

# John

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Date: 18 July 1982

Preacher: Collier, Gilbert (1900-1984)

[ 0 : 00 ] Word found in John's Gospel, the eleventh chapter, and words that are found in the twenty-sixth verse.

The eleventh chapter of John's Gospel, verse twenty-six. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.

Believest thou this? These, of course, are the words of the Lord Jesus, spoken primarily to Martha, sister of Mary, on that tremendous time and experience which they were passing through, when their brother Lazarus had been removed by death.

He speaks to her thus, Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.

Believest thou this? The words constitute a tremendous challenge they must have done to Martha.

[ 1 : 44 ] Tremendous challenge. And the Lord adds to that challenge by the words he spoke to her.

And let us remember, these words are also spoken to you and to me. Believest thou this?

This great truth, this tremendous word that the Lord utters. Surely he must be speaking somewhat in a nominal way here, or a figurative way.

Surely he cannot really mean us to accept and receive such words as these.

that by simply living and believing in him, we shall escape death. Man is always seeking to escape what is inevitable.

[ 3 : 06 ] All the way through our lives we do it, sometimes unconsciously, sometimes purposefully. But we are always bent on avoiding the inevitable.

And the most inevitable thing of all, man is always trying to avoid. And that is death.

And here is one that is saying to us this morning, there is a way that that inevitable thing, so as it may appear to us, to you and to me, in its inevitability, can be and is avoided in the way that I, says the Lord, set down before you.

What the Lord is speaking here, and throughout the whole of this wonderful portion of his word, is the nature, the wonderful supremacy, of real faith, God-given faith.

Faith, he tells us, will overcome all things, natural and visible. You remember how he said to the disciples after he had caused a fig tree to wither in the short space of time by his word and command.

[ 5 : 02 ] And the disciples were astonished when they saw the results of his command to that fig tree, wither, let no fruit ever appear on thee again.

And immediately it began to shrivel and wither away and obviously was about to die completely. They were astonished at the sudden change that his word had made.

And he says to them, if ye have faith, that is to say real faith, ye could not only do this, but ye could say to this mountain, be ye removed and be thou cast into the depth of the sea.

Christ was teaching his disciples the supremacy of faith. over all natural elements, powers, and things.

Remember how Elijah, when rain was about to come in answer to his prayers, he girded up his loins hands, and ran before the fast-going chariots of Ahab to reach the city of Jezreel before that king could reach it himself, which demonstrates the wonderful nature of faith, how it is supreme over all things.

[ 6 : 50 ] it will conquer death, it will overcome the devil. So, let us look at these words then in that light, these wonderful words of Jesus Christ, spoken to Martha, and as I say, it was spoken at a time when she was in tremendous need.

Here was a little family, close-knit family, living at Bethany, and the one whom they depended so much upon had been taken away from them, leaving the two sisters alone.

They had been so much tied up with the Lord Jesus, he was the very centre of their lives, there's no question about that.

He was ever in their thoughts. And one thing they could not fathom or work out at all was the fact that when they needed him most of all, he was not present with them.

And they believed that he knew everything. They believed that he could never make mistakes.

[ 8 : 30 ] How then could it have been possible for him whom they loved so much, and he who meant so much to them should not have been present when they needed him most of all.

That was a baffling problem to these two women of Bethany. men. Now let us look into that. Let us see the hidden purpose that was behind it.

Let us see what that wonderful purpose was, and how wise the Lord was not to be present at this particular time when these two sisters were in such a strait of a terrible path of sorrow.

How far greater things were to be brought to them than if even the Lord had been present in their time of tremendous sorrow.

Let us go back a little and see what he says to the disciples. He was there some distance away from Bethany and he tells them very well, he tells them plainly that he knows all that is going on at Bethany.

[ 10 : 06 ] He is not needing any information. He knows what is the situation at Bethany and after approaching the subject to his disciples he tells them plainly that Lazarus is dead.

And then he says this, and I am glad, I am glad I was not there for your sakes. Now we can learn a great deal from this, something which may be helpful to us in our own personal experiences.

Jesus. There are times when we get into a situation when we feel now is the time, now is the moment when if there is anything real in religion we shall prove it to be a reality now.

And at that very time it seems to be as far away from us as anything could possibly be. And we begin to question, we question our own beginnings, we question our own grasp of eternal realities.

We wonder whether after all the Lord is truly mindful of us. and we go through some tremendous exercises and anxieties and perhaps fears and even doubts.

[ 11 : 49 ] And then he appears, solves our difficulties, enters into our affairs, lifts us out of all our distresses.

You get an example of this if you like to read the 107th Psalm. There you have people who feared God and believed in him, they were the redeemed of the Lord because it tells us in the beginning of the Psalm, and yet you find those very redeemed people, those people who knew the Lord, coming into all kinds of great distresses, tossed up by all kinds of tempests and fears, and getting to their very wits end, not knowing where to turn or what to do.

Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them. He delivered them. But he delivered them not before they went into their troubles, but after they came through and went into them.

He delivered them out of them. Now Jesus says here, I am glad for your sakes I was not there.

Then he comes, comes at the right time. Martha goes out to meet him, and she says, showing her weakness, frailty, showing that she was in this very position that I have just been describing, wondering whether there was anything real after all, wondering why it was that the Lord should not know all about her case, why he should not have already intervened in her affairs.

[ 13 : 57 ] She said, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. She had faith, you see, to believe in his power, that she had not that wisdom to understand that his power could have been operated without his presence, visible at that particular time.

You see, her real belief in the Lord was limited to his immediate presence. We have to be wary of this, I think.

We think the Lord can only help us if he's there, or if we feel that he is answering our prayers at a particular time.

We cannot sometimes grasp the glorious truth that he is everywhere and he is always mindful of his people, always concerned with the detail of their lives and existence and pathway.

way. And he knows everything about us, although we may be far off from him in our own feelings and indeed in our own ways.

[ 15 : 27 ] He knows. And this is one thing that he was teaching Martha at this time, and he teaches us.

He comes with this tremendous challenge. Believest thou this? I have said something to thee, Martha, which is of tremendous importance and significance.

Believest thou this? You've had difficulty, Martha, in believing that I can operate and move even where I am not.

My bodily presence may not be. I can nevertheless move and deal with and fully supply the needs of my people.

now, Martha, if you cannot hold that or cannot reach to that height, how can you come to this where I say, if a man liveth and believeth in me, he shall never die.

[ 16 : 55 ] But what a challenge it is. What a challenge to you and me. Does it mean to say that true believers never die?

When the Lord said this in that reading this morning, when he said that in the hearing of the Jews, they received it with utter contempt.

They thought that he had a devil and was mad. They said so openly. Thou hast a devil and art mad.

And now we know that that is the truth, because Abraham is dead, he's not with us, he's not here, he's gone, he's a historic character that has passed away from this scene of this world, and the prophets, they're gone.

wrong? And how then can it be true, when thou sayest, he that keepeth my sayings shall never see death?

[ 18 : 13 ] death. You see, they could not receive the truth of Jesus Christ. Now, what seems to us, to you and me, inevitable, is the hour of death.

It's a wonderful thing to be prepared for it. death. But the Lord does not say they shall not see the hour of death, but they shall not see the article of death.

That's the great thing. I said last Lord's Day ought to have kept a little illustration really for today, for this subject.

I was speaking about my granddaughter who was of ten years of age and never been in a train in her life. So I thought to give her a real treat, I'd take her to London.

And I did so on a beautiful day somewhat like this. But I of course forgot entirely when we came to North Church Tunnel, that she would never have been through a tunnel before.

[ 19 : 32 ] And as we went into that terrible dark, sudden darkness, her countenance changed completely and she became alarmed and disturbed unduly so and I had to comfort her and tell her, reassure her.

Then of course in a very few moments of time we burst out into the beautiful daylight again. And all was well, smiles returned.

and it was a wonderful experience. Now you know there's the difference between the death of an unbeliever and the death of a real believer in Christ.

The one goes into the tunnel and that's a never ending tunnel. the other comes out of the darkness of this world into the glorious light of eternal glory.

There's the difference. Christ said, he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die.

[ 20 : 51 ] now there's one or two things we need to observe here. One is the unqualified condition that the Lord lays down for the believer.

He doesn't say providing this and that and the other. You see, the Roman Catholic Church will say there's no salvation unless you belong to the Church.

You must be one of the faithful members of the Church before you can possibly be saved.

There's no way to heaven for any that are outside the pale of the Church. That's their condition, you see. Christ never makes it.

The Word of God never makes it. the Lord said whosoever and what a beautiful wonderful word that is.

[ 21 : 56 ] Whosoever He uses this same word in many instances in the Word of God. We have it when he was speaking to that woman by the well of Sychar.

He said to her, Whosoever drinketh of this water, the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him, a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

And you know what she said, give ever more, give me this water. Whosoever, He says, shall drink of the water that I shall give him.

Then again, He says, he that heareth these sayings of mine and believeth on him that sent me shall have everlasting life and is passed from condemnation into everlasting life.

Whosoever receiveth these sayings of mine. No conditions, you see, except that one condition, receiving the sayings of the Lord Jesus.

[ 23 : 40 ] Do we receive them? Then again, He was speaking another time and He says, this is the bread that cometh down from heaven, which if a man eat, if a man eat, he shall live forever.

bread that cometh down from heaven, which whosoever shall eat shall live forever.

You see, the teaching of the Lord was all along these wonderful lines, bearing out the truth of our text, demonstrating by His Holy Word, how gloriously true it is that by belief, which means receiving, and it means also eating, by such belief, those who are so blessed shall never die, never die.

Oh, what a wonderful thing it would be to escape death. People will say, that's just what I want, I've been trying to find a way. People are always seeking a way to avoid death.

They plunge into the things of this life and think that they can drown completely the thought in their minds that one day they must come to face their maker and come to the end of their days.

[ 25 : 37 ] But they try to put it away and void it. The Lord Jesus calls His people to consider it very blessedly.

I used to remember an old minister that I heard when I was quite young and very often he impressed me by his preaching. He was a quaint old man really but oh so wonderfully true and faithful to the Lord.

He used to say this sometimes in prayer, Lord he said, help me to keep my dying day always before my eyes.

I used to think that that was rather a morbid sort of way of living. I in those times being young and I sympathise with you dear young people, I know exactly how you feel, you feel you want to have a good share of life and not think at all if at any measure whatever of death.

But what is death to the believer? It's going out of the tunnel into the glorious light of day. That is what death is to the believer.

[ 27 : 04 ] It's awakening in the likeness of Christ. the psalmist says, when I awake I shall be with thee.

And in thy presence he says in the 16th psalm there is pleasure forevermore in thy presence. So you see it's not a thing that we need to put out of our minds completely and try and avoid our thoughts and never consider it what we need to do is to earnestly diligently search out the way whereby we can truly believe we shall not see death.

Not see death in all its awfulness and ugliness. Not see death. Now this is the way.

we want to look at the essential nature of that belief which the Lord Jesus lays down here for Martha and for you and for me.

He says whosoever liveth and in the original Greek this word is a tremendous word. It is a perfect participle which really means he who continues to live goes on living and also the word believing is the same nature and character.

[ 29 : 01 ] It means to go on believing. Now you see there are plenty of people this is what the Lord is correcting this idea and notion that we can just say glibly oh yes I believe I believe all right.

There's no question about that. I believe in God. A man went past this chapel a little while ago and looked in and I said you ought to go in there sometime.

He said a few things rather detrimental to religion. I said you do not believe I take it you do not believe in God. Oh yes he said I believe in God. And that is the attitude of a great many.

And they're quite content with that attitude. They think that they're perfectly right by simply just acknowledging now and then along the course of their life.

Yes they say I believe I believe that that is not what Christ is speaking about here at all. He says he that liveth and believeth.

[ 30 : 18 ] There must be a belief in the life and the life must demonstrate the belief. That is what the Lord is emphasizing so much.

you see real religion is a living constancy a daily matter an ever increasing reality of the vastest importance.

Whoso ever lives and believeth in me shall never die. and how does Martha answer him?

No she saw him the life the resurrection he was to her everything he was to her the solution from the fear and pains of death.

Christ in the vessel I can smile at the storm that's the truth you know you've proved that you believing people you've proved you've proved that again and again that with Christ with you in your little vessel it may be tossed about with a terrible storm that you can hardly ride out but with Christ coming perhaps at your invitation perhaps without it nevertheless when he comes all is well everything is settled there are no fears no more dangers yes she said Lord I believe I believe I believe but who so live it oh my dear friends what it means to live we need to live our religion not not just profess it live it walk it out it must be a daily matter a life and death matter to us our religion if we have a real one if we have

Thomas said let us go and die with him now they hear from his lips these words of infinite calmness truth blessedness he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die oh I can well see poor dear Thomas almost look into his very heart and he said what a fool I have been to think and to measure out things as I have done thinking that everything had come to an end nothing but disaster faced us here is the blessed lord the wonderful master he says he that liveth and believeth oh I do believe weak though I might be indeed

[ 37 : 47 ] Treasures and grace to them are given, and crowns of joy laid up in hand. 1112, tune 435.  
And beautiful falls and pa■stwa ain't eder andksam on thee, Sleigh will the place to faith A  
man has promised to offer

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Give us, O Lord, we pray, the believing hearts in Thee, and help us to live as Thou wouldst have us live, by faith, by trust, and by confidence, in Thy grace, now and evermore.

[ 40 : 46 ] And may the grace of the Lord Jesus, the love of God, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
abide with us, now and evermore.

Amen.