church put them in the mouth of John."

Now I want to tell you something, it's obvious that this man was a professor all of his life, because anyone that knew anything about men and women, about humanity, would know there isn't anybody of men or women who could have ever devised those magnificent words of the Gospel of John. It's just absolutely contrary to all human, may I use the word without necessarily blessing the whole discipline, psychology. To think that the people, the ordinary people without divine inspiration could give us gospels. Think of it. You ever seen anything like that?

Now we laugh, and we say a committee cannot produce anything much. What about a committee of humanity? What about a committee of so-called believers, who invented the truths of the gospels and have given them to us. That is a psychological impossibility; could not happen. Further, well, the professor goes on to say, "It was not really the Son of God that was a term used by people of God." It was true of Romans in the Old Testament; therefore, it's the same kind of thing with reference to him, that he was not really the Messiah, although, he may have claimed to be in the biblical sense.

Finally, he comes to the resurrection. Our time is fast drawing to a close, but he comes to the resurrection, and what do you think the resurrection is? Well, the resurrection is for Professor Hick, ordained Presbyterian minister, Professor of Christian Theology. Well, "the resurrection was the seeing of a vision or visions of Jesus in resplendent glory or less probably in the physical emergence of his revived body from the tomb." Now notice not resurrected but revived.

So the apostles did not really see the Lord, they say visions of him. But when we read the New Testament, have you ever known anything like this; vision that you could sit down with and eat a meal. Have you ever done that? Some of you have probably had some visions, at least you thought you had some visions, I, however, doubt that you ever had an experience with a talking, eating,

drinking vision. I remember when I was many years ago preaching in the South, and we had some interesting preachers in those days. I knew a Baptist preacher, and I don't know how he came to discuss this, but nevertheless, he discussed a fellow who had an experience with a ghost.

And he said this ghost appeared to this individual, and he said that he was so afraid of that ghost when he saw it that he started running. He said that he ran and ran and he looked back and the ghost was running after him. And he ran and ran and finally, he got so tired. He looked around and the ghost was still there. And there was a rock, and he had to sit down on a rock and said the ghost sat down on the rock opposite him. And he said, "I reached out to touch the ghost and he weren't there, and then the ghost reached out to touch me and I weren't there." [Laughter] Well, to think that the appearances of our Lord were simply visions is ridiculous. The visions, the appearances of our Lord, with so many witnesses who heard him teach them for forty days in those appearances are not found, incidentally, in the Gospel of John; those accounts, but in the Gospel of Luke and in the book of Acts also written by Luke.

So many deceivers are entered into the world who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in flesh, this is a deceiver and antichrist and we cannot conclude anything other than the fact that Professor Hick is a deceiver and an antichrist by the apostle's evaluation. Confess not means to deny. So a Savior not quite God, like Hanley Mole used to say, "Is like a bridge broken at the farther end." We must have the incarnation of our Lord, the true deity of the Son of God, if we are to have a knowledge of a God at all, who has redeemed us by his sacrifice on the cross.

This is a deceiver and an antichrist. As Luther said, "Das ist ein Betrüger und ein Antichrist." Manward and Godward sides: deceiver, the manward side; antichrist the Godward side. No mincing of words with this apostle of love. And then he goes on to say, "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward." Not only they, but the apostles for the work that they have wrought upon the believers to whom he is writing. "Whosoever advances and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ hath not God." "Whoever runs ahead," as the New International Version puts it, "and does not abide." "Whoever goes onward," as

the American Standard Version read, or "Goes too far" as the New American Standard translates, "and does not abide." In other words, the question is, is Jesus some kind of landmark only or is he the goal and pattern of our lives eternally?

Can you imagine people in the language of today saying, giving their little bits about spiritual truths saying, "Hey, this is advanced teaching." That is the language of today, isn't it? Punctuate everything beforehand with a "hey". Hey, this is advanced teaching that we are giving you, but listen John says, if it does not abide, does not stay within the teaching of the word of God, it is not advanced. It is corrupt. It is an advance that goes beyond the truth of the word of God.

We don't deny that it is possible for us to rephrase spiritual truth to make it understandable by individuals in our society today, but in whatever way in which we express the truth of God, it must be harmonious with that that has been revealed in the word of God. So whoever goes too far or whoever advances and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. There is no God for the individual who denies the doctrine of Christ.

Then in the 10th verse he says, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your home, neither bid him Godspeed." In other words, if an individual comes and you know that he is unsound on the doctrine of Christ, you are not to give any indication whatsoever that you support that kind of teaching. John does not have reference to someone who knocks on your door and who is seeking to lead you into some advanced teaching or different teaching. In other words, it probably does not have to do with a Jehovah's Witness who knocks on your door and wants to sell you some of their literature. What John is talking about, it would appear, is an official teacher, one who was known as an official teacher. And so if such should come into the community known as an official teacher, and if he does not bring the doctrine of Christ, then you are not to receive him into your house, you are not to bid him Godspeed. You are not to give any indication whatsoever that you support what he is doing. And thus, no fellowship is the apostle's meaning.

There are two wonderful stories of the early church that sort of illustrate this. Polycarp, who was a disciple of the Apostle John told the contemporaries of Irenaeus, who in the later part of the 2nd century, narrates it on their authority that once when the Apostle John was about to bathe in the public baths when Cerenthus, the Gnostic heretic came and the apostle when he heard that Cerenthus was in the public bath with him, leapt out of the public bath, one tradition says, unwashed, and stated that "surely the house would fall in ruins since the enemy of the truth is there". So he wouldn't even take a public bath with Cerenthus.

And then there is the story of Polycarp himself who was a very godly man. He met Marcion, one of the early heretics. When he met him, Marcion looked at him and said to him, "Do you recognize me?" And Polycarp replied in great Christian fashion, but by the 20th Century which would be really rude, but he said, "I recognize Satan's firstborn." So if Professor Hicks should greet you, what should you say to him? Do you know me? Johnson's been talking about me? Do you know me? You should say following this post-apostolic tradition, "Yes, I know you as I know Satan's firstborn." That would really put you out in the boonies, wouldn't it as we say in Texas?

Well, it is time to close. The 12th and 13th verses give us the superscription. The apostle writes, "Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. The children of thy elect sister greet thee." If this is a reference to churches, then the apostle is writing to the church and its adherence in one place and sending them greetings also of those who are in the church of which he fellowships. If he is speaking about individuals, then of course, there is a reference to two sisters, who each have children and he makes a greeting for them.

Let me conclude by simply underlining first the necessity of love as the apostle has set it forth. Someone has defined perfect love this way, "Slow to suspect, quick to trust. Slow to condemn, quick to justify. Slow to offend, not never offend, slow to offend, quick to defend. Slow to expose, quick to shield. Slow to reprimand, quick to forbear. Slow to belittle, quick to

appreciate. Slow to demand, quick to give. Slow to provoke, quick to conciliate. Slow to hinder, quick to help. Slow to resent, quick to forgive." Love is necessary in the Christian body.

But love, secondly, essentially is love in truth. And the apostle would like to avoid two simple errors. First, to give false teachers opportunity to do more harm and so he will oppose them and oppose them vicariously and clearly. And further, he does not want to set up any hindrance to the false teachers seeing their own errors. Marcian, if that incident is true might have had an opportunity by the way in which Polycarp responded to him to consider his own teaching. For us, to not treat false teachers in the way that the apostle recommends, reminding them that they are living in the spirit of antichrist and of the deceiver, is to hinder the possible change of heart that might come to them.

If you are hear today and haven't believed in Christ, haven't really received the testimony to him, have not responded to the love of God in the propitiation that Christ has offered, as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ and for the Christians that are here, we remind you of the clearer statements of the word of God that salvation that Christian's possess is a salvation offered to all who will receive the testimony and rest in that truth. Christ has died for sinners. We all are sinners the Scriptures say. We may receive as a free gift in faith that which Christ has accomplished by the decision of our hearts as we turn to him and give him thanks for what he has done for us. May God in his grace touch your heart and may you deep down within give him thanks for what he has done in shedding his blood for sinners. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the marvelous inspired word of God and we pray Lord that Thou would by Thy grace enable us to respond to it properly in love and truth. For Jesus' sake. Amen.