



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 John 2:3-6

"Knowing and Keeping the Commandments"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] The Scripture reading today is 1 John chapter 2, verse 3 through verse 6. As you can tell, we're going rather slowly through this epistle that the apostle wrote near the end of his life. But I think that what we have been seeing in it has certainly justified our slow journey through it. Today we are looking at four verses. They are so different from the two verses that have preceded, and I'm sure you will notice the difference as we look into them.

The apostle writes in verse 3, and incidentally since the last two messages have been on the advocate with the Father and the propitiation for our sins, and just previous to that the assurance that "if we confess our sins, he's faithful and just to forgive us our sins." That might create the same kind of impression that the last two verses of the 5th chapter of Romans evidently created with a number of people with whom the Apostle Paul was acquainted.

You remember in Romans chapter 5, verse 20 and 21 the apostle concluded the chapter by saying, "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Evidently that created the viewpoint, in the minds of some, that if we go on sinning that

will be a manifestation of God's forgiving grace, because grace much more abounds over sinning, and so God will be glorified the more we sin by the manifestation of more grace covering our sins, so why should we not just continue in sin, that grace may abound. Well, Paul of course, speaks very forcefully against it by saying right at the beginning, "God forbid." And then shows how our relationship to the Lord and union with him is utterly opposed to such a blasphemous idea.

Well, there may have been something of that in John's mind. He has just spoken about the fact that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." "He's the propitiation for our sins," and so there might have been some, I'm not sure that this is really in John's mind, but it could well have been in his mind that there some who thought, "Well, it's so easy to have our sins forgiven, and the promises are there, so we perhaps should not be as careful about the kind of life that we live as other apostles in other parts of the Bible seem to suggest." So it may be that that has something to do with the way that John now writes. For in the 3rd verse he says,

"And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."

Those are remarkably forthright, remarkably plain words that the apostle has written to people just such as so many of you are in this audience, professors of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And when I say, "so many of you in the audience," of course, I do not exclude me. In fact, I think particularly of me as one who makes a profession constantly of faith in Christ.

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

[Prayer] Father, we are indeed grateful to Thee that the apostles wrote so plainly under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to our needs, and exhorted us, and encouraged us, and consoled us with the words of God. We so need, Lord, to be exhorted, to live in accordance with the profession of faith that we make. Deliver us from hypocrisy, and from Kant, the pious statements which we often make as believers, but to which we do not yield complete allegiance. We ask that through the ministry of the word of God, we may be encouraged, lifted up, and blessed to the extent that we keep the commandments of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Oh God, help us to remember that sin breaks our communion with Thee. Enable us, because of the greatness of the atoning work of Christ, to desire truly to please Thee in all of the daily life which we are called upon to live.

We thank Thee for this assembly, for its leadership, for the members, and the friends, and the visitors who are here today, and Lord, we hold them up before Thee and pray Thy blessing upon each one of us. We need Thy blessing. We thank Thee for the whole body of Christ, of which we are a part, and we pray, by Thy grace the church of Jesus Christ may truly represent him who loved the church and gave himself for her. In the day in which we live, Lord, we sense the necessity of the reality of a trust in Christ that results in a life pleasing to Thee. We pray Thy blessing upon the whole body wherever it may be, not simply in this country.

Bless the ministry of the word that has gone forward already, to the east of us all the way across the Atlantic and then to the west. Bless the word as it goes forth later on. May it be fruitful.

We thank Thee, Lord, for the outreach of the church of Christ, for the outreach of the Chapel and its ministries, bless them as well. Supply the needs that exist. And Father, we pray for those who are struggling, who have trials and tribulations, who are sick and ill, and some bereaved, Lord, encourage and by the manifold consolations that belong to Thy name, build up and hold those who truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray for those who've requested our prayers. We ask, Lord, particularly for them, and pray that Thou wilt meet their needs. For this country, Lord, in this year of decision, we pray that Thy hand may be upon the United States. We are confident, Lord, that all of the things that transpire are within the appointed will of our triune, we pray that if it please Thee, we may have a president to come who will be a significant figure in the history of this country for good.

We commit this day to Thee, and the meeting to Thee, and the meeting this even to Thee. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] The Apostle John subscribed to the moral tests of the spiritual life, namely that all true spiritual experience is morally evidenced if not to men, then to God alone. But it is always evidenced. The mere claim to life, the apostle realized, was a claim that may be counterfeited, and his language reflects that. For example, in the 1st chapter, in the 6th verse he says, "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." And then in chapter 2, in verse 4, "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." And then in the 6th verse he says, "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." So the apostle believed it was possible for spiritually, what shall I say, spiritually professing men to say things that sounded perfectly orthodox, but nevertheless were counterfeit statements and counterfeit claims. It seems from what John has written that expressions like, "I know him." "I abide in him." These were catch words among those who were his readers or potential readers, but it was common in his day to say, "I know him." That is, "I know God," but not really to know him. To say, "I abide in God," but not really to abide in him. Of course, we have some outstanding illustrations in the Bible of this, perhaps the most notable being Judas, the apostle of Jesus Christ. In his resume that would have been the most significant thing that he could write, "Apostle of Jesus Christ," and so he was an individual who had a great

profession, perhaps the greatest profession that one could make in this age. There are some evidences that Judas, in company with the others, performed signs and wonders in his day. And we have no reason, from the word of God itself, to suggest the he was not involved with them. Mark chapter 6 certainly seems to imply that. So to counterfeit spiritual things is a very common thing.

We often hear people say that they are studying such things as the spiritual life, or the deeper life, or the Keswick life, but often these are only proud claims that individual makes. We know, of course, that assurance and humility are not always linked, nor the keeping of the word of God linked to our profession. Now, it's true that many evangelicals distrust an interest in the inner life of communion with God and its emphasis when men, even in our circles, begin to lay stress upon holiness of life, upon the cultivation of humility, upon stress upon obedience to the principles of the word of God; many of us tend to draw back, because we feel that it is probably not too good to poke around in our motives and in our feelings in the inner life.

Claims of the right knowledge of such things remind us of the much maligned, unfortunately maligned "Puritans." It's doubtful that any people have been more falsely maligned than the Puritans, but nevertheless we live with that term, and we live with the idea that lies back of it even if was not true of them. Dogmatism, assurance, and conviction are out of fashion today, except in science. Now, we may be dogmatic, we may be assured, and we may have conviction in science, even though next year our convictions much change, and that's perfectly acceptable to our society. It only represents the rebellion that we have in our age toward the things of the Lord.

I take a little publication called the *Religion and Society Report*; it's edited by Richard John Neuhaus. And he has an interesting comment in one of the recent issues concerning the issue of the *United States News and World Report*, which I take, but unfortunately do not read too closely. A special issue was devoted to the two hundred and fifty most influential Americans, including Neuhaus says, thirty-two intellectuals. He

said that he was not displeased to be on that list. He said his mother actually believes he's among the top thirty-two, but nevertheless he was happy to be on the list. But then he went on to make some rather interesting comments. He said the influential men were divided into categories of business, foreign affairs, politics, intellectuals, science, media, culture, and high society.

Now, this is an analysis of our society. Now, you will notice, of course, the omission. There is nothing about religion, nothing about spirituality, nothing about the church directly. But our society is divided into these things. He said, "The only mention of religion in the entire issue is a conventionally snotty put down of scientific creationism by Stephen Jay Gould of Harvard University. But what is striking," he said, "is that there were only three people that had any association with religion." He was one, and Michael Novak was another, and they were classified as social philosophers, and the Martin Marty, well-known professor of church history at Chicago's School of Religion was classified as a historian. So of the two hundred and fifty influential men in this country, not a single one was a person who had spiritual references. That's remarkable, and what he went on to say was this, "More people are in church any weekend of the year than attend all professional events in the entire year." So what it does reveal, of course, is that our society is a very worldly society. Our society is a society that is in unconscious rebellion against the things of the word of God.

Now, among evangelicals we tend to say, "Yes, let's make much of worship. Let's make much of prayer. Let's make much of Bible study. And let's even make something of discipline in the Christian life, but let us be suspicious of two things. Let us be suspicious of mere creeds on the one hand, and of course, that's certainly valid. But let us also be suspicious of any claims to a higher form of spiritual life, because that sounds like Kant." And in many cases it is, but when we say all of that, it's still true that the Scriptures do set forth for us a kind of life that could be called a higher spiritual life, if measured by the kind of life that characterizes us.

There's a little church over in east Dallas, I don't know whether it's still there or not, but I used to go by it quite a bit. It's just a little frame building, and it's called The Church of the Deeper Life, as I remember, the Deeper Life Church. When I passed by it, I used to smile. It's small; there are just a few people there. Maybe that's the one place in Dallas where you really can here the deeper life taught, but the general impression that we have is it's probably not there at all. They're making an interesting claim.

Now, the Apostle John has a beautiful way of testing our claims to spiritual life. It's very simple, it's very direct. It's so direct we read through it, all of these simple little words, and they do not seem to make much of an impression on us. Listen to what he says. First of all, in order to probe the trustworthiness of our knowledge of God, he makes a statement concerning the evidence of our knowledge of God. You proclaim your knowledge of God. You profess that you know God. You believers in Jesus Christ, of which I am one, we believers in Jesus Christ, this is what John would say to us if he were here, standing in this pulpit. This is what he would say to us, "By this we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." That's very direct, isn't it? "Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments."

Now, if you'll recognize that this is said against the background of the life of John's day, it might be helpful to just for a few moments say something about the way people though concerning the knowledge of God. In the days of Socrates and Plato, the 4th and 5th centuries before Christ, when men talked about knowing God in those classical times, they thought of the knowledge of God as something that could be attained by intellectual argument, by human reasoning, simply put. They felt it was possible for us to come to some assurances, that we could know God by human thinking. In the times of the New Testament things had changed, evidently. Many were dissatisfied with that particular view point, and so they thought about knowing God in a more emotional way, through emotional experiences, characteristic were the mystery religions with their passion plays. A dying and rising God was their God.

And they played out on their stages the story of the dying and rising God, with whom they hoped to gain union, and they did it by entertaining individuals. They had cunning lighting. They had sensual music. They had perfumed incense. They had a marvelous liturgy, and the climax of it all, as an individual was initiated into the religion, was the moment when the initiate could cry out, "I am thou, and thou are I." That was the climax. That was their experience, an emotional experience, a "feeling" God, not knowing God as the earlier Greeks had thought about it, but feeling God, feeling, emotionalism.

Now, the Jews, if you look at the Old Testament, they rejected both of those approaches to God. They felt that God was not known by speculation, not by emotion, but by revelation, the revelation of the knowledge of God through Moses and the prophets. The God revealed, however, was a holy God. And furthermore, they went on to say that the God revealed, being a holy God, necessitated holiness on the part of those who worshipped him. That seemed to flow perfectly from the kind of God that they had had revealed to them.

Now, the Apostle John writes against that background. We know that grace is a gift. We know that we receive eternal life through the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ who died for sinners, and that the reception of eternal life does not depend upon our works, whether religious or of other kinds, but simply by the free gift of God's grace. But the miracle of grace makes demands upon us, let us never forget that. Not that we might be saved, but simply, because we have been saved. Because we have appreciated what we were, what we have come from, and what, by God's marvelous, sovereign, (we've been talking about that recently) sovereign grace.

Now, the apostle says, "Hereby we know that we know him." If you look at that statement, you'll realize that the apostle believed it was possible to know God, and secondly, he believed it was possible to know that you know. In other words, it was possible to know God, and it was possible to have assurance of that knowledge. Hereby,

we do know that we know him, and he's talking, incidentally, about using the language of experience, and so we'll say he's talking about experiential knowledge. And the assurance of that experiential knowledge as being available for men, but there's a condition. In the original text, it's a simple condition or clause. He says, "Hereby we do know that we know him, if," in the case of his readers, as seems likely, "we keep his commandments." The word keep suggests a sentry.

It was often used of a sentry, so it suggests that we should be on guard to obey God's will. Let me say to you, my Christian friend, and others of you who are in the audience who may be professors of belief in Christ but not really possessors, and those of you that don't make any profession, that the first principle of Christianity is this, Jesus is Lord. Now, once you say that, you have affirmed the trinity, ultimately. For if the Father is Lord, and Jesus is Lord, we are speaking about a God that subsists in three persons, if we remember the Holy Spirit as well. Jesus is Lord. The apostles never veered from that. Jesus is Lord; that was the point of Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost. When the Philippian jailor said, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The Lordship of Christ, don't be deterred by debated over Lordship salvation, we're not talking about that. We're talking about our Lord's position as Lord. Jesus is Lord is the fundamental principle of Christianity.

The apostle, in Romans chapter 10, verse 9, when he talks about profession, he says, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." In 2 Corinthians chapter 4, in a passage that we looked at not too many months back, Paul said, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord." So Jesus is Lord, first principle. God is known in Christ the Lord, and John says simply, "I may know that I know him by the practical test of obedience. It's just as simple as that.

So what shall I say about divorce? The Bible says divorce is contrary to the will of God. Do we keep the commandments of the will of God when we engage in divorce?

No, we violate the commandments of God. When we commit adultery, do we keep the commandments of God? Do we keep his word? No, we violate the commandments of the Lord. We violate his word. When we engage in sexual rebellion, and the Bible explicitly sets forth sexual rebellion, do we keep the commandments of God? No, we violate the commandments of God. The individual who says, "I know him. I abide in him." And who doesn't keep the commandments of God, John says, is a liar. I shouldn't have done that. I'll be known as a pulpit thumper from now on. [Laughter] But John speaks just that definitely. It's very simple; the words are easy to understand. We cannot even say this is so theological it's over my head. "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." "Commandments" is a long word, but we all understand it; even the kids in the audience understand commandments.

Worldliness, well now that's a little different, but the Bible says, "The friend of the world is at enmity with God." That's the prevailing sin, probably, among our evangelicals, worldliness. We are so worldly. We are an affluent people and so worldly. The things of our Lord are down the list of our priorities. Look, if we really do profess the name of Christ, if we really do believe him, if we really do abide in him, that's something that each of us needs to wrestle with by our sides, by our chairs, or wherever it is we open our hearts to the Lord God.

Let me go on, the apostle, after having stated here the evidence of our knowledge of God as keeping the commandments, he's not satisfied with one verse, but he's going to enforce that and expand upon it a bit. So he will do this by a denial of the opposite and then an emphasis by denying what he's just affirmed. He will say, in other words as someone said, his principle is "A," "B" opposition, then "A" affirming again. "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." That's the negative, and then verse 5 the positive. "But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected," incidentally, that's love for God, most likely, "hereby know we that we are in him."

So let's notice what he says. He says very simply, the false claimant of him is a liar. That's not something new, incidentally. John didn't have to hear any definite word from the Lord concerning that, because the Scriptures, which were before him stated that. Listen, for example, to Hosea in the Old Testament who says essentially the same thing that he says, except he spells out the kinds of sins that Israel was engaging in. In the 4th chapter of his prophecy, the prophet says, "Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood." And then we don't have time to read through the remaining seventeen verses, but they just spell out the different ways in which Israel was not keeping the commandments of God. And because of that Israel was exposed to judgment and ultimately experienced it as a nation. So he says, "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar." It's like the Lord, faced with an individual like Samuel Lewis Johnson, Samuel Lewis Johnson says, "I know him." But Samuel Lewis Johnson does not keep the commandments of the Lord.

William Law who's written a book on this says, "It's just as if the Lord God has put the roughest and blacked pencil mark under that profession." I'm a liar, and the truth is not in me. Now, expanding the necessity of obedience, he says, "But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him." There's a kind of perfect covenant of love between the true believer and the Lord God, the true believer, who responds to the love of God in love and obedience. It seems to me just as simple as that.

Now, when he says, "In him verily is the love of God perfected," he means it's brought to completion. That is, we affirm that we know him. We affirm that we abide in him. We affirm we are believers in Christ, but that affirmation, that profession is completed in the obedience, the response that we give in our daily lives to the

commandments of God. We're not saved by obedience, but our obedience evidences the salvation that we genuinely have. That's exactly what the Scriptures say. We don't affirm that anyone is ever converted through the things that he does. When we talk about the grounds of our salvation, we turn to "He is the propitiation for our sins." But we affirm that these grounds, when by God's grace they have been made ours, that is the benefits, there is a necessary evidence of them in our lives. We cannot escape it if we look at the apostle's teaching.

There is an interesting thing here in that he says in the 5th verse, "Whoso keepeth his word," whereas he has been talking about keeping the commandments in verse 3. Someone has illustrated it this way, and perhaps it bears some repeating, "It's possible that he's talking about a broader thing than just the commandments and inclusive of the promises of God, the promises we receive, the promises that become ours, but it also may be something more significant in that the word of an individual is more personal than simply his commandments.

Take children and a mother's relationship to them, now when your children get to be a certain age, like teenagers, they have certain capacities to accept responsibility. And we'll just assume a mother is going to leave the house, and she has a couple of teenage daughters around, and so she says, "I'm going to have to be gone for a few hours, and these are the things that I want you to do." And so she gives them a few commandments. Now, if when she comes back, those things have been done, they have kept her commandments. But now, let's suppose that when mother leaves, they should get together and say, "Look, mother will be very pleased if we keep the commandments, but she will be astonished and overjoyed if we do some extra things that we know she wants to do, and we'll do them for her in order to please her." And so when mother comes home, she is astonished. In fact, she has to sit down for a few moments [laughter] to get over that catastrophe of what has happened. But now, that's maybe, someone has said, what John is speaking about, to keep his word is so much

more personal than simply to keep his commandments. Look, if God has done for you what he has done for us, keep his commandments. That's a small return. That's a totally inadequate return for eternal life and the blessings that go along with it. But that's one of the rewards of life. "Verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him."

And John doesn't stop with that, and he's gonna say some more about it. Later on, in verse 6, he speaks about the moral obligation of practical union. He states, "He that saith he abideth in him ought," this is a verb. There are several of these in the New Testament, three specifically. This one speaks of moral obligation. "Ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." The claim, "I abide in him." The consequences, "Ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." The mystical experience of union with the Lord is proved genuine by appropriate behavior. But one might ask what is it to walk as he walked? What kind of walk did our Lord engage in? Or how would you describe his walk? That word, incidentally, walked is used very significantly, in the New Testament, of the believer's relationship to the Lord, and it's used specifically of our Lord's life. He walked here. He walked there. And if you'll examine our Lord's life, you will see it was no sauntering about. It was no lounging around. It was no ramble, as someone has said among the commentators, no easy ramble that Jesus engaged in. It was earnest. It was purposeful. It was a decisive journey in the accomplishment of the will of God.

Take, for example, those great expressions, one of which is the 9th chapter of the Gospel of Luke, as he made his way toward the city of Jerusalem Luke writes, "And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go unto Jerusalem." Now, as he went up to Jerusalem, Mark gives us a description of the situation, and it's so remarkable that this verse, I think, has impressed itself upon me as few in the Gospel of Mark. And they were on the way going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus went before them. You can just see our Lord, his strides outpacing the disciples who are sauntering along, rambling along in their little journey.

But he has one thing upon his mind, the deace that he should accomplish in Jerusalem. He steps out in front of them, and as they look at him they sense there is something about the numinous, something of the numinous about him. And listen, "And they were amazed." Why should they be amazed at him stepping out in front of them? Because they sensed it was something significant, and as they followed, they were afraid. That's the kind of life our Lord lived. His feet were busy, his soul rested in God and in the will of God. That's a picture of the believer's life. Our feet are busy, our spirits in communion with the Lord God.

John adds that little word in John 3:13. I don't want to speak with my customary dogmatism about this, but the apostle writes, "And no man hath ascended up to heaven," this is our Lord speaking, "and he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." It almost suggests that while our Lord is carrying out his activity, he, the Son of man, is in such communion with the Father, and submissive to his purpose, united with him, "I and the Father are one," he will say later, that it can be said that he, the Son of man is in heaven.

Now, what about our walk? We ought to walk as he walked. Well, obviously we ought to walk as seeing God in all things, and all things in God. As Paul said in 2 Corinthians, "All things are of God." That's how we walk as Christian believers, submitting in active benevolence, going about doing good, as Peter described our Lord's work, in unity with God and in union with him, and in no easy ramble. Thomas á Kempis wrote a famous book called, *The Imitation of Christ*, and that's a valid title. Some have suggested that it should have been something different. It should have been *Participation in Christ*, rather than *The Imitation of Christ*. But imitation is legitimate too, as this particular verse suggests. He says then, "To abide in him suggests then conformity and community of life."

One of the pleasures of life that I have is going back to Scotland, as you know, and looking around, looking at castles, seeing places where the Reformation took place,

going to little churches way often out in remote places, where well known preachers of the gospel of Christ, in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries proclaimed the word. One of the first things that I did when I went to St. Andrews was to go to the Cathedral in the Abbey, it's just ruins now. It's a big ruin; you can see it for a long ways away. In fact, you can see it way up on the hill as you come from the south, and my first thing was to look for the grave of Samuel Rutherford. I knew it was there, and fortunately as I came in, I turned right and went about a hundred yards, seventy-five yards or so and there it was. I looked at it; I think the stone is kind of crooked now. Mr. Rutherford was a 17th century theologian, one of the real movers behind the Westminster Confession of Faith, faithful minister of the sovereign grace of God. I imagine that of the people who live in St. Andrews today, a beautiful, little town by the North Sea that probably ten percent of them realize who Samuel Rutherford was, and that may be exaggerating.

Well, right next to Mr. Rutherford is a grave of a man by the name of Thomas Haliburton. Now, I confess when I first saw Mr. Rutherford's grave I said to myself, "Who is Thomas Haliburton?" And thought he was just some friend or something, and that's the only attention I paid to it. Last week I began to read the memoirs of Thomas Haliburton. I had quoted him in some messages, because there were things that I have come to know about him since the first time I was there. But one of the things that Mr. Haliburton said was very interesting to me. He was born in 1674, one of about eight children, as I remember. All but two died as children, and he died when he was thirty-eight, evidently, weakness in the family in their constitutions. But as he was dying, his memoirs are very striking. Here is a true man of God.

But I love this, "About noon," he said, "I was just thinking on the pleasant spot of earth that I will get to lie in." You ever thought about the place that you might be ultimately placed? Well, he evidently knew exactly where he was going to be buried, and he knew it was going to be near Mr. Rutherford. So he said "the pleasant spot of earth that I will get to lie in beside Mr. Rutherford, Mr. Forrester, Principal Anderson, and I will

come in as a little one among them" He loved Rutherford. "And I will get my pleasant George in my hand, and oh we will be," and listen to this expression. I haven't heard this in all of my life, "We will be a knot of bonnie dust." "We will be a knot of bonnie dust." Now, some people may think that's crazy for a man to say that. Of course, he's thinking about the associations in the resurrection. It is a knot of bonnie dust there, and that's all it is, too, now, dust, after all of these years.

Mr. Haliburton, incidentally, the last two years of his life was Professor of Divinity as St. Andrews. There are two pages here; I wish I had time to read them, about how he knew it was God's will that he go there. Do you know that that poor man, as Mr. Prier suggested to me this morning when I told him about this, that that poor man did not have the intelligence to send out a resume. [Laughter] And furthermore, if he had had the intelligence to send out a resume, he wouldn't have done it, which is even worse. To know you ought to do it, and not do it. When the word came to him that the queen or the king had issued a patent, which means that he was given the right to serve as Professor of Divinity there. When that came, he did not make any response whatsoever. He never expressed to a friend, he said, "I never expressed to a friend that I wanted to do that. I waited for the Presbytery to act. I waited for my church to act." He was pastor of a church in that part of the land of Scotland. He never let anyone know about it. He waited so that all of the affairs might turn out without any word from him.

To my mind, that ought to be taught, as Mr. Prier suggested to me this morning, this ought to be taught in our theological seminaries. For they are taught to go about getting a job just as you in the business world are, scrounge for it, get friends to speak up for you, the right resumes, send them all around. Let them know you're available. Mr. Haliburton, he knew the Lord knew he was available, if it should be his will. And he waited over a period of time. The Presbytery acted. As a matter of fact, there were certain things there that he says that are just most interesting. And finally, when it became evident it was God's will, he asked the Lord to make him fit for what the Lord had called

him to do. That's what I think is walking, one of the things, walking as he walked. That's the evidence that you belong to the Lord.

Well, to sum it up. John's "ethical rigorism," as someone has put it, is evident. He demands the same fierce test of consistent conduct. These are the credentials of a true Christian, and all of these other words and things that we utter like, "I went to a Victorious Life Conference last week, and I was so built up by it." Those things are all tested by the acts of our lives. In other words, it's all spiritual humbug to talk about the things that are not evidenced in our lives. How may I know that I know him, and in him? Experience? No. Science and wonders? No. Tongues? No. Voices from heaven à la contemporary religious medicine men, quacks, and charlatans? No, it's as simple and as hard as keeping his word, keeping the commandments.

I like Samuel's word. Eli had disobeyed the Lord, and Eli stood under the disciplinary judgment of God, but a man of God nevertheless. Samuel was serving as an apprentice, and as Samuel was lying down, you'll remember the word came to him. "Samuel." The young boy got up, walked over to Eli and said, "You called?" Eli said, "I didn't call. Go on back." "Samuel." He got up again, went to Eli, "You called?" "No, I didn't call. Go on back and lie down." "Samuel," a third time, then Eli said, "I didn't call, but maybe the Lord's calling." So he went back, then the words came, "Samuel, Samuel." And then he replied, "Speak Lord, for Thy servant heareth." What a marvelous response. So when the word of God expresses itself in commandments or in words, there is no appropriate response, for a true believer in Christ, but the response of, "Speak Lord, for Thy servant heareth. And by Thy grace and by Thy power, I want to obey."

If you're here today, and you've never believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, we invite you to come to him, not by keeping the commandments. You cannot do that. But by remembering, he's the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. Come to him. Trust in him. Receive eternal life, and by God's grace,

be enabled to enter into the life of response of obedience and love and trust. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are indeed grateful to Thee for these simple words from the apostle, so pointed, so valid, so real to us, which we find at times so difficult.

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]