



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 Timothy 3:14-16

“The Church and the Truth She Defends”

TRANSCRIPT

Message] This past week I told her 2 Timothy chapter 3 verse 14 through verse 16, but it's 1 Timothy chapter 3 verse 14 through verse 16. So we're reading these three verses, and I'm sure you will note that the title conforms to this particular passage rather than to the other.

Now in 1 Timothy of course the preceding verses of the epistle have had to do largely with, and especially chapter 3, have had to do with the things that make up the organization of the local church it's polity, and now in verse 14 of 1 Timothy chapter 3 the apostle writes,

“These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”

One comment, some of you no doubt have some different translations from the Authorized Version that I read. The Authorized Version in verse 16 reads, “God was

manifest in the flesh.” Now it is much more likely that the original text at this point reads, “He who was manifest in the flesh.” Which could be rendered simply “he” but “he who was manifested in the flesh.” The difference between the two is actually ultimately in writing Greek at that time a line through a zero, which would make it a theta instead of an omicron. And as a result it’s natural to expect that the scribes would have some difficulty with it, and so some of the manuscripts have “God”. Some of the oldest and probably most New Testament scholars would regard them as the better manuscripts have “he who” or *haas* as over against *theos* so we’re going to take it as “he who was manifest in the flesh.” But there is no question but the verses have to do with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and so actually no doctrinal point is involved because the only person who could have been manifested in the flesh and could have been referred to by these words is our Lord Jesus Christ who is the Son of God very God of very God. But that accounts for the difference in the texts that you may be reading. Obey the Lord. Bless his reading of the word, and let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are thankful to Thee for this wonderful day that Thou hast given to us. We thank thee for the change in weather. We recognize the marvelous providence of God that guides and guards our steps throughout all of our lives, and we thank Thee for the confidence we have that the future is in Thy hands and therefore we can rest securely in the knowledge that that which is ultimately the best for us will fall out to us. We thank Thee for this, the Lord’s day. We ask that our thoughts may redound to Thy glory. We pray particularly for the ministry of the word of God not only in Believer's Chapel but wherever the word of God is proclaimed, and we pray that there may be responsiveness on the part of those who Thou hast in wonderful grace chosen to come to Christ. We pray for the saints as well that we may be built up in the faith and strengthened and encouraged.

We pray for Believer's Chapel and ask Thy blessing upon the outreach of the chapel for its radio ministry and for other forms of ministry carried on by faithful believers here in this local church. We pray Thy blessing upon them, each one of them, and upon their families. We pray for those whose names are in our Calendar of Concern. We ask Lord, especially for them. Give healing as it should please Thee and strengthen and encourage and build up in the faith, and for those who minister to the sick we pray for them also and for their families. Lord, we turn to Thee because we have no one else to whom we can turn for the many needs that we have in this life. We pray Thy blessing upon them. Commit them to Thee. And then for each one in this auditorium we ask Lord Thy blessing upon them and may Thy grace abound toward each of us, and we especially pray for the meetings that remain this day. Our Sunday school and for the young God people, and for the adults as well who continue to study the word of God today. Now we commit our service to Thee as we sing, as we listen to the word of God may we be responsive. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Saturday night in Ephesus or perhaps Sunday morning, we are not absolutely sure, Ephesus the city of the amphitheater and the temple of Diana, and if you were walking in the city that evening or that morning, you would move to a humbler part of the city and to the invisible temple. The temple of Diana was the greatest of the attractions of the city of Ephesus one of the great marvels of the ancient world, but there was a temple invisible in the gathering of the body of the saints in the city of Ephesus that was greater than the great temple of Diana. That temple that is the true temple cannot vie with Diana so far as outward display and glory is concerned, but it outlives Diana's temple by the ages. And from the open door of someone's home because probably the church met in someone's home you might have walked along the pathway, and you might have heard them singing a Christian hymn, and the Christian hymn might have

contained the words, “God manifest in the flesh justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”

Now the reason why that might have happened is simply this, that the words that the apostle wrote in verse 16 is a combination of words that suggest an ancient hymn. Possibly even an ancient creed. A very short creed containing some of the important points of the Christian faith, and there are reasons for that. It's not surprising that New Testament scholars have made this suggestion. And it's only a suggestion of course, but there are reasons for it. There is a rhythmic structure in the words, notice the words “Manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” And so the rhythmic structure is obvious to any one who studies them and furthermore you'll notice that the text begins with “without controversy” an expression that could mean something like beyond all doubt. And then in addition to that there is the irregularity that I mentioned concerning the word found in some manuscripts as “God” and in other manuscripts as “he who.”

Now evidentially, and it's very possible that these words belong to something larger, and they were taken out from it. And that accounts for the difficulty that the scribes had with the opening word. At any rate what it does suggest is that we are looking at the possibility that those words of verse 16 formed an ancient hymn that was sung by the believers, which the Apostle Paul regarded as true to the Scriptures and included in the letter that he wrote to young Timothy.

We know this in addition. Pliny, the younger, governor of Athena, a bit later than the writing of this, and Athena you'll remember was a province onto the Black Sea, wrote to the emperor Trajan about the Christians in the area, and he asked the emperor how he should proceed against the Christians whose worship was already outlawed and whose beliefs he stigmatized as “an odious superstition.” And in the course of the letter to the emperor he told them that they were accustomed to meet together on the morning of a fixed day, and that may have been Sunday. He may have been referring to that, but at

least he put it that way. And then he said, that they took vows not to rob or steal or lie or commit adultery, and that they sang, and this is the interesting thing. They sang “a hymn of praise to Christ as God.” So it’s, I am not suggesting that this is precisely the hymn that they sang, but I think you can see that its entirely possible that there was just such a hymn as this which was sung and it is I think rather likely that what we have it part of a hymn incorporated by Paul in the letter that he wrote to Timothy, perhaps something that Timothy himself was well aquatinted with.

We know that Paul in his writing very frequently rises from the ordinary to the sublime. He writes along and he writes letters and it sounds like the correspondence that any of you might write with the exception that he does not err doctrinally, but at any rate every now and then there comes from him a line or two or a section or two that is it seems lifted above the ordinary and comes to be something like something that surely was inspired by the Holy Spirit or the sublime. He’s been talking about church order and discipline in the earlier verses of chapter 3. He’s been talking about the elders and then he’s been talking about the deacons but now explaining that he wants Timothy to behave in the church in a certain way. He moves from the ordinary to the sublime in these remarkable verses that we have read. He wants Timothy to know how to behave in the church, which he calls a pillar, not pillow but pillar. He speaks of the church like the columns of the great temple of Diana, which holds the building up, something that should hold up the structure of the church. He talks about the church as the ground of the truth as well, a bulwark in disciplinary protection. One might ask the question why a bulwark of that upon which it founded. In what way is the church to be regarded as a pillar? In what way is the church to be regarded as a bulwark of the truth?

Now if you will look through the remainder of the epistle and then also in 2 Timothy as well, I think you’ll discover that what Paul is concerned about when he talks about the church as being the pillar and ground of the truth is the heresy that it’s possible that the church might fall into. In other words he wants to encourage the church to be

what God intended it to be, a defense against heresy. For example he talks about the heretics in 1 Timothy chapter 6, in verse 5 as those who have lost grip of the truth. In 2 Timothy chapter 2 in verse 18, he talks about the heretics as those who defy the truth, and then in 2 Timothy chapter 3 in verse 4, he talks about those who have stopped their ears to the truth. And in Titus chapter 1 another one of the pastoral epistles, he talks about those who have turned their backs upon the truth, so when he writes about the church as being the pillar and bulwark of the truth, he's talking about the church in it's office of defending the truth of God against heresy.

Now if you look at the words that are spoken in verse 15 for example he says, “To behave thyself in the house of God which is the church of the living God. The pillar and ground of the truth.” What comes to your mind surely is that the church has a double design. The church is that body of believers, which is to defend the truth of the word of God, and it is also to be the place where God's presence is found. It's the church of the living God the pillar and ground of the truth. And he calls it the house of God. So these two aspects characterize the church. It is the house of God that is the place with which God identifies himself, and secondly it's the place where the truth is to be defended. It's the defense against the error and the heresy that characterizes the preaching of the word of God and so often does characterize it incidentally. So we should think of the church as the place where God is, and we should also think of the church as the place where individuals who have received that truth gather together to be strengthened through the word of God that they might defend the truth to which they have become indebted.

I like to think of the church in that way because the church is the place with which God has identified himself, and when we meet in accordance with the Scriptures we acknowledge the facts that are found in the word of God and we seek to carry them out in our lives, and then as a body of individuals we can be sure that God is in our presence, but it is also our responsibility to defend the truth against the heretics and heresy constantly arises and within the church as well. The Apostle Paul talks about this

when in Ephesus later on he encourages the elders and reminds them that from their own midst have gone out individuals who have turned aside from the truth. Satan is always anxious to infiltrate the body of the believers and distort the truth that has been given to us, and so one of our important duties is to defend the truth.

It's not pleasant to have to defend something, and particularly defend it in connection with heresy that exists in the body of the believers because many people's feelings are sometimes disturbed by that fact. They think of it as something negative, but I think if you read the New Testament you will see that the apostles did not major on the positives entirely. They had the positives and the negatives, and they held them in their proper tension. So here the house that is the house of God, and the church, which is the preserver the pillar and ground of the truth this double design of the church of God is so important and we should never forget that in the ministry of the word of God.

Now there is one other thing I think that we ought to bear in mind too that when we say the church is the pillar and ground of the truth the preserver of the truth, we don't mean that the truth is preserved simply in its books that are written by the individuals who may be members of the church. We don't mean that the truth is preserved simply in the creeds that may have been written, and I do believe my Christian friends it's very important for you to be acquainted with the creeds of the Christian church. Almost all creeds are creeds that have been constructed after a great deal of study and careful formulation on the part ordinarily of the finest theological minds of the particular bodies who have published them.

No one should in my opinion be without an acquaintance with the Westminster Confession of Faith, The Canons of the Synod of Dort, the Lutheran confessions as well. All of those confessions are extremely important, and you will find that some of the greatest theological instruction you can find is in those creeds. But the creeds are not the Scriptures of course, so it's not to be persevered in books, the truth is. The truth is not to be preserved simply in the creeds, and surely the truth is not to be preserved in an

infallible man, who when it is said, speaks ex-cathedra. He speaks infallibly, but ultimately the truth is to be preserved in the hearts of believing individuals. And so there is the personal side of the church as the pillar and ground of the truth. We as members of the church are responsible also for our part in upholding the truth of God, defending that truth against heresy.

Well now you might ask yourself the question, well if the church is the house of the living God, the church of the living God and it's the pillar and ground of the truth, what is the truth? And the apostle gives us a brief summary of the truth here, and it has to do primarily with the Lord Jesus Christ and the ministry that gathers around him. In fact when the Lord Jesus said, “I am the way the truth and the life.” A great deal of what Paul says is simply an exposition of our Lord's statement. The truth. What is the truth? He's the truth, and all of the things that have to do with him express the truth and there are many other things beside the simple statement, Christ is the truth are expositions of what is meant when we say, “Christ is the truth.” All of this ministry, so the following words then explain the truth in what may be called, as Mr. Spurgeon entitled his sermon, The Hexipla of Mystery, the six things that have to do with the mystery, which he speaks of here as the mystery of godliness. And so we want to look at them, and first of all say just a word about verse 16's introduction. “And without controversy.” That is beyond all question.

Now strictly speaking there have been many questions about the truth, but there should not be questions about them, and that's the vantage from which the apostle writes beyond all question great is the mystery of godliness. I know there have been many questions about it, but there should not be Paul says and all agree if they are believing individuals that the contents of the mystery of godliness are great. Great is the mystery of godliness.

You might ask why he calls it a mystery. Well the term mystery is one of Paul's favorite expressions because it expresses truth that cannot be known by men naturally but

is known by men by revelation from God, a secret. So the secret of godliness is the truth that God revealed, which you could not have understood without the aid of the Holy Spirit, so it's the secret in that sense, God's redemptive plan hid from eternity and time but now revealed, revealed to believers. Believers only can understand the secret of godliness.

Now it would be nice at his point to talk about the various mysteries to which the apostle refers in his other writings, but we don't have time to do that. There are six or eight of them in the word of God that he calls mysteries, and what he means simply is that they are truths that are revealed to believing individuals and others are unable to comprehend them. This one he calls the secret of godliness, and in its essence as we've mentioned it is the incarnate, glorified Lord Jesus Christ, and if you were to spell out all that is significant in the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ the ministry that he accomplished and ultimately his glorification to the right hand of the throne of God all true spiritual truth would be related to that great ministry of the Son of God. He is the truth.

Now there are six lines that expound the idea further, and we'll just look at them in the remaining time that we have, and line one is “He who was manifest in the flesh.” So now we're turning to the truth, and what you read here of course could have never been said by any mere man. You could never say these things about a Moses. You could never say these things about a Socrates, even less than about Moses. You could not even say these things about the Apostle Paul. All true Christianity, all truth from God depends upon the truths that are expressed here, “He was manifest in the flesh.”

Now the Authorized Version has, “God was manifest in the flesh.” And I don't want to debate that because that's precisely what did happen, but lets say for a moment that I could show to you that God was not written by the Apostle Paul but some scribe inserted it through a mistake, an error of the eye, looking at the little word *baas* and thinking that was the abbreviation for God, which would have been *baas* with a line

through it. I want to explain to you why this must be a reference to Jesus Christ. Well in the first place could this refer to any man? Can you speak of a man as being manifest in the flesh, aside from the Lord Jesus Christ? You cannot speak of men being manifested in the flesh as if they existed beforehand and now they are manifested in the flesh. This kind of language would fit no other man than our Lord Jesus Christ.

Well suppose for example I might argue it's not a man, but it's rather an angel, and angel manifest in the flesh. Incidentally every man is manifest in the flesh. If you want to talk about individuals such as we are being in the flesh. All men are manifest in the flesh, and so you could not single out one man and say that about him, but could this be an angel? What angel was ever manifest in the flesh? We do not know of any angel who was manifest in the flesh, and if he were to be manifested in the flesh would it be a mystery that he should be seen of angels as the text goes on to speak about. Could it be that the devil was manifest in the flesh? Well if so he's been received up into glory because the individual who is manifested in the flesh, if he were an angel has been received up into glory, and we would not, I don't think, fall on the side of those who believe that the devil has now been received up into glory. In other words we couldn't think of any man to whom the words would fit. We cannot think of any angel to whom the words can fit, and finally then the individual who is manifest in the flesh, must surely be God, and so even though the text as we say did not have “God manifest in the flesh” but simply “he who was manifest in the flesh,” we are talking about our Lord Jesus Christ, who was God.

Sometimes I am amazed, I must admit I am amazed at individuals who can look at a text like this. You almost think that they want to indicate that our Lord Jesus Christ is not what the Scriptures say, and these individuals frequently are professing Christians who would look at this and say, “Well we cannot use this text of the deity of Jesus Christ because the Greek text has “he who” and not “God”.” But you know in reading the Bible if we read the Bible simply in a cursory way that's the kind of conclusion we might

come to, but when you read the Scriptures you are expected to think, and so if you think about he who was manifest in the flesh, you'll realize it cannot be a man. It cannot be an angel. It cannot be the devil, and the things that are said about this individual that follow can only be things that refer to our Lord Jesus Christ. And so what we have here then is a reference to our Lord Jesus Christ as the eternal God, the one who was manifest in the flesh.

There is a marvelous story, I think about Bronson Alcott. Bronson Alcott was the father of Louisa May Alcott, who wrote the well-known work Little Women, and Bronson Alcott was a New England dreamer and a seer. He visited England one time and he had a conversation with Thomas Carlyle, and in the conversation with Thomas Carlyle, he said that he himself could sincerely say as much as Jesus said, that he was “one with the Father.” And Carlyle who had a little more intelligence said, “Yes, but Jesus got men to believe him.” [Laughter] And how true that is. “God manifest in the flesh,” that's a reference to our Lord Jesus Christ. It can only be a reference to him. And furthermore it implies his pre existence. He was manifest in the flesh. He existed beforehand. He was manifest in the flesh, and manifest in the flesh. In other words not man, not an angel is nearest to God, but the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God. What fullness of comfort and fullness of truth is found in the fact that a man, the God man, is our representative, and being in him we are nearer to him than angels. So we look for God not in the bush, as Moses did. We do not look at him as being on Mount Sinai. We look to the Lord Jesus Christ. He was manifest in the flesh. Incidentally the fact that he was manifest in the flesh, and the things said about him here, suggest also his virgin conception as well. So that's line one, the incarnation of Christ. The second thing that is said about him is that he was justified in the spirit.

Now I would like to suggest that this word “spirit” should be lowercased. A little “s” not capitalized. Justified in the spirit due to the parallelism “God manifest in the flesh justified in the spirit.” The reference is to the Son of God in his spirit. And the

resurrection is implied. “Justified in his spirit by virtue of the resurrection.” He’s no convicted imposter as men wanted to say and crucified him saying that he was a blasphemer. There are many reasons to doubt the claims of the Lord Jesus when he was in flesh. After all if you think of the Son of God one who claims to be very God of very God, you wouldn’t think of an individual who lived in poverty would you naturally. You would not think of an individuals who was crucified through weakness would you? You would not think of an individual who was known by the leaders of the nation as a man of disrepute. And so he was justified in the spirit in the sense that God raised him from the dead. And thus it became evident that he was more than the world thought of him as being. He was indeed the Son of God.

J.B. Phillips in one of his writings, which has been often quoted, asks three questions that must be answered if the historical fact of the resurrection is rejected. The first question Mr. Phillips said was, “Who changed?” or “What changed the early disciples from dissertation to a steady flame of belief in the resurrection in spite of personal loss?” The second question, “If the resurrection did not happen, who was Jesus Christ?” And he goes on to suggest that if the resurrection did not take place then Christ was a lunatic and idealist suffering from folie de grandeur on the biggest scale because he did claim that. He may have been a fraud and an imposter and how can we possibly revere the teaching of such a fraud? But then he asks a third question, and he said, “Why are so many Christians sure that Christ not only rose, but alive today?” And Mr. Phillips said, “That question may enrage the critic, but it’s a very fair one. A man may find difficulty in writing a poem, but if he cries, ‘William Shakespeare help me.’ Nothing happens. He may be terribly afraid, but if he cries out, ‘Oh Horatio Nelson help me.’ There is no sort of reply. But if he’s at the end of his moral resources or cannot but effort or will muster up sufficient positive love and goodness, and he cries out, ‘Oh Jesus Christ help me.’ something happens as once.” He was vindicated in the Spirit as the resurrected Lord and believing Christians who rely upon him and call upon him know that that is true.

Line number three, “seen of angels.” The interest of the angelic world in the mission of Christ is very well known, you read through the New Testament and you’ll find at various important points in our Lord’s life the angels appear on the scene, just to take a couple of them at his birth. The angels sang in heaven. Near his death the angels are in Gethsemane strengthening him. There are angels associated with his ascension into heaven. I suggest to you however that this text does not refer to those events. When it says he is seen of angels if we follow along chronologically, what we are talking about is our Lord being seen of them in heaven, when he entered heaven into the world of the angelic beings, and the world of his Father, so I would suggest to you that when it says seen of angels, he said he was manifest in the flesh it was justified in the spirit in the resurrection seen of angels. He has entered heaven and the angels have beheld him there. It’s still true of course angels in fixed amazement around our alters hover with eager gaze adore the grace of our eternal lover, but the text that Paul talks about it seems to me refers to our Lord’s entering heaven where he was seen of angels.

Line four is preached unto the Gentiles or the proclamation among the gentiles. Incidentally this is not simply a program that God engages in, but it’s a program that has to do with a person. Now you know I am not going to say it’s not important to pay attention to biblical doctrine let us be sure that we are attached simply to a person. That of course if false, but it is true to say that the program of God, the purpose of God is not simply a program, but it’s a program that has to do with a person. And both of those are true. We must hold to the propositions of the word of God but the propositions have to do with a person, and we do not grasp the truth fully if we don’t have the propositional side of it and also the personal side of it. So proclaimed among the Gentiles, that’s the next step in the drama of the word of God, but I want you to notice too that it says, “preached unto the Gentiles.”

Now I think that’s important because in our day the tendency is for us to try everything but preaching because people in evangelical churches have often reached the

stage where they don't really like preaching. They would like to be entertained, and so we have portrayed among the Gentiles, by what? By liturgy. In other words if we have impressive liturgy people who no longer have stomach for the preaching of the word of God it's doctrines, it's great truths love to sit in an audience and observe a leader carrying out liturgy. It does not of course require us to listen and pay attention and use our minds, and the word of God says, “preached among the Gentiles.” So it's not to be portrayed. It's not to be drawn as if art is the way by which we are to make Christ known. It's not to be acted as if drama is the way by which we are to spread the truth, preaching is God's ordained way of the dissemination of the word of God.

Now I am not going to say that it's never possible for someone to engage in drama. It's never possible for some liturgical act to have some significance. It's never possible for art to have something to do with the portrayal of the truth, but as a general rule when art is used you must know the truth in order to understand the art, and also in drama you must know the truth in order to see it in the drama. The divinely given way of proclaiming the word of God however is preaching.

Now some of us don't do preaching very well, I know that of course, but nevertheless that is God's way in which the truth is to be proclaimed among the Gentiles, proclamation among the Gentiles. One might ask, “Well why is that a mystery? Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness preached among the Gentiles, what's mysterious about that?” Well the very fact that the good news is preached among the Gentiles is the mystery because up until the time of the coming of our Lord no preaching was done to the Gentiles the truth of God was concerned with the nation Israel and even our Lord said that he was not sent but to the house of Israel, but as a result of the ministries unfolding now we are living in the day in which as a result of Israel's disobedience the word of God has gone out to the Gentiles, and so Christ is preached among the Gentiles with the apostle as the apostle and teacher of the Gentiles, and so it's a mystery in that sense. The Lord Jesus even spoke about those who were not of Israel as

being dogs remember? In his encounter with the woman from Canaan, and he himself spoke about the fact that the truth should not be given to the dogs, but the time has come in which the preaching to the Gentiles takes place.

And then line five, “believed on in the world.” In light of man’s nature, that’s very remarkable. The gospel story a strange contrary to all prejudices of the flesh insulting to our self-esteem. That is that we cannot save ourselves, but we read “believed on in the world.” In fact it’s a mystery still.

Line six, “received up into glory.” “Proclaimed among the Gentiles, received in the world, and not received up into glory.” The ascension in session of the Lord Jesus Christ, so “received up into glory.” The original text probably has the word “in” and so received up into glory, and now is in glory is probably the idea of it. Our covenant head has finished his work. And as a result he’s seated at the right hand of the throne of God, but he is still with us. And in having him with us, we have the assurance of the blessing of God upon the ministry of the word of God and the church of Jesus Christ.

Edwin M. Stanton was the secretary of war in the days of the civil war, and Mr. Stanton was the one who was in the room with President Abraham Lincoln when he died. It was April the 15th. I don't know whether there’s any connection with the IRS, but it was April the 15th 1865 at 7:22 in the morning. The room had the sunlight coming into the room, but as Mr. Stanton looked over and saw the President breath his last, he went over. Pulled down that shades, and then turned and said to others who were in the room, “Now he belongs to the ages.” There is one person who really belongs to the ages. And there is one person to whom the ages belong, and that is the one who is referred to here as God manifest in the flesh, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Let me conclude with just an observation. This is the duty of the church. It’s to support and defend the truth, and it’s to do it by preaching, and what that means, it’s not simply that we should always have someone in a pulpit like this preaching. No, in my opinion this probably would have been a meeting that would have been rather strange to

an early church. The early church gathered and engaged in meetings such as we do on Sunday night. The Ministry of the Word service would have been unknown to them. The idea that we should have a meeting that would simply be a ministry of the word meeting with some man who week after week may preach the word of God would have been unknown to them, but so far as I know there is nothing in the word of God that says that cannot be done, but in the early church the believers who had been gifted by the Holy Spirit preached the word of God in their meetings. And so consequently it was not simply one man who stood and ministered the word of God, but the church was a preaching church and then when they left having been strengthened by their fellowship they went out to spread the word of God in preaching. Preaching is simply the communication of gospel to others, and that's precisely what you and I should do. We are the part of the pillar and ground of the truth, and we are to defend that truth, and we are to defend it by preaching it. Call it testifying. Call it preaching. We are referring to the same thing, and if we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and we are not making the truth known, we are not fulfilling what God would have us to do.

Let me tell you just a brief story before we close. When James M. Gray who later was president of Moody Bible Institute was quite a young man he said, he heard George Mingins pastor, evangelist in the Presbyterian church relate this experience. Mr. Mingins had been an infidel in his youth and associated with infidel companions in Philadelphia, and some time after his conversion he was visiting one of his old friends who said to him during the course of the visit for a few days in the home of his friend, “George, I hear you are a Christian now. Is that so?” “It is.” Said Mr. Mingins. “And George, do you believe in God?” “I do.” “And do you believe in hell, and that all who do not believe in God and in Jesus Christ will ultimately go to hell?” “I do most solemnly.” Mr. Mingins said. “Well George,” said he, “does Christianity dry up all the milk of humanity in ones body as it has in yours.” “Why,” said Mr. Mingins, “What do you mean?” He said. “I mean this George. That here you have been living under my roof for three days and three nights, knowing

and believing all this, and you've never put your hand on my shoulder and said a word that might be the means by which God might save me.” And so I said to myself, I say to you that we as part of the church of Jesus Christ are expected to defend the gospel to proclaim it, defend it as the saving truth, and if we are not communicating that truth with those who come in contact that infidel friend of George Mingins [ph48:58] may have had something that was true to say as all humanity been dried up within our hearts and our failure to tell our friends of the destiny that faces them if they do not believe in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

If you are here today and you haven't believed in Christ we remind you as Paul did that this is the truth and that salvation is available for those who will believe in him as the one who has offered the sacrifice by which you and I might be saved. May God in his grace touch your heart to that end? Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father we are so grateful to Thee for the truths of the word of God, and Lord we acknowledge that so often we fail to defend the truth as we should defend it, and we enable the heretics to gain a step and the result is that the church today has been infiltrated by error and deception and untruth. Lord, we ask Thy blessing upon Believer's Chapel and other evangelical congregations that believers may truly realize their responsibility and proclaim the truth by preaching, protect and defend it that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ may be properly glorified in the salvation of souls and in the strengthening of the saints of God. And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.