



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 John 3:1-3

"The Confidence, Hope and Obligation of the Children of God"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We are continuing our exposition of John's first epistle, and our Scripture reading for today is 1 John chapter 3, verse 1 through verse 3. It is of some significance to note the two verses just preceding the verses we looked at last week. One of the things in Bible study that often throws one off the following of an author's train of thought is the chapter headings, which as you no doubt know, were not in the original writings.

In verse 28 of chapter 2 the apostle wrote, "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." You notice the twofold reference to the coming of our Lord, and then in verse 29, "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." That's the expression we want to particularly note as well. But the Scripture reading begins with chapter 3, in verse 1 of 1 John. The apostle writes,

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God (Now, I have made a change in the Authorized Version for the term that is rendered in the Authorized Version, sons of God, is really a term that means children of God, and then in the most ancient manuscripts of the New Testament and generally recognized by New Testament critics as the better manuscripts, there is found the expression, "and we are," following that opening statement, so we read it that way.) Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us

that we should be called the children of God and we are: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the children (again) of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear (Now, that little expression, "when he shall appear," may also be rendered, "when it is disclosed. Let's read it that way.) Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when it is disclosed, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

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

[Prayer] Our heavenly Father we thank Thee for the privilege we have of approaching Thee through the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for this grace in which we stand, by virtue of all that our redeeming representative has accomplished for us. We thank Thee for the sentiments expressed in the hymn we have just sung, reminding us again that the ground of our approach to Thee is the redemption that Jesus Christ has accomplished for lost sinners in the shedding of his blood.

We are grateful and thankful that Thou hast opened our eyes to understand ourselves and our need, and to see and understand him, and how he, the Son of God, by his sacrifice meets all of our needs.

We ask Thy blessing upon each individual present in this auditorium, and may the hand of God rest upon them for spiritual good. We thank Thee for the whole church of Jesus Christ today, and we pray that the body may be strengthened, and built up, enlarged, and increased if it should please Thee, and that we may be prepared through the ministry of the sanctifying Spirit to see him whom to see is to know the eternal Son.

We are grateful, Lord, for all that Thou hast accomplished for us, and we pray that by Thy grace we may be used in our ministries as individuals, and as churches, to make the message concerning Christ more widely known. We thank Thee for the church of Christ. We thank Thee for Believers Chapel and its ministries. We thank Thee for our elders and others, the members, the

friends, the visitors who are here today; we particularly remember them and their needs. Lord, undertake for all of our needs, for we do have many.

We pray for the sick. We ask that Thou will particularly, if it please Thee, bring healing. We know some who are suffering, some in the hospital. We commit them to Thee, we pray that if it should be within Thy will Lord, that Thou wilt demonstrate the eternal power of the Godhead in the raising up of men from the sickbed.

And we thank Thee for this country and for this weekend, and we thank Thee for what it represents. We pray Thy blessing upon the United States of America, upon our president, and others in the governments represented in this land. We thank Thee for the freedoms that we enjoy, and as we look out over the world and realize that we are a nation blessed by unusual freedom, we give Thee thanks. We pray for the ministers of God who rule over us. Give wisdom and guidance beyond their native abilities as they carry out their tasks.

And Lord, be with us in this meeting as we sing, as we hear and listen to the word of God, and enjoy Christian fellowship with one another, may we experience the blessing of the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] We are going back to a lapel mike; the people in the tape ministry and the radio ministry feel that they want to take every advantage that they possibly can to improve the preaching.

[Laughter] And so, we are going to try again, this, hoping perhaps it might work. If it doesn't, I don't know what we will have to do.

I was telling the audience at 8:30 that I have been having fever that is temperature, [Laughter] every day since, I think it was Wednesday. And each I would think, well I feel a little better, so I will be able to preach on Sunday, and then at night the fever would come back, and last night again, but it was too late to ask Dan Duncan or somebody else to preach on the spur of the moment. So I was forced to do it. And if I should appear to be a little under the weather, that is more than normal, this is the reason.

“The Confidence, Hope and Obligation of the Children of God” by S. Lewis Johnson
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The subject for the message today is "The Confidence, Hope and Obligation of the Children of God." Sadly illustrated in our recent public experience is the truth that the divine life cannot be divorced from moral excellence. The apostles contend that since God is light, we are to walk in the light. They contend that if God is our Father, then we are to bear the image of his family. And we have had in recent weeks and months some outstanding illustrations of failure in this regard, as you well know. If you've been reading the newspapers, keeping up with things that are happening in the United States, you will know that men in public eye, known by millions of people, have been most flagrant violators of that principle that the divine life is not to be divorced from moral excellence.

We think of them, we tend at times to think that it is only a certain part of the religious body of which that is true, and it may be more significantly evident in certain parts of the body, but it's pretty general. We've seen some illustrations of that, perhaps recently, at least by the things that our local authorities allege, that individuals who are members in good standing, pastors of churches in good standing, might be capable, we know in many cases have been capable, of the vilest of crimes.

Not too long ago, one of the graduates of the theological seminary with which I was associated for a number of years, here in this city, ran off with one of the deacon's wives of the church in which he was serving as an official, as one of the pastors. So what we are seeing constantly is moral failure, and as I say, if there is one thing that the apostles make as an established point in divine truth, it is that the divine life cannot be divorced from moral excellence. It is impossible for us to talk about having divine life, and not at the same time having moral excellence.

The ethical question John has been dealing with in the preceding paragraphs, and finally, you might have expected this because the coming of the Lord has such direct reference to moral excellence. So the ethical question has led John to the Parousia, or the coming, the presence of the Lord. In verse 28 of chapter 2, as I mentioned before we read the Scripture, the apostle writes, "Now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

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Now, so far as I know there is no evangelical doctrine that is more powerful and practical in moral stimulus, than the teaching that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming again. So we should have expected John to have something to say about the second coming when he's speaking about moral questions. Sooner or later the relationship of the believer to our Lord's second coming must be broached, for it has direct reference to the kind of life that we live. I think you can also say that in our churches, if you never hear a message on the Lord's coming, you can be almost certain in saying that moral fiber of the congregation will have suffered as a result of it. It's one of the divine ways by which we are exhorted to moral excellence, and Christian living that is pleasing to God.

These three verses that we have read for our Scripture reading in 1 John 3:1-3 form a nice summary of the chronological stages of the Christian life. For example, in verse 1 the apostle writes, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us," and so he looks at the past stage of the Christian life when we were given eternal life. And then in the 2nd verse he says, "Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." And so there he speaks about the future of our Christian life. We shall be like him, seeing him as he is.

And then in the 3rd verse, "every man that hath this hope in him purifieth," notice the present tense, "purifieth himself, even as he is pure." We have reference to that stage of our Christian life. So in the past, the bestowment of the love of God; in the present, the purification of the truth of God as we respond to it; in the future, the coming again of our Lord when we see him, and become like him, seeing him as he is.

Well, let's look at our verses, and the first thing that the apostle states in the 1st verse is, the greatness of the divine birth. I must confess, in my own study this past week, when I wasn't lying on the bed at least, in my study this past week it became even fresher to me, the marvelous blessing that we have in being sons of God. So I'm not then, surprised that he speaks about the greatness of the divine birth. Look at verse 29, in the last sentence, "You know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." Now what follows is really a kind of exposition of "born of him."

What it means, and what are the implications of being "born of him." In fact, as one of the students of 1 John has said, "What follows is a meditation on the expression, 'born of him'." In the original text, there's a little bit of stress on the "of him," so divine birth is the subject of the meditation.

Now, when he says, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us," when he says "what manner of love" you can obviously tell from the English that this is an emphatic way of expressing the thing. In the original text, the word that the apostle uses is one that always implies astonishment, and generally admiration. It's the same word that was used when the Lord Jesus stilled the storm, and after he had stilled the storm he turned to the apostles who were in the little boat with him and rebuked them. I'm sure you remember the incident. He said to them, "Why are ye fearful, oh ye of little faith." He arose, rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm, and the men marveled, and they said, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and sea obey him." That's the same expression, that is, the same word is used, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." The full exegesis of the love of God is not given here, that's going to be given in chapter 4, in verse 9 through verse 14, but here is an anticipation of it. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God."

Now, I think that in the study of the Bible, it's always helpful to dig just a little bit below the surface. We always tend to read the Bible, I think, and particularly if we've grown up in evangelical churches, and if there is not a great deal of stress upon the meditation, the reflection in a deeper way on the word of God, we miss so much in Scripture. So I want, for a moment, to meditate on what it means to be "born of God;" to be the children of God. As a matter of fact, that's the meaning of the expression, "children of God." The Authorized Version renders this "sons of God." "Sons" is a New Testament word, and we are sons of God. We have a certain position in the family of God. That's likely the force of the noun, *huios* which means sons. The word that John uses here is a word derived from a Greek word that means "to beget," and so, "children of God" suggests those that have been begotten. That is, they've had a birth experience. Oh, we know of what our Lord was

talking about when he said, "You must be born again," so the children of God are those that have been born again. They are those who have the nature of the Father.

We'll say more about it in just a moment, but having said this, immediately after it, to allay any questions that might arise in the mind, evidently since "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God," looking forward to the full manifestation of our sonship, John feeling that maybe some of the ones reading his letter might say, "Well, we will be his sons, or his children in the future. We are called to that, but we only become that later." He added the little expression that I mentioned in the Scripture reading, "and we are."

Mr. Spurgeon was so impressed by that, you see he preached out of the Authorized Version such as I have been doing recently in 1 John, not for the reasons that Spurgeon did, he did that because he regarded the Authorized Version as the most common version in his day, and as a good version, which it is a good version, but he did not turn to the Revised Version. The Revised Version came out in 1881 in Britain, and that English revised version had the word, "and we are." And so, Mr. Spurgeon preached a little message entitled, "A Jewel from the Revised Version" and laid great stress on "and we are," John's way of emphasizing the fact that we are the children of God.

Now, John may have added that to allay any false understanding of being called to be sons of God. Some might understand it simply to be a future position that we might have, so he says, "And we are." Unfortunately, we don't know the answer to some of the questions that we might raise about the writing of Holy Scripture. Luther was once asked, "Do you feel you are a child of God this morning?" He said, "I cannot say that I do, but I know I am." Well, that's a good Christian attitude. That is feelings subordinated to the word of God. Experience does not alter theology. Theology alters experience. So, "we are," John says, and we are.

Now I want to talk for a moment about what it means to be a child of God. We say that that means that the individual has had a birth experience. That is, there has been a begetting. If we are the children of God then that means essentially, that we have had an inward communication of his nature. If we are born of God, then we have the nature of God. We are not surprised that Peter

should say that we have become partakers of the divine nature. So there is an inward communication of the nature of God. The world about us seeks always to water down the expressions of the word of God, and so you will find in the language of the society about you, many people saying things that they don't really understand, should never even talk about for that matter. But nevertheless, they say them.

I don't know how many times a year I read in the paper, some people will talk about in connection with things that have happened in our society and an individual will say something like, "We're all the children of God." Well, there is one sense in which a person might use that expression, speaking broadly. For example, the Apostle Paul, preaching in Athens, said to that group to whom he was proclaiming the word of God, 'For as much then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think of the Godhead as like unto gold, silver, or stone graven by art and man's device.' It is possible for us to speak of ourselves, each one of us whether Christians, whether believers or not, we are the offspring of God. But what that means is that we are the creation of God, not that we are divinely born sons. We are the creation of God. We are the offspring of God. That statement does not suggest that sinners have had an inward communication of the nature of God.

Now, assuming for a moment we are talking about the relationship of a father to a son, now there are different ways by which I might be a son. I might be a son in my family, because my father is my natural father. That is, I am the result of the union of my mother and my father. But it's also true that I might be a son in a family, having been adopted by my father and my mother. That's a great experience. That's a great expression of love. We should never look down upon that, and I would not want for any moment to look down upon it. To be a son by adoption is very significant. It's reflective of the conscious desire of parents for children, perhaps children they could not naturally have.

One thinks in the Bible also of the prodigal. Beautiful illustration of the relationship between God and an individual who was a son in the creation sense, but who left and went off and wasted his substance in riotous living, who upon coming to himself, and starting home, as he comes

near home the father looks down the lengthy little road, sees him, recognizes him, runs to him having gathered up his garments about him, falls upon his neck, and repeatedly kisses him in token of affection, asks for the fatted calf, and begins to celebrate. That's a beautiful picture, as a matter of fact, Jesus Christ's picture of God, for he told the parable.

But yet that parable does not tell us everything about our relationship to God. It doesn't tell us anything about the change of nature that should have taken place. It says simply, "when he came to himself." So if we're looking for something that fully expresses what transpires when a son of God becomes a son of God, then we're talking about the work of the Holy Spirit in efficacious grace, whereby he transforms inwardly, the unwilling to the willing. In other words, it's by virtue of God's own initiating grace that we have become of one mind and one heart with our Father. We are born of God and given his nature. Let me underline that. We are born of God, by the work of the Holy Spirit, and we are given the nature of God. Can you realize that?

Now, if you realize that it will mean, of course, a tremendous amount of important truth to you, but it will also mean a tremendous amount of important truth as to how you regard other believers as well. So born of God what a marvelous truth that is, possessing God's nature. I have had inwardly communicated to me the nature of God. That's why moral excellence has to be the experience of a believer in Christ.

Now, of course, what happens when an individual receives the new birth, as Jesus told Nicodemus, "You must be born again, Nicodemus." When that transpires, the world as John says, "Does not know us." As a matter of fact, he says, "on account of this," that is on account of this sonship which we possess; the world does not know us, because it did not know him. Now, this is not just one text in which this is set forth, in the upper room discourse, the Lord Jesus warned the apostles about this several times.

In chapter 14, in verse 16 and verse 17, when he was talking about the gift of the Holy Spirit which he would give to them, he stated, "I'm going to pray the Father, he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot

receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." And then in the very next chapter in this same upper room discourse, in chapter 15, in verse 18 and verse 19, he told those men, John was one of them, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." So do we expect the world to understand us?

Do we expect the world to really understand what transpires within the heart of a true believing man? No, we don't. The world will never understand, because their nature is different. The nature of believers is the nature of the eternal God. They have had implanted within them, inwardly, the nature of God; divine sons born of God. As John has put it in verse 29 of the preceding chapter, the consequence is the ignorance of the world, and it's something we must bear in mind constantly. We don't want to encourage them in their ignorance. We don't want to be scornful, superior. We are superior, but we don't want to give that impression. We want to try to win as many as we can, but it's helpful for us to remember in our experiences, in our most zealous attempts, and our most earnest attempts, in our tenderest and most earnest attempts to win people to the Lord, when the appeals are rejected, the Scriptures gives us reasons and explanations that satisfy. So having been born of God, we are the children of God.

I have a friend, he's with the Lord now, and he's enjoying life a whole lot better than the rest of us, but he used to like to say in preaching that when he was talking on these topics, he said, "You know, I live in such a such a town, and when I go downtown to shop, I'm jostled quite a bit by the crowds on the streets." He said, "Every now and then I get the feeling, I want to turn around and say, 'Look, do you know whom you are jostling. You are jostling a child of God. Be careful what you're doing, because the time is coming when I'm going to be ruling over this place.'" [Laughter] Well, I'm sure that we would understand fully what John meant when he said, "For this reason the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." They wouldn't understand him either.

In the 2nd verse, the apostle speaks of the greatness of the children's future glory. The present dignity is marvelous, to be a son of God, to be a child of God, but listen, to be a child of God now cannot be compared with the future, and the dignity that shall be ours then. Psychologists like to have us think about the dignity of man. Look, they don't understand what dignity is. The highest dignity that a man could possibly have is to be a child of God, to be a son of God.

But when we are talking about dignity, and ultimate dignity, we have to talk about the future. As the apostle Paul put it, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." And so John says, "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be." I guess you could say that's the only true agnosticism in the Bible, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." We can say, we don't know everything that lies ahead of us, and then in that sense, we can truly be agnostics. The glorification that is coming, we love, but we do not fully understand it.

There are some hints the Bible gives us. Paul tells us in Philippians 3, at the end of the chapter that we are going to have a body that is like our Lord's own glorious body. We are told in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, in verse 1 that we have a building from God that is from heaven, and again speaking of the resurrection body. So we know we have a marvelous experience lying ahead of us. Peter tells us we've become partakers of the divine nature. There are various other things the Bible does tell us about the future, but we do not fully understand what lies ahead of us.

I guess one of the best ways to understand that is to look at one of the biblical illustrations; Paul's illustration in the great chapter on the resurrection of the body is the illustration of a seed and a plant. Now, if you have ever placed a seed in the ground and planted it, and nurtured it, as any kind of amateur horticulturist would, you keep it damp. You come out and look at it every day; that really helps growth you know, to look at it every day. [Laughter] And if you can speak to it, so some people, that helps as well. But anyway, you look at it, and if when that beautiful plant grows up, and you have that beautiful plant and it's blooming, if you go back and get one of the seeds that you

didn't plant and just put the seed down by the side of the plant and reflect upon the fact that that's Paul's illustration of the resurrection body. In other words, "the seed is," Paul says, "the plant."

Now, we know, at least I know, and I know very little about horticulture, but I have learned this, but really there is a death, that that little seed will have its body about it, which will die in order that the life principle may grow. In fact, now you can see it all transpiring. So that there must be a death in order to be life, but Paul says that that seed is that plant. In other words, there is difference; the difference between a little black seed and this beautiful plant, but there is also continuity. Both of those things are true of the resurrection body, that's what Paul is illustrating. He's saying the body that we shall possess is this. What you're looking at my friends, is the seed, the seed before it has died, or at least the seed in process of death. Perhaps you can relate to that a little better.

But what follows, the difference is even greater than what you see in nature. So "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know," that when it is disclosed, "we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." So the apostle is saying then, that we can expect because we are the children of God, to have what children like to have. What do children like to have? An ice cream cone? Well, of course, all children like to have ice cream cones, something to play with, but most children, and remember there's always something of little child in us, most children like to have an inheritance.

Look at you, some of you are smiling; you're still children. You'd love to have an inheritance. It's nice to have an inheritance. I've had an inheritance. I had a bequest one time too; they're not bad either, but an inheritance. Well, what is our inheritance? This is what our inheritance is, our inheritance as believers, "when he shall appear," when it shall be disclosed, what we are going to be, "we shall be like him." This is our inheritance. We are his children; we look forward to the inheritance of our likeness to our Father. We expect an inheritance, God gives us the inheritance.

Now, he says, "We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." And one might, if he were interested in Bible study, want to ask himself the question, "I'm going to be like him when I see him, does this mean that just to look upon him is to transform me?" Well, of course there's a sense in which that, perhaps, is true; to look upon him is, let me say, like the film of a camera. He is the

image that is thrown upon the film. One could understand that. That may be what John has in mind, although I don't think he had a Minolta in mind or anything like that.

But nevertheless, he may have had something like that in mind. Just to look upon him is to be changed. I prefer another interpretation even though that might be, many think it is, the correct one, but others feel with me that what this really means is that there is a transformation in me, accomplished by God, which enables me to see what I could not have seen were it not for the transformation. In other words, "we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is" means that there will be such a transformation in us that we will be able to see him.

Now, I rather think that is what he had in mind, and if that is so, then of course what he has in mind is such a thing as "the pure in heart shall see God." Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. We are told in the word of God, that there is a constant sanctifying influence going on upon us. As we look at the word of God, we are constantly being changed and conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul states that in 2 Corinthians chapter 3. So the process of sanctification is going on in the life of every child of God, and he is being conformed more and more to the Son of God until finally the conformation being complete, we see him as he is. What a sight, a momentary sight; the greatest sight you will ever have.

I've lived a long time. I remember Lindberg, seeing Lindberg in Birmingham, Alabama after he had flown the Atlantic. I remember seeing President Franklin Roosevelt in Charleston, South Carolina, rushing to the battery in order to see him drive by. Knowing now what I know about his economics and other policies, I wouldn't have rushed so hard. [Laughter] But nevertheless, to see my first president, I was there. Some of the great sights include the first look at the ocean; that always is a magnificent sight as all of you know, I'm sure. To see the Grand Canyon, what a magnificent sight that is. Once you see it, it sticks with you; Yosemite, the Petrified Forest; that was a great let down. That's one of the greatest of all let downs, I'll never forget that as well. I hate to tell you what I was looking forward to. I saw Babe Ruth play baseball; I saw Lou Gehrig play baseball, and then down through the years, the great football players that I have seen through the

years, the majority of them from the University of Alabama, [laughter] but nevertheless, to the present day to see an outstanding sports competitor, an outstanding sports event, and outstanding sports accomplishments brings a certain kind of thrill to a person who's looked at sports for sixty years, as I have. Great sights, I'll never forget them. I'll never forget Roger Staubach, Bob Lilly, and then some of those who are still on our team here in this city, who still manage to play a little bit. But no sight could ever compare with the sight of our Lord, which is the experience of every child of God.

And finally, the apostle writes, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself." In other words, purity is the necessary result of hope. What does he mean by purity? Why, he means freedom from moral stain. In other words, everyone that has the hope that a child of God has as his hope; does purify himself, not will, but purifies himself. That's an inevitable part of his life, purity, growth and purity, everybody, everyone that has this hope in him. The Christian hope, as I said in the introduction, is incompatible with moral indifference, in the present as well as in the future. Just as the high priest had to purify himself before performing the ritual of the great Day of Atonement, this is part of the priest's daily work. In other words, we believe in a present purgatory, not a future one, a present one, "Everyone that hath this hope in him, purifies himself even as he is pure."

Now, of course if you want to talk theologically, we don't mean that we are able by ourselves to purify ourselves, but we have the resources to do it in the power of the Holy Spirit, granted to us to accomplish what God the Holy Spirit has written in his word, and said that he is well able to do. Gibbon, when he wrote his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, set forth five reasons for the success of the early church. I won't read them all to you, but I just noticed this, that one of them was the austerity and the purity of their morals. In other words, one of the reasons why we are able, in our day, to gather as a Christian church, so Gibbon, a non-believer, suggested was the austerity and purity of their morals.

Well, let me close because our time is just about up. To be born of God is to have the great fundamental principle of his righteous nature wrought and implanted in us. That is the evidence of the bestowal of the Father's fatherly love upon us. That's the soul's impregnable rock of assurance, the love of God as manifested in Christ, and in the birth that he has given to us. If in the future, as our Lord's and the prophets' and the apostles' prophecies come to pass, and the moon above is shaken, the sun is removed from its place, heaven and earth flee away, the graves are open, this whole earth flows away from the presence of God. In the midst of all of that, this anchor of the soul holds, God's manifested love in the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the new birth accomplished by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of his elect saints. To realize more and more what we are, amid present limitations, is our lot now. Just remember, no matter how long you've been a Christian, and I've been a Christian over forty-five years, we're just beginning our life as God's children, just beginning in the light of eternity.

Furthermore, some of you young people may think that if the Lord comes fifty years from now, that's a long time. That's not a long time. In the light of eternity, that's soon. So what is to come is going to appear soon. Therefore, the future hope is not something altogether different. I've tried to give you an impression that there's a whole lot about it that is different, but it's not all together different, because you see the future hope is essentially the continuation of what we now are. The only contrast being what we are now as children and what we are then as children. We are still children; it's still the life of a child of God. It's still the life of an individual who does have God's nature inwardly implanted in his being. When the veil is removed, then we are like him.

In the meantime, the Lord is teaching us to know the Father as he does, through his teacher the Holy Spirit. The school in which the instruction goes on may not seem to be the best kind of school. It reminds me of the school in which I began to preach out in west Dallas. It wasn't a very nice school. It was a little stone building. The doors seemed to be always open. As a matter of fact, on Sunday morning when I preached one of my first sermons, one of the cows nearby came up the steps. [Laughter] Can you imagine that? Heard the word of God was being preached there, and

came up the steps to get in to hear S. Lewis Johnson preach. Well, it turned out that when he came down the hall and looked in the room he went on by, figured that wasn't the sermon he wanted to hear. [Laughter]

At any rate, this world is not the nicest place for the accomplishment of the will of God, it would appear too many, but the Lord is accomplishing his will and his work all along. We may have poor teachers here, the things that the school sets forth for us may not be the greatest pedagogically looked at from the world's stand point, but we are being taught by our Lord the things that we need to know as children of God. Listen to our Lord's petition as he prayed in the high priestly prayer. "O righteous Father," isn't that interesting, "righteous Father?" "O righteous, Father, the world hath not known Thee, but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent me." So here we have the Father and the Son, the Father knowing the Son, the Son knowing the Father, as our Lord points out in other places.

And then here is a third group over here, and they don't really know the Son perfectly, and they certainly don't know the Father perfectly, what they do is simply this, that the Father sent the Son, they know that. "I have known Thee and these have known that Thou hast sent me, and Father, I have declared unto them Thy name." In other words, they know the true God. "And I will declare it," he'll continue his work. "I will declare it, that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them." Now I think I can understand why John, having heard that great prayers should say, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God."

Are you such? Do you know that you are one of God's children? Is that your experience? Do you know the new birth, that experience deep down within your heart that has transformed your being so that you truly know and love him whom to know is life eternal? May God help you to realize that Christ has died for sinners that they might be saved, and you may have the experience of that new birth and the confidence that you belong to him; even if, as Luther, occasionally you don't feel like it but you know it because it's grounded in the infallible revelation of God. May God in his

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grace bring you to the knowledge of him, and to the enjoyment of the anticipation of the inheritance.

Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful indeed for the words that the apostle has written to us as an elderly man, decades of experience of the knowledge of God, many years of reflection upon the divine revelation. We thank Thee, we praise Thee. We thank Thee for the oneness that we seem to enjoy with him as he worships and praises and teaches. May as the Son of God teaches us, may we be responsive.

For those who may be here who do not know him, at this very moment may they turn in confession ...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]