



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 John 3:13-18

"Divine Love and Its Inevitable Fruit"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We are calling it the "Shame Sheet," [laughter] and so you want to be sure and note it, and if there is a person in the Chapel whose name is the same as yours, [laughter] you have an excuse. [Laughter] This morning, one of those persons met me afterwards and said, "A name is up there which is the same as mine, but it is not mine." [Laughter] And I said, "We still think of you when we look at that name." [Laughter] But it was true that she was not the one involved, but if you see a name up there that's exactly like yours, you know it's not you. If there's another Howard Pryor out there, [Laughter] the name on the board is his name and not Howard's over here. [Laughter]

We're turning for our Scripture reading to 1 John chapter 3 and we're reading verse 13 through verse 18 for our Scripture reading today. The apostle has been, as we have been saying, ringing the changes on Christian love, and he is not through with that yet. He has just mentioned the fact that there are two classes of people, the children of God and the children of the devil. And that the ancient message both of the Old and New Testaments is that the believers should love one another, or should exercise love, not as Cain, who did not exercise love, slew his brother, because his works were evil. And the apostles continues in verse 13 with,

"Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know (And I'm saying it that way, "we know" because in the original text there's a bit of emphasis upon the "we.") We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. (Now let me point out a fact that might be puzzling to you. When he says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren," you might relate that causal clause to "We have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" And that of course would be a salvation that is a salvation of works rather than the salvation of grace. The "because we love the brethren" goes with the "we know." We know we passed from death unto life, and the reason we know it is that we love the brethren.) He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God (Now I read "of God" because the Authorized Version which I am reading has "of God." There is no question but that that's the sense of it, but the words are actually not in the original text. It says simply, "Hereby perceive we love.") because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."

Those are very strong words, but they come from the Apostle of Love, may we give heed to them. Let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Our heavenly Father, we approach Thee in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We rejoice in this beautiful day that Thou hast given to us, but most of all in the gospel that Thou hast brought to us through the prophets and the apostles and preeminently by our Lord himself. We thank Thee and praise Thee for the assurance of the forgiveness of sins, for the gift of divine righteousness, and of the other blessings of

life that are ours because the Son of God came and gave himself as a propitiatory sacrifice for sinners. We thank Thee and praise Thee for the confidence that we have in him, not in ourselves or in our righteousness for we have none, but in him who is our representative, mediatorial surety, has made it possible for us to have sonship and the other blessings that go to make up the right relation with the Lord God in heaven.

We thank Thee, we praise Thy name, and we worship Thee, Lord, for the blessings of life. We thank Thee for the whole church of Jesus Christ, for each individual member. We pray, Lord, Thy blessing upon the whole body today. May as the word of God be preached, there is responsiveness, may there be yieldedness, and submission to the truth of God, by Thy grace.

We are grateful too, Lord, for the other blessings of life. We thank Thee for life in the country, the United States of America, and we pray for this land. And as we as a national body of citizens make decision on Tuesday, we pray that the decisions that are made may be in harmony with Thy perfect will for us. May the president who is chosen be a true minister of God for us.

And we thank Thee, Lord, for those who have requested our prayers who are ailing and sick, and we pray for them. We ask that Thou wilt minister to them and to those who minister to them as well, give wisdom and guidance. And for the families involved, we pray for them, sustain them, meet their needs. And for those who are suffering, we pray Lord, Thy blessing upon them. May, by Thy grace, they be lifted up and know the comfort of the God of all comfort, our triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Be with us today through the meetings of the day, and as we gather around the Lord's table, may that be a time of spiritual communion as well as of edification for us we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today as we continue our exposition of 1 John is, "Divine Love and Its Inevitable Fruit." Love is the burden of the gospel. It's the goal of all that God wishes that we know, and it's the sum of everything that he would have us do. I imagine that if you were to ask the average person who has some acquaintance with the professing Christian world, of which many of us are a part, and were to ask that individual, "What is the most important word, with reference to the Christian gospel?" They probably would say something like "Jesus taught us love." Or "He taught us to love." Or "God desires that we love." It's very unfortunate that that is probably the end of it as far as many of us are concerned. What do we mean when we say, "Love is the burden of the gospel?" Do we mean sentimental love, a sentimentality of love? Do we mean romantic love? Do we mean patriotic love? Do we mean sexual love? What do we mean when we say Christianity teaches love? I would imagine I say, that the average person would have no real concept of what we mean that is what Christian theologians would mean when they say, "Love is the burden of the gospel."

Now the apostles understood very clearly what was meant when the Scriptures say, "God is love." Let me give you, if we may turn over to the 4th chapter of this same epistle, this apostle's comment on love. He states in the 10th verse of the 4th chapter, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." What is God's love? God's love is, according to the apostle, the fact that he sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. That's divine love. Divine love is a very theological love, that's not the love of sentimentality. That's not sexual love. That's not patriotic love. That's not romantic love. That's not even what we tend to think when we think of love as simply, sentimental affection. This is something highly theological, very specific. "Herein is love," that God "sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins;" that's Christian love.

Now, of course in response to that then the apostle goes on to say that there should be loving response on our part; same kind of loving response, same kind of

theological response, same kind of recognition of the spiritual situation and response thereto. It's not that he loved us in this highly theological way, and we should respond in sentimentality or romantic love, or sexual love. So when we say, and I do believe this is true, that love is the burden of the gospel, we are talking about Christ gave himself, propitiation for our sins, or for the sins of sinners. That's what we mean when we say love is the burden of the gospel. It's the goal of all he wants us to know. He wants us to know that great fact, and secondly, it's all that he would have us to do. That is, to love similarly in response.

Now, of course, as we look out over the world, and as we analyze the world in the light of the gospel, we see an immediate obstacle, because the world is Cain's posterity and is afflicted with the same mind and disposition that Cain had. It hates the gospel. It hates the witnesses of the gospel. And these are not words that I am inventing in order to lay the background for this particular message; these are words that have come from him who is the theme of the gospel, the Lord Jesus himself. He said in the upper room discourse, as he spoke to his apostles, in John chapter 15, in verse 18, he writes or he said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." In the 19th verse he says, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." In the 25th verse the Lord states, "But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, they hated me without a cause." He continues in the 16th chapter by saying, "These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." In chapter 17, in verse 14 Jesus said, "I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, Father, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." So here we have a problem, an obstacle, the burden of the gospel is love, but the world hates the gospel and those who purvey the gospel.

One of the commentators, illustrating the point, reminded us, who have read him, of an ancient Athenian, Alcibiades, a very well known statesmen and general in about the 5th century before our Lord Jesus Christ, a friend of Socrates, actually. Socrates was the good man according to worldly standards, par exelos, and Alcibiades, brilliant, erratic, often debauched, used to say to Socrates, "Socrates, I hate you, because every time I meet you, you show me what I am." This author goes on to also comment upon Aristides, who was often called, The Just. And finally, Aristides was involved in a condemnation for death, and the jury, after they had passed their death penalty upon him, one of the members was approached, I guess by one of the members of the press in those days, and asked why he voted against Aristides. He said he was tired of hearing Aristides called The Just.

Noah, when he built his ark, condemned the world, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says. So it is characteristic of the world to respond negatively to the gospel. The world hates the gospel. The world hates Christians, in the purest sense, because Christians, true Christians bring conviction. They remind us of what we are, and faced with what we are, we don't like what we see.

Now, the apostle, as he looks out on the society of his day, sees only two entities of men, he sees the men of the world on the one hand, hate the gospel, hate men who preach the gospel; and then on the other hand there are the brethren. That is, those who by God's grace have been brought to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. He calls the one the children of the devil. He calls the other the children of God. Again, he follows the words of our Lord, who in the 8th chapter of the Gospel of John said to his generation, "You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh," the New International Version renders this in a somewhat of a figurative way, he speaks his native language, his native language, "He speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

So to the Apostle John we have the children of God, we have the children of the devil. We have light; we have darkness, with no twilight, remember. We have wheat, and we have tares. Our Lord used that illustration as well. We have life on the one hand; we have death on the other. And so we are called to ask the question of ourselves, "How do we then live?" How do we live, if have believed in Christ, in a world that hates the gospel and hates those who purvey the gospel.

Well, let's listen to what the apostle has to say. He first, in verse 13, 14, and 15 of this third chapter, speaks of the proof of life and death; the consequences of Cain's actions are set forth in his own thought. He says first of all, the world's hatred is no marvel. It's not a miracle. It's not something that should surprise us. "Marvel not, my brethren that world hate you." This hatred is a natural hatred. After all, the new believer and the old believer will discover if they do stand for truth, that what the apostle says is really true, the world hates us. Christian love belongs only to the new life, it doesn't belong to the old life, it belongs only to the new life. Only a Christian can love, according to Scripture. The world cannot love. Oh, it can exude sentimentality, it can be suffused with other forms of affection, but Christian love, Christian love, only a believer can exercise or can experience Christian love. "Marvel not," it's not a miracle. It's not something that should astound you. "Marvel not, my brethren, the world hates you." So the new believer and the old prove this in their experience.

What happens, my Christian friend, after you have come to know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, and you're filled with the joy of the Lord, and you go to your brother or your sister or your father or your mother or your friend and you unfold to them the gospel? How rarely is their response immediate, "What a marvelous message, I will receive it too." Oh, it does happen every now and then. You can find that almost a miracle, but usually what you meet with is one of these things, what someone has called "chilling indifference," contempt, or anger. And I'm sure that everyone in this room has truly been converted and you've gone to someone with the gospel anticipating a favorable

response. You can give me illustrations from your own experience, of responses that fit this, chilling indifference, contempt, or anger.

"Christian love," as someone has put it, "is no plant of natural growth in the soil of corrupt humanity." It just doesn't grow there any more than a camellia bush naturally grows in the soil of Dallas, Texas. It likes acid soil, we don't have acid soil. It likes a certain kind of sandy soil; we don't have that kind of soil. It likes a little bit different temperature to really survive well; we don't have that kind of temperature. So you can try to grow them, as I do, it's usually a losing task, but what you have to do is just take out everything natural to Dallas and put things that are natural to Charleston, South Carolina [Laughter] in the soil, and there you have the possibility of a camellia bush. Christian love, in the soil of lost humanity, just will not grow. You can change the soil or try to change the soil by natural means, but it will not work. So the apostle says don't marvel if the world hates you.

Not only, however, is hatred natural to us, but the hatred is murderous; it's just not disliking someone, it's the kind of dislike that in the proper situation would be murder, just like Cain. That was the lesson. Because he goes on to say, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. And whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and you know that no murderer hath eternal life dwelling in him." Did you notice that dark climax? We have first of, "loveth not," "he that loveth not," verse 14, then in verse 15 we have "hateth," and finally "murderer." So to love not, there is no neutrality, to love not is to hate, and to hate is to be guilty of murder. Well you say, "I couldn't think of possibly murdering anybody." Well, perhaps not, in the society and environment in which you find yourself, but if in the proper environment you really hated someone and you knew you could get away with it, and no one would really know the blackness of your deed, if you really hated them, you wouldn't want them around. You would be happy that they weren't there, and you'd do

away with them. That's how evil our hearts are in the soil of corrupt humanity. That's really what we are like.

Well I know some of you look very sweet and nice, couldn't possibly be that, but that's what you are naturally. So the apostle says, "Look, hatred is natural to us. Hatred is murderous, the lesson of Cain and Abel is plainly before us, and Judas stands as a living illustration of it." Our Lord said, in the upper room, "By this," Christian love, loving one another, "you shall know, all men shall know that you are my disciples," my disciples, as over against Moses and anyone else, my disciples. This is the way the Lord's disciples are known, Christian love. And so we read in that very context, Judas went out and it was night, night in Judas' heart, night outside, it agreed, and the apostle of Jesus Christ is the one who is responsible for his death, think of it. Just think of it. Or think back to Cain and Abel. Both of them grew up on the same father's lap, knew the same mother, heard the same things about the Lord God, and what they knew of him in the Garden of Eden, and when the proper occasion came, out in the field Cain rises up against his brother and slays him; not just kills him, slaughters him, so the text of Scripture says. That's what John looks at and says, "That's an illustration of what I am trying to say."

Now, on the other hand, how do we tell the difference between Christians and non-Christians? Well, there are lots of things we might say in answer to that, but there's one question here and one answer here that the Apostle John gives that we should pay careful attention to. He states, "Marvel not, my brethren, that the world hate you." Isn't it interesting, by the way, he says "my brethren," he reminds them that he's talking about the love of brethren. But anyway, he says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life," all because we've raised our hand in the meeting, because we've been baptized, because we attend Believers Chapel, where they preach the pure oxygen of the gospel. Well, all of that's very nice of course, you should be baptized, you should attend Believers Chapel, ideally, but we know, "We know," he says, "that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." That's how we know, we love the

brethren. We know, in contrast to the world, our love is evidence of the life; just as hatred is natural to the unbelieving heart, so Christian love is natural to the believing heart, natural. In other words, the Christian believing heart must love with the love of God. So, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." It's natural to us. It's something that belongs entirely to the new life, by grace.

It's something given by God. It's not something that we have worked up; we are naturally haters of God. It's something given by God. When you see a person who hates the gospel and hates the lost, oh he may have the veneer of our society upon him, and may even be a benefactor, physically, of this society, but he hates the gospel and doesn't like it. I don't want to pass judgment on our governor, but the governor has revealed a great deal about himself when he has said publicly, "I don't think I need two births, one's enough." That has told me a great deal about the governor spiritually. You may vote for him for political office or not, but let us remember that when a person says that, he has little comprehension of the gospel.

And what John is saying is that what is natural to the unbelieving heart of hatred, is on the other hand, to the believing heart, natural Christian love; grace, belonging entirely to the new life, given by God. And further, it is opposite to the abiding death. "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." The man who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ and in whose life Christian love is found is one who abides in eternal life. Those are tough words; they're apostolic words, however. So the world's hatred is evidence of death. The motives of the hater, the motives of the murderer are the same. They each desire the death of the hated.

Well, the apostle has made his point, for me at least, but he goes on to show us what love really is. And so the supreme pattern of love is found in the 16th verse, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Cain was a son of man who hated. Christ is the Son of Man who loves. And so, he is set forth as the example. Here is the love of God.

He laid down his life for us. In other words, if you want to really know what love is, ponder; reflect upon the Lord Jesus Christ who came from the bosom of the eternal Father. Love's secret is perceived in the ministry of the Lord Jesus. He came from the bosom of the eternal Father for a self-sacrificing vicarious death, substitutionary death. That's what he has done, and that he has done for the sins of sinners.

What that means is that our Lord could have come, and could have lived a great life, could have been a great benefactor of society, might have shown us a great deal of sentimental attachment and love, and in many other ways may have revealed aspects of God, but my friend, if he had not died upon the cross at Calvary, we would have no Savior. One of the greatest of the Scottish theologians once said, "If he had not died for us, he would have done nothing at all." For of what use to sinful, mortal men would be a Savior who he didn't know what sin and death mean when they combine as they do to crush a poor human heart. And they crush us, not simply because we're slaves and servants of sin, but furthermore that sin brings us to an eternal separation from God, and that's why the apostle, the Apostle of Love, mind you, when he talks about love, says it is seen in the self-sacrificial, substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what love is, that is love itself.

I read lots of books, and I read books that living theologians are writing, and I often read books on the atonement, and I must confess that I have always appreciated a word that this same Scottish theologian has said with reference to the books of his day, around the turn of the century; because so many of the books of this day, written by well known religious leaders, are empty of fundamental help in the spiritual life. He was reviewing a book on the synoptic gospels, and he said, "If the members of the church read this book, and believed it, there would not be two or three left in the world to meet in the name of Jesus." That's true, there are many books written by outstanding Christian leaders that is in the world's eyes, that if everybody in the Christian church would really read them and believe them, we wouldn't have but a little handful of Christians, relatively

speaking. I'm not surprised that the World Council of Churches is having difficulty and having to reorganize, because that kind of view of spiritual reality must ultimately come to its natural end. They're losing money. They're losing members. I'm rejoicing. [Laughter] But nevertheless they are having reorganization. They have not yet discovered why; they cannot discover why. They don't have the spiritual understanding to discover why. I'm only saying, "Why this long Lord? Why this long?" But nevertheless, that's true.

Now, the last part of that verse is a little bit difficult. He says, we "perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us." Now, his life was a self-sacrificial substitutionary life for the sins of sinners, a propitiatory sacrifice. Then he says we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But now can I offer a propitiatory sacrifice? Can I offer a substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of sinners? Of course not, I cannot do that; even if I should live a perfect life that would only guarantee my salvation. I couldn't stand for anyone else, only an infinite person can stand for an infinite number of people. And so, our Lord is thoroughly qualified to stand as a propitiatory sacrifice for sinners, I'm not, but nevertheless John says, leaving aside any propitiatory significance, leaving aside the substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of sinners by which the Lord pays the penalty for our sins, we should respond in kind so far as we able. And our response should be a moral response; we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Now, that's very difficult. Let's think about that for a moment. This is an apostle talking; that's not a preacher talking, oh he was a preacher, but this is not only a preacher talking. Listen to what the apostle says. Now, mind you, he is a person who leaned on Jesus' breast, and he's saying what our Lord would say, because this is precisely what our Lord has said in the synoptic gospels and in the gospel of John. He is saying that we should love to the extent that we are willing to lay down our lives for the brethren. I take it that that means that we should regard the lives of other believers as more significant for us than our life if the occasion arises.

But I hear lots of Christians talking constantly about love, I even hear people saying, "That's a loving church. I want to see that church. Its members are willing to lay down their lives for other believers." I don't think that's what's meant. I think they mean something like, "They're very friendly. They're very friendly with each other." There's a lot of sentimental affection among them, and they have a social relationship, which is significant as many people like it. I think that is really what is in mind, but John says Christian love is more than that. You shouldn't use the term love for that, biblically. You shouldn't say, "That's a loving church." Unless what you're saying is they would each be willing to give their lives for the brethren, at least it seems so to me. In fact, it seems to me that we should not speak so easily of Christian love, if we haven't given it some contemplation.

Now, Fred Bruce, one of the leading evangelical scholars and interpreters has said, "No Christian should speak readily of his love for others, unless he's prepared if need be to show that love as Christ showed his, by giving up his life for them. Indeed by regarding it as his plain duty to do so." This is what is meant by showing the love of Christ in one's life. It's love in deed and in truth that is expected from the child of God, and not the kind of pious talk that devalues the currency of heavenly love, because it's unmatched by corresponding action. Don't talk about love, my Christian friend. Don't talk about love; if this is not what you mean, you are willing to give up your life for your brother or your sister. That's what John means, it's a higher standard. As a matter of fact, it's an impossible standard. You cannot measure up to it, I know you, most of you. You cannot measure up to it. My dearest friends, I look out and see some of you, my dearest friends; you cannot make it of yourself. This is something only God can do, through us. But if you have that kind of love in your heart, planted there in grace by the Lord Jesus Christ, there is hope.

Now, you naturally at this point want to say, how does this work out in experience? What I like about John is he was called the theologian, but he also was very

practical; the fact of the matter is almost too practical. Listen to what he says. Let's bring it down to the practicalities. We've been talking about the generalities of what Christ did and what love for the brethren might be. C.S. Lewis used to talk about loving everybody in general is an excuse for loving nobody in particular. [Laughter] And listen to what John says, he says, "But whoso hath this world's good," that means a big bank account or other means of a financial nature. This is the word for life, that is life in its external aspects, not the principal of life, but life as it is reflected in what we see, goods, we even use the term goods. The Authorized Version says, "good." "My little children, whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother hath need and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him how dwelleth the love of God in him?" What does that mean? That's the way to deny the existence of the love of God in that person. He's asking that as a rhetorical question. Here is a person who has this world's good, and he had over here a brother whom he loves with the love of Christ and is not willing to share with him. "How dwelleth the love of God in him?" Is that kind of attitude the attitude of our Lord when he gave himself for us?

Furthermore, he says, "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need." It's no simple passing glance, the original text suggests, but serious consideration. Well, I know how we so often are. We dream of heroic sacrifices that we will make one of these days that never arise in our society, so we don't have to really meet our ideas of some heroic deed which we will perform and prove that we love the brethren. Yes, when it comes, when the Russians come, or when this happens in our society and we have the KGB or the SS or the CIA or whatever it may be, and they knock on our door, we will then be willing to give our lives for the brethren.

Well, there are lots of people who are already experiencing that, as you heard about our Romanian friends and others who face that constantly. So we dream of heroic sacrifices and John says you may miss those of the sacrifice of some ease that you enjoy now, and the sacrifice of some luxury that you enjoy now, and the sacrifice of the

exercise of your self will in the way that you conduct your life or social pride, and you give us pious talk. John Bunyan said, "Practical love is best. Many love Christ with nothing but the lick of the tongue." I love you, that's about it, the lick of the tongue. Tongue love, we're filled with that. Turn on your TV, turn on the professing Christian programs and listen to the tongue love. That has a particular appeal to our shallow evangelical society, tongue love.

I must give you, I cannot help but repeat this, I have it stuck in my Bible, but you know I told you last week I read the comic strip, I read about forty percent of them, most of them I pass by, but some of them I really like, and one I really like is "In the Bleachers." It's a sports background usually. About a week or so ago there was a picture, it's just one cartoon, a picture, a broadcast booth, you could Brad Sham and Dale Hansen in it, because it's that kind of booth. And here is a sports writer, he stretched out on the floor, flat on his back like this, and his tongue, out of his mouth is about that long, and it's down the side of his face. It has come out and just collapsed down the side of his, and like those fellows in the Cowboy games that rush out to help an injured player, here's a guy standing behind him, and finally he shouts up, and he says, "It's his tongue all right, could be ligaments." [Laughter] And underneath it says, "Career ending injuries in the broadcast booth." [Laughter]

Well, tongue love is kind of like that. A person, just constantly talking about things of which the apostle, the apostle considers these things are very serious. He says his life doesn't dwell in the murderer; love doesn't dwell in the miser. That's what he's saying. Love doesn't dwell in the murderer, but it doesn't dwell in the miser either. "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

There are many of us, who gather around, in fact we sang a song very much like that today, we sang "Since from his bounty I receive such proofs of love divine, had I a thousand hearts to give, Lord they should all be Thine. Lord, they should all be Thine." I

hope you sang that, not so much as what was true of you, but as true of what you would like for your life to be. One man who I like wrote, "In many a church the man is found singing with unction, 'Was the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small,' for whose shrunken soul the smallest coin out of a full purse proves large enough to meet Christ's loud appeal." As that great political philosopher, M. Dukakis said the other night [laughter] at the conclusion of one of his speeches, so the media said, "Action speaks louder than words." That's a great new thought. [Laughter] Love does mean love in action.

Well, our time is up I see. What the apostle has said is the climax of hate is murder, just as Cain hated, slew Abel, so the world, Cain's moral descendants, hated, slew the greater than Abel, would slay us. Abel, however, passed into life. Cain passed into eternal death, ultimately. In fact, Cain, when he slew Abel, slew himself really. So Christian love is designed to characterize the church. Hatred characterizes the world. The prototype is Cain. It originates in the devil. It issues in murder. The evidence is spiritual death.

The Christian church, on the other hand, is characterized by love, this kind of love, this love that gives oneself for the brethren, like Christ's love. The prototype, therefore, is Christ. It originates in God. It issues in self-sacrifice, and its evidence of eternal life. I must say as one of my favorite commentators has said, "O to be enabled to enter more and more into this brotherly love of Jesus, to apprehend its nature, to imbibe its spirit." If you have any need for motivation, let me remind you of something. You, who know the Lord, how did you treat the Lord before you knew him?

Oh, the chances are, you as I, in the first place you were hostile. Secondly, you wearied him. And thirdly, you provoked him. As a matter of fact, if we could speak in human language, you pierced his heart by the kind of life and response that you gave to the love of Christ. And so, how did our Lord deal with us? Very tenderly, very persistently, he kept at it until finally, by his grace, he turned us around, and we repented.

Don't be afraid of that word, repented, it's a gift of God. It's part of your faith. And by his grace, he touched our hearts and brought us to the knowledge of the Lord and brought us into the family of God. He dealt with us tenderly. I would like to say to you, in appreciation for what our Lord has done for us, how can we withhold our goods from the brother who's in need? And furthermore, how can we give up on our non-Christian friends and not exercise patience and love and concern and care with them in seeking to win them to the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If you're here today, and you've never believed in Christ, of course you cannot know the love of God. You cannot experience the love of God that is only something that believers, by God's grace, can understand and appreciate. But you can become a believer. You can enter into the family of God. You can actually come to him in such a way that you receive the forgiveness of sins. You become one of the brethren and know what it is to be forgiven, know what it is to have the righteousness of God as a gift, know what it is to stand with the assurance that your future is safe in the hands of our covenantal representative, the Lord Jesus Christ. We invite you to him. He did what John says, he offered himself as a propitiatory sacrifice for sinners. You're a sinner. Come to him. Receive as a free gift, eternal life, no better time than right now. As we stand, bow your head, confess your need, acknowledge him as your personal Savior, receive the gift of life. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for the good news concerning Christ and we thank Thee, Lord, for the burden of the gospel that we love one another out of a heart transformed by divine grace. For any...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]