



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 John 4:13-16

“The Marks of an Authentic Believer”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] It's a pleasure to be here, as many of you from Dallas at least know I'm no longer really preaching very much in Dallas, and so I feel like a young neophyte getting up and speaking to you because I have not been doing too much around Dallas. And the trials of old age are upon me and so consequently you have to make provision for an old man.

Now I want to speak tonight on basically the topic that Gary mentioned, but nevertheless deal with a specific passage. I happen to feel that in Reformed theology there is unfortunately the tendency in much of the preaching and in many of the preachers that I listen to, to avoid the exegesis of the specific texts that are before them. We have a lot of very good theological preaching with a lot of very good theology. I don't have any criticisms of that at all, I learn from that kind of preaching. But I feel that it is tendency of many of us, so anxious to get over a theological point that we do not really handle the text very carefully. And so consequently we're not really learning to understand Scripture as we ought to. So I hope you will excuse me this evening if you're looking for something different, but I want to look at a specific passage and deal with it in some detail. Not so well as a lot of others might be able to do, but nevertheless, that's my intention.

Really my topic to myself is the marks of an authentic believer. But I'm taking this topic and at the end of it emphasizing specifically the thing that Gary wished, and that was that we would talk about covenantal love because that's the way that the Apostle John himself treats this passage right at the end of it. But it's 1 John chapter 4 verse 13 through verse 16 and I'd like to read this passage and keep it before us as we seek to expound what an Old theologian of the early church, many of you know this of course, but you would think, I would imagine, because I think you would think very much as I did, that the theologian of the New Testament was the Apostle Paul. What is very interesting about it historically is that the early church did not think that. The one that they called the theologian, *ha theologos* was John, the last of the apostles. And so in one sense we have here the final message of the apostles, and the preeminent theologian, the one that they called the theologian was not Paul, the one they called the theologian was John.

Now I think if you will think about that for a few moments, you will understand why. Because the Gospel of John is a theological gospel with a careful plan, reaches its particular conclusion, makes the points that he wants to make, and the same is true of 1 John. So I'm not surprised that he should be called the theologian. Now this is near the end of the apostle's writing, so in a sense, it's the last word of an old man. So I feel good about that.

Now, the passage is 1 John 4:13 through 16 and I want to read it for you. In verse 13 the apostle says, “By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.” It's rather interesting I'm not going to make much over this, I'm just going to mention it. It's rather interesting that he does not say he has given us his spirit. Now he could well have said that, as a matter of fact, he himself was taught that by our Lord, as in the Upper Room discourse, our Lord spoke specifically that all of the believers, the apostles and all of the other believers would have the whole of the Spirit. But he puts this in a partitive way, he says in verse 13, “We know that we abide in him

and he us because he has given us of his Spirit.” Not given us his Spirit, but given us of his Spirit. And he’s going to talk about a specific ministry of the Spirit that we have been given, that they had been given, the apostle says. He goes on to say in verse 14,

“And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and have believed the love that God has for us God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him.”

The question, “What is an authentic Christian?” has been given a very significant emphasis by what is happening in the Christian Church today. We have well known evangelists who are involved in scandals; we’ve had much of that as you well know. In fact, Jim and Tammy Baker are in our news at the present moment for activities a few years back. We all know the difficulties of Jimmy Swaggart, they’ve been publicized widely. We have some evangelicals; I won’t mention their names, who also have been involved in some scandals. And so the question of what is an authentic believer is before us. The world itself understands a great deal of that even in such periodicals or magazines or newspapers, specifically newspapers as the Wall Street Journal, we have lengthy articles concerning the activities of various individuals who are supposed to be Christians.

I have one before me in my notes here, a few years back, a number of pages. It’s rather amazing, how many people are out on the stump as evangelists, Christian evangelists, who are making large sums of money milking the saints, or those who profess to be saints. Now we have had that of course come over into evangelicalism. Can you imagine, the Apostle Paul writing a letter to the churches and saying that he would be in Ephesus or he would be in Colossae or he would be in Corinth, and he would be giving a weekend seminar on the doctrine of the Grace of God, and in order to attend it would be

necessary for you to travel to those places and the entrance fee would be a hundred and fifty drachmas or something like that? Can you imagine that? This is what we have in evangelicalism today. We have this constantly. It is expected. And you yourself, you go to those conferences, and you pay those fees, in order to hear a person expound the Scripture. Now you don't think anything much about it I know. But if you read the New Testament, and you read the New Testament in the light of that, you will come quickly to the conviction that while there may be a lot of good theology in the theology that is preached, there is a whole lot of implicit theology that is violated by the individuals who are proclaiming the word of God to us. So, it's not surprising that the condition of the evangelical church is as it is today, because we are violating principles of the word of God, many of those principles.

The apostles, Paul and John have some important things to say on just these points. Now I'm not going to go into more detail about that, there are lots of things that could be said about it. Others can say those things better than I of course. But I want to center attention on what John says in this particular passage, it has to do with the atonement, and it has to do with the atonement as it has to do with Christian love.

Now one of the rather interesting expressions that the apostle writes here is the fact that he says, “We know that we abide in him and he in us because he's given us of his Spirit and we've seen and testified that the Father has sent the Son as the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God.” Now this is in the context of what he said just above in verse 9, “In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him.” In the very next verse, “And this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins,” number two. Number three in verse 14, “And the Father has sent the Son of the Savior of the world.” He sent the Son that we might live, he sent the Son to be the propitiation for our sins, and he sent the Son as the Savior of the world. These are the things that the

apostle, the great theologian, the last of the apostolic theologians writes to us. And as you can see, the atonement is right before his mind and heart in the last days of his ministry.

He says that God is love. Now I think if you'll read carefully, what he says here, he will say, that to say God is love is the same thing as to say that he has made an atonement, that the Son has made an atonement, for the sin of the world. Notice verse 9 again, “In this the love of God was manifested, that God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him, in this is love, not that we loved God but that he sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” In other words, for the apostle to say “God is love,” is exactly the same as to say, “God has in his Son made atonement for our sins.” That's the meaning of God is love. He has defined it. And so if we want to know what God is, it's defined here. The Son came and accomplished a propitiation for our sins. If you want to know what propitiation is, it is the love of the Son in giving himself for us. In other words, in the propitiatory death of the Lord Jesus Christ, if that's eliminated from the love of God, it might be unfair as someone has said, to say that the love of God has been robbed of all of its meaning, but it surely has been robbed of its apostolic meaning. In other words, to say God is love is not to say something sentimental, it's not to say something mawkish, it's not to say something romantic, it's not something to say in a sickly sentimental way or a paternal way or a maudlin way, it's to say that the Son of God came and accomplished a propitiation for our sins. That's what God is love means. That's the definition that the apostle has given of God is love.

Now when we think of God is love, we think of all of these other things normally, all of these sentimental things. And you will find it preached that way. In how many churches my Christian friend, you're sitting out there, in how many churches has the doctrine of the love of God been presented in a doctrinal way, in a specific relationship to the atoning work of Jesus Christ. You don't have to answer the question; I know the answer to it, rarely, rarely. But that's the way the apostles write.

So, first of all, I want you to notice in verse 13 what the apostle writes about the indwelling Spirit's illumination. This all is bound together in a marvelous body of truth. Verse 13, “By this we know that we abide in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.” In the remainder of the chapter, he elaborates on the two phrases of verse twelve, God's indwelling and perfect love, but here, the ground of the illumination that we have concerning the gospel of Christ is the work of the Spirit in illumining our minds.

Many years ago I had some controversy with a person who was involved with me in the ministry of the word of God. And we had some discussions over the question of the atonement because he did not accept the doctrine of the atonement that I was beginning to accept. We discussed it and after a little while, he said well I don't want to discuss that part of the problem any more, I just want to discuss this part of the problem. And the part of the problem that he wished to discuss was, “Is faith something that precedes regeneration or does regeneration precede faith?” Because so commonly in evangelical churches that would be answered very simply, faith precedes regeneration. We believe then we're born again. That's common, that's almost an apostolic idea that everyone accepts. But unfortunately it cannot be found in the Bible.

And what I like about John is, he's the one who has the last word of the apostles. Let's look at what his word is. I want you to look at chapter 3 and verse 29, “If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of him.” Unfortunately that perfect tense is translated is born and you don't get the force of it so let me retranslate it. I'm sorry, did I say 3? It's two of course; I was trying to check you out. [Laughter] Chapter 2 verse 29, “If you know that he is righteous you know that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.” Everyone who practices righteousness, is faith an activity that can be called a righteous act? Well of course. Well if it is the act of a person, he has been born. In other words, the birth precedes the expression of faith.

Now, John had in his audience people just like you. One text of Scripture is not enough. It's amazing isn't it? We need more than one text of Scripture, that's not a doctrine of the Bible of course, one text is sufficient in the Bible. But there is a place for comparing Scripture with Scripture. So take a look at chapter 4 verse 7, here again, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.” There it is again, same tense, *gegenntai*, the perfect tense in Greek has been born of God. Now all of you are Greek students so you know the perfect tense generally, I don't want to be too technical refers basically an act that took place in the past, the results of which continue to the time of its use, “Has been born of God.” So, chapter 4 verse 7, we have the same thing. In other words, it's very simple; everyone who loves has been born of God. There is no act of Christian love that can be expressed except that which comes from a person who has been born of God.

Now I know two is not enough for some of you. In fact that is more than two or five or ten is not enough for some. But in chapter 5 verse 1, it's almost as if John's saying right now, “Lewis, emphasize this.” Chapter 5 verse 1, “Whoever believes,” isn't that faith? “Whoever believes, that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God.” Now I know your text, Authorized Version has, “is born” but that's the old perfect tense in English's translation, “is born.” You miss the point, “has been born of God,” whoever believes. In other words, if you have faith in Christ, you have been born. The very moment you hear the gospel and the Holy Spirit brings you to faith, you have been already, you've been born. Now could anything be plainer than that? Do we need more than three texts? Has been born of God.

Well now I think I understand John when he talks about the indwelling Spirit's illumination in verse 13, “by this we know that we abide in him and he in us because he has given us of his spirit.” The ministry of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and illumination is the means by which the apostle says, “We know that we abide in him and he abides in us.” This is what might be called the interior witness of the Holy Spirit. In fact, one of

the scholars of the New Testament, a man who probably was a Christian man, isn't that sad you have to add something like that? It's a scholar of the New Testament, he's probably a Christian man, he has said with reference to this, “We are intended here to think of the interior witness of the Holy Spirit, the immediate spontaneous unanalyzable awareness of the divine presence in our life.” That's not so far from precisely what John is talking about when he says, “We've been given of his Spirit and therefore we know,” we know certain things. The apostle was one of those dogmatic kinds of people, and that goes with the theologian of the early church too. There's nothing wrong in being dogmatic is there? There's not a thing wrong with that, if the Scriptures support it.

Now this man, John, he's one who is really dogmatic, because he does this often. Turn to chapter 5 and verse 18, “We know that whoever is born of God does not go on sinning.” Verse 19, “We know that we are of God and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.” Verse 20, “We know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding.” I would say, that he's a relatively confident individual, with all these “We knows.” We know, these are the things that we can say also as long as we follow with the apostle that we know. So the indwelling Spirit's illumination is something that is very important for identifying a believer in Jesus Christ. He's a person in whom the Holy Spirit has made plain the teaching of the word of God. Not everything, but specifically the gospel of Christ and then from that comes the growing knowledge of the theology of the New Testament or the theology of the Bible. This is characteristic of a believer; he's a person that you can see is the product of the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit. It's characteristic of him, he understands.

There are people I know that you talk to, they've been around a church all of their lives, but the minute they open up the Bible you can tell they don't understand a thing about it. The Bible is a dead book as far as they're concerned. They have phrases that they've heard their preachers say, or maybe that they've read, but they don't understand

them. John is saying that the mark of an authentic believer includes the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit as part of his life.

Now the content of the illumination of course, is the doctrine of the New Testament. What he is saying here is specifically the relationship between the Lord and us in this covenantal relationship. “By this we know, that we abide in him and he is us,” in other words, we are in him and he is in us. Now you’ll recognize that as the covenantal language of the Old Testament. That was part of the language of the New Covenant, part of the relationship between God and Israel, all through the Old Testament, the relationship of unity, covenantal relationship. Here it is, right here. Now the word covenant’s not here, but the relationship is obviously there. So, what he is talking about is a divine, covenantal union. He had in the earlier days of the ministry in the upper room discourse, made that very plain to them, because in chapter 14 and verse 20 of the Gospel of John he had told them in the upper room discourse, “At that day you will know that I am in my Father and you in me and I in you.” Marvelous, four plus three, seven little words that speak in the simplest form of the fundamental relationship that a believer has with the Lord God in heaven, he in us, we in him. And he’s the one who is love, because he has sent the Son to be a propitiation for our sins, that’s the expression of his love.

Now let’s look at verse 14 and verse 15, because what follows as a further mark is adherence to the apostolic faith. And we have the complement here of interior witness in external testimony. Verse 14 and verse 15, “And we have seen, and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God. The second mark of a genuine believer in Christ, a genuine Christian, is adherence to the apostolic faith. That’s the complement of the interior witness of the Holy Spirit. This is the external witness. The person in whose heart the Holy Spirit has spoken expresses that externally in the confession of our Lord Jesus Christ as the one who is the Son of God and who has come. That’s marvelous, the Spirit

has spoken within, the mouth of the individual regenerated by the Spirit now expresses the faith that God has given him.

Now you can see of course that this is something of a meditorial mission of salvation. The we of course is the apostles first of all, and by the way, in the original text this bears a bit of emphasis because in Greek the verb often lets us know the type of subject, but when the apostles or others use the pronoun as well as a verb that expresses that, that generally expresses some emphasis. He says, hemeis, we, we have seen and we have testified, well we have seen and testified that the Father has sent the Son as the savior of the world. First the apostles, and then of course, John is speaking to someone that he knows has been taught and so it's first the apostles and then the Christian society. We, apostles and then the believers, that includes you, some of you at least. Some of you are smiling, some of you are stiff. It's alright, you can relax here. If you're Presbyterian, you can relax. I grew up a Presbyterian that's my family, generations, preachers in the family. So I understand and I appreciate, because there are many godly people and I must say many of them are my greatest teachers of the word of God.

But “We have seen and have testified that the Father has sent the Son as the Savior of the world.” The Father, never forget this, we often in Christian circles forget, we talk about our Lord. And our Lord if you read his language carefully, he tells us constantly it's the Father who is the motivating force behind what I'm doing. “I have been sent by the Father,” over and over he says that, the Son has been sent, I have been sent. And so he traces the motivating force of salvation, the whole salvation plan back to the Father.

Now we should not forget that. And we have it in passages just like this, “And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son.” There are some people who find it difficult to pray to the Father in heaven. And I don't find any difficulty with that because it's the Father who sent the Son. And he wants us to remember that, “The Father has sent me, give thanks to the Father.” So, we do make much of the love of our Lord Jesus Christ but in following him we ought to make just as much over the fact that the

Father has sent him. He warns us and admonishes us to do that. Our gratitude should not stop at the Son of God, but go on to the Father. He came he said, “Not to do the will of mine but the will of him who sent me.” He doesn’t allow us to regard him as our Savior in distinction from the Father but only as acting in concert with the Father. And so let’s not forget that fact.

So the Father has sent the Son. The abiding purpose and result of the mission of the Son of God of course is salvation. That’s the design of the incarnation and the fact of the atonement has come out of that. In fact, that sending of the Son has an enduring power in the understanding of Biblical truth.

Now he sent the Son as the Savior of the world, Savior of course through the sacrifice that would be accomplished and savior of the world. The world, this sinful, estranged society, is the world universal? Is this world inclusive of all individuals who’ve ever been born who’ve ever breathed? Well, my Christian friend, if it is to this point, the ministry’s failed. As a matter of fact, we can know it’s failed; countless millions have passed into eternity and have not been saved. But he’s been sent as the Savior of the world. Now, I know you in the audience, you don’t have any problem with that most of you, but you never can tell, somebody may have slipped in and doesn’t quite understand this yet.

Isaiah said this a long time ago, chapter 46 and verse 10, “Declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times that are not yet done saying my counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure.” There are other passages, that’s not just one. In other words, Isaiah says that God in heaven will do all of his pleasure. In other words, he doesn’t fail in his purposes. So if he sent the Son to be the Savior of the world, he has become the Savior of the world. But the Scriptures tell us of course that he’s not been the Savior of every single individual, but he’s the Savior of the world. So it’s obvious that the term world is not the world in the sense of every single individual who’s ever been born and breathed upon the face of this earth.

He's not been the savior of the world and yet he has the Savior of the world. Well there's no problem with this, no problem what so ever. We read the Bible, just keep reading the Bible. And if you don't understand it now, let it upset you and puzzle you and make you read and ponder and turn page after page and ask all these Bible teachers how you can harmonize these things. It may be that the truth will out, but some of us have been though a lot of that too. He's the Savior of the world. Well now of course we read from reading the Bible that the world is a term that's used in a number of different ways but one of the simple ways in which it's used is the world of the Gentiles and of the Jews. Now he's the Savior of the world in the sense that he's the Savior of both Gentiles and Jews. The world, not just the Jews, but the Gentiles as well, that's the Abrahamic Covenant. The covenant made with Israel but inclusive of Abraham's families and then the Gentiles on part of the family.

You remember in John chapter 4, another book that this same apostle wrote. He talks about the meeting of our Lord with, let me find it here in John chapter 4, he talks about the meeting of the Lord with the Samaritan women. And you remember that after she has spoken with our Lord Jesus, she went into town and she said to the men,

“Come see a man who told me all things that ever I did. Could this be the Messiah? Then they went out of the city and came to him. In the mean time his disciples urged him saying Rabbi eat. But he said to them, I have food to eat of which you do not know. Therefore the disciples said one to another has anyone brought him anything to eat? Jesus said to them, my food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Do you not say there are still four months and then come the harvest? Behold I say unto you lift up your eyes look on the fields, so they're already white for harvest. (I'll skip on down a few verses, to save time.) And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in him because of the word of the woman who testified he told me all that ever I did. So when the Samaritans had come to him they urged him to stay with them and he stayed

there two days. Many more believed because of his own word and then they said to the woman, now we believe not because of what you said, but we ourselves have heard him and we know that this is indeed the Messiah, the Savior of the world.”

Not simply of the Jews, but the Jews and Gentiles, the Samaritans are included also. That’s what John means when he says that the Father has sent the Son as the Savior of the world. Isn’t it marvelous how the Scripture is so harmonious in the things that it says?

Now the divine sonship, I maybe should say something about that. Verse 15, “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God.” Confess, that is written in such a way as to suggest a decisive confession. “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God.” Now I’d like to suggest to you that there is a lot of discussion that goes on today among evangelicals that has made the process of salvation a bit more complicated than it ought to be made. Our Lord says through the apostle, “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God.” As a matter of fact, when the Apostle Paul was in his ministry in the Book of Acts, in Acts chapter 16, you remember, and I’ll just turn back to it, because to tell you honestly, honestly I’d forgotten for a moment the place where he was preaching. In Philippi, Philippian jailer, all of you know the story and so finally the Philippian jailer said to Paul, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Now the Lord Jesus did not engage in a three or four or five step means by which we could enter into life. He did not; he had not read some of the theologians and some of you who are fighting over the question of the term by which we enter into life today. But he simply said to this man, it was insufficient of course in those days, but nevertheless he simply said this, now I shouldn’t do that, that shows you I still have the old nature doesn’t it? [Laughter] He said simply, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” Or specifically the text says I believe, “The Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household.”

Now I like John Calvin, he is maybe the greatest of the interpreters through history. Many of you ought to read Calvin's commentaries, they're readable today. They're readable by you who are just ordinary Christians who haven't been to a theological seminary or a Bible college or anything. Marvelous application of Scripture, his gift was there most of all, but he had many other gifts as well. John Calvin says here with reference to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, “Short and meager in appearance, but it is ample.” Ample, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shall be saved. So, no wonder the apostle says back here in verse 15, “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God.” That's very simple that's very much to the point, it also is without the observance of the ordinances.

Now today, there's a big debate going on in evangelicalism between Roman Catholics and the Protestants over fundamentally the ordinances, but over specifically the means by which we enter into the forgiveness of sins provided us by Jesus Christ's work. I can't go into that it's a very necessary topic today, but nevertheless, it just simply comes down to the question is faith alone sufficient for salvation? Faith in Jesus Christ. Or is it necessary for us to observe some of the ordinances? Martin Luther, marvelous man, I hesitate to criticize Luther, because there's so many marvelous things about him. But Martin Luther believed it was essential that a person be baptized in order to receive the forgiveness of sins. He specifically states that. In one of his places he says, that when it comes to his struggles he remembers quote, “I was baptized.” Now there's a sense in which a person might say that, so I don't want to criticize him too much. Because you might say, “Yes I am a believer I remember when I was baptized.” But you are understanding in your mind that really the fundamental fact of your salvation was the faith that preceded that water baptism.

Now when Paul talks about this, he's very much to the point. Because they debated whether it was sufficient to be circumcised in addition to faith and he said, “No, if we add circumcision we've added an ordinance. Now what is circumcision? It's a

physical act, there's a material element involved. There's a person standing by who performs the act with a knife, there are others. All of the things that are in circumcision are true of baptism. Have you ever thought about that? All of the things, they are physical acts. Now Paul said, if you preach faith plus circumcision you have not only gone astray, you've preached a false gospel. I suggest to you that if you also add baptism, as the Roman Catholic church, does as the means by which we receive the forgiveness of sins that you have begun to preach a false gospel. So when Paul said to the Philippian jailer, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shall be saved,” and the Philippian jailer believed, that was his salvation. He expressed it in the baptism that followed. But John says it again here, “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God.” So the Father sent the Son, chief test of doctrinal orthodoxy includes that, the supreme evidence of the Love of God, the inspiration of our love.

I want to come to the last part of this without getting off to far from what we're talking about and talk about verse 16. Of course what we have said so far, with reference to this particular passage is that the indwelling Spirit's illumination is of course a sign of what it means to the Lord God. And then of course the confession of Jesus as the Son of God, that God abides in him and he in God, and then finally in verse 16, the faithful abiding in eternal love. Before I do this I do want to say something. I have a good friend he was a Braniff pilot, and he came to hear me when I was a young man and responded, brought one of his Braniff pilot friends with him, he responded as well. We've maintained a friendship to the present day; he's my age, so he's eighty-one. And occasionally he calls me he's in a church where sovereign mercy is preached in the state of Ohio. The other night he called me we had a nice conversation, he told me about the church, very good, very sound group of believing people. And then he said I want to send you one of our bulletins, and so he sent me a bulletin, and this is sovereign mercy if I've ever heard it. It's a marvelous story, I'm just going to read it for you because it

belongs right here when we were talking about what Jesus Christ has accomplished and that he is the Savior of the world, both Jews and Gentiles.

“Seven years ago, (this man writes) I was hunting deep in the woods when I came upon a dog caught in a large powerful steel trap. I purposed to save that dog and set him free. When I approached him, I was met with a fierce look and a deep growl. (Boy I can see, S.L. Johnson right there.) Eventually I made my way near him but when I touched the trap causing pain, the dog attacked and I barely escaped being bitten. Not to be frustrated in my purpose of mercy I found a forked stick and used it to hold him down while I removed the trap and set him free. He limped away in one direction and I went in the other. Shortly, I became aware the dog was following me. I stopped, he came to me, I petted him, he licked my hand. The dog followed me the rest of his life. (He goes on to say,) the Lord Jesus came to me when I was trapped in sin and doomed to die, he purposed to save me and set me free but when he approached me in the gospel I met him with fierce looks and harsh words. (I see some of you out there four or five of you been saved too, I can tell.) [Laughter] When he touched me, it caused me pain because it revealed my problem and I rebelled all the more. But he wouldn't be frustrated in his purpose of mercy by divine power he held me in check as he removed my chains and set me free and now I follow him, I lie at his feet, I desire no more than to be with him.”

Then Paul Morton, my friend, wrote down at the bottom, “That my friend says it all.” That does say it all. That's the work of God in salvation.

Now the last verse is very simple, I'll be very brief with it. “We have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him. This is the third mark of Christian assurance, the believing confession of love. The historical mission is evidence of the Father's love as well as the Son's deity. Evidently, the individual who wrote this, “We have known and believed the

love that God has for us, God is love and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him,” and reckons upon the way in which it’s associated with our Lord Jesus Christ he is an individual who has heard the Father say in Matthew 3:17, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” The blessed status of those who abide in God’s love, well he says it, “He who abides in love abides in God and God abides in him.” The love of the open heart of the God head Jesus Christ reveals. And answering love reveals our reception of it too. Covenantal love is simply the relationship we have with a Father who sent the Son that we might have the forgiveness of sins through him. And now having become united to him, he is in us; we are in him, that’s the fulfillment of the purpose of God with reference to the love of God for us.

So, what are the marks of an authentic believer? The illuminating Spirit who has shown into our dark minds and our cold hearts, we who could not understand apart from his ministry for we were natural men, we do not receive the things of the Spirit of God they’re foolishness to us, neither can we know them they are spiritually discerned. By the work of the illuminating Spirit we’ve come not only to understand but to rejoice in what we have understood.

And secondly, the second mark is the confession of the Son. As John puts it, “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God.” That’s so simple, so simple, confess the Son.

And thirdly, the faithful abiding in the love of God, “God is love he who abides in love abides in God and God in him.” What a God we have come to know, a God who is love, propitiatory love, don’t leave that out. Propitiatory love, that defines the kind of love. It’s the love that gave the Son as the propitiation for our sins. This is the chief outshining of the divine splendor when Christ died on Calvary’s cross and offered himself as the propitiation for our sins. Love in his nature, love in the atonement, love in Jesus, love in the brethren, one in the same holy principle. And the man who has come to understand and who has received forgiveness of sins is the person whose basic nature has

been transformed so that he loves the Lord, he loves the Father, he loves the Spirit, he loves those who belong to the Father, those who belong to the Son, those who belong to the Spirit, he loves them too. That’s to my mind what it means to be an authentic believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. So an authentic believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is a person who understands the propitiation for our sins.

Let me just say one last thing. Am I going way over? I know I’ve gone over time, but I don’t know whether I’ve gone way over time or not. I usually go way over time. It is very common for theologians today to say, “The God in heaven is a God who loves and doesn’t have to be propitiated.” In other words, there’s no need for propitiation, he loves, he doesn’t have to be propitiated. Well, if he did love without propitiation, then a legitimate question might be raised, what about the sins that we have committed? What about the divine judgment under which we stand? Are we to forget all about that? Is the God in heaven an unrighteous God who really doesn’t punish sin but only gives out forgiveness under anybody’s terms? How foolish. The Scriptures over and over again remind us that the God in heaven is a holy God and he judges sin, he punishes sin, can not overlook those things, those belong to his nature. And we who’ve been born again we know, we feel the same thing, what about sin? What about that? Some provision has to be made. We are living in days in which theologians love to say a true loving God doesn’t have to be propitiated.

Well there was one theologian that I like, some years ago made some comments regarding this. He said, “God has a choice of method, he may inflict the full amount of suffering due to sin either upon the sinner or upon a proper substitute. He may require the complete satisfaction of justice from the transgressor or he may provide for it for him vicariously. Divine justice may smite the guilty man or it may smite the man who is God’s fellow, Zechariah 13:7. It’s free to do either, but one or the other divine justice must do, must smite the sinner or else the sinner’s substitute. God’s not obliged either to accept or provide a substituted penalty and in case he does either it’s grace and mercy towards the

actual transgressor. These two particulars of permitting substitution and providing the substitute furnish the answer to the question, where's the mercy of God? Because if we say God must be propitiated, then people such as the ones we've been talking about say well where's the mercy of God? We all know God is merciful, and he forgives in mercy, but where is the mercy if he must be propitiated? There is mercy a theologian says, I'll never forget this, when I get to heaven I'm going to shake his hands and say, “There are lot's of things I enjoy in your theology but one of the greatest is this, there is mercy in permitting another person to do for the sinner what the sinner is required to do for himself, still greater mercy in providing that person, and greater still in becoming that person.” That's what the Son of God, the second person of the Triune God has done. He has done that. So, as John says, “We have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him.” I can understand that, I can understand that. Bow with me in prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are indeed grateful to Thee for these marvelous words that the last of the apostles has given us. We understand Lord why he was called by a number of them the theologian. But how marvelously personal was this theology and especially these words about the propitiation. We thank Thee that the divine love must contain propitiation and propitiation far from being something that is theological and something that some want to avoid we know it ...

[AUDIO ENDS ABRUPTLY]