



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 John 2:28-29

"Avoiding the Shame"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We are indeed grateful to all who were responsible for the daily Vacation Bible School. It was a very encouraging thing to see the young children who are being taught in the things of the Lord and in the final program on Friday, it was most impressive to hear them and to see them and to see what potential lies there. And I'm also happy to report that there was no child, so far as I know, that was suspended from church for a few weeks as a result of behavior there, [laughter] which is very good also. But we thank all of those who participated, the teachers, the helpers, those who were responsible for the organization, the writing of the lessons, and especially the children and their parents for coming and for hearing the word of God, and I know that it will be significant for the remainder of your lives and of their lives. We'll say a little bit more about it in a moment, because the point of the passage we're reading touches to some extent upon our daily Vacation Bible School.

We are reading and studying John's first epistle. And the Scripture reading for today is the last two verses of the 2nd chapter, 1 John 2, verse 28 and 29. The apostle writes, "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him."

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 through the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for the grace in which we stand, and for the blessings of life that are ours through the Savior who loved us and gave himself for us. We are grateful and thankful. We know, Lord, that we are not sufficiently grateful, give us greater understanding of the things that have transpired for us, that we may truly appreciate him who has done so much for us.

We ask Thy blessing upon the whole church of Jesus Christ, wherever it may be gathered together, and upon the all of the members of that body. We know that everything that transpires in this universe is directed toward the ultimate sanctification and glorification of the people of God. May, O God, in our own part of the world, and in our own lives, the purposes of the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be accomplished to the glory of Thy name.

We thank Thee and praise Thee for the country of which we are apart, and pray Thy blessing also upon our president, upon the government, the governments of the state and city in which we live, and may, again, we be given by Thee freedom to proclaim the Scriptures.

Father we are grateful and thankful, too, for the fact that we are able to gather and pray for those who've requested our prayers. We thank Thee for answers to prayer, particularly in the case of Bill and Sally Phillips and Billy. We thank Thee and praise Thee for the provision of the answers to their prayers, the answer to their prayers. And we pray that if it should please Thee, there may be no rejection of the kidney and pancreas that have now been given to him. We pray for the supply of all of their needs. We pray for others as well, who've requested our prayers, Lord, we pray that in Thy grace and in Thy counsel, Thy perfect will may be accomplished in the lives of each.

We thank Thee and praise Thee for all of the promises of the word of God that touch our lives day by day. So often we are unmindful of them. We confess our sin of indifference, our sin of unresponsiveness to the word of God and to the promises of God. Lord, help us to think realistically and spiritually of the life that Thou hast given us to live.

Now, we ask Thy blessing upon the ministry of the word of God, thanking Thee for all of the blessings of this past week, and of the weeks that are ahead of us as well, in Thy will. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Song] Our hymn is number 128, "Praise Ye the Triune God." This is a beautiful hymn about our great triune God. Each verse centers on one of the persons of the Godhead, so please pay attention to the words of this hymn as we sing all three verses. Number 128; please stand with me as we sing. [Singing]

[Message] Sometimes we do not realize how significant some of the great teachings of the word of God really are, and the doctrine of the triune God is one of those great doctrines. The hymn that we have sung, to me, is one of the great hymns, not because of its tunes, although I do like it, but because of the truth expressed in it. For all of the truths that we set forth as Christian truth are ultimately related to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

I grew up in a church in which we sang the "Gloria" every Sunday morning. It was part of our service. "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit." The doctrine that we proclaim, which we call the doctrine of the sovereign grace of God, is nothing more than the "Gloria." "Glory to the Father, Glory to the Son, Glory to the Holy Spirit as the triune God, the saving God of the hearts of all who know him," so, I get such a thrill out of singing a hymn like that as I reflect on the goodness of the triune God to me. To fully understand all of the doctrine of the grace of God is simply to understand that line, "Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit." That's why we talk about sovereign grace.

The subject for today as we continue our exposition of 1 John is "Avoiding the Shame." The Apostle John, we have said, was called the theologian by the ancient church, and here in the message of 1 John, he centers attention upon certain tests which he poses in order to evidence Christian truth. The first is a doctrinal test, the test of the person and work of Christ. Do we or they

and we, do we really believe that Jesus is the Christ who has come in the flesh? Is there really an incarnation of the second person of the trinity? John thought that was exceedingly important. In fact, one could not be in the family of God if he did not believe that.

He talks, secondly, about the moral test of obedience to the truth. He wrote in the 3rd verse of this very chapter, "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." That's not the ground by which we know him, but that is the evidence of our knowledge of him. We keep the commandments. And of course, as we've been trying to say, that does not mean that we always keep every one of those commandments, but the bent of our life is the obedient life.

The third of the tests, and he has already set this forth as well, is a test that we might call the social test. It's a test of the love of the Lord and the love of our fellow believers. He says also, in this very chapter, verse 9, "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him."

Now, he has gone through these tests, the doctrinal test, the moral test, and the social test, but now he returns, in the last two verses of the chapter, to the moral test of righteousness. He says, "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of him." In other words, he gives no place to an antinomian perversion of the gospel, that one can actually be a believer and live in disobedience. That idea, the apostle rejects out of hand.

He says, "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of him." It might seem a statement that is unnecessary for us, for we should know, of course, that if the Lord God is righteous, that everyone that does righteousness is born of him, for there is no other way in which one can do righteousness. And further, that if we are born of him, we do righteousness. It's a remarkable thing, but in the Christian church, even in the evangelical church today, there are those who really believe one may live his life out in disobedience, and yet be a

Christian. He assumes the point that needs proving, that a person has truly believed in the Lord, and then leads a life of disobedience. But there is not such person, John says. It's impossible for us to live a life of disobedience and at the same time, proclaim genuinely a faith in Christ.

Now there are people who affirm that, who really say, "I have believed." Whose lives are characterized by that, they unfortunately are deceived according to the apostle's teaching. Now, don't misunderstand me. I know it's possible for a person to live for a time in disobedience, but family discipline operates, and family discipline is severe if we persist. In fact, the apostles of the New Testament set forth the fact that if we've made a true profession of faith, and if we seek, by our lives, to live a life displeasing to the Lord, be so concerned about the testimony to his name, that he doesn't hesitate to begin a process of discipline that leads to physical death. So while for a time one might live in disobedience, the Father exercises a moment by moment concern and control over his children. He's not like many of us parents who have not disciplined as we should, but he disciplines as his nature demands.

I say all of this, because this past week I received a notice in the mail asking me to join a society which affirms evangelical truth and at the same time affirms that it is possible for a believing man to live a life of displeasingness to the Lord. To the apostle, looking at our text again, the evidence of relationship to the Lord God is likeness to him, true in both natural and spiritual relations. I saw it in some natural relations this past week, in our daily Vacation Bible School. Looking in on the children, in the process of the daily Vacation Bible School, one of the things that is a bit astonishing, even after all of these years, is to see how many parents one can identify by looking into the faces of the children. It's remarkable. You can look over a crowd and say, "Ah, that little girl or that little boy must be the child of someone you mention." I was going out of the room last and walking out of the back door, there was a young man standing by the door, and I stopped. I wasn't sure of his identity, so I said, "What's your name?" And he said, "Scott." Well, there are some other Scotts, and so I said, "What's your last name?" And he said, "Armstrong." And I said, "Well you don't have to tell me who your father is, because I can look in your face and see that you are the

son of Phil. Isn't that right?" He said, "Yes sir." You can see the parent in the son. For some, we might consider that rather unfortunate, [Laughter] but nevertheless it's a fact of life. One sees the evidence of relationship in likeness.

It was remarkable too last week, I think, to see the knowledge of the word of God that was communicated, even to the four-year-olds. Mark Newman was telling me about his own daughter, Shannon, who is four years of age. One of the subjects last week was the 23rd Psalm, and the children have manifested some unusual knowledge of the word of God at that stage. He said Shannon came home every day and expounded the next part of Psalm 23 that she had been studying. She reminded him that the Lord was a shepherd; that David who wrote it was a shepherd, and David was giving truth that he, as a shepherd knew, and applying it to the Lord. She said David went out and "wrestled," she used the term "wrestled" according to Mark, he "wrestled" with the bears, and he kept those bears from the little sheep, and that's what the Lord does for us. I don't know who the bears are in the present life, but I can think of some that are bears, a few that are lions too, but it's great to see the things that they are learning.

One little girl, however, needed some further instruction, so I'm told, she was reciting Psalm 23:1, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." But she was saying it according to a new reading. She was saying, "The Lord is my shepherd, which I do not want." [Laughter] But fortunately the teachers knew enough to make a proper change referring her to the true reading of the text at that point. That's not as interesting a reading or reciting as the little boy, who loved to go fishing, recited the 4th verse, he said of the 4th verse, "Thy rod and thy reel, they comfort me." [Laughter] I told Ray Colval, this morning, who loves to fish, that if he had had a little boy that would be exactly the way his little boy would recite that particular verse. So the things that are in our lives reflect those relationships that we have.

I also, two weeks ago on Monday, turned on the television in order to look at the playoff of the National Open Golf Tournament, which Curtis Strange won in playoff with Nick Faldo, and one of the things that was most interesting to me was that the commentator made reference to the fact

that Mr. Strange, Curtis Strange, has a twin brother. And it was obvious that it was an identical twin, because he had flown in for the tournament, I think maybe for the playoff itself, and occasionally near the end of the playoff, the camera would fasten on his brother, who looked so much like Curtis Strange that had you not had a close up you might think that it was Curtis, but as Curtis Strange was walking up the 18th fairway, realizing a dream that every little boy who ever played golf seriously had at one time or another, the winning of the National Open Golf Tournament. Here is his thirty-three year old brother standing by the side of Curtis' wife on the side line, and tears were forming in his eyes, and this thirty-three year old man, mind you, his lips were quivering, and then Curtis finished the 18th hole shortly afterwards, embraced his wife, was trying to say something about what it meant to him, and here his lips are quivering and tears are in his eyes too. The likeness between the twin brothers was remarkable as they both entered into the experience that was the greatest experience of their lives, one the athlete, the other the brother.

The evidence of relationship is likeness in both natural and spiritual relationships. The apostle will talk about that now, when he says in verse 28, "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." That emphatic expression, "and now," points us again, to the practical need of confidence before the judge, for the judge is coming. It's a beautiful and affectionate appeal, the apostle says, "And now little children." That is an appeal to the common spiritual nature that exists between John the Apostle and those to whom he is writing. They are his children, children in the faith, and having been born of the same Father, there is a likeness that one expects to find.

He calls upon them to "abide," and that's the important statement, the command to abide. "Now, little children, abide in him." What is abiding? What does it mean to abide in Christ? Well, the term that is used is a term that's translated different ways in the New Testament. We have it, for example, translated as "to dwell, to dwell in him," we could render it, "Dwell in him, little children." It's translated "to remain," and it could be translated that way here, "Remain in him." By the grace of

God, you've been brought to believe in him, and thus joined to him. He lives in you, you live in him; "Remain in him." It is also translated, "to continue." So, "continue in him." All of these are acceptable renderings.

When the Lord was beginning his personal ministry, one of the disciples of John asks him, "Where dwellest thou?" And this is the term that was used, "to dwell, to remain, to continue." In fact, in John chapter 15, the Lord Jesus brings the changes on the idea of abiding. Notice some of the things that he says in the 15th chapter, and the 4th verse of the Gospel of John, the Lord Jesus in the upper room says, "Abide in me, and I in you." "Abide in me, I abide in you." That's the kind of union that is the most intimate kind of union that we could have.

It's in the context of the vine and the branches. And so, just as he is the vine, we are the branches, and just as the life of the vine is in the branches, so the life of Christ is in us. Just as a branch is in the stem, so we are in him. He goes on to say, in the 4th verse, "Abide in me, and I in you." And in the 7th verse, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Do you notice the difference between those two verses? In verse 4 he has said, "Abide in me, and I in you." And in verse 7, he says, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you." In other words, substituted for "I in you," is the clause "My words abide in you." For his words to abide in us is for him to abide in us.

He goes on to say, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love." The very practical indication of abiding in Christ is for his words to abide in us. When his words are abiding in us, he is abiding in us. That's so significant for the Christian life. There is a statement that the Lord makes in the 6th chapter of the Gospel of John, which bears upon this, there he says, "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth, abideth in me, and I in him." It's by feeding upon Christ that we abide or dwell in him. We take our food, we're not always eating, but we do at set times take our food, and then the food abides in us and continues to work in us, though we don't feel it at all. The digesting of the food is very much like the meditation that answers to the taking or the feeding upon the Lord Jesus Christ. We feed upon him by going to the word of God and making it

part of our life, and as we feed upon the word of God and reflect upon the things that are found in the word of God, and enjoy the communion and fellowship that we have with him, he abides in us. To put it very simply, to abide with Christ is to stay where grace puts the believer in touch with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me say this, everything that we need as believers, our food, our rest, our joy, our fruitful service, all is found in abiding in Christ. For everything that we need is found in him. It's impossible for us to have an unhappy life, if we abide in Christ, an unjoyous life, a joyless life. That is impossible; to abide in him is to enjoy him and his provision to the fullest. We would have no marital problems, no personal problems, no problems with our children, if we really were abiding in him. It's really as simple as that. In fact, for Christians, we might even have no Christian psychologist, because we wouldn't need them. I know some people will be very upset with my saying that, but listen, that's what Scripture really says, that the word of God is sufficient for us. So it's something really that we should think about. These are the prescriptions of the Lord Jesus and his apostles for us.

One sees this illustrated so beautifully in the incident of Mary and Martha, in which Martha is in the kitchen preparing things for the Lord, Mary is sitting at his feet listening to his word, and Martha becomes a little upset and asks the Lord to do something about it. And the Lord Jesus says, "Leave her alone. She is doing that better thing." She is sitting at his feet and hearing his word, abiding in him.

One of the problems of our society is that we have lost that art of meditation, generally, we've lost the sense of need of reading, and so we sit in front of a television screen as brain-dead couch potatoes. [Laughter] And what is even worse, my friends, is we permit our children to do it. I'm not against children looking at the TV. They should have been there looking at Curtis Strange win the National. [Laughter] But what I am really against, as a wrong done to our children, is to allow them to sit for hours before a television screen, and have them grow up never having read more than a few insignificant little books. That's a terrible crime committed against our children.

Their whole lives suffer as a result from that. The Scriptures say, "If we abide in him, we'll be fruitful." That's what John is speaking about when he says, "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence or boldness, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." That's the purpose.

Notice the "that" in verse 29, "And now, little children, abide in him; in order that, when he shall appear," or when he shall be manifested. There is no uncertainty suggested by the expression, which may be literally rendered, "if he shall be manifested." The only uncertainty that might be here would be the circumstances under which the coming is realized, "whether I am alive or not," John might have said, but we know now as far as John is concerned, that when the Lord is manifested, John will have died, for he has died. What John is essentially saying here is, the life once manifested is to be manifested again. He had said in verse 2 of chapter 1, "For the life was manifested," but there is coming a time when the life will be manifested again, at the second coming. That's what he means when he says, "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall be manifested," literally, "we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." In other words, the best preparation is present preparation, and the boldness that we have when he comes is that produced by abiding.

Samuel Rutherford, one of the men whom I appreciate so much, a Scot, born in 1600, died in 1661, largely responsible for a great deal of the Westminster Confession of Faith, but at the same time, a very godly, spiritual, devoted man; once said, "Build your nest upon no tree here; for ye see God hath sold the forest to death; and every tree whereupon we would rest is ready to be cut down, to the end we may fly and mount up, and build upon the Rock, and dwell in the holes of the Rock. Set not your heart on the flowers of this world; for they have all a canker in them. Prize the Rose of Sharon." He didn't say this, but I can add this, the rose of Sharon, that lovely figure of our Lord Jesus Christ has no black spot whatsoever, "the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley more than all; for He changeth not. Live nearer to Christ than to the saints, so that when they are taken from you, you may have Him to lean on still."

You see, for the apostle, there were two ways to meet the Lord when he is manifested. We may meet him with boldness, with assurance, with confidence. That word, incidentally, is a word that by its root suggests the idea of free speech, the kind of speech that a child utters, a child to the parents. We think, often, that some of the most interesting and amusing things that children say are the things that they say without thinking, that is they speak freely, absolutely freely, not like the adults. The adults have all kinds of reasons for not saying exactly what they think, but children speak freely. They speak boldly, and when they say something amusing, we are happy to repeat them to others. Well, John is using a term that might be used of that. He says, "Abide in him; that, when he shall appear or be manifested, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed," that is, we'll meet him either assured or we'll meet ashamed. And let me say this to you that you probably realize, that the best preparation for the searching eye of the Lord Jesus Christ at his second coming is to abide in his presence now; abiding in his presence now means that we shall have a bold, assured meeting with our Lord. The alternative is to be ashamed away from him because of a sense of guilt. So the secret, the apostle says, is to abide in him.

And he does speak about his coming. He uses a term that is also sometimes translated, "a presence." But also at the time that the apostle wrote, it was the word that was used for the visit of a king or an emperor in the east, and he thinks of the coming of the Lord as that kind of return. So little children in Believers Chapel, "Abide in him; that, when he shall appear or be manifested, we," I think that is so interesting, that he doesn't say you, but he says, "we," the apostle himself, "You abide in him that when he appears, we, I with you," including himself with the little children. "We may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

Now, what's the evidence that we meet the test? He states in the last verse, "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." This is the moral test. Everyone born of God does righteousness, we could say. On the other hand, we can say everyone that doeth righteousness is born of him; that's what John says here. Now, when he writes, "If ye know that he is righteous," there is no question about that. He even uses a term that refers to

intuitive knowledge, knowledge of this great truth as a fact. "If ye know that he is righteous." The Old Testament sets that forth in numerous places, that the Lord God in heaven is righteous. In fact, that's a biblical axiom of the Godhead as a whole.

In Deuteronomy chapter 16, in verse 20, in the Hebrew text, the text reads with reference to the children of Israel, Moses writing, "Righteousness, righteousness you shall follow." In fact, the word is given twice in order to lay stress upon the fact that they are to follow righteousness, because the Lord God is righteous. We do have some question about to whom he refers to here, when he says, "he." It may be a reference to the Father. It may be a reference to the Son. We're not absolutely certain. In the 1st verse of the chapter we do read, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

And so, the fact that that expression is used, makes it possible for us to look at this as a reference to our Lord. In verse 7 of the 3rd chapter he says, "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." I assume it is the Lord Jesus, in light of the previous reference, just a few lines back. It also may be an illustration of the fact that, since everybody's mind is upon the Father as the righteous God, he may have actually thought of that, and expressed it as a common truth, that they all would be acquainted with. But the point is this, that it really doesn't make any difference; for the Father is righteous, the Son is righteous, and the Holy Spirit is also the righteous Holy Spirit. But that truth is a truth that we are not to lose as Christians. Let us not pass over statements like this, to know that God is righteous, to know that that is one of his attributes is fundamentally important for the knowledge of God.

Let me give you an illustration or two of how in our Lord's life he carried this out. There came to him one day, the rich young ruler. The rich young ruler asked how he might inherit eternal life. Jesus told him to keep the law, to follow him. After further conversation, we read the rich young ruler turned, left disappointed, because he was unable to meet the test. In the course of the interview it is stated, "Jesus loved him." Isn't that a remarkable statement? Our Lord loved him, but

he turns and the last certain picture that you have of the rich, young ruler is his back as he walks away from the Lord. Now you might have thought, since it is stated, that the Lord loved him, that something special might be done for him. That is, some relaxation of the justice of God, of what might be called the strict, righteous requirements of God, but there is no relaxation of the righteousness of God. If God were to relax his righteousness, this whole world would crumble. The moral fiber would crumble. God is what he is; he must always be what he is. And the time will come, if you don't appreciate it now, in which you will understand and be thankful that God is a righteous God.

Later on, the Lord Jesus draws near to the city of Jerusalem, and when he was come near it, as he made his entrance into the city, he looked out over the city, and the Scriptures say he wept over Jerusalem saying,

"If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

No one ever loved Jerusalem as the Lord Jesus Christ, Jerusalem the center of the earth. No one ever loved it, and no one ever loved it more perfectly than the Lord Jesus Christ. But knowing what was to come in 70 A.D., nevertheless, in spite of his love for the city, the righteous Son of God can only proclaim the word of God to Jerusalem. No relaxation of the righteous requirements of God.

And finally, in Gethsemane, the Lord Jesus, reflecting over the necessity of the coming cross in order that you and I might find redemption, falls upon his face and three times cries out, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." And if you'll remember, he added to his petition, "Nevertheless,

not my will, but Thine be done." If there was ever a person who appreciated what was going to transpire, and what was necessary for the salvation of men, it was the Lord Jesus Christ. And if he had really never prayed, "Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done," if he had really prayed, "Lord, relax the righteous requirements of your divine nature," we should have been lost forever. No Savior, no salvation, no justification for ourselves, no righteousness for ourselves acceptable to God, because it is only found in the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ, by which he purchased for us through the shedding of his blood, the righteous standing with which we can come to the Lord God. So if you know that he is righteous, I know he's righteous, the Scriptures have told me. I see it illustrated in the life of our Lord. I'm thankful that he never, for a moment, relaxed the righteous requirement of the Lord God in dealing with sinners.

Then "You know," John says, that "everyone that doeth righteousness is born of him." What he's simply saying is this, it's just as simple as it can be, the children reproduce the Father's character. Membership in God's family is recognized by family likeness, morally. We look at those kids last week and we say, "Ah, there is the son of so and so. Or there is the daughter of so and so," true in measure in natural relationships, but true always in the spiritual. Membership in God's family is recognized by the family likeness morally, not church attendance primarily, although that has its place; not in water baptism, it has its place; not in attendance of the Lord's Supper, it certainly has its place; not even in our biblical speech, for we are such tremendous hypocrites that we, as unbelieving individuals, can actually talk like believing individuals. That fools so many people, they can speak so beautifully in what someone has called, "the language of Canaan," and then ultimately evidence comes to hand that there was no real knowledge of the reality. Actions do speak louder than words.

What does he mean when he says, "Do righteousness?" Now, let me say, we are not talking about an individual who always, forever does righteousness. I hope we understand that. No one can possibly do that. We are talking about a bent of life. We recognize the fact that the Father disciplines. "Do righteousness." What is a righteous work? Well, this came to my mind, when I happened, I know you're going to think I was a couch potato this past week, but I look at the news at

10:00 every night that I possibly can. I looked at the news channel 8, to get the local news, if you want to know what I look at, explains a lot about me, I guess. But I then turn over to channel 13 and get then end of the news program there, so I have an hour of news.

Well, one of the nights this week, I think it was about Tuesday, as I went back to the kitchen after the news program was over, to get a glass of water, I came back into the family room and there was some program on channel 13 that had to do with religion. So I began to look at it, and it turned out that it was a British producer who had produced two hours. Some of you I know have heard it, because you've already told me about it, but two hours of attack against fundamentalism in various forms. The first hour an attack on Jim Baker and Jimmy Swaggert and the hypocrisy that characterizes that kind of ministry, and then the author and he seemed to have this particularly in mind, he turned to Dallas. Dallas which he called the "buckle on the Bible belt," and began to speak about the contradictions in Dallas; so many churches, so many professing Christians, so many fundamentalists. I bet you there's a fundamentalist out in this audience. [Laughter]

Anyway, so many fundamentalists, and yet we are the crime capital of this part of the country. I have forgotten his exact figures, whether he said of the whole country or this part of the country. Anyway, then he centered his attention on First Baptist Church and Dr. Criswell, and I must say that he did everything in his power to make First Baptist Church look bad. And if a person didn't know anything about First Baptist Church, he might think the source of the hypocrisy that characterizes fundamentalism resides down there. I must say he did say something about the vast good that that church has done in this community, but then near the end, he was talking with Dr. Criswell, and he was obviously, he said that he had seen things there that raised questions about the theology lying back of the fundamentalist movement, and so he asked Dr. Criswell, "Is it true that you believe that if a person does not believe in Jesus Christ as his own Savior, he goes to hell no matter what he may have done?" And Dr. Criswell and I admire him for this, because it was obviously a set up, he said, "Yes I do." I don't remember whether he cited John 14:6, but that flashed in my mind. "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by

me." But then what was supposed to be the *coup de grâce*, he said, "Dr. Criswell, you mean to say, if Mother Teresa, with all of her good works should not believe in Jesus Christ, that she would go to hell and suffer there for eternity." And Dr. Criswell said, "Yes."

Well, I couldn't help but think, of course, what Dr. Criswell said, we'll never know, what was read out the program, but what I would have liked to have said was, "Mr. So and So, would you tell me what is a good work? Because it all depends on what you mean by, "a good work." Because you see, the Bible defines a good work, it doesn't define a good work as a work of benevolence, a work of philanthropy that any man may do for personal reasons. The Bible speaks about good works in an entirely different sense. The Bible says, "Only that which is a good work is that which is the product of faith in the God of Scripture," or in the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, if I should do something the world says is good, is not necessarily a good work. In fact, the Scriptures say there are no good works that can save. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." Not by works of righteousness which we have done, has God saved us.

First of all, then, to have a good work, it must arise out of faith in God, not because I may profit some way, the things that people may say about me, the advantages I may obtain by that. And secondly, which goes hand in hand with it, it must be done for the glory of God, not for the glory of me, or even the organization of which I am a part. So a good work arises out of faith in Christ. It is done for the glory of God; that's a good work. That's why no one who does not have the nature of God within him can do a good work. That's why all that the world says is good works, maybe works of benevolence, maybe works of philanthropy, and we certainly are happier for them than works that tear down and wreck our society, but for the demands of a righteous God, they are insufficient to purchase salvation.

So good works then, are only possible by those who believe. As he says, "Ye know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of him." If you see a person who does something out of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for the sole glory of God, there is a believing man; no one else can do

that. No one else can do that. So John, when he says, "He that doeth righteousness is born of him," is simply saying good works are the consequence of sonship. They are not the condition. They are the consequence of sonship, so important for us as Christians to realize that and read the Bible in the light of it.

To sum it up then, relationship is evidenced by resemblance. If we are related to the Lord, it will be evidenced by the kind of life that we live. Listen to the things that the Lord Jesus said in one of his conversations. John is recording, in the Gospel of John, a conversation that he was having with some unbelieving men of his day. He said, "I speak that which I have seen with my Father, and ye do that which ye have seen with your Father." They answered and said unto him, "Abraham is our Father." Jesus saith unto them "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham, but now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth which I have heard of God. This did not Abraham." God's sons reflect him and his righteous act. The rule then for the seducers of the professing people in John's day is like father, like son. How important it is my Christian friends, for us to recognize that we demonstrate our relationship by the actions that characterize our lives.

If you are here today and you never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is impossible for you to do a good work. If you should say, as my friend on the television program suggested, that we are saved by our good works, you cannot do any good works, there are no good works that you can do. All of your "good works" are really not good works at all, judged by the divine, impartial, stated principle. We are lost. We need a Savior. We need a deliverer. We need someone who will pay our debt and make it possible for us to have as a free gift, eternal life. This, the Son of God has come and has accomplished, and if you recognize your lost condition, your desire to know him whom to know is life eternal, come to Christ. Confess your need of him, your sin, the many ways in which you seek to avoid the truth. Come to Christ, trust him, receive as a free gift, for you cannot earn it, eternal life. May God help you to do that. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] We thank Thee Lord for these remarkable words written by one who spent his time in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, and has faithfully through the Holy Spirit, taught us...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]