



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 3:31-36

“He that Cometh from Above”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] For the Scripture reading today we are turning to John chapter 3 verse 31 through verse 36. And while you are finding the passage let me remind you of the general context. The Apostle John is writing of an incident that concerns John the Baptist and his disciples that one of the Pharisees perhaps, but at least one of the Jewish men had engaged in a little bit of disputation with some of John’s disciples about purifying. And in the course of the discussion they had referred to the fact that many of the people who had been following John the Baptist were now following this new man, Jesus of Nazareth. And John’s disciples were a little upset by the fact that everybody seemed to be following this new teacher of the word, and so they came to John and said, “Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond the Jordan to whom thou bearest witness, behold the same baptizeth and all men come to him.”

Well that’s the occasion for John the Baptist to engage in a discussion of who he is and then also of who this one to whom he testified is. He points out that he’s not the Messiah, he’s not the bridegroom, but he’s the friend of the bridegroom. And he stands and hears the bridegroom and rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. And in effect he says the thing that is causing you concern is the thing that really causes me to rejoice. “This my joy therefore is fulfilled, he must increase but I must decrease.” So in the preceding verses, he in effect has pointed out how he must

decrease. He’s simply a witness; he’s simply the friend of the bridegroom. He’s not the Messiah, he’s not the groom.

Well now in the remaining verses of the section he turns to a more positive consideration of the one to whom he has witnessed. And so after speaking of himself in verse 27 through verse 30, he speaks of him, our Lord in verse 31 through verse 36,

He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.”

Now by the way, that second statement is an illustration of the fact that the first statement is not to be understood in starkly literal fashion. No man receiveth his testimony, because of course he goes on to say, “He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.” So what he means is that the general response of men to the testimony of God is to refuse to receive it. Later on the Lord Jesus himself speaks about the testimony that comes from the spirit and says which the world cannot receive. So the general attitude of the world toward the testimony of God is rejection of it, but there are some who do receive. Verse 34, “For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.” That statement may be understood in several different ways, it may be translated differently. It may be even translated in this way, “For the Spirit doth not give by measure.” It also may refer to the work of the Son. It may refer to the work of the Father. It may refer to the work of the Spirit, but I think that the Authorized Version has caught the force of this, “For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.” In other words, the Lord has a full measure of the Holy Spirit. “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

May the Lord bless this reading of his word. The text for today is John chapter 3 verse 31, through verse 36, “He that Cometh from Above.” Never let it be said I should add that those who believe in the grace of God do not take all of the texts of the Bible as the Scriptures are written, we do. It’s that we contend that others who do not believe in the grace of God cannot really believe all of the texts of Scripture as they are to be understood.

Well with that little word of encouragement who kept quiet, we will turn now to John chapter verse 31 through verse 36. Some of you look a little puzzled, well that’s all right. [Laughter] Ask your husband afterwards, Paul said so, “He that cometh from above,” John 3 verse 31 through verse 36. This passage, a much overlooked one, I think in the Gospel of John is a marvelous expression of the supreme dignity of the Son of God and the place that he must have in our lives.

Some years ago I read a book written by a well-known British Bible teacher J. T. Morrison in which he describes his experiences as he made a trip around the world. He said that his ship put in one day at Calumbo for a day for coal and supplies and that they were all glad to go ashore because they had been on the boat for three weeks boxed in with no place much to go. And so they went out in Calumbo and enjoyed the sights in the city and came back that evening. When they came back they were sharing some of their experiences, and one of the ladies said that she had been to a Buddhist temple that day and on the walls of the temple were paintings depicting scenes from the life of Buddha. And they had all been explained by the priest who was in charge of the temple. And in the course of her conversation with other members of the boat she said, “They were so much like what we read about Christ that I’ve come to the conclusion that there is no real difference between Buddha and Christ, and if these people believe in Buddha, that’s all that is required.

And Mr. Morrison said that he was piqued by what she said, and so he said to her, “Well if all of that is true, will you believe in Buddha as well, if there is no difference between the Buddha and Christ?” And she said, “Well no, I come from the West, and so I believe in Christ, but I don’t see any difference between them.” In those pictures depicting Buddha,” Mr. Morrison said, “did you see any picture of Buddha dying on a cross for sinners.” And she said, “No, I didn’t see any picture like

that.” And he said, “If that’s so then Buddha can hardly be like Christ. Did you see any picture in which he was pictured as not only dying upon a cross for sinners but being buried and then being raised from the dead?” And she said, “No, I didn’t see any picture like that either.” And he said, “Well then, Buddha is not like Christ, because the thing that marks out Jesus Christ is that he died for our sins according to the Scriptures, he was buried and he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” And finally he said I was very glad that she herself saw that that was not true, that there was a distinct difference between the Buddha and Christ, there is all the difference in the world. Jesus Christ is the one whom the Father sent who is above all. He’s the one who comes from Heaven, who is above all.

I also read a story of a little girl who was in a family whose mother was a believer and whose father was an atheist. And her mother had had permission to let the child go to Sunday school and so she had been to Sunday school. But she was still just a little girl and she contracted a disease and was on her death bed. And the little girl said to her father who was standing around the bed, she said, “Daddy I’m dying, whose religion shall I have, yours or mother’s?” And the atheist father is said to have hung his head and then to have said shamefacedly, “I think you’d better have mother’s.” The real truth about atheism as Dr. Tory used to say is,

“Men hope by the denial of God’s existence to shield themselves from the discomfort of God’s acknowledged presence. The faith that really helps in the time of need is not atheism or agnosticism. They have nothing to say to us when we die, but that which is of help to us which encourages us which strengthens us which aids us in the experiences of life that are the ultimate experiences is the Christian faith, the faith concerning the Lord Jesus Christ who died and who rose again.”

Well, John is giving an exposition in this section of the greatness of the Son of God. He is in a sense, expounding what it means when he says, “He must increase.” Why of course he should

increase, because he's the one who comes from above. And in verse 31 and verse 32 of John chapter 3, we have the supernal testimony of the Son.

A character of the Son is twice over said to be represented by the expression, “He that cometh from above.” Notice what John says, “He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: (evidently a reference to John himself,) he that cometh from heaven is above all.” That's John's testimony to the character of the Lord Jesus, he is above all. And he says it twice In order to stress the fact that he is absolutely preeminent.

Now that is the testimony of the whole of the New Testament. Take the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 9 in verses 1 through 5, as the apostle unfolds the disobedience of the nation Israel which gives him such heaviness and such continual sorrow in his heart, and especially when one considers he says, the advantages they've had.

“They are Israelites; to whom pertains the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; and the fathers belong to them, and of whom as concerning the flesh the Messiah came, who is over all, God blessed forever.”

So the Apostle Paul affirms that he is God over all blessed forever. In Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 20 through 23, the apostle also says concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. In these words, that he is above all,

“Which he wrought in Christ, (he says) when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come”

And the Apostle Peter to give one more instance of one of the apostles. In 1 Peter chapter 3 and verse 22 speaking of Jesus Christ, he says, “Who is gone into heaven and is on the right hand of

God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject to him.” So Peter says he’s in heaven and the angels and authorities there are subject to him. Paul says, “All things have been put under the son.” He says he’s “God blessed forever.” And John the Baptist says, “He that cometh from above is above all.”

Now what is rather striking about this is that John the Baptist, and I rather disagree with some take these to be the words of John the Apostle, there is no ultimately different doctrinal sense, but what is significant about this is that John was a good Jewish man. And being a good Jewish man, he knew the great text of Judaism, “Hear O Israel the Lord our God is one Lord.” And yet in spite of the fact that he regarded the God of the Old Testament as being the one true God, he is able to say concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, “He that cometh from above is above all.” He that cometh from Heaven is above all, the one whom God has sent, as he explains in the following context. So, here is John who recited the Shema Israel which testifies to the unity of God, finding no difficulty and contradiction what so ever with that doctrine of the unity of God in affirming also the supremacy and deity of the second person of the Trinity. In other words, in the thought of John the Baptist and in the thought of the apostles, there is no denial of the unity of God when we affirm the tri-unity of the persons in the one Godhead, so that we believe as Christians in one God who subsists in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Now, John the Baptist speaking of himself I think says, “He that is of the earth is earthly and speaketh of the earth.” John, he says of himself is terrestrial, but Jesus is celestial. He comes from heaven. Now furthermore, his testimony is different from the testimony of others, because it is absolutely truthful. Listen to what he says in the 32nd verse, “And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifies and no man receiveth his testimony.” In other words, everything that he says is true because he tells what he has seen and heard. And he may speak of heavenly things for he has seen those heavenly things. The things that have to do with the true God he has seen and heard, his testimony is certain.

When he says that what he has seen and heard he testifies to, he’s simply using an expression to stress the certainty of his teaching. In other words, the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ is not set forth as a hypothesis about which we may have discussion, he is giving us truth. “What he hath seen and heard that he testifieth and no man receiveth his testimony.” It is the character of men because of their sin to refuse the testimony that the Son of God gives. And even though the apostles and our Lord our eye witnesses of the great truths to which they testify, men do not respond to them. Their hearts are wicked.

Now John talks about that reception of the testimony in verse 33, 34 and 35, reminding us of the verses in the first chapter, “He came unto his own and his own received him not but as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God even to them that believe on his name. So he says here, “He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.”

Now what he means by that is simply this, that the person who receives the testimony by the reception of that testimony attests the veracity of God. As Moffat translates it, “Certifies to the truth of God.” “He that hath received his testimony hath set his seal to this that God is true.” That means by the way, if you have received the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal savior, you too have testified to the veracity of God in his word. If we do not receive the testimony, we in effect as John will say in his first epistle are calling God a liar.

Why should we believe in the veracity of the Lord Jesus Christ and of the word of God and of the testimony of God to spiritual truth? Well in the 34th verse, he says, “For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God.” The Son speaks the words of God. Now that I think is very, very significant, and I’m going to ask you if you will to turn over to the 8th chapter and the 26th verse. For the Lord Jesus here reiterates what John says there. John has said now, “He whom God has sent speaketh the words of God.” Listen to our Lords comment in the 8th chapter in the 26th verse, “For I have many things to say and to judge of you, but he that sent me is true and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.”

Now, I would say that as a preacher of the word of God, that should be the aim of a preacher of the word of God. “I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him,” the Lord Jesus Christ said. We do not have any right whatsoever of going through the Bible and picking out things that we think you are able to hear and understand, we are ambassadors for God and we are responsible to convey his message to you. What kind of a preacher is it who goes through the word of God and makes selection of the parts of the Bible affirming that some of these are worthy to be preached and some are not. What kind of position do we take when we do something like that? We in effect say that the Holy Spirit has let slip something that would be harmful to the church. Our responsibility is to preach all of the word of God. It is the word of God. Our Lord said that he spoke to the world those things that he has heard of him. If there are doctrines in the word of God that we know are offensive, we are not to pass by them because they are offensive. One of the greatest services the word of God can do is to come to you as an offensive word so that you will get all stirred up and finally think about a few spiritual things and ultimately perhaps come to the conclusion the word of God is right, and the problem lies with you.

The other day I got a call from a theological in another theological seminary up north. Sorry it was from up north instead of from south, but nevertheless, it was. He’s a southerner attending a seminary up north. He said, “Dr. Johnson, I just had a conversation with another man who graduated from a theological seminary that’s sound just a few years ago, as a matter of fact Dr. Johnson, he attended Believers Chapel quite a bit.” He said, “I asked him something about the fact that he was in church in which the gospel of the grace of God was not too prominent and doctrines such as the doctrine of election and others were not very popular in that church. I asked him how he could do that when he told me that he believed those things.” He said, “Well I avoid the chapters or the books that might specialize in those things.” So he preaches only certain books of the Bible. My friend who knew enough about the bible to know that those truths are found everywhere in the Bible, he said, “Well how can you do that? They are found everywhere in the Bible.” So almost in every chapter you’re going to have to deal with the question of the sovereignty of God’s grace. And

he said, “Well when I come to those passages in the exposition of specific texts, I just don’t say much about them.” And he said, “You know, Dr. Johnson, he sounded very apologetic to me over the phone, as if he might be a bit unhappy.”

Well of course I hope he’s very unhappy, I hope he’s so unhappy that he will come to realize that our responsibility is to preach God’s word. It’s not to give what we think is suitable for the saints and avoid the other things that God has said because if the Holy Spirit has revealed those things they are the subject of our investigation and study and meditation. I do not suggest that there is not some time when certain truths may not be more acceptable for certain saints at a particular time. That’s not the point. But everything in the Scriptures is to be unfolded to the saints of God for they are God’s words. We do not have the right to go through the word of God and pick the things that we like and then cast aside the things that we don’t like, what are we doing? We are then preaching not the word of God, we are preaching our word. Jesus said in the 12th chapter of this same gospel, “He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words hath one that judgeth him and the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. Then in the 49th verse of this 12th chapter he says, “For I have not spoken of myself but the Father who sent me, he gave me commandment what I should say and what I should speak.

Now that is the pattern for us, we are to give what we are given to proclaim. And we are given the word of God to proclaim. And we are to give it and we should remember that the people who listen to us are one day going to be judged by that very word of God. And every teacher of the word of God, every little Sunday school teacher teaching those little children from those who are teaching the big children like you, everyone should be teaching the word of God, and not picking and choosing in it. So, John says, “He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God.” And so we are to respond to him, accordingly. And he adds the words, “For God giveth not the spirit by measure unto him.

Now, what is meant by that? Well probably what is meant by it is that the Father has conveyed to the Son a full measure of the Holy Spirit for the carrying out of his Messianic task, for

the enduement with power from the Spirit was in the Old Testament, that which the Messiah was to be given in order to carry out his ministry in the Holy Spirit.

Now I think it's rather striking that in the rabbinical writings, reference is made to the fact that the Spirit was not given without measure to the prophets. The Holy Spirit which abides on the prophets does not abide except by measure so the rabbinic writing said. In other words, the prophets of the Old Testament do not have the fullest measure of the Holy Spirit. But the Lord Jesus Christ is one to whom God has given the Spirit without measure.

Further, another reason why we should take the words of God as truly the words of God is given in the 35th verse, “For the Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into his hand. In other words, the Son is the one into whom the Father into whose hands he has given everything.

Now this is a sentiment that is expressed in other places in the New Testament and perhaps the most outstanding place is Matthew chapter 11 and verse 27 and you'll recognize immediately that even the wording is similar to the Gospel of John. In fact, this has been called by some scholars back in the nineteenth century “a bolt from the Johannine blue.” Well really it was called by Von Heizer, the German scholar, “A thunder bolt from the Johannine sky,” I just gave you the American translation of that, “A bolt from the Johannine blue.” Listen to Matthew 11:27, “And all things are delivered unto me by my Father and no man knoweth the Son but the Father. Neither knoweth any man the Father except the Son and he to whomsoever the Son wills to reveal him.” So everything has been delivered into my hands by my Father, no man knows the Son except the Father. No one can fully know the Son except the Father, for we possess the same nature. “Neither knoweth any man except the Son and he to whosoever the Son wills to reveal him.” So only the Father knows the Son and only I know the Father and to whom I will to reveal him. In other words, the sovereign possessor of the knowledge of God is the Lord Jesus Christ. And only the individual to whom he reveals the Father comes to know the Father.

“No man can come to me except the Father which has sent me draw him,” he will say in the 6th chapter. If you don't like to truth like that, don't come when we get to that chapter. [Laughter]

Don't come when we get to the 8th chapter, don't come when we get to the 12th chapter, in fact, you better resign from the Gospel of John right now. You see what we have here is teaching on the sovereign determination of the knowledge of God resting with the Lord Jesus Christ. Unpalatable truth? Well maybe so, but it's the truth of God. He is one who speaks God's words. And our responsibility is to proclaim what he has said. All things have been given into his hands because the Father loves him. And it is our responsibility to pay attention to what our Lord Jesus Christ has said in the word of God. And for preachers, it's your responsibility to preach him.

Now frankly, I find the greatest encouragement in this, do you know why? Well because the Father loves the Son, the sovereign love of God the Father is directed toward the Son. Second, he's given everything into the Son's hands, the Son has plenipotentiary power, all power is given to him, and also the Son determines the knowledge of the Father, and he's given me the knowledge of the Father. And because he's given me the knowledge of the Father, because he's the one into whose hands everything has been committed, I therefore can trust him in all of the experiences of life.

Now I find that encouraging in the utmost. In the experiences of life, we need someone in whom we can trust, and here we have one who has had all things committed into his hands. He's the Son of God whom the Father loves; he alone knows the Father and those to whom he reveals the Father. And because he is the sovereign Lord, my times are in his hands. I don't find that bad preaching, bad doctrine, I don't find that something that terrifies an individual. I find that something that is most encouraging. I don't know why anyone would want to go through the Bible and avoid truths like that. What kind of Bible do we have but a mutilated Bible if we avoid such truth? And how much weaker the saints would be if they didn't have an opportunity to be strengthened by truth like this.

“The Father loveth the Son and has committed all things into his hand.” You know if this is John the Baptist's word then I find something else in this that's very encouraging. Those men had come to John and said, “Look, he and his company are baptizing over there and everybody is going after him.” You might think John would have a little touch of envy, a little touch of jealousy, we

preachers have been known to have a bit. The fact of the matter is, we preachers are probably the most jealous, envious body of people as a whole that you would ever find. We're also good actors, you don't see it too often, but nevertheless it's there. But John in effect says, look I don't grieve over that, I'm not the bridegroom, I'm the friend of the bridegroom. I'm not the Messiah, he's the Messiah. Can you not see that in the historical situation, if these are the words of John the Baptist it's a most magnificent expression of self abnegation? And what a beautiful example it is of how we ought to be when others are blessed perhaps a bit more than we are, when our time of service is over.

Well the logical conclusion follows in verse 36. He says, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” Now notice that in this great promise, for the believer, life is promised. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” I find that rather remarkable, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” H. A. Ironside, the famous Bible expositor from the Moody Church in Chicago of a generation ago, said that in one of his books said that a friend of his preached on this text, John 3:36. And at the close of the meeting as preachers sometimes do in smaller places, he went down to the door to greet the friends. A lady who was troubled about her soul came by the door and the preacher looked at her and said, “Well how is it with you tonight? How is your soul, have you been born again? Are you saved?”

She said, “I don't know sir, I hope so.”

He said, “Well let me go over that text with you again, it says he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. Do you believe in the Son?”

She said, “Oh yes, I do sir, I believe in Jesus Christ.”

“Well do you have everlasting life?”

She said, “I hope so.”

He said, “Well let's look at the verse again; he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. Do you believe in the Son?”

She said, “Yes I do.”

“Do you have everlasting life?”

“I certainly hope so.” [Laughter]

“Well read it again.”

And so they went through the same thing again and finally he said to her, “You know when you were a little girl they spell very differently from what they did when I was a boy.

She looked at him and said, “What do you mean, I’m not so much older than you.”

He said, “Well evidently when you were a girl H-A-T-H spelled hope. When I was a little boy, H-A-T-H spelled hath.

She said, “Oh! I see it! He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.”

“Yes that’s right.”

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. That’s the term by which the gospel comes to us, hath life upon believing. Now it’s true there are some who have misunderstood what is meant by believing. But this is what the Bible says, “He that believeth on the Son hath life.” Now personally I like that, I believe on the Son. I have life. I’ve a long way to go in sanctification but I have life because I believe in the Son.

Roland Hill used to say, “H-A-T-H, that’s spells got it!” [Laughter] Well, that’s right, spells got it. Now he says, but for the disobeyer, “he that believeth not,” This word that’s used here is not the common word to believe not, *apisteo*, but the word to disobey, *apatheo*. So that “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, he that disobeyeth the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God abideth on him.” In other words, obedience is the obedience of faith. When a man does not believe he’s in disobedience. So if you should be sitting in the audience and you have not yet come to believe in Christ, you’re not in a condition of neutrality, you’re disobedient to God. That is why he adds and the wrath of God abideth on him.

Now the reason for that is very simple as John says later in his epistle, and I’m sure that the apostle would have understood the meaning of John the Baptist to be that here, he says in the 5th

chapter of his first epistle these words, verse 10, “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself, he that believeth not God hath made him a liar because he believeth not the record that God gave his son.” So when we fail to receive the word given concerning Jesus Christ, we not simply are disobedient, but we also make God out to be a liar, because we have not accepted his testimony. So, to be saved is to accept the testimony of God concerning Christ.

What is the testimony of God concerning Christ? That he’s the second person of the Trinity who came to earth, took to himself an additional nature, went about doing good manifesting his capacity to be the sacrifice for sinners, went to the cross, hung there on the cross under the judgment of God crying out, “My God my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” Completed the work of atonement, was placed in the grave, rose again on the third day and is at the right hand of the Father, that’s the testimony of God concerning Christ. To believe the testimony of God concerning Christ, the record that he has given concerning him is to possess everlasting life. So, “ye that believeth not the Son shall not see life.” This also indicates that faith and conduct are necessarily linked, because when a man does not believe, he disobeys. When a man believes, he obeys. Faith is the obedience of faith.

Now the last statement that he makes here is one that modern man finds very uncongenial, “And the wrath of God abideth on him.” I would imagine that this is the most uncongenial concepts that twentieth century man finds in the bible. “The wrath of God,” not shall abide on them incidentally, but abides now upon those who have not believed in Christ. Various devices are adopted in order to soften this, it cannot be done. If we soften this, if we deny what is stated here, that the wrath of God abides on unbelievers, the first place we would have a mutilated Bible because we would find that in the Bible that there are literally hundreds of places, I think thousands, thousands of places where the Bible speaks of the wrath of God poured out upon the disobedient. So if we sought to excise this from the word of God we would have a mutilated Bible to start with.

And then secondly, if we abandon the idea of the wrath of God, we are left with a god who is not ready to act against moral evil. In other words, we would ultimately have an immoral god.

And furthermore, we would not have any sense of the peril from which we are to be saved. And thus the idea of salvation has no significance whatsoever if there is no peril involved in the refusal of the gospel. And that's why when the gospel is preached today there is so little response, they do not have any idea of the peril which they face, men without Christ. But our Lord and the apostles and John the Baptist affirm that the wrath of God abides on unbelievers.

I'd like for you to notice the three-fold aspect of John's testimony. This is the conclusion of John the Baptist's testimony for the large part. He had first of all said, “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” That of course is a text to the effect that Jesus Christ is the sin bearer. I wish I had time to go over to the Book of Galatians in order to lay stress upon the fact that Jesus Christ is the sin bearer. There in that passage remember Paul says, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law having come to be a curse for us.” You know there are three little prepositions in that chapter that are very significant. Those who have not believed in Christ abide under the curse, a little preposition under. Everybody under the curse, conceding of the curse as a mighty judgment that is to fall upon men, so that we are all under that curse. The wrath of God abides over us.

There's an old story which illustrates this I think about Dionysius of Syracuse, a Greek tyrant. He had a servant by the name of Damocles, he was a courtier and he kept talking all the time about how kings were happy and how kings were fortunate and how kings were blessed and how nice it was to be a king. Until finally Dionysius decided that Damocles needed a lesson, so he invited him to a big banquet. And he said, furthermore, when you come, you're going to have a very high place at the banquet. So the banquet night came and he was ushered to the king's chair or throne at the head of the table. And he was told to sit there, and then he looked up and he was horrified to see that there was a great heavy sharp sword hanging right above his head literally by a thread. That's why we speak of “A sword of Damocles.” It's a figure of speech for impending judgment. Well everyone without Jesus Christ is under the curse, abides under the wrath of God. So here we are under the wrath of God. But Paul says Christ has redeemed us out from the curse by becoming a

curse. Now the Greek preposition is rather significant, it really means literally over us. So here we are under the judgment, but Jesus Christ has come in over us by being made a curse for us so that the judgment falls upon him and we are delivered out from the curse of the law. A little lesson in substitutionary atonement in three simple prepositions, under, over and out from. So when John says, “Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world,” he’s talking about that.

Now the term of salvation is simply “believe.” Or as the Old Testament says, “Kiss the Son lest you perish in the way when his wrath is kindled but a little.” What is faith? “Faith is believing God and asking no questions” the little boy said. That’s not far from being the precise truth.

May I close by telling you a story that is a true story of the preaching of Dwight L. Moody? And I hope you realize that when I tell this story because it hinges on the nature of the will, that we’re not affirming the freedom of the will, but we are affirming the necessity of an action by human will. We believe that a man must make a decision of his will in his salvation. We just affirmed that a man of himself cannot make that decision, “No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” But thank God the father draws people to him.

This is an eye witness account of the preaching of Moody when he and Mr. Sankey were in London in the last century. Among the most remarkable scenes this man said that he ever witnessed was one in East London during the visit of those two beloved and honored men of God. It was in the year of eighteen eighty-three and eighteen eighty-four. The hall was pitched in the center of a dense working population in the city of London. There were literally hundreds of thousands of workers in that area. It was also an area in which there had been a great deal of stress on atheism at the time Charles Bradlaugh, the champion of atheism was at his zenith and on hearing of the fact that this meeting was arranged on a Monday night and specifically said to be for atheists, skeptics and free thinkers of all shades, the atheists who had a lot of clubs in London decided that they would go that Monday night and hear Mr. Moody.

They did, five thousand men marched into the giant hall in London to hear Mr. Moody preach. In fact, they occupied most of the seats. And the saints of God and others who were not

associated with the atheistic clubs had to stand around largely on the outskirts to listen while Mr. Moody preached. And the platform was filled with the preachers and Mr. Moody. Well Mr. Moody stood up and asked the men to choose their favorite hymns. Well that provoked a loud laugh, for atheists don't have any song and they don't have any hymns to sing. And then Mr. Moody ultimately got to preaching.

He took as his text the great passage from Deuteronomy chapter 32, “Their rock is not as our rock, our enemies themselves being judges.” Their rock is not as our rock, the enemies themselves being judges.” Moses says, “Their god is not like our God and they themselves testify to it.” Well he started preaching and as he finished he said, “We're going to rise and sing *Only Trust Him*.” So, they rose on their feet and he said also, “Those that want to leave can leave, but we're going to have some inquiries afterward.” He said he expected the vast majority to leave. Everybody remained in their place. And when they sat down he said; “Now I'm going to explain four words, receive, believe, trust, take.” And he said a broad grin pervaded the faces of all who were there. He spoke a few words about receive and then he made the appeal. He said, “Who will receive him, just say I will.” And from the men standing around the edge of the hall came some fifty people, not those who were the atheistic clubs, but the people who had not been able to get a seat, about fifty men came forward. Not one from the mass came. One man growled, “I can't.” To which Mr. Moody replied, “You've spoken the truth my man, glad you spoke, listen and you'll be able to say I can before we're through.

Then he explained the word, believe, and he made his second appeal, “Who will say I will believe him?” Again, some responded from the fringe of the crowd 'til one big fellow, a leading club man shouted out, “I won't!” Well Mr. Moody was overcome, burst into broken tearful words, half sobs, says, “It's I will or I won't for every man in this hall tonight.”

And then suddenly he turned the whole attention to the story of the prodigal son, explained the prodigal son story and then commented upon the fact that finally the prodigal son, “I will return and go to my father.” He said, “The battle is on the will and only there. And when the young man

said I will arise the battle was won for he had yielded his will and on that point hangs everything tonight, men you have your champion there in the middle of the hall, the man who said I won't. I want every man here who believes that man is right to follow him and rise and say I won't.”

He said there was perfect silence in the auditorium. Everybody held their breath and finally Mr. Moody burst out and said, “I thank God no man says I won't, now who says I will?” And he said in an instant five hundred men came out of that crowd saying, “I will, I will!” And he said that was the breaking point of the clubs in London.

So we say to you this morning, who will believe in Jesus Christ? You cannot of yourself, but you can appeal to God for mercy. May God help you to appeal to God. Cry out to him. Ask him to save you, bring you to Christ who died for sinners.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for the word of God. We acknowledge he is above all. The Father loveth the Son John said, but we love him too. We thank Thee for what he has done. And O God if there are some in this auditorium who have not come to him, oh give them grace to say ...

[AUDIO ENDS ABRUPTLY]