



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

2 Corinthians 11:1-6

“Only One Jesus, One Spirit and One Gospel”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] One further word concerning the coming of Dr. Gerstner which is not in our bulletin. You'll notice from the bulletin that he's speaking on the subject of great reformation doctrines. On Friday night at seven thirty, he will be speaking on the subject of Martin Luther and the inability of man. It may be helpful to remember that Dr. Gerstner spent his life ministry as Professor of Historical Theology at the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, a Presbyterian school, and that's somewhat of his area of expertise, although he has some other areas as well.

On Saturday morning, he will be speaking on the subject of reformed Evangelism. And the reason for that is, of course, that many people think that if you do believe in the doctrine of divine election that that rules out any kind of Evangelism. Of course, that is pure ignorance, we know in Believers Chapel at least. But nevertheless, Dr. Gerstner will be speaking on that very interesting topic, and I'm very sure that he will clarify this for any who may be in a bit of a confusion on that point. Then Saturday night, he will be speaking on John Calvin and divine election, and finally on Sunday morning on Jonathan Edwards and the doctrine of justification by faith.

Now, I must say I have chosen these topics [Laughter], but he was very happy to do them with one exception. He asked me if he could, instead of doing Martin Luther

and justification by faith, if he could do Jonathan Edwards and justification by faith. And on the grounds of patriotism, we acceded to his request, and so it will be Jonathan Edwards and justification by faith. As many of you know, Edwards is probably, perhaps, maybe possessed of the finest mind, philosopher/theologian, that America has ever produced.

And Dr. Gerstner has spent a large part of his life in the study of Jonathan Edwards and is actually one of the editors of the Yale University’s reprint of his works which have been in process of publication for some time. They are not finished. Dr. Gerstner will be editing one or two of those volumes. I think he is dealing with his sermons. So we have the privilege of hearing a Christian man, a truly earnest Christian man, knowledgeable not only in the gospel but also in Jonathan Edwards and Edward’s doctrine of justification by faith.

Knowing Dr. Gerstner, who is an outstanding preacher, I know that that will be a treat for all of you, and he will be speaking on that topic in the two messages on Sunday, October the 30th to November the 1st. So we will be meeting Friday night, Saturday morning, Saturday night, and Sunday morning with Dr. Gerstner. And also each of the nights, Friday and Saturday, we’re having a time of Christian fellowship afterwards.

And also, Dr. Gerstner, as you know, is a skillful preacher but in addition he is, if anything, an even more skillful handler of questions from the floor, and he likes to do that. And so we’ll probably have question-and-answer sessions after the Friday and Saturday evenings sessions. He probably is the leading evangelical teacher who uses the Socratic method of teaching. And people who have heard Dr. Gerstner, and who have been taught by him, frequently say, very frequently, he’s the best teacher I have ever had in my life. So we are going to try to persuade him, that hasn’t been arranged yet definitely, but I am almost certain he will be happy to do it. In fact, he might even say I was hoping you would ask me to do that because when he was last here he did that, and we hope to have that again. So please look forward to that week and if you have friends,

let them know about it because that’s a treat for us at Believer’s Chapel to have a man like John Gerstner come.

The Scripture reading today is 2 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 1 through verse 6. And the apostle, at the conclusion of the preceding chapter, had said “But he who boasts let him boast in the Lord. For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends.” Now, since Paul is going to, in a sense, commend himself after saying “For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends.” He begins the next chapter with this statement,

“I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness,” or perhaps since this could be rendered this way, with my little bit of foolishness. “But indeed you are bearing with me,” that could be rendered, “But indeed bear with me,” but we are leaving it as the New American Standard Bible has it. “For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. But I am afraid lest, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. For if one comes and preaches another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.” That’s stated ironically. In other words, when false teachers come, the Corinthians bear with them. Think of it. “For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles.” It’s possible to understand that in two ways. “Most eminent apostles” could be a reference to those appointed by our Lord; that is, the twelve and the Apostle Paul himself, but primarily of the twelve here. “Not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles.” But since the false teachers who had come to Corinth called themselves apostles, it’s more likely I think that he’s referring to them when he says, “For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles.” And thus, of course, this again is spoken rather ironically. That’s what they say of themselves. If you’ll

look at verse 13 just below, he says, “For such men are false apostles.” They claim for themselves the title of eminent apostles, but Paul is rather sarcastic in his reference to them. He does acknowledge one thing, however, and that is that he’s not skilled in speech. For he says in the 6th verse, “But even if I am unskilled in speech, yet I am not so in knowledge; in fact, in every way we have made this evident to you in all things.”

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

[Prayer] Our heavenly Father, we are indeed grateful to Thee for the gospel that the Apostle Paul proclaimed and which by Thy grace has been transmitted to us through the centuries. And we thank Thee for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who is the divine Son, the second person of the eternal trinity, the one who has come, taken to himself another nature, human nature, and has offered himself a sacrifice for sinners upon the cross at Calvary.

We thank Thee for the atonement that was accomplished, and we thank Thee for the good news of it which we have been called upon to proclaim. And we thank Thee, Lord, for the way in which through the years the Holy Spirit, the third person of the trinity has brought home to the hearts of God’s people the truths of their sin of Christ’s atonement for them and of forgiveness of sins through him and of the hope that we have of ultimately being presented to him as Paul says as a pure virgin. We thank Thee and praise Thee for the hope that we have grounded in what the divine trinity has accomplished. How marvelous it is to be able to rest our hope and our lives upon the certainty of divine revelation and of the divine Trinity.

We thank Thee, Lord, for the day in which we live, and we thank Thee for the privilege of preaching that word. We pray Thy blessing upon the ministry of it today, upon the whole church of Christ as they engage in the work of making Christ known.

For all of those who belong to our Lord, whether weak or strong, or whether a bit confused or possessed of clarity from Thee, Lord, may Thy hand of blessing be upon them for the good of this nation and of the nations of the earth. We thank Thee, too, for this particular local body, for our elders and for our deacons, and for the members and friends and the visitors here today. Lord, may Thy blessing be upon each one of them.

And we pray for the sick, especially. We pray for those who are in the hospital who have had serious operations. We, Lord, pray for them and for their family and for the doctors who have ministered to them. Be with us through the ministry of the word today, and in the remembrance of our Lord at the Lord’s Table this evening.

In Jesus’ name. Amen.

[Message] The clock in the back is five minutes slow. So I want you to know that we began our service five minutes late, and so therefore, that means we can go to five minutes after twelve, doesn’t it? [Laughter] Your mathematics is no better than Joe Biden’s. [Laughter] So we will try to stop at five minutes till the hour according to the clock.

Now, the subject for today is “Only One Jesus, One Spirit and One Gospel.” The apostle reminds us in this brief section of important facts of the spiritual life. Remember in chapter 10 he had said we are engaged in war, a spiritual war. And this spiritual war is a war in which we have engaged Satan and his hosts. This war, while over the mind and the knowledge of God, is a satanically engaged war or satanically waged war.

That’s something that the Scriptures tell us from the beginning through the end of the last of our books. From Genesis chapter 3 in verse 15 and the fall in the Garden of Eden and the curse pronounced upon Satan, through the Old Testament to our Lord’s earthly ministry in which he said, If the world hates me, it also will hate you, and spoke of the fact in John chapter 8 that the struggle was essentially a struggle with Satan to the end of the story of divine revelation when Satan is cast into the Lake of Fire, the world

has been engaged in the quarrel with Jesus Christ incited by the evil one, Satan himself.

So Paul reminds of that here. He reminds us also that the war touches the basic doctrines of the word of God. In the 4th verse he speaks about another Jesus whom we have not preached, about another spirit which you have not received. He speaks of a different gospel which you have not accepted. So this is not a warfare over the incidentals. It’s warfare over the important doctrines of the faith. He reminds us, too, that the issues are a fundamental concern not simply to him but of concern to God himself. He states in the 2nd verse, “For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy.” He relates it all in the 6th verse to the knowledge of God which we know is the ultimately important knowledge. To have all of the knowledge that we may have gained through human research and through human study and through human philosophical reflection and to not have the knowledge of God is to fail abysmally in knowledge. The apostle contends that what he is telling the Corinthians and others who heard him preach is the knowledge of God.

Now, we do not know specifically the identity of Paul’s adversaries. We have to learn this from reflection on the 2 Corinthian epistle. One of the most recent commentaries is by one of the most outstanding New Testament scholars, Professor Ralph Martin of Fuller Seminary. This particular scholar has suggested, in what I would consider an outstanding book, that these men offered a wonder-working Jesus. They, it seems, made some claim to have some kind of knowledge of Christ according to the flesh. In the 5th chapter Paul had said, “Therefore from now on we recognize no man according to the flesh, even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet we now know him thus no longer,” evidently they laid stress upon that and their connection with the first apostles or the early Christians in the land of Palestine.

They offered a wonder-working Jesus then, not Paul’s crucified and risen Lord. They offered a spirit of power and ecstasy, not the spirit of Christ. And they offered a gospel of power and present glory based on signs and also upon the tokens of authority

in their lives as Christ’s servants. They did not offer a gospel of a suffering Christ whose power is displayed in weakness as Paul mentions in the 13th chapter. In addition they were men who were gripped by the mercenary spirit. And Paul in his lengthiest statement concerning that just following the passage that we are studying lays stress upon it. On the other hand, the apostle lived by faith and did not mind the humility of engaging in his own personal labor in support of the ministry which the Lord had given to him.

Now, if you’ll analyze what Professor Martin has said, I’m sure that you will see that there is some similarity between Professor Martin’s contention and what we see in evangelicalism today because we have a movement in our midst which is growing by leaps and bounds that offers a wonder-working Jesus, a spirit of power and ecstasy and a gospel of power and present glory based on signs and tokens of authority, the authority being self-originated authority. We actually have people who go by the name of evangelical who say that there are apostles today and do not make the careful distinction between the apostles of the New Testament, apostles of the churches, as over and against the apostles appointed by the Lord for specific apostolic ministry of that type, but men who claim to be apostles today who even claim that God has appointed other apostles.

One man from the north of the river between Texas and the state to the north has proclaimed himself and his son as apostles and has also anointed three others as apostles and that today we have these five apostles. They are characterized by claims of miraculous signs and wonders and, in fact, in reading this and in reading the things that Professor Martin has said about the men who evidently were Paul’s adversaries, according to him, one cannot help but see the parallel between the two.

Now, I don’t want to leave you with the idea that Professor Martin is necessarily accurate. He doesn’t make that application that I am making, incidentally. So I want to give you another conclusion of another man, a well-known professor of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary, Dr. Philip Hughes, extremely well known, well

respected by scholars both of liberal and conservative bent. Professor Hughes’ identification of the adversaries of Paul is along these lines. They are intruding Hebrew men. After all in verse 22 we read, “Are they Hebrews, so am I, or are they Israelites, so am I, are they descendents of Abraham, so am I.” So they were Hebrew men.

They were making claims to superior authority and that is they were claiming to be apostles and, furthermore, they, too, were afflicted with mercenary greed. Chapter 11 and chapter 12 both make statements regarding this. They acknowledge the Lord Jesus as a charismatic figure and also, and this is important, they sought to bring the Corinthians into some form of bondage to the Law of Moses.

Now, we don’t, as I say, know precisely the identity of the men, but probably some of these things are true of them. Now, Paul in seeking to answer them, these men who claim to be apostles and claim to have authority and claimed, evidently, to perform signs, the apostle will point out that Corinth is his territory by the Lord Jesus Christ’s own appointment. For Christ appointed him as apostle of the Gentiles. So the Corinthians lie within the territory of the Apostle Paul. He is filled with indignation. He is filled with intense love. He is also filled with a little bit of scorn for the claims of these men which are so obviously contrary to that which God has undertaken in his own life. And so he defends his authority, and he defends his authority with a hallowed passion which he claims comes from the heart of God.

Now, so far as we know, we believe, at least I believe that the apostle was absolutely right. That is, his defense is a defense that comes from an acquaintance with the Lord God that was deep and significant for him. He does have authority as the apostle of the Gentiles and what he says does come from the heart of God. Nineteen hundred years I think has affirmed the rightness and correctness of the apostle’s views. But let’s look at what he has to say. And first he appeals for the Corinthians indulgence because he is going to have to say something favorable about himself being forced to do

so by those who have come and have sought to upset what he had done among the Corinthians.

He states in the very first verse, and you can sense the intensity of the feeling of the apostle because he doesn’t begin with a “therefore” or “thus” or “and so,” but there is no connective at all and this type of construction is anacoluthon or this attempt to speak without any connection is uncharacteristic of the Greeks and thus intensity of feeling is often revealed by it. He says, “I wish that you would bear with me in a little bit of foolishness, but indeed you are bearing with me for I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy, for I betrothed you to one husband that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.”

You can see that the apostle thinks of this as a very distasteful embarrassing thing to have to do. After all, we don’t like to sing our own praises, do we? Unless we are politicians, then, of course, we like to sing our own praises. But in spiritual things, we don’t like to sing our own praises. In fact, if we are really spiritual, we know we don’t have any praises to sing about. So the apostle having to do this is embarrassing to him. It’s very distasteful to him. He says, “I wish that you would bear with me in a little bit of foolishness.” So he regarded it as something that he did not want to do, he regarded it as foolish to have to do that, but he’s forced to do it by the situation and he explains why in the second verse, “For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I have betrothed you to one husband that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.”

Jealousy sweeps a man off of his feet. Paul’s jealousy is from God and the perceptive of eternity dominates it. In other words, it isn’t the jealousy of a husband for a wife whose attentions are devoted to another man as evil as that may be. His jealousy comes from God. It’s a divine jealousy. It’s not the jealousy that a patriot may have for the welfare of his country, though that is justified. Not the jealousy of parents for their children, though in many cases that may be justified. And it is not the jealousy of a wife for a husband or a husband for a wife though on occasion they are justified as well. This

is the justification -- or this is justified by the fact that it is God’s jealousy, a divine jealousy, and it’s drawn from the figure of the marriage of the people of God to the Lord Jehovah. He says, “I have betrothed you to one husband that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.” So what we are talking about is the divine betrothal and a divine marriage.

Now, if you read the Old Testament through and you read passages from Isaiah chapter 54 for example and chapter 62, Josiah chapter 2, Ezekiel chapter 16 and other passages, you will see that one of the great figures of the Old Testament is the marriage of the people of God to the Lord Jehovah. And that is lying in the background of this. In other words, to leave the Lord and to follow the false apostles is to become a spiritual harlot. Over and over in the Old Testament Israel in their apostasy was accused of having gone into spiritual harlotry. And so Paul is speaking in those terms. He’s saying in effect that when I present you to the Lord Jesus as a church, I want to present you to the Lord Jesus as a pure virgin.

Now, in Old Testament language the dowry that a woman who was to be married to her husband should present to him was the dowry of virginity. And that, of course, is the dowry that we should present to our parties in marriage as well. That is, a wife to be married to a husband, a young maiden should present to him a virginity and likewise with the man who is to be married to a woman. Does that sound strange to you? It’s only strange because of the kind of society which we have become by departure from the word of God. This is the dowry that an individual should present to the other to whom they are to become united in holy matrimony.

The apostle is trading upon that fact here by reminding the Corinthians that in being brought to the Lord they are brought to one to whom they are to be spiritually married. This marriage is to be consummated at the Second Advent. For we read, “to present you as a pure virgin.” And that term is a term used in the 4th chapter of the coming of the Lord and in other places as well. So Paul’s thought then is that the

Corinthian church, he wishes to present them to the Lord as a pure church, not as a harlot church, not as a church that has gone after false doctrine or after claimants of a false position before the Lord. If you read this in the original text you can see even further that the apostle is very much upset over it because he says, “For I am jealous of you with a godly jealousy for I betrothed you to one husband,” and that word “one” is emphatic, to one husband, not to two, to one husband.

I’ve often made this statement in this type of discourse at this point. You know there are three kinds of people to whom we are related, acquaintances, friends, and husband and wives. Many of us in this audience, perhaps most of us, have many acquaintances. In fact, the chances are you have acquaintances that after some years will come up to you and say do you remember me? That’s a terrible way to come up to someone.

Friday night I was at Salado at the conference speaking and after the meeting, two people came up to me and one of them reached out his hand and said it is so good to see you. Do you remember me? Well, I just have to say, No. I’m sorry. I don’t remember you.” And I know I am going to be embarrassed because it is obvious I should remember them. And the first one was one I should have remembered, I guess. But I had never met him but one time in my life over a day or so some years back. Someone else came up afterwards and I was thoroughly humiliated, I didn’t know them either. So when you come up and shake my hand, please say this is John Smith, glad to see you. Do you remember me? Oh, John, I am so happy to see you again. [Laughter] That’s a great help.

But anyway, acquaintances, it’s nice to have lots of acquaintances and the only reason I do is because I preach before a lot of congregations from time to time. But anyway, we don’t have the responsibilities to acquaintances that we have to our friends.

Now, friends can expect that we should be obligated to them to the extent of

friendship. We expect from our friends that they have obligations to us. We’ve entered into a closer relationship and therefore the responsibilities are greater.

But when we come to husband and wife, oh, the obligations of husband and wife. They are the ultimate obligations. Your obligation to your wife or to your husband is total and complete. And, in fact, when one person violates the responsibility in the English language we refer to that violation by one of the most offensive words in the English language, adultery. Well, that is precisely the way that the Bible refers to spiritual adultery. To turn and follow after the world is to treat our Lord as in an adulterous relationship. To lust after the flesh and yield to the lusts of the flesh is to engage in spiritual harlotry, and of course to follow teaching that is not the teaching of the divine word is to be a spiritual whore. Terrible to think of, an adulterer, that is what Paul is talking about when he says, “I have betrothed you to one husband that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.”

Now, this would have special reference to the Corinthians because Corinth was known as a dissolute place and these individuals had been brought out of the situation in Corinth. Many of them had been just that, adulterers, fornicators, homosexuals, lesbians. Read 1st Corinthians chapter 6, the gamut of sins is found in the church at Corinth and so they, as they reflected upon what the apostle spoke about, would have thought of their past.

Now, the apostle goes on in verses 3 and 4 to tell us of his fear of their seduction. One might ask at this point, what is this virginity that we are to render to him? Is this to be without any adulterous relationship to the world? Or is this to be without any adulterous relationship to the flesh? Just what is this virginity, Paul, about which you are talking? Well he explains. He says, “But I am afraid lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness your mind should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received or a different gospel which you

have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.” Ah, dripping irony from the Apostle Paul.

You see, what is this virginity? The virginity is the cleaving with our minds to a whole-hearted, pure devotion to Christ. It’s with our minds. It’s what we think. It’s the spiritual truth that we have come to embrace. That’s Paul’s thought here. I don’t discount at all the fact that one may be adulterous in the realm of the flesh and adulterous in the realm of materialism and the world. But Paul is thinking about satanic adulterous relationship, that is, in the realm of religion for that is where Satan particularly operates. If you go back and read chapter 2 verse 10 and verse 11, we don’t have time to do that, chapter 4 verse 4 or down here verse 13 through verse 15, you’ll note that the stress in the satanic temptation is the spiritual stress.

That’s what took place in the Garden of Eden when Adam came to Eve and said, Eve let’s have a little seminar on the doctrine of God. And they talked about the doctrine of God, and Eve fell by unbelief in the doctrine which God had taught her and Adam regarding their conduct in the Garden of Eden. Satan is, of course, serpent-like. He’s called the old serpent in the Bible, and thus as serpents versatile and cunning, and he would corrupt the perceptive center of our being, our minds. That’s what he’s interested in, our minds. Of course, he’s not disinterested in the flesh and not disinterested in the world, but Paul is thinking about the mind. He is talking about the place where our perceptions really have their origin.

We know evangelicalism’s failures -- I won’t talk more about them this morning -- in the realm of the world and in the realm of the flesh. We’ve had many illustrations of that recently. It’s not necessary to speak further about them. And, in fact, believe it or not, in Believer’s Chapel we have this constantly going on; individuals who have some form of attachment to the Chapel, sometimes not very deep granted, but nevertheless, have been in our meetings who in absolute acts of rebellion leave husband or leave wife, or conduct themselves in a way that is a rebellion against the Trinitarian God in heaven. Unfortunately that is true even in Evangelical churches.

Paul is interested, however, in the mind. He’s talking about the person of Christ. He is talking about the doctrines of the word of God as they affect the gospel and as they affect the Holy Spirit. So he’s talking about things in the realm of the mind. You know, I have the distasteful task of constantly reminding those who attend Believers Chapel of certain doctrines which, in my opinion -- I may be wrong. I hope I’m wrong. I hope that when this particular age comes to an end and the Lord comes from heaven, and I see the body of believers who have been in Believers Chapel in the presence of the Lord, and they come up and say to me, Dr. Johnson you kept talking about free will all the time but we all believed in the bondage of the will. You didn’t have to keep telling us that. I wish that were true. I just don’t believe it is true. I believe that when that time comes, you will believe in it.

But there are many in our congregation who from time to time make statements that indicate they still have not grasped just such a fundamental doctrine as that. Come here, Dr. Gerstner, and I hope that that will be a help if my voice is no help. But that’s why I keep repeating it, and I talk about divine election for the same reason and I talk about the penal substitutionary death of Christ for the same reason. The same reason that Paul speaks about here, I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I want you to grasp the great truths of the word of God and enjoy the comfort and assurance that they give you in the experiences of life.

When he says he’s afraid, he explains why. “For if one comes,” this is the 4th verse, “and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached or you receive a different spirit which you have not received or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.” Look Paul’s Christ is the Messiah, the exalted Lord, attested by the miracles of the Holy Spirit. I think it is so interesting that he refers to the individuals who have come to Corinth as “if one comes,” literally, “he that cometh.” That’s so ironical because you see it’s so much the antithesis of an apostle. They claim to be apostles, don’t they? Now, what is an apostle? Well, think back, think back. An

apostle is someone sent, but these individuals just come. They’re not sent. They come. In other words, the apostle’s point is not that they were sent by the Lord, but they’ve just come. They’ve come of their own free will.

I think of the story of the old black preacher who was a spiritual and godly man. He was listening to a young brother preach, and this fellow obviously was rather confident of his own abilities. In fact, he gave the impression to the older preacher that he was a bit arrogant. And so he went up to him afterwards and he said, “Was you sent or did you just went?” Well, I think that in Paul’s language here, there is something of that flavor when he says, “If one comes,” in other words, you don’t really care whether he has been sent by God or not. You don’t investigate his claims; you simply look and treat him as someone who is come to preach a gospel. In other words, not paying any attention to what they are really saying and the result was their minds were afflicted by that teaching.

Their version of Christianity was a threefold denial of Paul. That is, they believed that Jesus was a son a man but not God. They believed he was crucified because that is the way they knew him after the flesh, as he says in chapter 5, verse 16, but not a risen savior. They believed he was son of David, but not son of David the Lord, and furthermore, if I am correct and if Professor Hughes is correct, they have mixed in with it a bit of law and grace. In other words, the kind of doctrine proclaimed by many who profess to be Christians today would come under Paul’s indignation and rejection.

The Mormons could not stand for they do not believe in the deity of Christ and therefore they do not believe in the Trinity. And if one does not believe in the deity of Christ, my friend, you do not have any Savior because Christ is said in the Bible to be the savior and no man can save us. Only God can save us. That’s why the Christian church has believed from the time of Nicea and Chalcedon that the Christian God is one God who subsists in three persons, co-equal in power. Jehovah’s Witnesses could not stand.

They do not accept the deity of Christ and therefore the doctrine of the divine trinity and consequently have no savior.

One of the striking things about our day is the fact that here in nineteen hundred and eighty-seven there is a tendency in the Christian church, the professing Christian mainline church to depart from the ancient doctrines concerning the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. At Nicea the question of the deity of Christ was settled. There in the Nicene Creed a few years after the council of Nicea, we read, “I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten son of God begotten of the Father before all worlds. God of God, light of light, very God of very God, begotten not made being of one substance, homousion, with the father of whom all things were made.” The creed also stressed his humanity.

That naturally raised the question what’s the relationship between the two natures of Christ. And at Chalcedon in AD 451 that was settled by the Christian church. We confess one in the same Christ, Son, Lord only begotten to be acknowledged of two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation, and the distinction of natures being in no wise done away because of the union but rather the characteristic property of each nature being preserved and concurring into one person, not as if Christ were parted or divided into two persons but one and the same son and only begotten God, Lord Jesus Christ. Christian church settled that fifteen hundred years ago, approximately.

Today however we hear men, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, in mainline religious bodies saying modern exegesis dictates there’s not just one Christology in the New Testament but many Christologies. The creeds used Greek philosophical language but that’s not the kind of language that we use today. We are not contaminated by metaphysical modes of speaking. And further, we today do not think in ontological categories that is about being but in functional ways. It’s not who is Jesus Christ and what therefore has he done for us, but what has he done and who therefore is he for us.

And, in fact, many of our religious leaders are asking publicly the question, does the term “incarnation” mean anything at all for us? I cite one well-known professing Christian professor, a British man, “Are we sure that the concept of an incarnate being, one who is both fully God and fully man, is after all an intelligible concept?” Now, if it’s not, we don’t have any Christianity. We don’t have any Believers Chapel. We’re just a group of people interested in metaphysical subjects such as God. In fact, some in our churches today even question that there is, if it’s possible to even talk about such a concept as God.

Now, Paul in the final two verses, I know you are thinking I’m not going to finish on time, and you are right. [Laughter] Because it’s when I intended to finish. Verse 5, “For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles but even if I am unskilled in speech, yet I am not so in knowledge, in fact, in everyway if we have made this evident to you in all things.” So Paul’s reasoning is, you bear with the intruders, bear with me for I’m in no way inferior to these super apostles, speaking satirically, his voice is vibrant with sarcasm, with reference to them.

He does admit one thing, he’s not a great eloquent speaker. He doesn’t engage in oratorical tricks. He doesn’t engage in persuasive philosophical arguments. Those are not Paul’s forte. He’s a layman in speech. He doesn’t speak in the superficial, artificial ephemeral language of an orator. Paul’s a preacher, direct, serious, earnest, his thoughts are directed to the mind and to the heart and his will and further his words are related to the eternal issues. If you want to know what his gnosis is, read 1 Corinthians chapter 2. That’s the gnosis that he wants to communicate to men. He speaks with a God-given certainty and therefore Paul’s words have outlasted all of the words of the orators. His words are thunderbolts of reality. They are not beguiling phrases of a grand literature style. That’s what he’s saying. We are speaking truth and reality.

There is an old, old, story. It’s been told, I’m sure, in Believers Chapel many times. But it comes to mind here of a gathering of important people. And after the meal

as a means of entertainment, it was suggested that each one present, for there were many gifted people there, should recite something. A well-known actor was there, and he stood up and recited the 23rd Psalm. He recited it in a wonderful way, all of the skills of elocution and oratory and dramatic art which he knew so well, he applied to the reading of the 23rd Psalm. And when he finished there was applause, eloquent applause.

Well when he finished an older man stood up and he began to recite the 23rd Psalm. There was a titter of laughter at first to think that anyone would have the nerve to follow this famous actor. But as he continued the audience became quiet. And finally when he concluded and there was complete silence, the actor spoke up. He said I’d like to say something. “I know the Psalm, he knows the shepherd.” That’s the difference. That’s the difference between Paul and his opponents. They may know the Psalms, but the Lord Jesus Christ has given Paul the knowledge of God himself. May we listen to what he has to say in his word.

Let’s stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these words of admonition and of encouragement from the Apostle Paul. Help us, Lord, by Thy grace to truly realize that our lives are by Thy grace to be presented to him as pure lives. Deliver us from the evils of materialism and lust and especially, as the apostle has spoken, from the errors of the mind that lead to so many other kinds of errors. May our thoughts by the Holy Spirit be purified and may they be directed to the wholehearted worship and honor of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

If there are some here, Lord, who have never believed in him, by Thy power and in Thy own way bring them to the knowledge of him whom to know is life eternal.

We pray in his name. Amen.

“Ony One Jesus, One Spirit and One Gospel” by S. Lewis Johnson
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