

That which was from the beginning

Part 1

Speaker	F.B. Hole
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[00:00:01] I propose to read quite a short passage in the First Epistle of John.

I'm going to commence reading towards the end of Chapter 2, and read on a few verses, just three verses, into Chapter 3.

I think I need read only from Verse 24 of Chapter 2.

This is the closing part of the Apostle John's particular word to those who were thus spiritually dead in the divine cavity. And he says to them, let that therefore of thine in you which he hath heard from the beginning, if that which he hath heard from the beginning shall remain in you, he also shall continue in the Son and in the Father. [00:01:17] And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.

These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which he hath received of him thine is in you, and he need not that any man teach you, but as the same anointing teaches you of all things and is truth and is no lie.

And even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him, and our little children abide in him, that when he shall appear we may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming. [00:02:16] If he know that he is righteous, he know that every one that doeth righteousness is for of him.

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God.

And now all the world knoweth us not because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

[00:03:07] And every man that hath this hope in him shall be like him, even as he is pure.

Now if you have sat down with us and read through this comparatively short epistle, you may have been struck by the fact that a number of times the Apostle John uses this phrase which occurs twice in the verse.

The verse that I read in your hearing a moment ago, the phrase, from the beginning, you have it, at the very beginning of the epistle, if we look at the very opening words, that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes and so forth. [00:04:10] He said that it was from the beginning we may know unto you.

Now why did he stress that thought, think you, so much?

The answer surely is, the Apostle who wrote these words lived in the first century. It is generally supposed that his writings did that, shall we say roughly, to Adam and Eve. The other Apostles had disappeared. Nearly every one of them had been martyred. John was the survivor. And he lived in days when there was a very insidious attack upon the faith of Christ. Not by flatly denying what had been taught, though of course here and there that was done, but by introducing novelties, bringing in things which were supposed to be an enlargement or perhaps an improvement upon what they had heard from the beginning. [00:05:25] But you know, God's way is to start from the beginning with that which he intends to say, in any given dispensation. That was the case in the oldest dispensation.

Right at the start, through Moses, God made known his covenant. He told the people of Israel plainly what he demanded and what they were to do.

[00:06:03] And remarkably enough, when you come to the closing words of the Old Testament, the fourth chapter of the book of Malachi, you have that prophet speaking now, certainly a thousand years, probably a hundred or twelve hundred years after the law had been given. And he said, now remember the law of Moses my servant. He said to the people, now go back to the start. Get your eye upon what God said at the outset. And he came to a side with what God's image said, he said, for all Israel. Now I'm quoting from memory, you could turn to the closing words of the Old Testament, I think I am right. He said, now remember the law of Moses, my faithful Moses, my servant. And I think for all Israel, if you're Israel, you're not exempt, it's for you. And don't say, oh well, of course there are a lot of contexts we needn't talk about nowadays. No, because he says, remember the law of his faith, the law of Moses, my servant, with the statutes and the judgments. [00:07:17] In other words, remember the whole thing. Why? Well, because that was what God has said from the beginning of the ancient law system that was given to Israel. Now, from the beginning, the truth has been made known to us. Look, you might, if you like, turn, keep your finger in the place, and turn to John's Gospel, and I think you will find at the end of chapter 15, those words occur. Yes, here we are. The last, the two verses that close John 15, now this is the discourse that the Lord spoke in the upper chamber, and possibly part of it has been quietly walked toward the garden of Gethsemane. [00:08:11] And he said, when the comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceeded from the Father, he shall testify on me, which he did through the Lord. Not to the apostle Paul, and look at the next verse, and he also shall bear witness. We might say, but look, the Spirit of God, the mighty comforter and such, is any human witness needed? Yes, human witness is needed. And you also shall bear witness, and what is the qualification of this witness? Really, because he hath been with me from the beginning.

[00:09:02] Now, that God we have preserved to us, that which has been revealed for us Christians from the beginning. And the apostle John is dwelling very much upon that, because there were seductive things being introduced, which were not from the beginning, which were immoral natures, which were being pushed in to the body of Christian doctrine, but which were of such a character that ultimately they would overthrow what God had said from the beginning. Now, in this verse that I started with, verse 24 of chapter 2, the apostle is writing to those who were but spiritually dead. If you look at

verse 18, you find he turns to those whom he calls little children.

[00:10:06] Really, the word practically is dead. Previously he had spoken to some whom he called young men. Those who were mature in Christian, uneducated, the intermediate, the young men, and then the men, the recently converted. The recently converted, though, may not be very young. Those who are young, of course, do not usually deal with people of the beginning. When they are young, most conversions take place in youth. And, for the moment, spiritually they are beings. And he's talking to beings. And he says, now look, you've heard things, and they reach you from the beginning, and you ought to abide in these things, live in them, dwell in them. [00:11:04] I'm coming to that in a moment. But I will point out that our excellent translators of our authorised version know beautiful English. They rather avoid using the same word again and again. And so, they've translated a certain word in the Greek original in the translation three times in that verse, and they've translated it by a different word. Now supposing I venture to take the first of the three and use it in the other cases, it would read, Let that, therefore, abide in you which you have heard from the beginning. If that which you have heard from the beginning shall abide in you, ye also shall abide in the Son and in the Father. [00:12:01] Now, some of you might say to me, and it's a difficult question to answer, what exactly is meant by this, abide? Well, I think I might say it really means living in the being. As we shall see in a moment, if you're a Christian, you're born of God. You're a child of God. Another little alteration we might make which improves things, that word sons, which you have in the beginning of chapter three, is really, there is a word for sons, but it's really the word for children. And that's the word generally used in the scriptures when we are thinking of the fact that every true Christian is born of God. What the Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus has taken place in their case. He said, Now, Nicodemus, you may be a very religious man. He was. A man of the Pharisees, a ruler of the Jews, a martyr of Israel. Yes, he was all that. Qualified, as every Jew would have thought, wonderfully qualified as a religious teacher. [00:13:21] But the Lord said, Nicodemus, except you're born of water and of the Spirit, you won't enter the kingdom. He came and he said, Lord, I've entered the kingdom and my life has been instructed unto war, as a student in the kingdom. The Lord said, but my dear Nicodemus, except you're born again, you aren't in it. For sons. Let's talk simply. You haven't got the life that will enable you to enter into the kingdom. Now, if you're a Christian, you've got the life. You've been born of God. We read about that, don't we, in the last verse of each chapter, where he said, if you know that he is righteous, well, you know that everyone that do it or practice his righteousness is born of him. [00:14:13] You know, to practice righteousness doesn't only mean paying twenty shillings a pound. That's included right in life. But we have to begin by being right in our relationship with God. And not a perfect person doesn't practice righteousness. You say, I don't know. Because they're shutting God out of their lives. Is that right for the creature? Not at all. They don't have righteousness. The very first element of righteousness is that we are right in relation to God. It's quite secondary, but very important in the case that we should be right in our relation to one another by all means, paying twenty shillings a pound. Certainly. Do your duty, do what is right, in this direction, in that direction, in your home, in your business, everywhere else. [00:15:06] But, men may pry those hands off that, and yet be guilty of the worst form of unrighteousness. That would be wrong with God. They shut the creature out of their thoughts and out of their lives.

But we, we Christians, we have been born of him. We can live in new life. You see, we've got to recognize this. We care, we Christians, if we've got a life, if there are cares, we can live the old life.

We have got what the Bible calls the flesh. We sometimes talk about it as the old nature, the old nature of our being. It's there in every one of us. It's in our present mortal body. We can live the old life. [00:16:08] But the Apostle John is virtually saying into these babes, now babes, I want you to abide

in him. I want you to be living the new life. I want you to have your thoughts and everything else concentrated in him and his life. And if what you heard from the beginning, the light that has reached you in the Gospel, if that abides in you, then it abides in you. Then you will abide in the Son and in the Father.

You will be living out this new life which you have in Christ, who is the Son. And he goes on to exhort these, which is the converted folk whom he speaks of as the little children or the babes, and he says, and look, if you live in this new life which you have, well this is the life. [00:17:13] And this is the promise, this promise that we live in here, the eternal life. It will be in its own sphere, as we sometimes say, when we get the hand, there will be no temptations of this new life. We shall have the flesh in us. We shall then be absolutely, what really we Christians are now. We have this new nature born of God, which does not and cannot sin, although I don't think it is a sin. We are going to reach a moment where in the flesh we'll be God. We shall have God as a glory, as Heaven loved His communion in the ancient, and also the fact that I bless God again and again, that as born of God and new to you, you have a nature which cannot sin. [00:18:10] Adam had a nature which could not sin. You say, well he fell out, you know that, because he did. He ought not to, but he could, as it is proven, the fact is, he did. But now, thank God, we have a new nature. We are born of God. And we have this anointing, that of course is a reverence to the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit, so that abides in us. This word abide keeps on occurring here, you see. Now what we've heard at the beginning, that's to abide in us. And if it does abide in us, we abide in the Son and in the Father. And then we have this anointing. It abides in us, as the Holy Spirit, giving us the capacity to take in and enjoy these things that belong to the life which is ours now in Christ.

[00:19:21] And so, look now please at verse 28. There, again you've got the expression, little children. But, the word there, as a matter of fact, is not the word for little children or babies. It's the general word. And that is to say, whether we are advanced Christians, fathers in Christ, I'm afraid there are very few such today, really. We are there. Or if we are this kind of young men today, strong, the word of God abides in us, but very much in danger of being seduced by the world. Or whether we are babes, we are all children. It really is an actual word. Fathers, young men, babes, abide in him. Why? Because he's going to appear and say to the Apostle, we don't want to be, we want to have confidence, we don't want to be ashamed before any time. [00:20:23] No. I can say to all of you, my dear friend, look out. If you set your life to yourself, then it's the ordinary life of the world. I'm afraid, though you're a Christian, you might be ashamed of your life. You're left in this world not to live the old life, which is our life heritage from heaven, but to live the new life which we have as born of God and in Christ Jesus. God has given us a power to do that. We not only have the new nature, but we have the indwelling spirit, we have the anointing. And so he says to everyone of us now, my children, abide in him. [00:21:09] And if you do, if your life is the life in expression which you have vitally in Christ the Lord God, well then you won't be ashamed before him as he's coming.

And then he says, you know, you can recognize your brother, so to speak, as your sister, because we know him, he is righteous, and the one who does bear him practices righteousness before him. Before world practices are righteousness, as I say, the first and most flagrant form of unrighteousness is the creature, the sharp creature out of his or her blood.

[00:22:04] Then the apostle, so to speak, says always with enthusiasm, as I say to you, O my dear brethren, behold, just look at this, look at the wonderful manner of the divine love, the Father's love, and this love is bestowed upon us. Look at the manner of it. Why, here are we, these sons, or more accurately, children of God, we are brought into a new religion. May I connect this in your thoughts

with that well-known parable of the fifteen-dollar duke, you know, the prodigal came back, he was repentant, he came back hungry and miserable, but confessing his need. And he left his mind that when he met his father, he would make a very good confession, and say, O father, I simply get to heaven, and in my sight I am no longer worthy to be called your son, make me as one of your pious sons. [00:23:12] I think you might be good enough to give me a decent job in the kitchen, and, well, a kind of bed of some sort to lie down on. And I can hear you say, you see, he was embraced by the father in such fashion that he had squeezed it out of him. He never got to that part. No, no, therefore, for the father, we might say, using that, O my dear friends, behold the manner of the father's love of the returning prodigal. He didn't take him to the kitchen, he put shoes on his feet. And that was Messiah's time.

It's been very well said, you know, when you come to the Old Testament, I think it's the first occasion, when Moses, before he acted in Egypt for the deliverance of Israel, he came back from Libya at the end of the fourteen years, after he'd seen a vision of the glory of God in the world. [00:24:19] Do you remember what was said to him, Moses? Take your shoes off, this is holy ground. That was, I don't know, an ancient custom. The servant went unshod into the house. The children, they wore shoes, in the presence of God Almighty's tremendous salvation. But what did they do to the prodigal? They put the shoes on. But it's God, even Moses, he takes his shoes off. When it rains, even the rains come to the father.

Because he was a bad lot, wasn't he, this prodigal son? In himself. Now he's coming back with his shoes, put shoes on his feet, says the Lord. [00:25:12] Well, that's only kind of a sidelight on what we've got in this passage. We can say to one another, and I hope we do all, look, look, look at the manner of the Father's love. He hasn't merely received us back, prodigals as we were. He hasn't put us in the servant's quarters. He's received us, we are the children of God.

We are brought into this new relation, and the second verse says, beloved. So we are beloved, now are we the children of God.

What we shall be is not yet definitive, but the relationship is one that is already established, and into it we are brought.

[00:26:16] Now I think I would like to, just with the help of our memories, to use that word. The first thing is the wonder of the new relation that has been established. That we, every one of us, are children of God. But, there's something that goes along with that which ends that first verse.

Therefore, just because we are all of God, just because we are brought into this new place of relation and favor as all of God, the world knows us not.

[00:27:04] Because in you we are. The word I think I should use here is disconnection. If we are brought into this near connection, this near relation in the presence of God with our Father, we are thereby disconnected from the world system of God knowing. Now we've got to remember that. I hope you say, well I'm very glad to hear that, because I think I can almost say that. I'm very glad that a bridge has come in. I'm also glad, you know, they've got a lot out of Sodom. You say, well I should think so. Yes, very well. Sodom is the world and God is the system. A good job there was a bit of disconnection between him and the world. I say, I don't know what a wonderful thing it is. We've got a life and an age as Christians that the world doesn't understand. [00:28:16] You know, the more consistent we are as Christians, I'm perfectly certain, you may be like God, kind with his foes,

gracious towards many. I'm converted that you come into contact with. I'm very likely that, well, it's rather decent of them, but if you've got quite the kind of means, you might just say, I say, you know, let me shoot your ears. The way they talk, the way they do, you know, I don't understand them. They seem to be agitated by things that we are all resisting. They don't understand. Again and again, you know, the world has to talk like that. Of course they do. Of course they do. You as born of God, a child of God, and I as born of God, a child of God, we have a pure being and we have a pure child that loves things that are not our own. [00:29:20] The world, as we know it, does not know the sense of understanding us. It didn't understand it. When he was here, no, there was that breach continually between him and the world. They had to say something, well, never in a state like this, man, but when you came to the point, they did not understand what he said. Now, I thought I was going to do, but I was unconfident. I'd never done it yet. What then? Well, I'd like to believe that one sitting in the doctor's office and joked out every time there was misunderstanding. I think you'll find that really nobody ever properly understood him. Again and again, you get his absences, and you can see even his disciples, again and again, misunderstood. [00:30:20] They didn't understand. The world also continually misunderstood him, simply because he spoke as to God. They, alas, were under the power of the adversary, and they merely had no foreknowledge of the human race.

The world didn't know him. We must accept it. Don't try and alter it. We are disconnected in this fundamental way from the world.

[00:31:06] We are brought into a relationship with God in this wonderfully near relationship, and we find ourselves in this way disconnected from the world. Of course, at present, there's nothing much out with it to show it, is there? You can't say, oh, you've never wondered which eye you've got. You can see the halo around my head. No, you've never seen anything. I've never had a halo around my head. And you have. No, you haven't. No, there's nothing that shows it. You might get to know somebody if actually your office all works, and you say, well, it's never been met. I've never worked with him. I wouldn't be surprised if that were the case. Yes, and so they are. And so are you. You've both got the same nature, the same life. [00:32:05] But as the apostle says here, we are now the children of God, but the next sentence means it does not yet appear what we shall be. We don't know what we're going to be, but it does mean that what we are going to be is not yet manifested. But he says we know that it will be. When he appears, when he is manifested, we are going to be like him. In that way, we travel incognito, you see that word used, through the present ego world. What we are going to be is not yet in manifestation.

Now, I have an illustration that I took when I was a youngster. When I was a youngster, there was always a tremendous number of gags to please us. I had two brothers, no sisters, fortunately. [00:33:11] We were a very great butterfly and moth collector. We had quite a good collection. And, you know, sometimes we got the cat out of it. Now, I need to know, you might, and on, the autumn is beginning to come on, perhaps about October.

Now, of course, not deceiving people, but the problem is, if you look, why there is a black cat, why there is a lot of black cats, rather black and rather spiky. Yes, but it's not yet manifested what we are going to be.

[00:34:03] Presently, there will be what we call full fame, and they'll turn into a chrysalis, as we've heard. And next summer, there will come out a beautiful butterfly, which is called a red admiral, of those black cats. Now, that's an illustration. You might take those caterpillars. Now, you're not a red admiral. Yes, you might believe it. What it really is, it is manifesting. It isn't an illustration, my friend.

What it really is, it is manifesting. But when the summer comes, it will be manifesting. Out of the chrysalis will come the butterfly, who is not always black. Yes, we haven't reached the butterfly stage yet. We are still in the caterpillar stage, if you like. But, you know, we know. We know what we are going to be. [00:35:08] It's a rather ready illustration, but I don't think it is a demand. No, what we are going to be is not yet manifested, but we know what we are going to be. What a wonderful statement this is. Look, we are brought into the new relation, children in the presence of the father. We are graced, really, with this disconnection from the world system, which doesn't know us. But at present there is no manifestation of what we are going to be, but we do know that when he shall appear, when he is manifested, we shall unite him.

If you like another word, rather ending, relation, disconnection, manifestation, then come conformation. We are going to be conformed to his likeness. We are going to be likened to which we see him as he is.

[00:36:20] Now that's a wonderful statement. I sometimes illustrate that by thinking, people, that when the first war ended on that great day which we still talk about, November 11th, 1918, when the first war ended, I was in the city of London, and about 11 o'clock in the noon's break, it's a total nonsense, and all business ceased. Thousands and tens of thousands came into the streets. That's when it began to rain. I remember I was going to London Bridge Station, just before I got to the other mansion house, don't you mean London they know? Here comes the London police. [00:37:11] And in the afternoon, I had offered up my hand and touched King George the British. Right by me came the Royal Carriage. Their Majesties were going to congratulate the Lord Mayor or something like that, on the afternoon of that great day. Yes, I served him. But I didn't see him as he is. Oh no, he was dressed up because it was raining somewhat. I didn't see him in the form of an admiral, like that George Fitzgerald. He wasn't a seaman, it was earlier. No, no, no, I saw his Majesty. But if I had been brought into personal contact, if I had had the privilege of being afraid of the Royal House, if I had sat down quietly, and there he sits, and we converse together, and I see him with all the praise.

[00:38:14] And all his externals may sigh. It's just the King as he is. I should have had the knowledge of King George the British, which I certainly have. What a wonderful thing it is.

We are going to receive the Lord Jesus, we are going to be lost in the presence of God, and we are going to be conformed to the image of our Saviour, and we are going to see him as he is. Well, I'll tell you what will happen. It must happen, with me and with you, every man, every saint, we may say, that has this hope in him, where he will purify himself, even as he is pure, we shall be staying in our book.

[00:39:13] Yes, I think I'll be done with that. That doesn't quite keep in a fitting connection with what I'm going to be. It will have a purifying effect upon our life. It doesn't say that every man that has this hope ought to purify himself. He certainly ought. But it does say he will. He will surely purify himself. That is, if he has this hope, he may have the doctrinal knowledge that it's going to be, but if it burns as a hope, I have to say, if this hope of seeing him as he is, of being conformed to his image in the day of manifestation, [00:40:08] if that's really a hope in my heart, I should be very careful how I go through this rather dirty world. And not only external defilements, but the internal ones, the things that would mar, do mar, that terrible worship of self which is so possibly Christian, for that will be dethroned.

And if it's a hope, then to exalt in our hearts and in our lives purification. That's the word I should use

there. For memory's sake, I've always been rather inclined to confess.

I have, as I've said, drawn myself into a new relation. I have the privilege of this disconnection from the world that doesn't know me. [00:41:13] I'm waiting for the manifestation, when there will be the conformation, but while I'm waiting, and if the hope is there in my heart, there'll be a humble desire to please my Lord, and again and again I shall be purifying myself.

Even as he is pure, that's a high standard, but this purification is bound to go on. As long as I live, I shall never be able to say, oh well, I've now reached the top notice of the peak, and I didn't bother about this purification at all. No, because the standard is so high, we go on our way, and as we get older, I hope we'll still be concerned with our lives, about our purity and the crux of that which is honoring to the one who we serve, [00:42:18] and who has brought us into this great place of deliverance. Now that is my little message to you tonight. Let us then abide in him. Let us live the Christian life.

We could live the life of the world, but we have the new nature, we have the Spirit. Let us abide in him, and live the life that is proper Christian life, while we wait for his coming. Now we will just take our hymn books and find another hymn for a moment. I think we might sing 117, which is, Thou helpst him to remember that not to ourselves, but we know that we, O God, are thine.

[00:43:20] Jesus, the Lord of angels, who gave us life and delight, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, is the blessed mercy given. 117.