



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 2:12-22

“The First Cleansing of the Temple”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We are turning to John chapter 2 and reading verses 12 through 22 for the Scriptures reading this morning. John chapter 2, verse 12 through verse 22. Remember in our preceding study we looked at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, the first of the signs that John has described for us in his gospel. And now we follow right after that, verse 12 through verse 22.

“After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days. And the Jews' Passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: and when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things from here; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. (By the way, in the original text at this point, instead of the past tense we have a future tense. And so this should be rendered, ‘The zeal of thine house shall consume me.’ And it is probably an intentional variation on the part of the apostle in which he is trying to point out that this particular text has future reference as well. It is possible even that this is a reference to the cross, although that may not be necessarily involved. But at any rate we should read, ‘The zeal of thine house shall

consume me.?) Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign showest Thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt Thou rear it up in three days? But he spoke of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.”

It is sometimes difficult for us to put ourselves in the apostle’s place, remembering that there was a time when they did not understand a large part of the things that were transpiring around them. Luke tells us when our Lord announces that he is going to Jerusalem to die and to be buried and to be raised again on the third day that they understood none of these things. So just as many of us, the apostles had true faith in the Lord faith in the Lord Jesus but it was a growing faith and needed constant illumination and enlightenment. And the time of the death, burial, and resurrection came to pass and then the day of Pentecost and the same apostles who were deficient in their knowledge of Scripture, but not in the essence of their faith in the Lord, came to a fuller appreciation of the things of God and became what for us they usually signify the infallible interpreters of the truth of God for us. May the Lord bless this reading of his word.

Our Subject today in the exposition of the Gospel of John is “The First Cleansing of the Temple.” This incident is an incident that appears in John chapter 2 in marked contrast to the preceding incident, the marriage in Cana of Galilee. The marriage was a day of joy, of happiness of the enjoyment of one of the greatest of the experiences of life. But this day is a day of manifestation of divine judgment. In the one case the Lord Jesus supplies wine for the marriage feast. In the next case he empties the temple of the money changers and those who sold the sacrificial animals in the temple area.

In the one case our Lord is commended. Mary says, “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.” But in this incident the Lord Jesus Christ is challenged. Give us a sign so that we may really know

that thou hast the power to do these things. In the one incident we have one that points perhaps to his death in the turning of the water into wine which was the blood of grapes, suggestive ultimately of the death of our Lord. In this one we have a clear pointing to the resurrection as the apostles note. But it is rather striking, I think, there are many other things that we might say about these two incidents but I think it's rather striking that in the one we have the manifestation of grace and in the other we have the manifestation of judgment and these two things are set right here in the beginning of the Gospel of John as if to suggest that they cover pretty much the whole ground of the character of our Lord Jesus. For he is, of course, one out of whose mouth came wonderful words of grace but he is also at the same time the ultimate judge of the universe. For, as he shall say later on in this very gospel, all judgment has been committed by the Father to the Son.

So we learn that the Lord is not only a savior in grace but he is a sovereign judge. He's a shepherd with a child in his arms but he is also the Lord with a scourge in his hands. It's possible, you know, to make of Jesus Christ in one of the aspects of his character something of an idol if we do not give him this other aspect of his character as well. It's possible to read the Bible and misread Jesus Christ. It's possible to have in our minds a caricature of him. And if our misconception of our Lord Jesus Christ makes him out to be other than he really is and if we worship him as we think he is when he is not really simply that it's almost as if we are worshipping an idol, for we are worshipping someone who is not really what the Scriptures set him forth to be.

It's possible to blandly overlook, neglect, or even intentionally put aside those aspects of our Lord's character that formed just as much or a part of the divine revelation as the manifestations of his love and grace. And this is an incident that I think is an especially important for that reason. We tend to choose to think about Jesus Christ the things that please us. We tend to want to avoid those things that we do not think are worthy of him. But strictly speaking, our thoughts of him sometimes do not come from diligent and humble study of the Scriptures and submission to them but they come from excogitation if I may use a lengthy word. Excogitation for ourselves of an ideal which is not really set out in Scriptures; that is, we really have constructed a Jesus Christ who is not altogether

true to the word of God. How important it is that we think right thoughts about the Lord Jesus Christ.

These past few days, this past week or two I had been studying with a class of theological students in Chicago -- where it is cold -- [Laughter] the attributes of God. And one of the things that I have been trying to make plain to these young people is that our thoughts of God are fundamental for our understanding of the divine revelation. And if we do not think right thoughts about God we do not have the right conception of God. And those things cannot, cannot, cannot be over emphasized. Let's not make of the Lord Jesus Christ an idol by emphasizing only his love, only his grace, only the sweetness of his character.

It reminds me of a story that I read a long time ago of a young boy and a young girl who had danced all night in a roadhouse. Now I don't think they have roadhouses today but they used to have roadhouses when we were young. And they had spent the whole night in the dancehall which reeked with the smell of whiskey and beer and tobacco. And finally in the early hours of the morning they came outdoors and the girl who was with the young man suddenly sniffed a bit and said, “What's that I smell?” And the young boy replied, “That's not a smell, that's fresh air.” We all have had similar experiences. It's possible for us to live in the swamps of low grade Christianity so long that the fresh air of the hills stuns, and the same thing is true in the study of Jesus Christ. It's so possible for us to be exposed to false views of him that when we come to true views of him we tend to think that perhaps that's not right. What's that smell? Why, it's nothing more than the fresh air of the word of God.

Now this incident is to be distinguished, I think, from the second cleansing of the temple which occurs near the end of our Lord's ministry. Jesus had been in Cana, Nathaniel's hometown. There he had attended the wedding feast and there he had turned the water into wine. Now if we read Matthew in the light of this passage and this passage in the light of Matthew, he had moved from Cana via Nazareth, down to Capernaum which was on the north side of the Sea of Galilee. And there he stayed, according to John, not many days. But it was near Passover time. And after all,

Jerusalem was the place where God had put his name and so it was there that the sacrifices were to be offered and it was there that the Passover was to be celebrated.

One could not offer sacrifices anywhere, one offered sacrifices in Jerusalem in the temple area. One could not celebrate the Passover anywhere, in Jerusalem was the place where God had put his name. And so the Lord Jesus as a faithful Jewish man went up at the Passover time to Jerusalem in order to participate in the Passover feast. Let us never forget that the Bible says concerning the Lord Jesus that he was a minister of the circumcision in behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises made unto the fathers. So our Lord’s primary thrust in his ministry was to carry out his task as the Messianic King, taking the gospel to the children of Israel. He was not sent unto the gentiles, he was sent unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel, he said. In behalf of the truth of God, in behalf of the faithfulness of God, and to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.

So evidently there was some special promises directed to the people of God, the children of Israel. Now he went up to Jerusalem and Malachi had said that he would suddenly come to his temple after the forerunner had said, “Make straight the way of the Lord.” Well, he comes suddenly to his temple. The ultimate fulfillment, I think, of that prophecy is at the second advent of the Lord Jesus. But this is one of those incidental fulfillments along the way. So as the Messiah, fulfilling the prophecy of Malachi chapter 3, verse 1, he enters the temple.

Now, the temple symbolized him because the temple was the place where the worship of God took place and the worship of God takes place in the true temple of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is not one of you in this auditorium who is able to worship God other than through the temple of the Lord Jesus Christ. We read, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” He is able to save unto the uttermost those that come unto God by him, seeing that he ever liveth to make intercession for them. He is the true temple. God has put his name upon Jesus Christ. All of the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving are offered through him so that today we worship in the true temple. That’s why the church is also called a collective body, the temple. It is as a group of people of who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ that we carry on our

collective worship of the Lord God. No worship is acceptable to God in heaven that does not come through Jesus Christ. He is the way to God.

In that sense, he is the true temple. So here he comes into the temple suddenly. The temple that symbolizes him in order ultimately to supersede this temple and supplant it by the temple of his own person and body. Now when he comes into the temple of God, the place that should be a house of prayer, what does he find? Well he finds it a place like a stockade. Someone had called it the bazaars of Annas, the high priest. That was what was going on, they were there in all of the numbers. If you think about it for a moment and you can understand the rationalizations that must have taken place, I'm sure that someone would have objected that to the fact that they were there people who were changing money in the temple area, in the court of the gentiles, to which all worshipers had access. No doubt, there were some people who were saying, “I don't really think that this ought to be carried on in here.” And then there were some faithful souls who, as they saw individuals come in and buy animals for sacrifice from those who sold the animals, they probably said, “I really don't think that this ought to take place here.”

But it was our Lord who made it really plain. You see, there would have been a rationalizing of it. I'm sure that people would have said now, well it may not be the best thing to do to change money here or to sell the animals here but think of it, a person lives in Nazareth, in Galilee, in order to sacrifice one of his animals in Jerusalem he would have to bring the animal all the way down from Nazareth to Jerusalem. And then he would have to bring the animal to the priest and the priest would have to say, “Make a pronouncement as to whether it was suitable for sacrifice, whether there were blemishes on it. There'd be a great temptation for the priests, ultimately, to enter into collusion with those who sold the animals. So that those who sold the animals might sell their animals at a profit from which the priests would get cuts. If the priest would say, as you presented your animal for acceptance as sacrifice, the priest should say, “Well that really is an animal that has a blemish.” And so they would pronounce it unsuitable for sacrifice. So all of that labor for nothing. So

ultimately what happened was that the temple area became a place of business and bribery and all of the sins that go along with it.

But you can imagine people saying, “Well, it’s so much more convenient to buy your animals down here.” And then remember this, every male Israelite had every year to give a half shekel into the treasury. The women were excluded and the slaves were excluded, but everybody else had to give a half shekel into the common treasury. But it had to be a shekel. Now they have shekels back in Israel now, finally, again, but this had to be a shekel and so it had to be Hebrew money. Now other kinds of money were used constantly and so in order to give a shekel and you’re required to give just a shekel, you had to give it in Hebrew money, you had to change your money. Your Roman coins or other coins had to be changed and so there in the temple area were the moneychangers who were also making money by the changing of money.

So the place had become something like a stockade, filled with business, not unlike some of our churches today with their auctions and their bingo, won’t be long before they have zingo-bingo in the churches, raffles, bazaars. And the church, instead of being a house of prayer as Jeremiah said, it becomes a din of robbers and thieves. That’s what our Lord found when he came into the temple area.

So what did he do? Stand off and say, “I don’t really think that this ought to go on in the house of God.” No, our Lord was the Messiah who had come to the temple suddenly and so he made a small scourge, a little whip of small cords. That’s a very poor weapon, incidentally, but it was a beautiful emblem of authority because with a scourge or with a whip one executes punishment. And so that is what our Lord did. We read that he made a scourge of small cords and he drove them all out of the temple. Drove the animals out, the money changers out, overturned their tables, he threw the whole lot out.

Now that is a most amazing thing. Our Lord, we say, is infinitely gracious but he is also inflexibly righteous. Never forget that. Our Lord Jesus Christ, inflexibly righteous. But have you ever wondered how it is possible for one man to drive out the Jewish money changers and the sellers

of the animals to overthrow their tables to destroy their work, so to speak, one many in that entire temple area. Have you ever wondered about that? I’ve wondered about it. How would it be possible? Surely they were very much interested in what they were doing and they were enjoying the fact that they were making money out of what they were doing. But here is one man who manages to overthrow the whole business. How did it happen?

Well I think we can only understand this if we imagine that there was such an overwhelming impression of the majesty of the eternal God that shown through the Lord Jesus Christ that they were actually put in the fear of God by the look upon his face. As someone has said, “An overwhelming impression of his personal majesty and perhaps some forth-putting of that hidden glory which did swim up to the surface on the mountain of transfiguration, bound all these men before him like reeds before the wind. Though they did not understand fully all that was involved in this, there was just something in him that made them think of the eternal God. It was as if the Lord God took the curtains and pulled them slightly apart so that through the human nature and the human body of the Lord Jesus, they gained an impression of the eternal God.

Now we know from the Bible that when our Lord comes at his second advent we shall see our Lord in this aspect primarily. In his first coming he was manifested primarily in his grace. But in his second coming he will be manifested in his glory and the glory of holiness and the glory of his judgment. And when he comes and the heavens are rolled away like a scroll and the stars in the heavens fall like the figs, untimely figs, from the fig trees when the wind shakes them as John says in the Book of Revelation, those individuals who had never really prayed in their lives will pray then. But the kind of prayer they pray will be to the mountains, not to the true God. To the mountains and to the rocks and they will cry out, “Hide us from the face of the one who sits upon the throne and from the wrath of the lamb.” So the Lamb of God ultimately will manifest divine wrath and this whole earth shall sense the glory of his majesty. That, I think is what we see here manifested in our Lord.

Now I'd like to say something that I think is extremely important right at this point. This lack of indignation at wickedness which is so characteristic of our age and even lack of indignation at wickedness on the part of Christians is not a sign of a poor nature only but of positive unlikeness to Jesus Christ. If we were truly like him we should have the same attitude toward wickedness that our Lord had. We must not so misread the Lord Jesus Christ that he become simply an ugly idol, an individual who loves and is sweet and gentle and nice but is not the inflexible righteous Messiah that the Scriptures reveal of him.

The wrath of God, incidentally, is never thought of in the Bible as opposed to his love. The wrath of God in the Bible is never opposed to his holiness. He is both loving and wrathful. He is both loving and holy. And in fact, if our Lord Jesus Christ had for one moment diminished his holiness, if he had for one moment diminished his sense of indignation at that which was contrary to the will of God. Then he would have lost my soul because it was absolutely essential that he be perfectly holy and perfectly righteous in order that he might be my substitute on the cross at Calvary. So when we see our Lord revealed here as the one who drives the money changers out we should rejoice in the manifestation of what the Old Testament prophets and the psalmists call the beauties of holiness. This is magnificent and I am so grateful that we have a savior like this.

What was a spark at this time becomes a flame at the Second Advent when we read of the wrath of the Lamb. I think also the success of our Lord in doing this is not only because of his majesty. I think, incidentally, of the incident in the garden of Gethsemane later on when they came for the Lord, the soldiers and Judas. And he went out to meet them and said, “Whom seek ye?” And they said, “Jesus of Nazareth.” And our Lord replied, “I am he.” In the original text just simply, “I am.” That's the name of the covenant keeping God, “I am who I am.” And when he said, “I am,” just the words caused the soldiers to go back and fall on the ground. Again, just a little of the forth-putting of the divine majesty.

But I think also not only was this the putting forth of the majesty of God as he took the scourge and drove them out of the temple but there also was no doubt as far as the men were

concerned a sense of their own bad conscience. A sense of their own sin in the presence of this holy Messiah of Israel.

Now we read following this that his disciples remembered that it was written. I like that because Matthew Henry said somewhere, talking about reformation, and with reference to this statement here, “It is written.” He said, “In the reformation of the church, the eye must be on the Scriptures.” If we are ever thinking about reformation in a church, reformation in the individual’s life, reformation in a local church, reformation in the whole of the church, our standard, our eye, must be on Holy Scripture. It is what the Bible teaches that we are to follow. It is not what men say, it is not their opinions. It is what the Scriptures say.

So in reformation whether personal, or ecclesiastical, or of the whole of the church, the local church or the whole church, our eye must always be on the, “It is written.” What we are anxious to do always is to become more and more harmonious with the teaching of the word of God. So they remembered that it had been written. The zeal of thine house hath consumed me.” Or as the original text says here, “Shall consume me.” And it would seem to me that the New Testament authors have interpreted that statement of the Old Testament to include this. And perhaps even on up to include the remainder of his ministry. But no one was ever more consumed with a passion for the will of God than the Lord Jesus Christ. The zeal of thine house hath consumed me, or shall consume me and the final manifestation of it at the first coming in the cross.

Well there’s some contrasting responses to this. We’re not surprised because there is always contrasting response to the word of God. And we have the disciples who have expressed sympathy. This incident is a food for their faith, ultimately. They remembered the Scriptures; they see in this a manifestation of the truth of Psalm 69, and verse 9, “The zeal of thine house hath consumed me,” and in direct prophecy of the character of his ministry.

But the Jews, on the other hand, and let me hasten to say not simply because they were Jews, because the gentiles had, ultimately, the same response, but the unbelievers, the Jews in this instance, had antipathy toward him. They find this that he has done food for fault-finding instead of for faith.

And they ask him, “What sign showest Thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things?” So they’re looking for some explanation. There was a similar response in the beginning of our Lord’s Galilean ministry when he went into the synagogue at Nazareth in the north of the land. His first ministry, his first public ministry was to get up and read Isaiah. And then he expounded the text of the word of God and some of them marveled at the words of grace which flowed from his lips. They said, “Is this really Joseph the Carpenter’s son?” They were just amazed at what he had done. But others were disturbed about it and went out seeking ways by which they might put him to death. And here in the beginning of this Judean ministry the same response, always the twofold response, always the twofold response down through the years, always the twofold response in the Old Testament, always and inevitably and immutably the twofold response to the word of God. Some respond, usually a minority, the great mass are totally unaffected by the ministry of the word of God. Show us a sign.

When I was in the insurance business in Birmingham, Alabama I had some friends who were very good friends. They were Christians. They were always anxious to convert me. They didn’t often come out just blatantly and say, “You’re going to hell Lewis,” but they let me know that that’s really the way they felt. That something had to happen. They were nice about it, they remained my friends, we would gather with these couples and one or two of the couples were Christians and we would have our fun with them but, nevertheless, they were anxious for some response. And so finally Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse came to town and for a week of meeting at the South Highlands Presbyterian Church of which I was a member, I was a Presbyterian but I wasn’t a Christian, and I had grown up in that church. So they arranged a little meeting and they managed to get my acquiescence in it. I look back on it now, it was just the providence of God. I didn’t like to go to teas on Sunday afternoon; I liked to play golf on Sunday afternoon. I was playing serious tournament golf in those days.

But anyway, it was February and the weather was not all that good and so I thought I probably won’t lose too much by going to this tea. There were about ten young couples there and

one young couple was a Christian young couple, one other person was a Christian, that was my wife, and they had arranged this little meeting at which I would be. And we sat and drank a little tea and they asked Dr. Barnhouse questions and he was extremely good with young couples particularly. Answered all of our questions, even answered my question. Mine was about the word of God. I just wanted to know if the Bible was the word of God. If the Bible was the word of God that settled all issues as far as I was concerned. I then ought to be submissive to it if it's the word of God, that settles it.

Well, he gave me a good answer but I still was not converted and I thought, well this is a nice afternoon, a nice two hours, and everybody went out to the front of the house to put on our coats in order to go home, it was a cold night. And as I was putting mine on Dr. Barnhouse said, “Well who's taking me to church tonight?” Well I hadn't given any promise of going to church; I said I would go to a tea. [Laughter] But my wife spoke up and said, “We will.” [Laughter] And I was -- I had just been brought up to not say rude things to a minister even though I didn't really want to go to church. So I found myself driving the preacher to church. And I've told you before of my experience and I was converted through the week of meetings that week. But the thing that is, I think, most interesting is that out of those ten -- I say ten or twelve, there may have been twelve -- young couples that heard Dr. Barnhouse give the message of the gospel very plainly, very clearly. I don't think anyone could do a better job than he did of preaching justification by faith, which he did.

Out of that group of people -- for awhile there were two couples that responded and then ultimately one of the couples drifted away so that finally in the preaching of the word of God we are again, a few respond and the great mass it seems do not respond. In this case the great mass of the people found it an occasion for raising questions about the Lord Jesus.

Now the Lord replies to them, they had asked for a sign and so he gives them a sign. It is suggestive, that very term is suggestive, of the fact that his answer will be something of a symbolic sign. So he said to them, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.” Now I think that if they had properly pondered his words in the light of the question that they had asked they would

have come to him as the true temple of God. They had asked for a sign and so he replies, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.” It is possible that that should be understood literally possible. “Destroy this temple, this great magnificent temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” But, after all, it’s highly unlikely that he wanted to be considered as some supernatural architect and contractor who could construct a building like that in three days so that’s unlikely to be the force. It could have been said figuratively in the sense of, “Destroy this temple, the temple of my body, and I will resurrect it in three days.” That, of course, is true. And is it not interesting that this is probably the one passage in the New Testament in which the Lord Jesus says that he was active in his resurrection. Almost all of the instances of the New Testament set the Father out as the one who raised the Son from the dead because by that we know that the Father approved of the work of the Son. But this one makes very plain that he, too, was active in his resurrection. It is the Father, however, who takes the lead.

We have no question about his power. He said, “I have power to lay it down, I have power to take it again.” But it’s also possible that he means by the term “temple” here when he says, “Destroy this temple,” that he means the temple of his body. And in three days he will raise it again from the dead, that he is speaking so figuratively that he means, “Destroy this temple,” perhaps even the temple as the place where God dwells. “And I will raise it up in three days,” in the sense of he will construct a new temple, the temple of the body of Christ. But at any rate, these words are words that ultimately would lead men to him. They would know, for example, that this was a sign and therefore the words were to be taken symbolically. They would also know that in three days he could not rear up, or would not rear up, another temple. They would know that the temple was the place where God dwelt and thus raising it up again might suggest the place of God’s presence shall be restored. They would know that this destroy expresses adverse action as in overthrow. And they might get the sense that they were destroying him and therefore he was making a claim to be the temple. And finally, if he’s the real temple of God then, of course, he would be the Messianic King. At any rate, what we have in our Lord’s words is the expression of impotence and then omnipotence.

And I’m inclined to think that he meant, “Destroy this temple, that is the temple of my body, and I will raise it up in three days. And furthermore, that will be the temple of God.” The risen Christ: the temple of God.

Well they say, “Forty and six years was this temple in building and wilt Thou rear it up in three days?” John the Baptist said, “There standeth one among you whom ye know not.” These words represent in miniature the total reaction of Judaism to Jesus Christ. They do not understand anything of that which is happening in their midst. And finally John concludes with, “But he spoke of the temple of his body.” And then he adds, “When therefore he was risen from the dead his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.”

So John says he was speaking of the temple of his body and that they might destroy it, but in three days he would be resurrected. And furthermore, that that would be the true temple, the place where God is truly worshiped through the Lord Jesus Christ. Isn’t it interesting that they were talking about preserving the temple and their very actions were destroying the temple but God was using it all to erect a new temple, sweeping away Judaism and now the new temple, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the worship of God through him who is the way to God.

The public manifestation leads to reception by a few rejection by many, just as he came unto his own and his own received him not but as many as received him to them gave ye power to become the children of God. What is the message of this? Well I think the message is very simple. Profanation leads to punishment, desecration of the things of God leads to divine denunciation and ultimately divine judgment. Secularity and sacred things leads to judgment by the one whose eyes are as a flame of fire. There are really two temples where this may take place. There is the temple of the local church. It’s not impossible for the temple of the local church to have within it merchandise that is dishonoring to the Lord God. It’s possible for a group of people who worship the Lord, the true worship, and nevertheless permit things to enter in in the worship of the body of Christ that are contrary to the will of God. The house of God which is the body of Christ should be a house of

prayer, a house of expression of devotion, a house of the expression of worship. The things of the world should not enter into it. The things of merchandise should not enter into it. Merchandising, business, anything that comes between us and the worship of the true God should not exist in the worship of the local church.

Yesterday’s paper, I believe, contained a most interesting incident. First degree murder charge was filed against a sixty-four-year-old Oklahoma church deacon, so the Dallas morning news said. This deacon sat through a Wednesday night prayer service, there were not too many people about, about twelve of them. And as the prayer meeting closed he told everybody to stand still as the preacher was greeting those who had been there at the meeting and pulled out of his pocket a pistol and shot the preacher twice, once in the body and once in the head. Now I’m having that Xeroxed and given to all of our deacons [Laughter] in order that they may be put on warning. One of the deacons said, “What you need to do is to wear a bulletproof vest.” [Laughter] But this man was shot in the head so what shall I do about that? But isn’t that strange? Here is a man who was evidently seeking to teach the word of God in a local church and at the same time one of the men in the church, a deacon in the church, was plotting to murder him and carried it out.

You know, the Bible speaks of two temples. There is the temple of the church of which we are all part. Paul in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 21 and verse 22, says that the local church is a temple, it’s the habitation of God in the spirit. It’s where we together gather and worship the Lord God. The fullest expression of it, no doubt is the observance of the Lord’s Supper here on Sunday night. The people of God gather as the temple of God and then they express their worship and praise to him. Christ is interested in commerce but he wants to keep it out of the church. He wants to keep out of the worship of the church anything that comes between us and the living God. And our worship must always be pure. All reformation of the church must have its finger upon, “It is written.” And our worship is to be pure.

The Bible also speaks of my own individual body being the temple of the Holy Spirit. “What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which you have of God? And

you are not your own for you are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body,” the apostle says. This is the temple of God for a believer. Therefore, all false merchandise, all false activity contrary to the word of God is not to be there. That is the place where we worship God. That means, my Christian businessmen, your business is not to hinder your worship of God. That means your family is not to hinder your worship of God. That means that all of the things that do -- that hinder our worship, our true worship of the Lord God, are not to be there. The Apostle Paul speaks of this, I think, most plainly and clearly in the Epistle to the Colossians when he states in the 3rd chapter, and the 1st verse,

“If ye then being risen with Christ seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right-hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hidden Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the sons of disobedience.”

The temple of our body. What are those things that hinder the true worship of God in our lives? Is it possible that our business actually stands between us and the worship of God. Does he have first place, does he have the priority. Is it possible that our concern for our family stands first? Is it possible that our love of money stands first and the Lord God does not really stand first? Is it possible that we have our affections set upon things upon the earth, the things that we can accumulate, and not upon the Lord God at the right hand of the throne of God.

Martin Luther said, “Oh God, punish us, we pray Thee, but be not silent toward us.” Would that we all could hear as we go about our ordinary avocations that solemn word of the Lord Jesus, “Make not my Father’s house a house of merchandise, a din of robbers, but make it a house of prayer.” A house of worship, a house of dedication to the interests of the Lord God. May God

Speak to us to that end. If you are here today and you’ve never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ we invite you to come to him who offered the sacrifice that takes away sin. That sacrifice was given for sinners, we are sinners. Come to Christ. Receive forgiveness of sins freely in grace. Enter into the temple of God of the church, enjoying the relationship that we enjoy as the family of God. Receive the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit who creates your own body as the temple of God and makes it possible for you to truly worship him. May God speak to you to that end. Wouldn’t it be a terrible thing to come in this audience, hear the word of God proclaimed, and as so many as the majority go out not knowing Christ. May God speak to you to that end.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these sections of the word of God that cause us to examine our own hearts before Thee. For so often the things of this world intrude upon the divine interests in our lives. Oh God, may the things that concern Thee be first in our lives. Help us to set our affection on things above, not on things on this earth. Enable us to mortify by Thy grace those members...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]