



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 1:35-42

“The Call of the First Disciples”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We are turning to the first chapter of the Gospel of John again, and for the Scripture reading today we are looking at John 1:35 through 42, John 1 verse 35 through verse 42. The first section of the Book of John following the prologue has three cycles. There is the testimony of John to the Lord Jesus which concludes with verse 37 beginning with verse 19. And then there is the first personal manifestations of the Lord and the birth of faith in him in the lives of many of the early disciples in the remainder of chapter 1 and then in chapter 2 verse 1 through verse 11 we have the first of the miraculous signs, but we are reading in that section in which John the Baptist is giving his testimony and we are going to see some of the responses that are made to that testimony.

“Again the next day John stood, and two of his disciples; And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!” Now we said last time that this expression the “the Lamb of God” is probably derived from Isaiah chapter 53 and verse 7 where in the great Suffering Servant of Jehovah hymn the prophet Isaiah said that he was “Led as a lamb to the slaughter.” And so the concept of lamb is suggestive of the substitutionary sacrifice of the

Lord Jesus Christ, a real substitution, not simply a conditional substitution or a potential substitution, but a real substitution, the Lamb of God. And then John continues,

And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. (Literally come and you shall see.) They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona (or John): thou shalt be called Cephas, (that's the Aramaic term) which is by interpretation, a stone.

May the Lord bless this reading of his word.

[prayer removed from audio]

[Message] Returning to John chapter 1 again and the subject this morning is “The Call of the First Disciples,” John chapter 1 verse 35 through verse 42. Putting it very simply there are three steps in the life with God. Step number 1 is the step of testimony given to Jesus Christ. Most of us who have come to know the Lord Jesus in a personal way as our own Savior have come to know him because someone gave testimony to us concerning him. It is possible that you simply read the Bible. I do have some friends over the past years who trace their conversion to the opening of the Scriptures and the reading of them. I particularly remember a man who was a traveling man who in Tuscaloosa, Alabama one night when he was by himself, having nothing to do and the Gideon Bible lying on the table by the side of his bed, he opened it and began to read, and as a result of that reading he came into a firsthand

experience with the Lord Jesus Christ. And he always traced his salvation to the opening of the Scriptures. Most of us I presume have had testimony given to us by individuals, and it is through them that we came to the knowledge of the Lord, through the preaching ministry or through the personal ministry of a friend or a relative, possibly even through the testimony of some author whose book has been given to us. But at any rate, the first step in life with God was testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The second step was personal contact with Christ because after the testimony has been given to us, the next step is to respond to it and to enter into a relationship with the Lord. That may be done simply by acknowledging our sinful condition and the fact that Christ has made the sacrifice by which we may be saved and sitting by the side of a wheel in an automobile or getting down upon your knees by your bed side or in many other ways an individual has a conversation with the Lord that is personal contact with him, the reception of him as our own Savior. And usually that is followed—it must be followed really—by fruitfulness through Jesus Christ that is those of us who have been born again through the grace of God give testimony to that fact to others. And we seek to please the Lord in our Christian lives. So these three steps form steps in the life of God, testimony to Christ, contact with Christ and then fruitfulness through Christ.

All of these things are found in this passage that we have just read. We have testimony to Christ given by John the Baptist. We have first hand contact with Jesus Christ made by the disciples of John the Baptist who enter into relationship with the Lord and through that also others such as Simon Peter and then Nathanael and others find the Lord. And then we also have fruitfulness here because as a result of entering into the personal experience there is a burden placed upon the hearts of the men to tell others about it. But central in all of this is this firsthand experience with the Lord.

I always think of those words that Pilot said to the Lord Jesus and our Lord's reply to him when I think of this because remember the Lord Jesus was asked by Pilot, “Art Thou the King of the Jews?” And Jesus replied by saying, “Sayest thou this thing of thyself or did others tell it thee of me?” Now what our Lord meant by that was simply this, Pilot have you of your own self come to ponder the question of whether I'm the King of the Jews or not or are you simply repeating what has been on the lips of others? From the human standpoint he was anxious to know the state of the working of the Holy Spirit in the soul of Pilot. Later on when it becomes evident that Pilot has not responded Jesus will not even say a word to Pilot, but at that point he said, “Sayest thou this thing of thyself or did others tell it thee of me?”

I think that's almost a symbolical way of referring to the Christian life. When people talk about the Christian life one has the tendency to say are you really speaking out of your own experience with the Lord or are you simply repeating what others have said. In other words, is there really a personal experience with you and the Lord? Do you have that?

There is a story told of Walt Whitman that is interesting I think in this connection. Mr. Whitman was listening one night, he said, to an astronomer who was lecturing to an audience, and he was lecturing on the stars, and Mr. Whitman said the hall was rather stuffy and the lecture was dull and the charts and the diagrams unilluminating until, says Whitman, “I could bear it no longer. I got up and I walked out of the building and I looked up at the stars themselves.”

Well there are many people like that in an audience like this. You have heard people speak about spiritual things. You know some of the great facts of the Christian faith. You've heard them speak about the doctrines of the Christian faith, but so far as a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ well deep down within your heart you probably would have to admit I do not really have very much of a personal relationship with the Lord

Jesus. Well the New Testament and particularly the Gospel of John is an invitation addressed to all of us to come forth out of the stuffy places and look up with your own eyes and see the bright and morning star the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is another story about Voltaire, a noted agnostic. He was one day walking in Paris with a friend when a religious procession passed and in the procession a crucifix was being carried and as it passed by Voltaire tipped his hat at the crucifix and his friend looked at him amazed and said, “Have you too found God?” And Voltaire is supposed to have replied a little bitterly and sadly, “We salute but we do not speak.”

Well what is your experience of the Lord? Do you salute him, but you really don't have any personal contact with him? Is it possible that you are very familiar with the Christian faith and the facts about it but so far as a personal relationship to the Lord you don't have it, or perhaps if you have a bit of a personal experiences and only a bit of a personal experience? Really that's ultimately why we come in a meeting like this and listen to the word of God and have the fellowship that we have as Christians. It's not to enlarge the roles of the church or to raise budgets or to win banners. It's not to count numbers. It's not to organize the membership. It's not to build a building.

Many of our churches have edifice complexes and as a result of that that's all that they are concerned with. We're not concerned with that. We're not concerned with money. We're not concerned with buildings. We're not concerned with organizations. We're not even concerned with numbers. It does not disturb me—it does disturb some I admit—it does not disturb me if several people don't show up and we have a few less at one meeting than we have at some other meeting.

I believe that God is sovereign and I think that fundamentally the important thing in a gathering of the Christian people is the status of the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts.

Numbers cannot do anything for that. Numbers may cover over the absence of that. Numbers may reflect some of that but not necessarily. A large building does not mean that God has blessed necessarily. Some of the largest and most beautiful buildings are the cathedrals of Europe, and those cathedrals are places where very, very few people gather and those that gather as a rule have very, very little of the a firsthand experience with the Lord. Those are not the tests of spiritual life. The tests of spiritual life are those things that concern the relationship that you personally enjoy with the Lord.

Now we are looking I say at the opening chapter of the Gospel of John and specifically at the testimony of John the Baptist for we are still dealing with John’s testimony through the thirty-seventh verse, and this is the third of his testimonies. In the opening part of his testimony in verse 19 through verse 28 he testified to his status with reference to the Lord Jesus. He said that he was the ambassador of the King. He was the forerunner of the King. Why he was a person who in comparison with the King was not even worthy to unloose the latchet of his sandal. That’s something that a disciple would not do. Only servants did that, and John said I’m not even worthy to be a servant of this individual because while he comes after me in time he really is preferred before me because he was before me. In other words, John gives testimony to his preexistence. John was his cousin, and he was born before the Lord Jesus. He was older. John could say to Jesus you are my cousin but I am older than you, but he knew that that was only the physical side of things. He knew that while the Lord Jesus took to himself human nature after John the Baptist had been conceived, he really was before John because as the divine person he existed from ages past. He was the eternal second person of the Trinity.

Then John testified to the work of the Son. He called him, “The Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.” He called him the sacrifice, the representative sacrifice, the

substitutionary sacrifice for the people of God, the one who takes away the sin of the world that is of the Jews as well as of the Gentiles. For John, looking at him in the light of the movement of the prophetic purpose of God sees the purpose of God extending beyond Israel. Salvation was of the Jews. Our Lord was sent to the Jews not to the Gentiles. Lost sheep of the house of Israel, not to the Gentiles, but the time came when as a result of Israel's response, the message goes out to the Gentiles, and an apostle of the Gentiles is called, the Apostle Paul. And we are living in that day. And the Christian church today is composed largely of Gentiles, but there is a remnant of Israel. There are still Jewish believers. In most of our congregations there are some. They form the remnant, the Israel of God who have responded to their Messiah in the present day. So he's the Lamb of God who takes the sin of the world, not may take it away, but does take away the sin of the people of God among the Jews and among the Gentiles. That's what John gives as his testimony.

Now again in these verses he gives a similar testimony. “On the next day,” three days and running John gives his testimony. And here in verse 35, “On the following day John stood and he had two of his own disciples about him,” for John you see was the ambassador of the King and he had been baptizing with the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Men were baptized by John, confessed their sins, received remission of their sins. They were baptized in testimony to their faith in the redeemer to come. As Paul says, “John was an individual who baptized you in the light of the one who was to come.” Of course Paul baptized then in the light of the one who has come. But at any rate, John was the ambassador. He pointed men to the Lord Jesus Christ, who was to come, and he had disciples, and two of his disciples were referred to here who were with him. One of them was a man by the name of Andrew and the other well his name was not even mentioned. We assume in the light of the rest of this gospel that it was probably the Apostle John. He's the kind of man who

doesn't like to mention himself. He's referred to later on as one of the son's of Zebedee, but that's the only reference that he makes to himself in a definite way. He mentions things that the disciple who leaned on Jesus' breast said, or experienced, but he doesn't say I'm John. I'm the great apostle. I wrote this book. That's for nineteen hundred and eighty-one [1981] and the preachers of today.

So John as [is] standing with perhaps the Apostle John and Andrew sees Jesus walking by and again he cries out, “Behold the Lamb of God.” Now this is, I say, the third of the days of testimony. There are six of them here in the opening section of the gospel corresponding to the six days of the passion which we shall study later on if the Lord does not come. In verse 36, “Behold the Lamb of God.” That's his testimony. So John the ambassador points to the King. That is of course the fundamental work of a witness. What he does is point to someone else. So John the ambassador points to the King. That is a good illustration of the kind of testimony that we give to the Lord Jesus Christ. We do not point to ourselves. We point to him. Anytime we attract attention to ourselves, we cause our own testimony to suffer because we do not proclaim ourselves. Christians do not say that they are Christians because they are good. They acknowledge that they are sinners, and they are sinners after they have been saved. Christians say that their salvation is something bound up in the gift of grace from the Lord Jesus Christ. So we don't ever want to create the impression that we think that we are saved because we are good. There should be a change in our lives and we should do works that manifest our faith and repentance, but we point to him. We point to him as the Savior. We point to him who saves sinners just like us, for that's what we are.

Notice John points away from himself. “Behold the Lamb of God.” He has two disciples here. The tendency of men who have disciples is to want to gather a few more. I know individual Christians who like to have a few little disciples around themselves. They

like to have a coterie of people who look to them. And then there are preachers who like to have a lots of people gather around them and look to them. John is not like that. He points away from himself. In fact in the third chapter he will put it most vividly by saying in chapter 3 and verse 29 and verse 30, “He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.” John found his greatest joy in being the friend of the bridegroom and being an instrumentality in the making of contact between the bride and the bride groom, and then he said, “He must increase. I must decrease.” That’s the greatest of Christian testimonies. “He must increase. I must decrease.”

Notice too that John does not push. He points to the Lord Jesus. He said, “Behold the Lamb of God.” He had said, “Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of Jews and Gentiles, the world.” He doesn't say, “Now how many would like to make a decision for the King? Raise your hand. I have some decision cards I'd like to pass out for you to sign, and we have no indication that he went out of his way to urge and push and shove that individuals might believe, but he simply held up the King. “Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.” I gather from this that John the Baptist realized that the work of salvation was the work of God, and he realized that though he might push and shove that the only way in which a person comes to faith in Christ is through the working of the Holy Spirit.

In the final analysis that is the fundamental thing that must take place if we are to come to know Jesus Christ. Our following of him must be as a free agent. I do not say free will, but as a free agent. We are not dragged into the Kingdom of God pushed into it against our wills. No, it is the work of the Holy Spirit to make the unwilling willing. As Dr. Barnhouse used to say so often, “No man ever gets into heaven unless God has first jiggled his

willer.” But nevertheless the decision is our free decision so far as we are concerned. We learn afterwards that it is the Holy Spirit who has removed the unwillingness and has brought us to the willingness by which we respond. We are responsible but salvation is of the Lord. Well he said, “Behold the Lamb of God,” and we read the two disciples heard him speak and they followed him. We don't read that John said, “Hey where are you all going?” No, he was perfectly satisfied for them to leave because he had come to be the ambassador of the King, and so they left.

Now I'm not sure about this but it is likely it seems to me that these individuals were already fundamentally believers. Of course the message that they had believed was not yet the full orbed message that will be preached in the present age for the simple reason that the great events have not yet taken place, but nevertheless these men were probably fundamentally believers in the testimony of God that had been given to them. What had happened then was that the Holy Spirit had worked in them. Peter puts it so beautifully in 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 23 when giving an analysis of the new birth he says, “Being born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible seed, by the word of God.”

Now I must say that most people read that as if Peter is saying simply, “We are born again by the word of God.” But more is said than that. If you'll look at that in a translation that is more accurate you will see that what we read here is, “Being born again” not of corruptible seed, but “of incorruptible seed through the word of God.” In one of these we have a statement of instrumentality, “through the word of God,” but in the other we have a statement of origin or source. The source of the new birth is not the word. The source of the new birth is the implantation of the incorruptible seed. That's a reference to the implantation of the divine life. John will later say in his epistle that Christians cannot go on sinning because the seed, the incorruptible life has been implanted in them. “His seed abideth in him and he

cannot go on sinning.” Sinning cannot be the bed of life of a Christian. So Peter says that we are born again by the implantation of new life.

We say, in doctrinal form, we are regenerated and then as the first act of our new life we believe the message. That happens through the word of God. It happens in the context of the Bible. I may in an audience like this say, “Christ died for sins,” and preach the substitutionary death of Christ for the people of God and somebody in the audience may say, “Well that is my situation. I certainly am a sinner and I evidently am under divine condemnation. I would like to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and have the assurance of the forgiveness of sins and suddenly he finds himself believing the message that I am preaching or that another preacher is preaching. What has happened is this. There has been a transformation by the Holy Spirit in the individual. He has by the work of the Holy Spirit from his unwilling state become willing. God has implanted a new life within him. He has been born of God and as the word is preached to him, he believes that word. That’s the act of a man who has been born. Just like the act of an infant born is to cry, he utters cry in manifestation of life, so the manifestation of the implantation of the incorruptible seed is faith in the message of God. As John puts it, “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God.” So simple, so simple, why don't people respond to that? Because fundamentally human beings have to be adjusted to the grace of God, the sovereign grace of God. It requires a lengthy time for us to come to the place where we say, “It is true, salvation is of the Lord.” Only the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit can bring a man to that conviction. John points. He doesn't push and shove. I don't push and shove you because I know that only the Holy Spirit can do that work. If the Holy Spirit has not brought that to your attention, I cannot bring it to your attention. I cannot do what he cannot do or has not done, I should say.

Well they turned and they followed the Lord Jesus. The work of the Holy Spirit is such that they followed him. And so the Lord Jesus seeing these two fellows following him, turned to them and said, “What seek ye?” Now of course he could have said that in a very bad way. He could have said, “What in the world are you fellows looking for,” but we are inclined to think that it was something else. He said, “What seek ye?” That suggests to me the need of a clear consciousness of our objects, our aim in our life. Now I turn it around and ask you. What are you looking for in this life? What are your goals? What are your purposes in life? What’s the one goal of your life, to make a living, to be a success in your business, to have a nice family, to have children, to have them grow up as good citizens, to enjoy life, to be rich, to have fun? What is your purpose in life? It is possible that you’ve lived for the years that you have lived and you still do not have a concept of what it is to be a human being and the goals of an individual’s life? What does that Westminster Confession of Faith say, “What is the chief end of man?” To glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

In the last analysis it is that I might know God, enjoy him, glorify him through my life. “As the hart panteth after the water brooks,” the Psalmist said, “So pants my soul after Thee.” That’s the picture of a man who really has a desire to know God. “What seekest Thou?” That’s a blank check for us. I’m sure that the tone of voice of the Lord Jesus was not only good, but it was a kind of invitation. “What are you seeking?” And they said, “Master, where dwellest Thou?” That was good. That’s an evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit. They didn’t stop and say, “Well we are seeking to be good citizens in Israel. We’re seeking to be acceptable to the hierarchy.” For things they substitute a person. They say, “Where dwellest Thou?” It is he, not his gifts, not the things that he might give that they’re interested in. They’re interested in him. And they call him “Rabbi.” Now that meant something because that expressed in a delicate way their intention to offer themselves to him as his

disciples. They are leaving John the Baptist as their Rabbi, and they’re attaching themselves to the Lord Jesus on the authority of their other Rabbi, John the Baptist. So they say, “Rabbi, where dwellest Thou?” And Jesus replies, “Come and you shall see.”

Now a Jewish man reading that who knew something about the rabbinic literature would know that this was something a little bit special because this expression, “Come and you shall see,” was a conventional form of invitation in rabbinic literature, drawing attention beforehand to something new, something important, or something difficult. So as the rabbi’s sought to introduce a person to something new they would say, “Come and you shall see,” or something difficult, “Come and you shall see,” or something important, “Come and you shall see.” And the Lord says to these two Jewish men, “Come and you shall see,” magnificent, compelling invitation. We don’t know the place where they met, but we do know the powerful results that came from that meeting. Notice too in the Lord’s reply he says, “Come and you shall see,” in other words, faith first, knowledge next. Paul later says, in 1 Timothy, speaking of God, “Who would have men to be saved,” “All kinds of men,” as the context indicates, “Who would have all kinds of men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” So the be saved is the first step to the opening up of the knowledge of God. That’s one reason some people never come to the knowledge of God. They never come first, and thus they never really come to know the knowledge of God. So, “Come and you shall see,” no delay they’re to come right now. Come right now, and it’s a compelling call to a firsthand knowledge of him. “Where are you dwelling?” “Come and you shall see where I dwell.” And he is going to enter into a relationship with them that would be absolutely unforgettable.

I like this expression, “Come and you shall see,” because it’s clear that John has more than simply, “Come and see the house I live in and admire it,” two story, brick veneer, family room, swimming pool in the back, vegetable garden, all landscaped, five bedrooms, six baths.

“Come and you shall see.” It was so unforgettable that John says, “It was the tenth hour.” He never got over that. But I wanted to say something about “Come and you shall see,” because John uses different words for “seeing.” He uses a word that means “to take a glance at.”

For example, just then I glanced over at this beautiful poinsettia. Now if I just took a glance at that I would just say, “Well that’s a beautiful red flower you see around Christmas time,” but if I really look at it and examine it. I would notice that those leaves are red, that it does have some kind of bloom in the center. It has green leaves. It’s named poinsettia. That plant is named after a man by the name of Poinsett, and he lived in America’s most historic city. [Laughter] Charleston, South Carolina, did you know that? [Laughter] Did you know that the poinsettia is a plant that goes back to a man by the name of Poinsett in Charleston? You’ll find his name in Charleston on streets, and there are still people living there with that name in that city. But you see I’m analyzing it a bit now, and of course it’s more significant if you know some of these things.

Well the word that John uses for “to gaze upon” and “to theorize over” has been used already, but he has another word that very frequently in his gospel means “spiritual understand.” For example, he says in verse 51 of this chapter to Nathanael, “Verily I say unto you here after you shall see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” Well the word that he uses here is the word for “spiritual understanding.” “Come and you shall really see where I do dwell.” I love to put with this the statement in 1 Timothy chapter 6 where the apostle says of God the Father, “That he dwells in the light unapproachable,” but in the case of the Lord Jesus Christ we may come to see him and then to understand him who dwells in the light unapproachable to which no man can come whom no one can see, but we can see the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well it was such an unforgettable day that John said, “That’s my personal notation, the tenth hour of my spiritual acquaintance with Jesus Christ.” It was the tenth hour. John loves to do this. We’ll see more of this as we go through the gospel. John is the one who has more symbolism in his literature than any of the other gospel writers. That’s reflected in the Book of Revelation, which is a book of symbols. But here he says, “It was the tenth hour.”

Now whether that was in the morning or whether it was in the evening, we’re not sure because we’re not absolutely certain the method of reckoning time in the Gospel of John. Some say that the tenth hour is about four in the afternoon because one reckoning of time began with sun up at about six o’clock and ended with sun down about six so that the tenth hour would be around four in the afternoon. If that’s so then they came and spent the night with him, probably out on one of the hills around the land of Israel, but if it is the other way of reckoning time, then it would be ten in the morning. That’s insignificant. John says, “It was the tenth hour.” That’s his personal notation, almost of a birthday, his relationship to the Lord.

Well, perhaps he was already a believer and this is just the notation of his first firsthand contact with the Lord. We generally have these birthdays, don’t we? Someone asks us, “Are you a Christian?” You’ll say, “Yes I’m a Christian. I was born again in February of 1941.” That’s what I like to say because that’s true of me. Through the preaching of Donald Gray Barnhouse I came to faith in Christ in February of 1941. Now that’s a very significant time for me. When February comes around and I think about that for forty years I have had a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you have a personal birthday? Do you have a time to which you can point and say, “Well, I was born again so far as I can tell at such and such a time?”

Well now it's not necessary that you have this because a lot of young people are brought up and the decision is made at a time in the past and they don't remember when that was. We don't remember when we were born physically. And so there are many people who don't remember when they were born physically, but they are still alive, at least they appear to be alive. They are walking around and talking, and one would gain the impression that they are living at other times there is doubt cast upon it, but nevertheless they appear to be living. Well the same thing is true spiritually. We may not remember the precise time; we may have been born again when we were little children. But it's important that we know that we are alive.

Now what happens when they give their testimony? Well in verse 40 through verse 42 we read, “One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.” Andrew is one of those most unusual men. He appears in the gospel about three times. Every time he appears he's out gathering in people to believe in Christ. He is the epitome of the evangelist, the man with a gift of evangelism. “He first finds his own brother.” That probably means the first thing he did was to find his own brother, and he said unto him, “We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus.

Now you can see what happens. Andrew has come into contact with the Lord Jesus Christ and the first thing that he does after this memorable contact with the Lord in which there is brought home to his heart by the spirit, he is the Messiah. The first thing that he does is to go out and get his brother. That's the evidence of fruit from the relationship with the Lord. Actually no one can ever do any greater service for one other person than to bring him to the Lord Jesus Christ. There is in this expression the greatest service that one man can render for another, or to another. It's the greatest thing that you can do for your brother or

your sister or the members of your family or for your friends or for any other man, to bring him to Christ. “And he brought him to Jesus.” And so Peter was brought to the Lord. We don't think of Andrew as being great do we? We think of Peter as being great, but after all what greater work could any man do than bring a man like Peter to faith in the Lord? Who did the greatest work, Peter, *primus inter paris*, “the first among equals” of the twelve, or was it Andrew? Who shall say that Peter himself did more for his Lord than Andrew who brought Peter to him? Andrew was a great saint. The Lord looked on Peter, and he said, “Hmm, Simon, Simon son of John,” Simon Johnson. [Laughter] I am an apostolic succession. You didn't know that but

Now some texts say he was the son of Jonah, but we overlook those, Simon son of Jonah, Simon Bar Jonahs, Simon Johnson. Now he looked at him and Simon, some say, is a term that means something like, “weak, watery, insignificant, insipid” the Lord said to him, “You're Simon the son of Jonah, but you are going to be called Κηφᾶς [*Kēphas*] or כִּיפָא [*kēypā*'], the Aramaic term for “a stone.” So it's a testimony to the fact that the Lord Jesus is going to bring about a transformation in Peter so that this weak, watery one is going to be Peter the great, strong apostle who will ultimately one day give great testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ and finally give his life for the Lord, a testimony to the authority and power of the Son of God and his ability to change lives, and that he can do for you. He can change your life. He can make you different. He can give you a new nature. He can build you up in your faith. He can make you a solid rock, a rock man for the Lord Jesus Christ.

What do we need? Well we need the same firsthand experience that the apostles needed and about which we read here. There is a wonderful story of Thomas Chalmers, and I must stop with this. Thomas Chalmers was a minister in the Church of Scotland. He lived in the Mance of Kilmany. He was a very intelligent man, an outstanding scientist as well as a

preacher. And he was quite content for many years to preach a cold dry formal religion, until one day, as someone has put it, the south winds of God blew upon his soul. And from that hour he preached fervently in order that men may be saved and became one of the great influential persons in the good church days of the Church of Scotland. “Mathematician as I was,” he said, “I had forgotten two magnitudes, the shortness of time and the vastness of eternity,” but Christ gripped Thomas Chalmers, and Thomas Chalmers became a different man because of that firsthand relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ.

If there is one thing that I would wish for you in the New Year, it would be that you might have a firsthand relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. And for those of you that already have that, that it might be a deepening experience through the word of God, through the prayer closet, through the meditation upon the Scriptures. May God in the coming year make us different. May he create within us something of the rock like character of an Apostle Peter and enable us to bear fruit for his glory. If you're here this morning and you have never believed in Christ, your need is to recognize your lost condition and the fact that the Lamb of God has offered the sacrifice for the people of God for sinners and in coming to him and receiving the free gift you may begin the life with God. May God help you to do that. And now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God our Father through the Lord Jesus Christ be the present possession of all the saints, and through the coming year, may there be developing life, life from God in the lives of the saints. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.