

ADRIAN ROGERS

# LEGACY

C O L L E C T I O N



## 1 P E T E R

These transcripts are taken straight from live audio recordings of Adrian Rogers during his tenure as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. As such some of the transcripts may contain stutters, stammers, transcription errors, and other authentic remarks as would be common in a live setting.

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# The Servant's Certainties

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: August 22, 1999**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 1:1–7**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. You Are Specially Loved
- II. You Are Strategically Located
- III. You Are Eternally Secure
- IV. You Are Incredibly Rich
- V. You Are Purposefully Tested
- VI. You Are Joyfully Expectant

Conclusion

## Introduction

Chris, when you serve the Lord, you have to be sure-footed. There are some things that you have to know that you know. And I can tell you, after more than four decades in the ministry, what keeps me going, what keeps my clock ticking, is not how I feel, but what I know. We're to be instant in season and out of season, and there are a lot of seasons that come in the ministry. But there are some certainties. And I want to speak to you tonight on "The Servant's Certainties."

First Peter chapter 1, and we're going to read seven verses. "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God, the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto the praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." And let's go ahead and read 8: "Whom, having not seen, ye love; in whom, though ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." And we'll read verse 9: "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

Now, actually, there are six certainties that are mentioned here, Brother Chris, that the servant of God needs to know, and all of us are servants of God. And so, let's see if we can learn those six certainties, and I'm going to be brief, but I hope it'll be a blessing.

## **I. You Are Specially Loved**

Certainty number one: You are specially loved—you are specially loved. Verses 1 and 2 tell us that God had His love on us before the foundation of the world. Look at it: “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ—he was a servant of Christ sent by Christ—to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect—now watch this—according to the foreknowledge of God...”

Now, every servant of God, and every child of God, needs to know that his salvation was planned by God the Father. It is not our idea. We are the elect of God. Verse 2: “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God...” Now, when did our election take place? It took place in the secret counsel halls of eternity before we knew anything about it. A corresponding passage in Ephesians chapter 1, verse 4, says, “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.” Now, were any of you here when that happened? Of course not! But that is when you were chosen. And why did He choose us? “That we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” And I'll tell you, a holy man of God is an awesome weapon of a holy God.

And, Chris, I can tell you this, dear brother, and I can tell you this, sweet Kelly: you are wanted children. God loves you. He set His affection on you before you were ever conceived. You were in the heart and the mind of God before He laid the foundations of this earth. Now, that doesn't do away with human responsibility. That doesn't mean that we don't have any say in the matter, for the Bible also says “whosoever will may come,” and anybody who wants to be saved can be saved. People are racing their theological motors about election. I can solve it in five minutes. The elect are whosoever will. That's it. The elect are the whosoever wills. Hey, if you want to be saved, come on! Thank God, the Bible says, “whosoever will,” but your coming will not surprise God. He knew about it. His foreknowledge knew about it before it ever took place, before He swung this planet into space. You say, “Well, I don't understand that.” Well, good, that's two of us.

Now, number one: it is planned by the Father; number two: it is performed by the Spirit. Notice verse 2: “Elect...through sanctification of the Spirit...” Now, that means that to be sanctified—that's a big word, but it just simply means to be set aside by the Holy Spirit. He set us aside for Himself. We are utterly, utterly dependent upon the Holy Spirit for our salvation, and for our service, for he says, “unto obedience.” Every pastor, every minister, every servant of God, has to be obedient. And so, we are saved by faith, and we serve by faith. And so, it is planned by the Father, performed by the Spirit, and

purchased by the Savior. Look in verse 2 again. He speaks of the “sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” Now, what he’s doing, Peter is going back into the Old Testament and using symbolism, when he talks about the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, because none of us literally have the blood of Jesus sprinkled on us.

Three times in the Old Testament, blood was sprinkled. First of all, it was there for cleansing. When a person would have leprosy in the Old Testament, he would be facing a horrible death. But there were times when God would work a miracle. And the cleansing of a leper is analogous to salvation, and a leper would be supernaturally, miraculously cleansed by the mercy of God. And then, he would have to go show himself healed by the mercy of God. And then, he would have to go show himself to the priest for cleansing. And what the priest would do would be to take two live birds, and he would take a vessel, and put running water in that vessel, and he would take one bird and kill it, and the blood would be mingled with the water in that vessel. Then he would take that other bird that had been captured, and put him in that vessel, and just put the water and the blood all over him, and take him out, and release him. And he’d fly away, singing, “There’s Power in the Blood.” Just released. He’s just free. And so, this was a symbol in the Old Testament, to picture what has happened to us. The sprinkling of blood was there for cleansing. And it was also there for consecration.

When a man of God in the Old Testament would be a priest, set aside to be ordained, a sacrifice would be made, and half the blood would be poured on the altar, and then the other half of the blood would be taken, and put on the priest, on Aaron, and his sons. Folks, have you ever seen a Baptist priest? We’re going to ordain one tonight. We are priests of God. And the Bible teaches that we are a kingdom of priests. And so, this sprinkling of blood was there for cleansing, it was there for consecration, and it was there also for a covenant.

When God made a covenant with His people, Moses read the terms of that covenant, and then an ox was killed, and his blood was sprinkled on the altar, and on the people to seal the covenant.

I asked Chris tonight, when we were going through the council, I said, “Chris, do you understand that being ordained is being set aside? It’s a holy thing. It’s a lifetime thing.” He said, “I do with all of my heart.” And so, this is the thing that you need to understand. You are specially loved. Your salvation has been planned by the Father, performed by the Spirit, purchased by the Savior—and that’s a good starting place for anybody’s ministry.

## **II. You Are Strategically Located**

But now, here’s the second thing you need to learn—and this is the servant’s certainty. Not only are you specially loved, but you are strategically located. Notice

verse 1: “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.” Now, the word scattered may seem haphazard, but actually the word literally means in the Greek language, sown, like you’re sowing seed. So, we are scattered. Yes, we are scattered as strangers. And, by the way, these people really were strangers. They were vagabonds, at least on this earth in the eyes of many people. It was open season on Christians when Peter wrote this. On July 16<sup>th</sup>, in the year 79, there was a fire in Rome. Actually, much of the City of Rome burned, and many believe that Nero, who was sort of a madman, but a great builder, had his henchmen to set fire to the city, to clear the slums, so he could rebuild. And, of course, many people suffered, and the thing backfired on Nero, and he looked for a scapegoat, and somebody, one of his advisors, said, “I’ll tell you what to do—just blame it on the Christians. They are a strange group. They practice drinking blood.” Remember what I preached this morning? Well, they just took that, and twisted it, and said, “They practice cannibalism, and they’re always talking about a judgment of fire.” And so, they seem like people that were misunderstood. And so, Christians were crucified, they were nailed to crosses, they were covered with pitch, and they were set on fire and used as human torches for Nero’s wild parties and his banquets. They were dressed in animal skins, and used as prey for hunting and sport, and then they were killed. And they were scattered as strangers, verse 1 tells us. But they were also scattered as seed. The word here scattered actually means to sow through. That’s literally what it means. And God has scattered His servants all over the world. As a matter of fact, the Bible says, in Acts chapter 8 and verse 4, “Therefore, they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.” Chris, you’re not here by accident. God has just sown you, you’re just His seed, and He’s planted you right here.

We’re scattered as strangers, we’re scattered as seed, and, folks, many of you are here in Memphis, Tennessee not really because of your own choosing; just circumstances have brought you here from whatever. You didn’t say, “Well, I just want to move to Memphis, Tennessee,” but you’re here. And God has a purpose in your being here. And you are to bloom and bear fruit where you’re planted. God has put you here.

Now, we scattered as strangers, scattered as seed, and scattered as saints, because verse 2 says that we’re sanctified. We’re not citizens of earth trying to get to heaven; we’re citizens of heaven just sojourning here on earth. And you’re going to be frustrated, everybody, if you try to make this world your home. One great man said, “Lord, if I’m building a nest, put a thorn in it.” And God does put a thorn in it. And we just have to be different. And the man of God is different. The man of God has to stand up. He’s to be different. But not just the man of God—all of us.

Go over in 1 Peter chapter 2, and look in verse 11: “Dearly beloved, I beseech you,

as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.” And the soul is another word for the psyche. If you try to be at home in this world, you’re going to be two-souled. You’re going to be a spiritual schizophrenic. The man of God needs to be sold out completely and separated from this world. He needs to be a holy man of God.

### **III. You Are Eternally Secure**

Now, here’s the third thing I want you to see. You are eternally secure. Notice verse 3. Look at it: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively—that is, a living—hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Lord.” Do you know why I believe in eternal security? Listen. You’ve got to have security in order to be a servant. Nobody—nobody—is an effective servant who doesn’t feel secure. When you know that your destiny is settled, you can concentrate on the present. You can just serve the Lord. You’ve got to have a sense of security to know who you are when you’re a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, the nature of our security is in the nature of our salvation. He says in verse 3 that our salvation is rooted in abundant mercy. That’s so wonderful. You see, that which is the gift of mercy can never ever be taken away for the lack of merit. It’s rooted in abundant mercy. We keep our salvation the same way we got it. How was I saved? I was saved by the mercy of God. How am I kept saved? By the mercy of God. Some people say, “Well, you know, I sure hope I’m living right when I die, so I’ll go to heaven.” I wouldn’t trust the best 15 minutes I ever lived to get me to heaven, and I’ve got some real bad ones also, but I wouldn’t trust some of my best. No. It—this salvation, this security—is rooted in abundant mercy, and it results in a new birth. Verse 3 says He has begotten us again. We were begotten by our parents the first time, and then we are begotten again. And this word begotten again, it’s a verb, and I know you’re real interested in Greek tenses, but it’s the aorist tense. Now, isn’t that a blessing? Go home and say, “You know what the pastor said tonight? I almost shouted. The aorist tense.” Let me tell you what that means. Friend, that means it is once for all. Begotten again, once for all. You’re not born again and again and again and again and again. I’ll give you—anybody in this place right now—100 dollars—I’ll have to borrow it from Brother Bob, but I’ll give it to you—I’ll give you one hundred dollars right now, if anybody can stand up and tell me anywhere in the Bible where anybody was saved twice. You don’t want 100 dollars? Why can’t you do it? Because you can’t find it. No, friend, listen. It is a once for all salvation. He hath begotten us again. Listen. It is rooted in abundance mercy. It results in a new birth. You know, there are people who say, “Oh, boy, I hope I’m living right, so I can go to heaven when I die.” Well, I want to tell you this: If the only

thing that keeps you from sinning is the fear of going to hell, you need to get saved. I'm serious. You probably need to be saved. Somebody said, "Well, you know, if I believe in eternal security, I'll just get saved, and sin all I want to." Dwight L. Moody said, "I get drunk any time I want to." He said, "I don't want to—I don't want to. I get drunk any time I want to." And, you see, because it is rooted in mercy, and because it results in a new birth, it rests in a living hope. He says, "unto a lively hope," in verse 3, and that lively hope is because Jesus came out of the grave—"...begotten us again unto a living—a lively—hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Now, you see, because He rose, we're secure. The Bible says, in Hebrews chapter 7, verse 25, "Wherefore, he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever lives." If Jesus ever dies again, then you can worry about your salvation—if Jesus ever dies again. He ever lives to make intercession for us. What a wonderful salvation. And I'm telling you what keeps me going, what keeps me tracking for Jesus, is this: I know I am eternally secure. And so are you, Chris.

#### **IV. You Are Incredibly Rich**

And then, next, you are incredibly rich—you are incredibly rich. Look in verses 4 and 5: "To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

I read this a while back, talking about Michael Jordan. You know, Michael Jordan is a great sports figure, and has recently retired. And when he was playing, just months ago, he was making over 300,000 dollars per game—per game. That's about 10,000 dollars a minute. And then, on top of that, he has all of these endorsements that would amount to about 40 million dollars a year just for letting people use his name. And so, he makes about 178,000 dollars a day. Not bad—178,000 dollars a day. If he's sleeping at night, while he's sleeping seven hours, he's making 52,000 dollars when he goes to sleep. If he went to a movie, and paid seven dollars to go see a movie, while he is in that movie, he's made 18,500 dollars just watching the movie. If he eats a five-minute egg, he made over 618 dollars while the egg is cooking. If, you know, if he wanted to buy a sports car that cost 90,000 dollars, he'd have to save for 12 whole hours to buy a sports car like that. You say, "Hey, that's rich." Friend, let me tell you something. Michael Jordan would have to save 100 percent of his income for 270 years to have the wealth that Bill Gates has. You think Jordan's rich? Two hundred and seventy years saving every penny to be as wealthy as Bill Gates. But I'm going to tell you. That man in that dark suit is more wealthy than both of them—more wealthy than both of them. That's the truth. You are incredibly rich. Look again in verses 4 and 5: "To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for

you.”

Now, what is your inheritance? Well, Christ is your inheritance. That’s why you’re so rich. Now, I hope that doesn’t let the air out of your balloon. Here’s what God said. It’s a great verse over in Ezekiel chapter 44, verse 28, talking to Levites, the servants of God. That’s what you are. You’re a New Testament Levite. God says, “I am their inheritance.” Now, you think about it. God is their inheritance. Well, if you own God, I’d say you’re rich. “I am their inheritance, and ye shall give them no possession in Israel...” That is, the Levites didn’t get any land. God said, “I’m just giving myself to them. I am their possession.” Now, we know that God possesses us, but God says, “I’m giving myself to you.” Now, that is your inheritance. You can’t be intimidated when you understand that. The devil says, “If you don’t serve me, I’m going to take away everything you have.” You say, “I haven’t got anything. God didn’t give me any possession in Israel.” You say, “All right, if you’ll serve me,” the devil says, “I’ll give you something.” “You can’t give me anything; I have everything.” What, what’s the devil going to do with a man like that? You see, we have nothing. The Bible says, “As having nothing, yet possessing all things—as having nothing, yet possessing all things...” God is your inheritance. And I hope that this church will take care of you and give you living wages, and all of that, but I want to tell you two young folks here sitting on the front row—you’re rich. You are a plutocrat. You have an inheritance.

And notice what he says. First of all, it’s faultless. It’s incorruptible. The foul breath of decay and the gnawing tooth of time can’t take it away. And not only is it faultless; it’s flawless. It’s undefiled. That means it’s not tainted. It’s paid in full. And it’s fadeless. The lawyers can’t get at it—no fees, no court costs, no taxes, no inflation, no inheritance tax. And it’s reserved in heaven for you. And the next verse says, “Who are kept by the power of God.” And the word kept is a military term. So, I want you, dear servant of God, to know that, as you serve the Lord, you are incredibly rich.

## **V. You Are Purposefully Tested**

Number five: You are purposefully tested. Don’t get the idea that the ministry is all honey and no bees. Look in verses 6 and 7: “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations”—and the word temptations here literally means trials—“that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”

Now, why do we go through these trials? Well, we have an inheritance reserved in heaven, in the safety vaults of heaven. Our inheritance is Jesus Christ Himself. And what God is doing through trials is just getting us ready for our inheritance. And the trials are many. He calls them manifold, and that really means variegated; it actually has

the idea of different colors. But all the trials, everything that comes to every servant of God, everybody in this place, can't come to us, except God allows it, and he says that they are for a season. And the idea is of being in a furnace, like gold is in a smelting furnace, where all of the dross, and all of the scum, is burned out, and we become more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ. Job said, in Job 23, verse 10, "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." And the trials are for His purpose and in His time. And every man of God goes through trials. And I don't think it's good to talk about them all the time, but I know my trials, and, Chris, you'll know yours, and gentlemen on the platform, and every man, woman, boy, and girl in this place, if you serve the Lord, you will be purposefully tested.

## **VI. You Are Joyfully Expectant**

And then, the last and the final thing I want to say about this servant's certainty: you are joyfully expectant. Look again, if you will, in verses 8 and 9, and see how he closes this passage: "Whom...—speaking of Jesus in verse 7—Whom, having not seen, ye love..." Now, the choir has been recently singing, "It Will be Worth it all When we see Jesus." "Whom, having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—and the word end here actually has the idea of the goal, the thing that you're headed toward—even the salvation of your souls." If you got the beginning, you're going to get the end. And the goal is that we're going to see the Lord Jesus Christ. And that's such a wonderful thing. That's such a holy thing. That's such a grand and a glorious thing.

## **Conclusion**

These are certainties. And, Chris, I can tell you, brother, that if you'll just read the Bible, and see who you are in Jesus, and then sometimes somebody gets on your case, and somebody gripes at you—and, you know, they will do that; they'll criticize you. Even as nice as you are, they won't like the way you part your hair, and they'll criticize. They'll find fault—but you just go back to the Word of God, and you say, This is true, this is true, this is true, this is true, and this is true, and it'll keep you.

Off the coast of New Jersey there was a father who took his two children out swimming in the Atlantic Ocean—two little children. They were having a wonderful time—a little boy and a little girl. And then the father recognized that the tide had carried them out, and they were way too far from the shore. He also realized they were in great danger of drowning, and they were being swept out to the sea. The father tried to get his head together. The little boy was the smaller of the two, and the father, though a good swimmer, knew now that he was a great distance from the shore. And the father

had to make a decision. And he said to the little girl, he said, “Sweetheart, we’ve gotten a good distance from the shore,” and he tried not to frighten her. And he said, “What I’m going to do, I’m going to take brother to the shore, and then, darling, I’m going to come back and get you.” Now, he said, “Sweetheart, don’t be afraid. Remember how daddy taught you to float? Darling, you remember? Just get on your back, and rest, and tread the water like it’s a bed, and just float. And, sweetheart, you can just float and float and float, as long as you want. Now, what I want you to do, darling—of course, his heart is just wrenched with fear, but he’s trying to be calm—he said, “What I want you to do, sweetheart, is just get on your back and float. And I’m going to take brother to the shore, and then, darling, I’ll come back and get you.” And, with a prayer in his heart, he began to fight that tide, and take that little boy back to the shore.

And when he finally made it to the shore, his last ouch of strength was gone, but he began to shout at the top of his voice, “Somebody, come! Come help me! Out there somewhere is my daughter. Come!” Out there in the trackless ocean. And strong men began to go, and they put the boats in the water, and began to search back and forth, looking for that little girl. It was way out in the ocean, and they found her floating on her back out there. The father was in the boat when they brought her into the boat, and he took her, and he hugged her, and he said, “Sweetheart, I am so proud of you, darling. I am so proud of you. You did wonderful.” Do you know what she said to her father? She said, “Father, you told me I could float as long as I wanted to, and you told me that you were going to come back for me. And, father, I was just doing what you told me to do till you came.”

You know, our Lord has said, “I’m coming back—I’m coming back. And here’s what I want you to do, and I want you to be faithful, because I will not fail you. I’m coming back for you!” And, Chris, Kelly, the one thing I want you to do is to be faithful till He comes.

# God's Recipe to Overcome the World

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: June 23, 1991**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 1:1–9**

*“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.”*

1 PETER 1:2

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Know That You Are Specially Loved
- II. Know That You Are Strategically Placed
- III. Know That You Are Eternally Secure
- IV. Know That You Are Incredibly Rich
- V. Know That You Will Be Purposefully Tested
- VI. Know That You Should Be Joyfully Expectant

Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles please and open to First Peter chapter one, and the message this evening, is a continuation of really of our thought this morning. Where we were talking about the friendly enemy, your enemy: the world. And, we talked to you this morning about the world and what the world would do to you. We used as an illustration: a man named Lot. And, we showed you the tragic story of the ruin of a man named Lot. We showed you how the world courted Lot, and then how the world conformed him, and then how the world corrupted him, and finally what the world cost him. And, we showed you the tragedy of what some call “worldly Christianity.” Tonight, I want to be on a brighter note: a more positive note. And, I want to show you how to teach your children, and how personally to live so that this vile world would not be able to do to you, in a large measure, or in a small measure, what it did to the man named Lot.

And, so we're here in First Peter Chapter one, and I want to begin reading with you in the Scripture, verse one of this wonderful, wonderful Epistle: *“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia,*

*and Bithynia, Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:1–9).*

Now, in these verses, we have God’s recipe for overcoming the world. Now, you may not see it right now, but you will certainly see it in a few moments as we delve into and look into these wonderful, wonderful verses. Now, the way to overcome the world is never to fight worldliness. If you fight worldliness, you are bound to fail. The Bible never tells us to fight worldliness. The Bible says, “This is the victory, even our faith,” not our fight, but our faith. We fight the devil, but we do not fight the world. We flee from fornication, but we cannot flee from the world. The victory that overcomes the world is our faith. Now, people have to understand what they have in the Lord Jesus Christ, and if they don’t understand what they have in the Lord Jesus Christ, they have a hunger that they will try to fill with the world.

Now, the Bible says, “*If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*” (1 John 2:15). Now, it doesn’t say that he doesn’t love the Father because he loves the world, but it says if he loves the world, it is because the love of the Father is not in him. The love of the world is only the indication that you don’t know and love God; that your faith has not brought you into a vital relationship with the Lord. The victory that overcomes the world is your faith to understand what you have in the Lord Jesus.

I have sometimes illustrated it this way: if there is a dog, and that dog has a nasty bone in his mouth, and you try and take it away from him, well that’s a good way to get bitten. But, how can you get that bone out of that dog’s mouth? One good way is just to put a steak down on the ground. And, he’ll have that bone in his mouth and he’ll look at that steak, and he’ll drop the bone and go for the steak.

Now, how do you keep children from being worldly? Do you just say, you can’t do that; don’t do that; don’t go here. That’s wrong, you’ll never get satisfied in that. That’s no fun. That’s ungodly. That’s immoral. That’s wicked. You’re never going to keep your

children from being worldly that way. You have to show them what they have in the Lord Jesus Christ. You have to present Jesus to them. They have to see the love of the Father. They have to see what they have in the Lord Jesus Christ. And, friend, when you understand what you have in the Lord Jesus Christ, the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace. When you've been feasting on Jesus, then you don't have to hunger after the things of this world. Now, if you've had a wonderful, delicious meal, like Joyce will fix for me, perhaps you've set down and your wife has prepared a gracious and a lovely dinner. And, you've eaten until you're full, and then you go outside and somebody offers you a plate of stale crumbs. You'll just say, "No, thank you, I'm already satisfied." Dear friend, when you're fed on the Lord Jesus Christ, you don't have to be in the back alley eating tin cans with the devil's Billy goats. The Bible teaches that the reason that people love the world is the love of the Father is not in them. They have never found satisfaction in the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **I. Know That You Are Specially Loved**

Now, I want you to look at the scripture that I just read to you. You're going to find six wonderful things that you need to know. And, when you know these things, I don't just simply read them, but when you know them, when you believe them, then this world will lose its strangle hold on you. Now, I want you understand these things, and number one, I want you to see that you are specially loved, specially loved. Look, if you will, in verses one and two, "*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied*" (1 Peter 1:1–2). Now, folks may I tell you that verse two is one of the greatest verses in the Bible; that shows you just how much God loves you. And, what a wonderful, wonderful salvation that you have. And, this salvation is the work of the triune God. For example, God the Father planned it. The Bible says that you are "*elect according to the foreknowledge of God...*" (1 Peter 1:2) Now, when did this take place? When did God choose you? When did God set His love upon you? In the counsel halls of eternity, before you knew anything about it, before He'd swung this world into space, before, dear friend, anything was. Before the foundation of the world, God loved you. Ephesians one verse four says, "*...he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world*" (Ephesians 1:4). Friend, I want to tell you, you are a wanted child. What a great feeling it is for me to know that I was in the heart and the mind of God before the foundation of this world.

Now, that I am elect does not do away with my human responsibility. If I want to be saved, I must choose the Lord Jesus. The Bible says, "Whosoever will may come"

(Paraphrase of Revelation 22:17). But, I'm not going to get into all of that tonight, but just simply to say that this great salvation, this love of God was planned by the Father. Secondly, it was performed by the Spirit. Look if you will again, "*elect according to the foreknowledge of God through sanctification of the Spirit*" (1 Peter 1:2). Now, the word "sanctification" is a big word. We don't use it in ordinary conversations. It's not street conversation. It's not business place conversation. It literally means to be "set-aside for a special purpose." Now, God the Father planned it. God the Holy Spirit performed it. God the Spirit convicted us of our sin. God the Spirit revealed the Lord Jesus Christ to us. God the Spirit put faith in our heart. God the Spirit put a desire for salvation in our heart. And, God the Spirit opened us up and poured in the love of Jesus Christ, and we were born again through the Spirit. We are utterly, totally, completely dependent upon the Spirit for salvation. But, listen the Bible says He did it unto obedience. Now, you're not saved by works. You are saved by grace through faith, but you were saved unto obedience. You're not saved by obedience. "I cannot work, my soul to save that work my Lord has done, but I will work like any slave for the love of God's dear Son." You're not saved by faith and works, but you're saved by a faith that works. But, how are you saved? It is the sanctification of the Spirit. Now, notice, it is planned by the Father. It is performed by the Spirit, but it was purchased by the Son. Look again, "*...and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*" (1 Peter 1:2). Now, three times in the Old Testament we have the ceremonial sprinkling of blood. And, it was a picture of what the Lord Jesus Christ would do. One time there was sprinkling of blood when a leper was cleansed. When a man had leprosy, it was a miracle. Now, no doctors or no medicine could cleanse a man of leprosy. Only God could do that and from time to time God would miraculously cleanse the leper and when the leper was healed he had to be ceremonially cleansed. And, so what they would do is they would take two doves, two precious, innocent birds, doves. And, they would take a basin with running water in it and the priest would take one of those turtle doves and he would ring its neck and kill it in that basin of running water and the blood would be shed there in that pure running water—that basin. And, then the priest would take the other dove and dip that over dove down in that bloody water and then release it. And, the blood would be dripping from the wings of that other dove as he would fly higher, higher, and higher into the sky with victory dripping from his wings. A soul set free! And, after the high priest had done that, then he would take the rest of that bloody water and sprinkle it on that leper that had been cleansed. Do you see the picture? All right.

The sprinkling of the blood was there for cleansing, then also the sprinkling of blood was there for consecration. When a priest was ordained in Leviticus chapter twenty-two, as a part of the ordination, they would take it as a sacrifice was made. And, half of the blood would be sprinkled on the altar, and then the rest of the blood would be sprinkled

on the priest to ordain him or to set him aside for the priesthood. My dear friend, not only have we been cleansed by the blood of Jesus, but we have been consecrated by the blood of Jesus. You say, “Well, what does that have to do with me, Brother Rogers? I’m not a priest.” You’re not? Well, I am. Did you ever see a Baptist priest? Have a look. I’m a priest and you’re a priest. And, every child of God now, whoever he is, where ever he is, even a little child—a boy or girl, who has been saved. These little children who were baptized tonight, they are priests of God through the sprinkling of the blood of the Lord Jesus. You see, there’s cleansing in that sprinkling. There’s consecration in that sprinkling. And, then there’s a covenant in the sprinkling. When the people of God in the Old Testament wanted to be related with God, God made a covenant with them. And, Moses, the man of God, read the terms of the covenant to the people, then an ox would be killed. The blood of that ox would be sprinkled on the altar, and the blood sprinkled on all of the people to seal the covenant.

Now, what does all of this mean? Well, just bring it over to this verse right here, First Peter one verse two. The Bible says, “...[the] sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ...” (1 Peter 1:2). Well, I’ll tell you what it means friend; it means there’s cleansing, there’s consecration, there is covenant in the sprinkled blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s what we have in the Lord Jesus. You’re salvation was planned by the Father, performed by the Spirit, and purchased by the Son. Now, a person who sees this, a person who understands this, then this world, this strangle hold that this world has on him is broken because he says, “What a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful salvation I have.”

## **II. Know That You Are Strategically Placed**

Now, there’s a second thing I want you to understand. Not only are you specially loved, but number two: you are strategically placed; you are strategically placed. Why are you in this world? Well, look if you will here, First Peter chapter one verse one, “*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia...*” (1 Peter 1:1). Now, the Bible says that we are strangers in this world. The word “stranger” means a “sojourner.” And, he says here that we are strategically placed in this world. The Bible uses the word “scattered.” Now, what does this mean? Well, first of all, it means they were scattered as strangers; scattered as people living in hostile territory. Now, Peter was writing to a persecuted people.

On July the sixteenth in the year seventy-nine, a madman named Nero burned the city of Rome. He only meant to burn the slums because he wanted to rebuild the slums and he was an ego-maniac who wanted to build things for his glory and honor. And, in order to get rid of the slums he set fire to them. The people reacted in ways that he didn’t expect them to react and they turned on Nero the Emperor. Nero was looking for a scapegoat and so he was looking around for someone to blame and they said,

“Why don’t you blame the Christians, after all the Christians are a strange sect. They meet underground. They have a ceremony that they call the Lord’s Supper where they think they’re drinking blood. And, they also are talking about a judgment of fire. It would be easy to say that these people are cannibals who set the city of Rome on fire.” And, so they blamed the burning of Rome on the Christians. Therefore, it was open season on the Christians and Christians in this day were nailed to crosses. Many of them were set on fire as human candles to light the gardens of Nero and for his wild parties and banquets. Many of them were dressed in animal skins and set loose in the forest to be hunted like wild beasts. They were scattered as strangers, but they were also scattered as seed. Now, the word “scattered” here is an interesting word. It literally means “to sow through,” that is, just to take seed like you would sow it through a field. And, God had a purpose in the persecution—the allowing of the persecution of these Christians because these Christians went everywhere preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ like seed being sown. Acts chapter eight verse four says, *“Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word”* (Acts 8:4).

You see, the seed’s not to rot in the barn. It’s not to rot in the church. We as Christians have a business in this world. Now, listen to me, we’ve been saved out of the world, we’ve been sent back into the world, we’re scattered throughout the world to witness to the world and that’s the only business in the world that we have. And, these early Christians, they were scattered as strangers, they were scattered as seed and they were scattered as saints. They were sanctified ones according to verse two. Now, listen to me folks. We’re to be in the world but we’re not to be of it. You are a foreigner: you’re not in your native land and you must march to the beat of a different drummer. Learn this: Christians are not citizens of earth trying to get to heaven; they are citizens of heaven sojourning on earth. And, you’ll always be frustrated if you as a Christian try to be at home in this world. Let me show you something very interesting. Look in First Peter Chapter two, verse eleven. The Bible says, *“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul”* (1 Peter 2:11). That’s a very important verse. Now notice in First Peter one he calls them “strangers.” In Chapter two, verse eleven he calls them “strangers and pilgrims.” And, he says, *“...abstain from fleshly lusts [that] war against your soul...”* (1 Peter 2:11). Remember this morning I told you that you were a twice born person living in a world of once born people. Now, if you do not live a separated life you are going to be frustrated. This word says, *“abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul”* (1 Peter 2:11). The Greek word for soul is *psyche*, which wars against your psyche—against yourself. A double minded man is unstable in all of his ways.

Did you know that if you go over here to our bookstore, you’ll find book after book after book about how to deal with depression, how to deal with worry, how to deal with

psychological problems, neurosis, all of these self-help books because so many in the churches are sick. Our churches are filled with sick saints. I'm not talking about physically sick; I'm talking about psychologically sick. And, I'll tell you, as far as I'm concerned, most of those books wouldn't need to be written if Christians would live godly lives. That's it. Fleshly lusts war against the soul. A double minded man is unstable in all of his ways my dear friend.

Listen, you don't need to be a spiritual neurotic. Know this: that you are specially loved and you are strategically located. God put you here on earth as a stranger, as a sojourner, as a pilgrim, and he's taking you like seed, just throwing through this world. Why? So that you can witness to this world. You have scattered a seed. "...*They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word*" (Acts 8:4).

### **III. Know That You Are Eternally Secure**

There's a third thing you need to know, not only that you are strategically located, but you need to know thirdly that you are eternally secure; eternally secure because this world is hostile territory. But, look, if you will now in verse three, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope*"—that means a living hope "*by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*" (1 Peter 1:3).

Now, why do I believe that you're eternally secure even though you're in hostile territory? Well, my dear friend, you are eternally secure because of the nature of your salvation. Your security comes from the nature of your salvation. Now, your salvation is rooted in the abundant mercy of God. Look at it again, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us...*" (1 Peter 1:3). Do you see the words "abundant mercy?" Do you know why you were saved? Because of God's abundant mercy. Do you think you're saved by your merit? No: you are saved by God's mercy. And, that which is the gift of mercy can never be withdrawn because of the lack of merit. Do you understand that? Salvation is not in your merit, it's in God's mercy and that which is the gift of mercy can never be withdrawn from the lack of merit. How do you keep your salvation? You keep your salvation exactly the same way you got it. How did you get it? By the mercy of God. How do you keep it? By the mercy of God. Now, my dear friend, it is rooted in abundant mercy, it results in a new birth. Look again in verse three: "*According to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again*"—that's just another way of saying born-again— "*He hath begotten us again...*" (1 Peter 1:3). Now, look at the word "begotten." Do you see it? In verse three. It is in the aorist tense. You say, "What does that mean, pastor?" It means dear friend, that when you were born-again, you were born-again once and for all. Something that is in the aorist tense means it happened never, ever to be repeated.

How many times can a man be born physically? One time. How many times can a man be born spiritually? One time. Have you ever seen a human being who was born twice physically? Of course not. And, you will never see a child of God who is born twice spiritually. Never, ever. You show me any time in the Bible where anybody was saved twice and I'll give you ten thousand dollars at the close of this service or stand up right now and tell me where it is. You won't find it.

My dear friend, when you are saved, you are saved by God's abundant mercy and you are begotten again: a once for all experience. Now, that gives you a new nature. Somebody says, "Well, I'll tell you pastor, if I believed that, I just believe I'd sin a lot more than I sin. But, I don't sin, because I don't want to lose my salvation." My dear friend, may I tell you, that if all that keeps you from sinning is fear of losing your salvation, I doubt that you've ever been saved. Do you know what keeps me from sinning? I have been born again and I have a new nature. I've been born again.

Somebody talked to Dwight L. Moody and asked Dwight L. Moody about his sin—whether he ever sinned. Moody said something very interesting. He said, "I get drunk whenever I want to." He said, "I don't want to." I don't want to. Well, you say if I believe in eternal security, I'd get saved, I'd sin all I want to. My dear friend, I sin more than I want to. I don't want to. And, if you still want to I doubt that you've ever known the Lord Jesus Christ. You need to get your "wanter" fixed. No, you need a brand new "wanter." You need to be born again. Listen, this salvation is rooted in mercy. It results in a new birth and it rests in a living hope. Look at it again, look in verse three: "...[He] hath begotten us again into a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3)

Now, why am I so secure? Well, my salvation is rooted in mercy. I have received the nature of God, and my dear friend, it is all sealed, made a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. You see, I have this assured expectation because Jesus Christ is raised from the dead. And, the Bible says in Hebrews chapter seven and verse twenty-five, "*My living Savior ever lives to make intercession for me.*" (Hebrews 7:25) Now, I'll tell you when I believe I'll lose my salvation—when the resurrected Jesus dies, then I'll I can lose my salvation. But, as long as He's alive making intercession for me, He ever lives. "*Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him...*" (Hebrews 7:25).

Leo Etteman wrote these words: "What a wonderful salvation. You cannot beg, buy, borrow or steal it. You cannot earn it. You can't learn it. You can't merit it and you can't inherit it. It is internal, external, and eternal. By the work of Christ on the cross it was completed, and can never be depleted nor repeated." I like that. My dear friend, that's the kind of salvation we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. And, so, know that you're specially loved. Know, my dear friend, that you're strategically placed. Know that you

are eternally secure. And, number four: know that you are incredibly rich.

#### **IV. Know That You Are Incredibly Rich**

Now, look in verse four. The Bible says He's done all of this in order that we might have *"...an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time"* (1 Peter 1:4–5). Now, what does this mean? It means, my dear friend, that we are heirs with God and joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ. I have an inheritance. Now, what is the nature of my inheritance? Well, look if you will, the Bible says that it is *"reserved in heaven"* for me. Now, my inheritance is not heaven. Heaven is the safety deposit box where my inheritance is. It is reserved in heaven for me. What is my inheritance? Christ himself is my inheritance. You see, he is my riches.

In the Old Testament the Levites were not given a possession, not given a land possession. As a matter of fact, Ezekiel forty-four, verse twenty-eight speaking to the Levites said *"...I am their inheritance: and ye shall give them no possession in Israel: I am their possession"* (Ezekiel 44:28). But, my dear friend, if you have Jesus you have everything and you don't need anything else. Now, this is an inheritance that cannot be lost. Look at it. Look at verse four, *"To an inheritance incorruptible"* (1 Peter 1:4). Do you know what that means? It means that it is faultless. The gnawing tooth of time and the foul breath of decay cannot take it away. And, then, not only is it faultless, it is flawless. Do you see there—undefiled? That means that it's not tainted. It means that you can see your title clearly. It means that Jesus paid it in full and there's no legal hanky-panky that can take it away from you. It is faultless; it is flawless. And, it is fadeless. The Bible says that *"it fadeth not away."* That means that legal fees and court costs and taxes and inflation cannot take your inheritance from you. Friend, you are incredibly rich. And, our Lord has reserved that inheritance for you, in verse four. And, then in verse five, He has reserved you for the inheritance. Now, suppose you have an inheritance, you have a rich uncle, but you die. What good does it do you? Or suppose you live, but somebody beats you out of the inheritance. What good does it do you? What he's saying is, number one: the inheritance is reserved for you. And, number two: you are reserved for the inheritance. Look in verse five, *"Who are kept by the power of God"* (1 Peter 1:5). Now, He keeps the inheritance for you and He keeps you for the inheritance. That's pretty good isn't it? We are kept by the power of God. My dear friend, you are not kept by yourself or for yourself. You are kept by the power of God. The word "kept" here, is a military word. It is the idea of soldiers who keep a fortress. God's power is garrisoning you about while you are here on this world, in this earth, in hostile territory; you are kept by the power of God. Don't ever get the idea that you keep yourself saved. You don't. You know the reason I'm still saved? Do you know the reason that I've been preaching

the Gospel now for forty years? I've been kept by the power of God. I can't take any credit for that.

A father was taking his little boy across the street in heavy traffic and he said, "Son," he said, "Come on. Take daddy's hand and hold on." And, they went across the street, and that little boy's chubby hand reached just around daddy's finger and made just a good handful for him and they started across the street. Then the father saw the light change and saw the oncoming traffic. So, he took his finger out of the little boy's chubby fist and took the fist and put it in his great big manly hand and just dragged the little boy across the street. His little feet were just dragging across the street just like that. When they got on the other side, he looked up at his daddy and he said, "I held on daddy."

Now, my dear friend, let me tell you something. It was daddy holding on to him. And, that's the way that it is with your salvation. You are kept by the power of God. Listen, know that you're specially loved. Know that you're strategically placed. God has scattered you, God has put you here that you might witness as lights in this dark world. And, know that you are eternally secure. And, know that you are dear friend, incredibly, incredibly rich.

## **V. Know That You Will Be Purposefully Tested**

Now, here's the fifth thing I want you to know: know that you will be purposefully tested. Look, if you will now, in verse six, "*Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations*" (1 Peter 1:6). We have our troubles. My dear friend, this world is not our home. We're just passing through. We've got a home laid up somewhere beyond the blue. And, down here we have troubles and trials. You say, "Well, if I weren't saved, maybe I wouldn't have these trials." Oh, friend, you'd have them anyway. "*Man that is born of a woman...is full of trouble*" (Job 14:1). But, listen what he says here, "*Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ*" (1 Peter 1:6-7). Now, what does that mean? It means that living for Jesus is not all honey and no bees. It means that there's going to be heartaches and tears. But, it means though our trials are many and though they are heavy, they are all under God's control. And, notice he says, "But for a season." Now, the idea here in verse seven, is of a goldsmith, who puts gold in a furnace. And, the idea is that he's purifying the gold. And, they say that the goldsmith can know the gold is pure when he can see his face in it. And, if you're going through heaviness and heartache here don't let that discourage you. The Lord is just simply working on you. For your good and his glory. Job said, in Job chapter twenty-three verse ten, "*...when he hath tried me, I shall come*

*forth as gold*” (Job 23:10). And, the trials are for his purpose and in his time and when he’s finished you’re coming through.

## **VI. Know That You Should Be Joyfully Expectant**

I wish I had more time for that but let me just tell you of the sixth thing that you need to learn about this world. Learn this: that you are to be joyfully expectant. Notice verses eight and nine, *“Whom,”*—speaking of Jesus Christ—*“Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory”* (1 Peter 1:8). I’ve never seen Jesus and it may sound corny to you for me to say this, but I want to say it with all of my heart. I love Jesus Christ, with all of my heart and soul. I love Jesus Christ. I’ve never seen Him, but I love Him. And, if He were in the heart of Red China tonight I’d be making plans to get over there to see Him face to face. I’ve never seen Him, yet I rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. But, one of these days and perhaps tonight, I’m going to see Jesus face to face. And, friend, when I think about that I don’t want to see the Lord Jesus having betrayed Him, living and flirting with this old world. I want to be pure and clean when I meet the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says, *“...though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls”* (1 Peter 1:8–9). What does he mean? The word “end” means “goal.” He’s saying, “If you got the beginning you’re going to get the end.” And, the goal is when we see Jesus.

I read years ago about a man named William Montague Dyke. He was blinded when he was a ten-year-old boy. He belonged to English nobility. And, he was educated and cultured and wealthy but he was blind. He won the hand of one of England’s most beautiful and gracious ladies. And, they got engaged to be married. He had never seen her. And, they performed surgery on William Montague Dyke’s eyes and they thought that the surgery was successful, but they planned it this way; that he would not see his bride until the wedding. He would not see anything until the wedding—the bandages were still there: the pads over his eyes, the gauze around his head. And, at an appropriate time after the wedding music had been sung, after the attendants had come in, after this blind man, William Montague Dike, had come into the service, standing there, waiting for his bride to come down the isle, the physician came up and with his scissors snipped away the gauze, unwrapped that bandage, and removed those pads. And, this man who had been blind since he was a ten-year-old boy saw. And, the thing that he saw was the face of His bride coming down the isle, whom, not having seen, he loved. It will be that way when Jesus comes. The only difference is, dear friend, we are the ones who will have the blindness removed and we’ll see the Lord Jesus, our heavenly bridegroom when He comes. And, I can hardly wait to see Jesus. And, I know

I will. Soon, and very soon we're going to see the King.

## **Conclusion**

Friend, when you understand what you have in the Lord Jesus, this is what keeps you from worldliness. This world has nothing to offer. I'd sooner eat dirt than to willingly sin. I fall and I stumble and I fail and I'm ashamed of it. And, I tell you there is in my heart a love—a desire—to be more like the Lord Jesus Christ till He comes. And, oh dear friend, this vile world is no friend to grace and no friend of yours. I hope tonight you just understand what we have in the Lord Jesus.

# This World Is Not My Home

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** January 2, 1983

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 Peter 1:1–9

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.”*

1 PETER 1:3–4

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## Introduction

Turn, if you will, to the book of 1 Peter, and we’re starting a brand new series of messages on this brand new Sunday of a brand new year. And as I was reading and saturating my heart and life with 1 Peter, I saw that Peter was writing to people who were in trouble. And the word *trial* and the word *suffering* we see quite a bit here in the book of 1 Peter. And so I’m just going to entitle this entire series “Timeless Truth for

Tough Times”—“Timeless Truth for Tough Times.”

Now, God’s people in that day, and in this day, know, and will know, tough times. But there are some truths that were true for Peter and his people, and are true for Adrian and his people—just as true. They are timeless truths for tough times. And Christians have never known anything but tough times. And that’s a part of God’s plan. So I want to show you today as we study 1 Peter—and actually, we’re going to be in 1 Peter till we go all the way through; and, God willing, we’re going to look at every verse, so I want you to plan to be here for each one of these messages and not to miss a one; you’ve started a New Year right—and I want, when the year comes to a close, for you to say, “I was in God’s house on God’s day every day of that year, 1983, and I’m going to let God’s truths permeate my heart and my life.” “Timeless Truth for Tough Times.”

And today, one of the great truths that I want you to learn, and I pray God the Holy Spirit will give me the ability to imprint indelibly upon your heart, is this: This world is not my home. And that’s the title of our message this morning: “This World Is Not My Home.” Now I want you to notice in 1 Peter 1:1: “*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.*” (1 Peter 1:1) God calls us here strangers, pilgrims, sojourners. This world is not my home. We sing that little chorus, “This world is not my home; I’m just a passing through. My treasure is laid up somewhere beyond the blue.” Not only are we strangers, not only are we pilgrims; but, friend, we are strangers, pilgrims, and sojourners in hostile territory, and we’re sailing through uncharted waters, and there’s danger lurking on every side. And so we need to learn that since we’re not of this world, but in this world, what our relationship to this world ought to be. And that’s what I’m going to be talking to you about in this first message entitled “This World Is Not My Home.”

## **I. We Were Selected Before the World**

Now, the first thing I want you to learn about those of us who are Christians is this: We were selected before the world. Notice in verse 2, a wonderful verse that talks to us about our salvation—look at it: “*Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.*” (1 Peter 1:2) And there you see the Holy Trinity working together for our salvation. Let me tell you what the Holy Trinity did: God the Father thought it. God the Spirit wrought it. And God the Son bought it.

Now I want you to see that right now as I tell you that the Lord selected us before the foundation of the world. Now, this word says that we are His elect. Do you see it there in verse 2? “*Elect according to the foreknowledge of God*”: that means that we are God’s special chosen ones. Friend, you are a wanted child. You didn’t just happen. You are not an accident. You’re not an afterthought. No, dear friend, before God ever made this

world, the Bible tells us in Ephesians 1:4, “*According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world...*” (Ephesians 1:4) Before God laid the foundations for this world; before God swung this planet into space; before God scooped out the seas and heaped up the mountains, and flung out the moon and the stars; before God set His mighty universe in orbit; before all of that, you were in the heart and mind of God. God has chosen you. How special you are to God!

Now you’re chosen of the Father. God the Father thought it. But God the Spirit wrought it. Look again: “*Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit.*” Now, don’t let that word *sanctification* scare you. It’s a big word, but it just simply means that He sought you and set you aside for a special purpose. To be *sanctified* means “to be set aside for a holy purpose.” God the Father sent His Spirit into the world, and the Spirit is selecting the chosen ones and sanctifying the chosen ones and just gathering them and setting them aside for a holy purpose. You see, we’re utterly dependent upon the Holy Spirit of God for our salvation. “*We love him, because he first loved us.*” (1 John 4:19) We seek Him because He first sought us. Thank God for the dear, precious Holy Spirit sent by the Father to sanctify us, to set us apart unto obedience.

Now, thus far, I’ve talked about God the Father choosing us, and God the Holy Spirit convicting us and setting us aside. And that sounds like we don’t have any part in it. But wait a minute. It says we’re sanctified “*unto obedience.*” There is divine sovereignty and there is human responsibility. And God’s divine sovereignty in choosing us does not negate or abrogate, nor do away with, our human responsibility. We must respond. And that tells me something else, dear friend: that if you want to be saved, you can be saved. Don’t get the idea that some are predestined for heaven and others are predestined for hell, and there’s nothing we can do about it. That is a perversion of the doctrine of God’s holy choosing and election. Look at it from the human side, and the Bible says, “*Whosoever will, may come.*” (Revelation 22:17) And the Bible says, “*The Lord is...not willing that any should perish.*” (2 Peter 3:9)

You say, “Friend, I don’t think I understand that.” Well, join the club. I don’t either. But I know this: that there is a human responsibility. And just as God has chosen me, I must say yes to Him, and I have the privilege. And I want to tell everybody who’s listening to me today, and anybody who’s listening to me today, if you want to be saved, you can. “*Whosoever will, may come.*” And when you come, even though God has chosen you, you do have a responsibility. You are sanctified unto obedience.

Now, salvation is free, but you must obey. Salvation is not by works; but if you are saved, you will work. You’re not saved by faith and works, but you’re saved by a faith that works—a faith that works: sanctified unto obedience. “*Faith without works is dead.*” (James 2:26) You say you have faith, and you don’t have works: you’re just fooling

yourself. Now you don't work in order to be saved; you work because you're saved.

*I will not work my soul to save,  
For that my Lord has done;  
But I will work like any slave,  
For the love of God's dear Son.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

So we are selected before the world. Look. God thought it. The Spirit wrought it. The Savior bought it.

Now he goes on in the last part of verse 2 to talk about the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ—the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. And now, Peter is drawing upon the Old Testament knowledge these people had, and in the Old Testament people were sprinkled with blood on three occasions.

#### **A. There Is Cleansing in the Blood**

First of all, when a leper had been cleansed of his leprosy. And leprosy is a type, a picture, of sin. And the leper, therefore, is a picture of the man with the leprosy of sin facing certain and sure and ignominious death. But in the Old Testament, by the mercy of God, miraculously—and that was the only way it could be done: miraculously—lepers were cleansed.

Now, when the leper was cleansed, the priest would go and examine him to make sure there was no leprosy. And then the priest would take two birds, two doves, and he would take the first dove and kill it over an earthen vessel. And that earthen vessel would be overflowing with running water—clear, sparkling water. And the blood would go down into that vessel and into that water of that slain bird. Then, the priest would take the other bird, the live bird, and plunge him into that earthen vessel until he was saturated with that blood and that water. And then, he would take him out and take him to an open field and release him, and that bird would fly away with the blood dripping from his wings. If he could sing, he'd be singing, "There's Power in the Blood," because he realized it was the other bird that died and not him, and he was set free. And the other bird took the death. The other bird shed his blood that he might be released.

And it speaks of "*the washing of water by the word,*" (Ephesians 5:26) and the water and the blood that cleanse us as we become heaven-bound. What a wonderful picture! And after the priest had done that, then he would take some of that same blood and he would sprinkle it upon that leper who had been cleansed from his leprosy.

#### **B. There Is Consecration in the Blood**

And so, the sprinkling of blood stands, number one, for cleansing. Then, again, there was a time of sprinkling of blood, and this was when the priest would be consecrated

into the priesthood. Aaron and his sons, who were priests of God—in the Old Testament, they had these priests, and an animal would be slain, and half of the blood would be placed upon the altar, and then the rest of it would be taken and sprinkled upon these priests to show that they were consecrated, set apart, to be priests. That also applies to us, because, dear friend, today, we are priests.

Now, some people get the idea that Baptists don't have priesthood. But we do. Have you ever seen a Baptist priest? You want to see one? Look right here. It doesn't make any difference how I wear my collar, either. Dr. Lee said, "You can back into it or walk into it: it doesn't make any difference." I am a priest of God. But so are you. And by His precious blood He has made us a kingdom of priests. (Exodus 19:6)

### **C. There Is Covenant in the Blood**

So, not only are we cleansed by the blood; we are consecrated by the blood. And, praise God, we can go to God for ourselves, because we are a kingdom of priests. But there was a third time when the blood was sprinkled: when God made a covenant with His people. Moses read the terms of that covenant to his people. And after he read the terms of that covenant, and the people agreed to that covenant, then, again, an ox was slain. The blood was placed upon the altar, part of it, and the rest of it was taken and sprinkled upon the people as to ratify and confirm the covenant—a covenant of blood, a blood covenant.

Now, let me tell you what's in the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ therefore for you and for me. There's cleansing in that blood. There's consecration in that blood. There is a commitment to a covenant in that blood. And we have an everlasting covenant with our God through the blood. We've been made priests through the blood. We've been cleansed through the blood. And all of this was in the heart and mind of God before He ever made this world. Hallelujah! We were not an afterthought, not an accident. And, friend, don't get too attached to this world, because I want to tell you, before this world was ever created, you were chosen of God, selected before the world.

## **II. We Are Scattered Through the World**

The second thing: You are scattered through the world. Look, if you will, in verse 1. Notice what he says. "*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.*" (1 Peter 1:1)

### **A. We Are Scattered as Strangers**

Scattered: you're scattered as strangers. In the year 79, Nero burned portions of the city of Rome. He was an urban planner. He wanted to rebuild Rome. And how was he going to get rid of the slums? Well, he said, "Well, I'll just set them on fire." So he had some henchmen to burn the city. And, of course, the people rebelled against it, more so

than he thought, and the backlash was so great that he needed a scapegoat. He needed someone to blame. And he looked around, and there was strange new sect of people called Christians. And those Christians were often talking about a baptism of fire and a judgment of fire. And besides that, they were strange people. They met together and some people said they drank blood and ate flesh—talking about the Lord’s Supper. They didn’t understand what they were doing. They said, “They’re cannibals. And they’re pyromaniacs, always talking about fire. They’re the ones who did it.”

And persecution fell upon these Christians. History tells us that Nero had some of them dipped in oil, tied to stakes, and set on fire; and he used them as human candles to light his banquet halls and his gardens—burning Christians. Many of them were crucified. Some of them had animal skins tied to them, and they were hunted by packs of dogs and finally run through with arrows and spears, swords. They were destitute, wandered throughout the whole world. They were strangers in this world. They were scattered. They were persecuted.

### **B. We Are Scattered as Seeds**

Scattered as strangers, but also scattered as seeds. Now, the word here—look at it—*scattered*—do you see it there in verse 1?—is the word that literally means “to sow through.” And the idea is the sowing of seeds, the *diaspora*—spores being seeds. That is, we are seeds. And when the Lord scattered, when Nero and the early people persecuted the church and scattered the church, they thought that they would stamp the church out. But all they did was to spread the church out. And in trying to stamp out the embers, they just scattered the fire. And those Christians were like seeds.

You might want to put in your margin Acts 8:4. And the Bible says, “*They that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word,*” amen? (Acts 8:4) It was not God’s will that the seed rot in the barn, and it is not God’s will that the seed rot in the church. And so, what the devil thought he was doing to stop the church only spread the church. And they were scattered throughout all that part of the world. And everywhere they went, a little colony of heaven went, and the gospel went with them.

Friend, let me tell you something. You have been saved out of this world, sent back into this world to witness to this world, and that’s the only business in the world you have in the world. God saved you out and sent you back to tell this world that Jesus saves. And He is scattering you as precious seed. You are an ambassador upon foreign soil, and you are an ambassador for your King.

### **C. We Are Scattered as Saints**

But not only were they scattered as strangers, and scattered as seed; friend, they were scattered as saints. He calls them in verse 2 “sanctified by the Spirit.” (1 Peter 2:1) And we’re to be in the world, but we’re not of the world, and we’re not to settle down in

this world. You are a foreigner in a native land, and you're to march to the beat of a different drummer. And don't you settle down in this world. It's not your home. You're just passing through. And you ought to pray, "Lord, if I'm building a nest, put a thorn in it." Don't you settle down here. If you do, you're going to get yourself in big trouble.

As a matter of fact, you're going to have mental problems if you try to settle down in this world. Let me show you a verse. Look in 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 11: "*Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.*" (1 Peter 2:11) Now you're a pilgrim, you're a stranger; you don't belong to this world. The fleshly lusts belong to this world. You feed on them, you feast on them: you're going to get sick. They say overseas, "Don't drink the water. You're not acclimated to that. Your stomach is acclimated to something else." Now when God saves you, God makes you a citizen of heaven. Now, get this down—get it big; get it plain; get it straight: *We are not citizens of earth trying to get to heaven; we are citizens of heaven sojourning on earth.* Do you understand that? We are citizens of heaven. Already we are strangers, pilgrims, foreigners, sojourners in a strange land.

Now he says, "As pilgrims, as sojourners, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." Now, look at that word *soul*. The Greek word for "soul" is *psuche*. We translate it "psyche." Let's put it this way: "Steer clear of things of this world, which war against your psyche." What is your psyche? Your mind, your emotion, your will—the psychological part of you. If you as a Christian settle down in this world, dabble in this world, love this world, delight yourself in this world, and yet your citizenship is in heaven, you're going to find yourself with a form of spiritual schizophrenia. You're going to have one foot in the world and one foot in heaven—just enough religion to make you miserable in the world, and just enough of the world to make you miserable in your spiritual life—and you're going to be divided right down the middle. And these things war against the soul.

Friend, do you want peace with God? Do you want joy this year? Do you want victory? Then let go of this world with both hands and take hold of our Lord with both hands. Don't be one of these kinds of people: so many—so many—who fail to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. If it's worth anything, it's worth everything. Make up your mind, dear friend, that this world is not your home—you're just passing through. Don't be a sick saint and a spiritual neurotic, letting these things war against your soul, eating dainties in a foreign land that you have no business eating.

### **III. We Are Secure from the World**

Now, the third thing: Not only are the saints selected before the world, not only are they strangers through the world; but they are secure from the world. Remember what Jesus prayed in John 17? He said, "Father, I don't pray that you take them out of the world,

but that I pray that you will keep them from the world.” (John 17:15) And how does He do it? Well, look in verse 3: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope”*—that is, a living assurance—*“by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”* (1 Peter 1:3) And verse 3 speaks eloquently and clearly about our assurance.

### **A. Our Salvation Is Rooted in Mercy**

Now, the first thing I want you to see about our assurance and this wonderful salvation is that it is rooted in mercy. Look. He says *“according to his abundant mercy.”* Now, there are some people who feel that you can lose your salvation once you have it. Well, friend, let me tell you something. Whether or not you can lose it depends on how you got it. If you got it by good works, then you could lose it by bad works. But how did you receive it? By grace. And if it is by grace, then if you’re saved by grace, you’re kept by grace. And salvation is not rooted in the merit of man, but in the mercy of God—*“according to his abundant mercy”*—and that which is the gift of mercy can never be taken away by the lack of merit. You didn’t merit it in the first place, and you never will merit it.

### **B. Our Salvation Results in a Birth**

Listen. It is rooted in mercy. But, secondly, it results in a birth. Look at it again: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again.”* (1 Peter 1:3) Now, that phrase *“begotten us again”* means we are born again. We are begotten of the Father. It’s in the aorist tense. That means it happened once for all and it can’t happen again. That is, you can only be born again one time, just like you can only be born physically one time.

Have you ever known anybody who was born physically twice? Of course not! Have you ever known anybody who was saved twice? You might know some people who thought they were saved twice, but no one has ever been saved twice. Nowhere in the Bible will you ever find a record of anyone having been saved twice. See if you can find it and bring it to me and make a monkey out of me. You can’t find it. It’s not there. Dear friend, listen. Just as you can only be saved once physically, you can only be saved once spiritually. It is one salvation—once for all. And when you’re born again, you are born again forever.

Now, you say, “But, Brother Rogers, you Baptists believe that you’re once saved, always saved. Man, if I believed that, I’d get saved, and sin all I want to.” Friend, I sin all I want to. I don’t want to. Let me tell you something: If the only thing that keeps you from sinning is fear of losing your salvation, I doubt you’ve ever been saved. Let me say that again: If the only thing that keeps you from sinning is fear of losing your salvation, I doubt that you have ever been saved. The Bible says that we’re born again. That

means we're "*partakers*"—Peter's going to tell us later—"*of the divine nature.*" (2 Peter 1:4) I don't want to sin. I'd be happy never to sin again. And if you still want to sin, you need to be saved; you've never been saved.

"Well," you say, "are you trying to tell me, Mr. Rogers, you don't sin anymore?" No, I'm not trying to tell you that. But I'll tell you this: Before I was saved, I was running to sin. Now I'm running from it. I may slip, I may fall; but I tell you, when I was saved, I was begotten again. I became a partaker of the divine nature. Oh, yes, there are temptations—certainly; but there is in the real me, in the innermost part of my heart, a desire to live right, and to live for Jesus Christ, and to live pure and clean, because I've been made a partaker of the divine nature.

### C. Our Salvation Rests in a Resurrection

And therefore I am secure not only because it is rooted in mercy, but it results in a birth. And it rests in a resurrection. Go on and look again—look at it again in verse 3: "*[He] hath begotten us again unto a [living] hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*" (1 Peter 1:3) Friend, because He lives, I live. And because I'm a part of Him, and He can never die, I can never die. I am not just looking at Jesus; I am a part of Jesus. I'm a part of His body raised up. And what is He doing, the living Lord? The Bible says in Hebrews 7:25, "He ever lives to make intercession for us." (Hebrews 7:25) I'll get worried about losing my salvation when Jesus in glory dies. When He dies, then I'll be concerned about losing my salvation. You say, "He won't die." You're absolutely right! "He ever lives"—"He ever lives"—"to make intercession for us." And I want to tell you, dear friend, we are secure from this world because our salvation is rooted in mercy, our salvation results in a birth, and our salvation rests in a resurrection. It's a wonderful salvation.

Thank God for the keeping power of our Lord. Look in verse 5. He speaks of those of us "*who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation*"—"kept by the power of God." (1 Peter 1:5) This word *kept* is a military word. It literally means "garrisoned about," as you would put soldiers outside a fort. And then, look at the phrase "*kept by the power of God.*" It literally says—the preposition may be translated—"kept in the power of God." That is, think of the power of God as a fortress, and you're on the inside, amen? You see, so many times we have the idea, "Well, these people, you know, we keep ourselves safe." Friend, no! He keeps us.

A daddy was taking his little boy across the street. There was busy traffic. And the father said, "Son, hold on." And so, the son got hold of his daddy's big finger. You know how little boys do? He was just a little tyke, just learning how to walk. And he took his daddy's finger, and they started to cross the street when the light changed; and, sure enough, the traffic came. This time the father took the finger out of the little boy's hand

and reached down and got that whole chubby little fist in his father's strong hand and almost lifted the little boy across the street till the top of his toes were just dragging this way across the street as he just pulled him right on across. When they got to the other side, the little boy said, "I held on, Daddy."

Well, friend, I want to tell you something: He holds us. We are in His hand. "*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD... Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.*" (Psalm 37:23–24)

#### **IV. We Are Satisfied Without This World**

And so, while we're in this world, we, dear friend, were selected before the world. We're scattered through the world. We are saved from the world. But let me show you something else as we continue to look: We, dear friend, are satisfied without this world. Look in verse 4—what are we saved to? "*To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.*" (1 Peter 1:4) Now, friend, you don't have to say it takes this world to satisfy me. I've got something better to satisfy me: I have an inheritance. You don't have to worry and fret because somebody else has a bigger house, a nicer car, finer clothes, than you have. You have something they don't have if you're a brother in the Lord Jesus Christ, if you're a sister in Christ.

Look at our inheritance. You say, "I'll never get an inheritance." You already have one. One man was sitting on a street corner weeping and crying. Someone said, "Why are you crying?" He said, "Haven't you read? Rockefeller died." He said, "Well, why are you crying? You're no kin of his." He said, "That's why I'm crying."

Friend, I want to tell you, you do have an inheritance. Look at it: "*To an inheritance...*"—notice how he describes your inheritance. First of all, it is incorruptible. That means it's faultless. It can't corrupt. The foul breath of decay, the gnawing tooth of time, cannot take it away. But not only is it incorruptible; look at it again—it is undefiled. Not only is it faultless; it is flawless. No high-powered lawyer is going to find a flaw in the deed. You can read your title clear.

When Jesus Christ died upon the cross for you, He said from that cross, "*It is finished.*" (John 19:30) And that word means "paid in full." And the Bible says He is both just and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus. (Romans 3:26) The righteousness of God has been perfectly, completely, satisfied by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. And you can read your title clear. It is faultless. It is flawless. And it is fadeless. It "*fadeth not away.*" (1 Peter 1:4) I want to tell you, dear friend, inflation is not going to get it. Lawyers' fees are not going to take it. Bank fees are not going to get it. Inflation will not diminish it. Thieves cannot steal it. You have an inheritance that is faultless, that is flawless, that is fadeless, and it is reserved in heaven for you.

Your inheritance is not heaven. Heaven is the safety deposit box. It is reserved in

heaven for you. What is your inheritance that is in heaven? It is Jesus Christ Himself. He is your inheritance. Let me give you a verse of Scripture in Ezekiel 44:28. God is speaking of the Levites, and this is what God says, “*I am their inheritance...*”—to whom? The priests. Didn’t we say we were priests?—“*I am their inheritance: and ye shall give them no possession in Israel: I am their possession.*” (Ezekiel 44:28)

Friend, if we only understood what we have in Jesus, we wouldn’t be jealous of anybody. I mean, listen. You don’t need anything if you have everything, and Christ is all. You say, “That’s rhetoric.” Friend, that is truth. In Him, you’re complete. (Colossians 2:10) And our God shall supply your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19) And He is our inheritance. And that inheritance is kept for us, and we are kept for it. And so we, dear friend, are satisfied without the world as we see Jesus and the things of this world grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.

I’m not saying it’s wrong to eat or have clothes or enjoy a certain amount of pleasure and entertainment; but I’m saying, dear friend, that these things will never satisfy the deepest longing of your soul. Only in Jesus will you be satisfied.

*Friends all around me are trying to find  
What the heart yearns for, by sin undermined;  
I have the secret, I know where ’tis found:  
Only true pleasures in Jesus abound.*

...

*Jesus is all this poor world needs today.  
Blindly they strive, for sin darkens their way.  
O to draw back the grim curtains of night,  
One glimpse of Jesus and all will be bright!*

—HARRY D. LOES

We’re satisfied without this world.

## **V. We May Be Sorrowful in This World**

Now, the next thing I want you to notice: We may be sorrowful in this world. I’m not giving you a contract here with fine print and not reading it to you. Listen again as we continue to read in verse 6. He speaks of our inheritance and he talks about our rejoicing in that. And well we might. He says, “*Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.*” (1 Peter 1:6) That phrase “*manifold temptations*” means “multicolored trials.” The word *manifold* here is really “variegated”—all kinds of hues, all kinds of temptations. And the word *temptation* here does not mean a solicitation to do evil, but it means a trial, a test. And he goes on to explain that in verse 7: “*That the trial of your faith, being much more*

*precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 1:7)*

Now, friend, you’re going to know some testings. You’re going to know some trouble. You’re going to know some heartache, because you’re in this old world and you’re a twice-born man in a world of once-born men. And you’re going to be going against the tide. And you’re going to suffer persecution. And you’re going to suffer trials. And then, just because you’re a part of the nature that’s been cursed, you’re going to feel pain and sorrow.

### **A. The Rigors of It**

Think of the rigors of it. He speaks of *“manifold temptations.”* He speaks of heaviness. Just the time you think that nothing else can come, something else does come. And there are some who are sitting here today—and I’m looking at them, and I know them. I’m preaching this morning to one man who has just laid aside his wife in the grave—went through the holidays without his beloved spouse by his side. I’m looking at another man here today whose precious wife is right now at the point of death. I’m talking to some of you who have suffered the loss of loved ones. I’m talking to some who have deep sicknesses in your heart and in your life. I’m talking to some, I know, who are without a job, who’ve known what it’s been all of their lives to have a job, and to have a good job, and they’re without a job at this moment—some of them who thought their financial future was fairly well written out. The rigors of it.

### **B. The Restraint of It**

But I want you to notice something else: the restraint of it. He says, *“if need be”*—*“for a season.”* (1 Peter 1:6) If God doesn’t cause it, God controls it. And God knows what you need, and God knows how long you need it, and you’re in it for God’s time and for God’s purpose. And where man rules, God overrules.

### **C. The Result of It**

But I want you to notice not only the rigors of it. I want you to notice not only the restraint of it. I want you to notice the result of it. It’s like gold being put in a furnace and tried by fire. In the Middle East, a goldsmith would take that gold that would have that dross and that impurity, and he would put it in his crucible. And he puts the flame under it, and he puts the fire under it, and it begins to turn molten and it begins to bubble, and he skims that impurity off the top. And they say that he knows when the gold is pure when he can see his reflection in it.

And that’s what our Lord is doing: stamping His image upon you. And when He can see His likeness reproduced in your life, He’ll know that you have become gold fit for His use and for His glory. Old Job, who went through so many trials, said, *“When he*

*hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*” (Job 23:10) You say, “But the fire is hot.” Yes, but He controls it—He controls it! He knows what He’s doing. Let me tell you something: No jeweler was more careful with his gold than the Father is with His children. He knows what He’s doing. He knows! You say, “But what about those things He’s burning out of my life?” You don’t need them.

Do you remember the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego when they went into that fiery furnace? And in that fiery furnace, the king came and he looked down there. He thought he was going to consume them with the fire. But as he looked down there, he said, “I put three men in the fire, and there are four in there. And one is like to the Son of God.” (Daniel 3:24–25) Christ is never closer to you, my friend, than when you’re in the fire. And when they came out of the fire, the Bible says that not even the smell of smoke was in their clothes. (Daniel 3:27) I wish I could say that when I go to the barbershop or get on an airplane. Not even the smell of smoke was in their clothes. But their bonds were no longer on them.

Let me tell you something, friend. The only thing that fire burned off is what the world put on them—that’s all. That’s all the fire burned off is what the world put on them. And that’s what God is doing. He’s just burning out that dross. He’s just taking those things that the world has put on you and He’s burning them out.

## **VI. We Will Be Saved out of the World**

What is a Christian? A Christian is someone selected before the world. He’s someone scattered through the world. He’s somebody secured from the world. He’s somebody satisfied without the world. He’s somebody who may suffer in the world. But there’s one other thing and we’ll be finished: A Christian is somebody who will be saved out of the world. Look, if you will, now in verses 7 and following. He says, *“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found”*—now, watch it—*“unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:”*—that’s what Nancy was singing about: “Glory, glory, what if it were today?” And then he speaks of this Jesus—*“whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:”*—now, watch this next verse—*“receiving the end of your faith.”* (1 Peter 1:7–9)

Now, the word *end* here means “the destination, the goal toward which you are heading.” You receive that. What is the destination? What is the end of your faith? When we see Him face to face. That’s what it’s all about: to see Him, to know Him, to be one with Him. We are traveling toward that destination. And, friend, if you get the beginning, you’re going to get the end. And what is that? When He comes at His glorious appearing and we’re caught up and taken out of this world. And the One that we’ve not seen yet we love, we’re going to see face to face. And, friend, it will be worth

it all when we see Him—saved out of this world to behold our Lord face to face. I've never seen Him, but I love Him. And one day—and as Nancy sang, “What if it were today?”—we'll see Him.

I read a story a long time ago about a man named William Montagu Dyke. This man was blinded at the age of ten through an accident, but he was handsome, witty, charming, and wealthy. He fell in love with one of England's most beautiful girls—though, of course, he'd never seen her with his eyes. He loved her, having not seen her. And they were to get married. But before the wedding, Dyke had a very special doctor who dealt with his blindness, and by the power of medicine and surgery—I don't know whether it was surgery or not, but through that type of treatment, whatever he received—his blindness was healed. But he had not yet seen. The bandages were still on his eyes. And they waited till a very exciting moment: the wedding.

And he was there at the altar, and his bride was coming down the aisle escorted on the arm of her father, who was an admiral in the English navy, Admiral Cave. And as they came down the aisle, the doctor snipped away the gauze and removed the bandages. He blinked and looked, and there was his bride, the first time he'd seen her. And, you know, all brides are beautiful. I mean, I've never seen one that wasn't beautiful. I've seen some that just did make it, but I have never seen one that wasn't beautiful. But this one was a beautiful, beautiful bride—I mean, she was gorgeous! And he saw her for the first time. And his eyes beheld her, the first time to see since ten years of age. And as they drew close together, he said, “At last.” And she said, “Yes, my beloved: at last.”

Now, friend, it will be that way when we see Jesus. But you just have to reverse it. You see, it's the bride who has not yet seen the groom. But one of these days the scales will fall from our eyes, and the Lord will come, and Him whom having not seen we love, we will see, and we will receive the end of our faith, that fullness of salvation, when we see Christ face to face.

## **Conclusion**

And so, let me give you a truth, a timeless truth for troubled times, and it is this: This world is not our home. And don't try to build a nest down here. God's got something far better for us.

# Turning Tears into Telescopes

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** January 9, 1983

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 Peter 1:9–13

*“Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”*

1 PETER 1:9

## Outline

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- I. Salvation Is the Subject of Ancient Contemplation
- II. Salvation Is the Subject of Anointed Proclamation
- III. Salvation Is the Subject of Angelic Fascination
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Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles today and turn to 1 Peter chapter 1. And we're continuing a brand series that we've begun entitled "Timeless Truths for Tough Times." And these are tough times. You say, "Tell me about it, preacher." Well, they are. But times have always been tough. As a matter of fact, since the Garden of Eden, mankind has known what the Bible would describe as sorrow, heartache, tribulation and trials—testings. Way back in the Garden of Eden God said to mankind, "*Cursed is the ground for thy sake...thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee.*" (Genesis 3:17–18) And God said to man, "From the sweat of your face you're going to earn your bread and make your living." (Genesis 3:19) And those tough times were true in the days of the apostles; they're going to be true in these last days. But God has given us some timeless truths for tough times.

Now, last week, the timeless truth was this: This world is not my home. Today, that timeless truth is this: You can turn your tears into telescopes. We're going to be talking about that today: "Turning Tears into Telescopes." Now, what I mean by that is bringing your sorrows into focus and bringing your heartaches into focus in such a way as you can see beyond the present and into the future and see what God has in store for you. And your tears today can become telescopes to make the future all the brighter and all the more meaningful.

Now I want us to begin reading here in verse 9—1 Peter 1:9: "*Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.*" Underscore the word salvation. Verse 10:

*“Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you.”* (1 Peter 1:9–10) And then, if you would, go back and look at verse 5. He speaks of those *“who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”* (1 Peter 1:5)

Now, there’s one key word that has come up in all of those verses that I’ve just read—and it is the word *salvation*. My friend, your need, my need, our need, anybody’s need, who does not have it, is salvation—old-fashioned, know-so salvation. And we don’t have to be ashamed of speaking about salvation, because it is the theme of the Bible. And any church that does not major on salvation is missing the Bible message.

I heard of a little lady from the Midwest who was traveling with a tour group. And they were in England and they were visiting all of the historical sights. And they went into that beautiful and gorgeous Westminster Abbey, there where the elite of England worshipped and there where the honored of England lie buried. And the guide was showing them the magnificent stained glass; he was showing them the stately columns, and they were going and reading the epitaphs on the tombstones and the markers of the illustrious dead who were buried there. And the guide was intoning on and on and on about the glorious history in that place. Then finally he stopped for questions, and he said, “Are there any questions?” And this little old lady, with her shawl on her shoulders, lifted her little hand and said, “Yes, I’d like to ask a question: When was the last time anyone was saved here?” Amen?

Now, that’s a good question to ask about any church: “When was the last time anybody was saved here?” *“The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”* (Luke 19:10) And so, a timeless truth for tough times is to help you to understand the nature of your salvation; and when you do, to see how that salvation can turn your tears into telescopes.

## **I. Salvation Is the Subject of Ancient Contemplation**

Now, there are four things I want you to learn about this wonderful salvation that we have, the first of which is this: It is the subject of ancient contemplation. Look, if you will again, in verses 10 and 11: *“Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified”—watch it now—“beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.”* (1 Peter 1:10–11)

Centuries and centuries before Jesus Christ was born, the Old Testament prophets spoke and wrote and prophesied that Jesus Christ was coming into the world. They preached, they taught, they prophesied the sufferings of Christ, the glory of Christ, and the grace of Christ in the Old Testament. You know, sometimes people have an idea

that people in the Old Testament were saved differently than people in the New Testament. They say, “Well, we’re saved today by Jesus. Who saved those folks back yonder?” Friend, if they were saved, they were saved by Jesus, too. No one has ever been saved by anyone but Jesus, and by any other method than by grace. And the Bible says that these people ahead of time saw the sufferings of Christ—that is, His death on the cross. They saw the glory of Christ—that is, His resurrection, His ascension, His reign, His return. They saw it.

Well, you say, “How did they know? Jesus had not yet come.” But the Bible says the Spirit of Christ was in them. Do you see it? It’s very clear. Look in verse 11. He says, *“Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.”* That is, Jesus was the One who told them He was coming. It was the Spirit of Christ that was in them that enabled them to give the message that they gave so long ago.

You know, sometimes the critics of Christianity say, “Well, Jesus wasn’t really the Messiah: all He did was to arrange to fulfill the prophecies”—that is, He was familiar with the prophecies, and so He just arranged His life so His life would fulfill those prophecies. Well, friend, I want to tell you, He did arrange it. He really did. The only thing is, He arranged it centuries before He was ever born.

Listen. He arranged to be born in Bethlehem. You think you could arrange where you were going to be born? He arranged to be born in Bethlehem, according to Micah the prophet. (Micah 5:2) He arranged the details of His life and His peasant background and the humiliation He would suffer, according to Isaiah the fifty-third chapter. (Isaiah 53) He arranged that He would be betrayed and sold for thirty pieces of silver before it ever happened—Zechariah the eleventh chapter. (Zechariah 11:12–13) He arranged, dear friend, that He would be crucified by driving nails in His hands and His feet in Psalm 22 before crucifixion was ever even known as a means of capital punishment. (Psalm 22:16) He arranged for that to happen. He arranged that He would be crucified between two thieves, according to Isaiah 53. (Isaiah 53:12) He arranged also that He would be buried in a rich man’s tomb in Isaiah chapter 53 before it ever happened and centuries before He came into this world. (Isaiah 53:9) Friend, I want you to know He arranged that He would be raised from the dead the third day and that He would be followed by millions who with no hope of material gain and at cost of their own lives would set out to convince others that He had been raised from the dead because they themselves were so convinced. What a marvelous, marvelous arrangement! Yes, He arranged it all centuries before it ever happened.

The Bible says the Spirit of Christ was in them and that Spirit, looking forward, spoke of the sufferings and the glory that should come. This is a marvelous passage on the

inspiration of the Scriptures. And as we study 1 Peter, we're going to find out a lot about the inspiration of the Scriptures. But let me tell you how inspired these prophets were. Peter says in 2 Peter chapter 1 and verse 21 that, *"Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."* (2 Peter 1:21) And that word *moved* means as they were "borne along" by the Holy Spirit. It's actually a word for the moving of a ship when the wind gets in its sails. Peter knew that these Old Testament prophets had their sails up. And the Spirit of God was moving them along, just like a wind drives a sailboat out on the sea. And what a marvelous picture of inspiration—that the Spirit of Christ was in the men who wrote the Old Testament!

Now, dear friend, not only did the Spirit of God give it to them, but the Spirit of God helped them to understand it. Notice also in verse 10: *"Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."* (1 Peter 1:10–11) Do you know what that means in plain English? It means that after they wrote it, they had to go back and study it to see what it meant. Isn't that amazing? They wrote it. And after they wrote it, then they started to search it and inquire and to say, "What does this mean?"

Friend, it was so inspired of God that they themselves many times did not even understand the full implication of what they themselves had written. And even the ones who wrote it could not understand it unless the Holy Spirit showed them. Much less can you understand the Word of God unless you search the Scriptures. The Bible says that they searched. Notice in verse 11 they searched, and then the Bible says that to them *"it was revealed"* in verse 12. (1 Peter 1:12) Do you see it? God gave it. Verse 11: The Spirit of Christ was in them. They searched it. Verse 12: It was revealed unto them.

Now, do you want to know truth? Friend, number one: You must believe that God gave it. Number two: You're going to have to get into it and you're going to have to search it. Number three: God the Holy Spirit is going to have to illumine you and turn the light on in your soul. Jesus Christ said in John the fifth chapter that you are to search the Scriptures, for they testify of Him. (John 5:39) And just as these Old Testament prophets contemplated the Scriptures, how much more today should we search and contemplate the Word of God!

Now, let me just say this salvation is so wonderful because it's all of grace. Now, notice what those Old Testament prophets were talking about. The Bible says in verse 10—listen—*"Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the"*—what's that next word?—*"grace that should come unto you."* (1 Peter 1:10) Don't you love the word *grace*? One of the most beautiful words in all of the Bible! Friend, *"For by grace are ye saved."* (Ephesians 2:8)

Now, sometimes people don't understand what grace is. Grace is the unmerited love and favor of God that is given to undeserving, hell-bound sinners. There are three key words in God's dealing with man: One is *justice*. The other is *mercy*. The third is *grace*. *Justice* is God giving us what we deserve. Don't ask for justice. *Mercy* is God not giving us what we deserve. But *grace* is God giving us what we don't deserve. Isn't that wonderful? When God gives us His grace, that means by His grace He makes us righteous. We don't deserve that, but that's what saves us. Salvation is not in the merit of man, but in the mercy and grace of God.

So, the first thing I want you to see about this salvation that makes it so wonderful: It was the subject of ancient contemplation. The Holy Spirit in the heart and mind and bosom of these prophets so long ago caused them to testify of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.

## **II. Salvation Is the Subject of Anointed Proclamation**

Now, the second thing I want you to notice: Not only is it the subject of ancient contemplation, but it is also the subject of anointed proclamation. Now, notice verse 12: *"Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven."* (1 Peter 1:12) And, friend, that's the way the gospel is always to be preached: with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. You see, this salvation, which is the subject of ancient contemplation needs to be the subject of anointed proclamation.

Oh, how dependent I am today as I stand before you to preach the gospel! I dare not preach it—yea, I cannot preach it in effectiveness—unless I have that anointing in my life. Please, God, anoint me even now as I try to make plain to these people how wonderful this gospel is! If we just knew how dependent we are upon the Holy Spirit of God! Remember last week: We are sanctified by the Spirit. We're set aside by the Spirit. And then the preacher is anointed by the Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit of God works in your heart to set you aside for salvation, and when the Holy Spirit of God works in my heart to preach this salvation, a divine miracle takes place.

In a little country church a preacher asked his deacon to dismiss in prayer. And there were very few people there, but the preacher prayed a fine prayer. But in the midst of that prayer, he said, "And, Lord, *unctionize* our pastor." Then he prayed that a couple of more times: "Lord, *unctionize* our pastor." Well, the pastor met the deacon at the door and said, "Deacon, that seemed to be a good prayer you prayed, but I want to ask you a question: What does that word *unctionize* mean, anyway?" Well, the old deacon scratched his head and he said, "Rev, I don't know rightly what it does mean. But whatever it means, you *ain't* got it."

Now I think—and this is true in a lot of churches and a lot of pulpits or whatever it is—there are some preachers who don't have it. And therefore, the Word of God, though it may be true, and though it may be subject of ancient contemplation, is not the subject of anointed proclamation. *The Word of God is to be preached by the man of God presenting the Christ of God in the Spirit of God, and then there will be glory to God, and people who will be saved.*

Dwight L. Moody was the Billy Graham of his day and the Billy Sunday of his day. God used Moody. Moody was saved when he was 19. And he started working and soul winning and building a church and a Sunday School, and he did a good job. And he had a good work, even what some would call a great work, there in Chicago. But there were two ladies in his congregation who were praying for him, and they would often see him and say, "Mr. Moody, we're praying for you"—"Mr. Moody, we're praying for you." After a while, he was a little curious, and so he asked them—he said, "Would you mind telling me what you're praying about?" They said, "We are praying that you will be anointed with power to preach the Word." And at first he was chagrined and disturbed, and maybe a little hurt by it, and his thought was: "Why don't they pray for someone else? I mean, it's obvious God is blessing my ministry. I mean, look at the crowds and people who are being saved." But they said, "Mr. Moody, we're praying for you"—and they kept on praying.

Then, that Chicago fire came and the tragedy in Chicago, and Moody left Chicago and went to New York City and was walking the streets of New York City trying to raise money for the people in Chicago who were suffering because of the fire. And he later testified that God met him on the streets of New York in such a dramatic and unusual way that he was overcome with the sense of the presence of God. The hand of God was so heavy upon him that he had to go to a friend's home and borrow a room to be alone with God. And there alone with God, he had an experience with God—not speaking in tongues, not seeing visions, but the reality of God and an anointing of God upon his life. Moody spoke very little about it, but enough for us to know that something marvelous happened in that room. And from that time on, there was a distinct dimension and difference in Moody's life. And it said of this man that he took two continents and shook them for Jesus Christ.

And I want to tell you something: If any two of you want to get together and start praying for me, it's all right. I want you to do that. I want you to pray that this pastor will have that anointing of God on his life, and I want you to pray that that anointing will be on your life and upon our lives—that this gospel, which is the subject of ancient contemplation, will also be the subject of anointed proclamation. We've sung it: "Brethren, we have met to worship and adore the Lord our God. But all is vain unless the Spirit of the Holy One comes down." Let's pray this year that God will anoint this

church and that there will be something here absolutely, totally, inexplicable apart from the power of God and the anointing of God that comes upon us.

### **III. Salvation Is the Subject of Angelic Fascination**

Now, the third thing I want you to notice about his gospel: It is also the subject of angelic fascination. Look in verse 12—the last part of verse 12: “...*which things the angels desire to look into.*” (1 Peter 1:12) Did you know today that the angels are fascinated with salvation? They desire to understand it. They’re looking into it. This word *look into* is a word that means “to stoop down and to look carefully,” like if you’re walking along the ground and you were to see a beautiful flower on the ground and you might just bend over to look at it and to observe it. It’s the word that’s used of Simon Peter when Simon Peter coming to the empty tomb after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Bible says he knelt down and looked in. (John 20:5) Can you imagine how intensely and intently that he must have looked into that tomb as he peered into the darkness and saw that the body of Jesus was no longer there? That’s the way the angels today are gazing upon, scrutinizing, examining our salvation.

Did you know that the angels are very much involved in everything that God is doing and in God’s great plan of salvation? Do you believe in angels? I hope you do. The Bible has much to say about angels. The book of Job tells us that the morning stars sang together when God created the world. (Job 38:7) That is, the angels sang in jubilation as God created this vast universe. But their song was soon silent, because man sinned and fell in the Garden of Eden. The angels watched, I’m certain, for the sure judgment of God.

Imagine God calling a council in eternity’s halls and saying to the angels, “My creation is ruined. Man is a sinner and fallen. What shall I do?” I can imagine the angels saying, “Holy Father, they must be judged.” But I can imagine God the Father saying, “No, they shall be redeemed.” And the angels are thinking, “How can a holy God punish sin and still redeem them? How?” And they come to the portals of heaven and peer over to see as God begins to unfold the drama of redemption.

And He sends His Old Testament prophets, and they begin to prophesy of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that shall follow. And then, the Old Testament Levitical system brings those sacrificial animals, and thousands upon thousands upon thousands of lambs and rams and doves are sacrificed, and rivers of blood run over the pages of the Old Testament. And the conditioning of man is coming as man’s mind is being conditioned that sin means death and that blood must be shed. And then, in the fullness of time, God says to one of these angels, “Gabriel, you see that little virgin girl? You go down there and tell her what I tell you to tell her.”

And Gabriel goes and speaks to Mary and tells Mary that she’s going to be the

mother of the Messiah. And at that time a multitude of other angels began to tune their harps and to practice for the Hallelujah Chorus that they were going to sing at His birth. Nine months they practiced. And then, the Messiah is born of a virgin.

The angels watch with wonder and bewilderment as God and man in one person walked the earth. They see Him in the carpenter's shop. They see Him as He grows to manhood. They watch Him as He's abused and ridiculed, as He suffers the ignominious false trial. They watch Him as He is made a sport of and as they spit in His face as they plucked the beard from His cheek, as they crown Him with a crown of thorns, put a purple robe unto His back, put a wilted reed in His hand. They watch Him as He's shoved from one person to another, blindfolded, as they make sport of Him.

Finally, they watch Him as He's nailed with searing nails to that hellish cross and is suspended between heaven and earth. They watch. Righteous indignation rises up in their hearts and minds. They unsheathe their swords ready to go to the Son of God. Jesus said, "Do you not think that I could call and the Father would send twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:53)

*He could have called ten thousand angels  
To destroy the world and set Him free.  
He could have called ten thousand angels,  
But He died alone, for you and me.*

—RAY OVERHOLT

The angels put their swords back in their sheaths because He bowed His head. He says, "*It is finished.*" (John 19:30) For three days and nights they mourn the death of the Son of God. The God calls another angel: "Earthquake angel, go down there and shake that tomb." And the earthquake angel goes down and there's a mighty earthquake. And the stone rolls away. And the angel sits on top of that stone. Another angel goes into that empty tomb and sits there at the head where the body of the Lord Jesus lay. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary come that morning, but the tomb is empty. But the angels are there. Jesus gives the Great Commission. He goes out on the Mount of Olives with His disciples, and He's caught up into the air. He ascends out of their sight. The disciples are there. Their jaws are unhinged. Their eyes follow Him as He disappears and a cloud receives Him out of their sight. And two angels are there, the Bible tells us in Acts 1:11, which say, "*Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing thus into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go.*" (Acts 1:11) And the angels, dear friend, announced the ascension and the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The angels are not finished yet. Do you know what the angels are doing right now? They're looking into this worship service. Did you know that the Bible tells us that the angels are fascinated when we come to worship? Did you know that the angels, dear

friend, study our worship services? Let me give you a verse of Scripture that is an amazing scripture—Ephesians 3:10. The Bible says that God does what He does “*to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.*” (Ephesians 3:10) Now, the powers and principalities in heavenly places—those are the angels. And do you know how they’re learning the wisdom of God? By studying the church. Do you know what they’re doing today? Now, some of you may be letting your mind gather wool right now, but I want to tell you, the angels are watching. The angels are looking down. The angels are being instructed today by the way we worship and by the way we praise God. And they are learning today the wisdom of God. We have a much bigger congregation than you can see.

A country preacher one time was working hard on his sermon late at night. And his wife said to him, “Why are you working so hard? Don’t you know that you’ll just have a handful of people to preach to tomorrow morning?” He said, “Woman, don’t you know how big my congregation really will be?” He understood this: that the angels listen every time I preach the gospel.

The angels listen every time and watch you take your Bibles. They’re watching you as you worship today. And they’re learning by the church, through what God is doing in the church, the manifold wisdom of God. And when the time comes for you to die, God is going to send His angels to carry you home. The Bible says in Luke 16 that when Lazarus died, the angels came and took him to Abraham’s bosom. (Luke 16:22) Tommy Lane and myself, along with Cliff Barrows and Billy Graham, were there at the deathbed of R. G. Lee, and we joined our hands around Dr. Lee’s bedside and sang together, “Oh, come, angel band, come and around me stand; oh, bear me away on thy snowy wings to my eternal home.” It’s the angels that bear the saints of God to heaven.

But I want to tell you something, friend. With all of that, the angels still cannot be saved. All they can do is just stand on the outside and study our salvation. They really cannot experience it—“*which things the angels desire to look into.*” (1 Peter 1:12)

*Holy, holy, is what the angels sing,  
And I expect to help them make the courts of Heaven ring;  
But when I sing redemption’s story, they will fold their wings,  
For angels never felt the joys that our salvation brings.*

—JOHNSON OATMAN, JR.

I had rather be a saved sinner than an innocent angel.

#### **IV. Our Salvation Is the Subject of Assured Consummation**

Friend, how wonderful—how wonderful—to know this salvation! Do you know it? It is the subject of ancient contemplation. It is the subject of anointed proclamation. It is the

subject of angelic fascination. And that brings me to the last thing: It is the subject, dear friend, of assured consummation—assured consummation.

Now, look in verse 13, if you will. After Peter has told us these other three things about salvation, he says, “Wherefore...”—now, remember, he’s talking to suffering saints; he’s talking to people who are going through tough times. And here’s what he says to them after he tells them how wonderful their salvation is. He says—“*Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober.*” (1 Peter 1:13) He is saying, “Therefore, it’s time for some serious thinking.” Do you know what the phrase “*gird up the loins of your mind*” means? Now, back in this day, men would wear a robe, a tunic. And if a man would get ready to work, or to run, he had to gather that thing up and get a belt around it some, or he’d trip up on it. And so, what Peter is saying is, “Get rid of the loose ends. Just bring your mind together. Bring everything into focus.”

Now, that’s what I want you to do today. Now, you know, the problem with many Christians is they don’t gird up the loins of their mind. They don’t do sober thinking in tough times. Do you know one of the hardest things in the world to do is to get people to think? While they’re youths, they’re too privileged to think. In manhood, they’re too busy to think. In maturity, they’re too worried to think. When they’re dying, they’re too sick to think. After death, it’s too late to think. And then, they’ll have all eternity to think.

Now, what Peter is saying is this: “Gird up the loins of your mind. Be sober. Think on these things.” And what is he telling them that they’re to think about? He’s telling them that Christ is coming, that His glory is going to be revealed. Listen: “*Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*” (1 Peter 1:13) Now, what he is saying is that you need to turn your tears into telescopes. You need to bring these things into focus. You need to get a view and a vision of what is coming.

Now, let me tell you something. There are those super sophisticates of our day who make fun of the kind of preaching that I’m doing right now. Do you know what they do? They say, “Well, there’s another preacher trying to get people to forget their responsibilities as he tells them about pie in the sky.” Oh, how they love to laugh at that: “Pie in the sky by and by when I die”! Well, friend, that’s exactly what Peter is talking about right now. And, by the way, I like pie—I like pie. Oh, these people: “Well, I’m not interested in the sweet by and by.” Well, they don’t seem to be doing so good in the nasty now and now either. I want to tell you something, friend; let me tell you something: It is the hope of the future that brings meaning to our suffering and our tears right now.

Now, let me show you that Peter’s theme in this book, as we’re thinking about “Timeless Truths for Tough Times,” is this: that the glories of the future can diminish and bring into proper perspective the agony and the pain and the problems of the present; that Peter linked suffering and glory always together. Now, let me show you. Look in

verse 11. Now, what did the Old Testament prophets prophesy about? All right, look in the last part of verse 11: “[They] did signify...the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” (1 Peter 1:11) Do you see it? That glory follows suffering.

Now, let me give you another verse here while we’re right here. I want you to turn, if you will now, to chapter 4, verse 13, the same book—1 Peter 4:13. Now, if you’re hurting today, this is for you. Look at it: “*But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings...*”—now, isn’t that strange: to tell these suffering people to rejoice? But that’s what he says—“*But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings: that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.*” (1 Peter 4:13) The thing that gives you joy now is the glory that you will have with Christ.

Let me show you in another verse how he links suffering and glory. Look, if you will, in chapter 4, verse 16, now of this same book: “*Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.*” (1 Peter 4:16) Do you see how he links suffering and glory? Look in chapter 5, verse 1: “*The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.*” (1 Peter 5:1) Amen? The suffering and the glory are linked together. Look, if you will, in chapter 5, beginning in verses 10 and reading through verse 11: “*But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.*” (1 Peter 5:10–11) Now, friend, don’t you see it, how God links suffering and glory: “after you’ve suffered, strengthen, establish you”?

Now, there are four words that you must also keep together: guilt, grief, grace, glory. Got them? Guilt, grief, grace, glory. Some of you might say, “Well, Brother Rogers, I don’t want to suffer, so I just don’t think I’ll be a Christian.” Well, that’s up to you, but you’re going to suffer anyway. As a matter of fact, you’re going to suffer a whole lot more, and there will be no meaning to your suffering. Why are you going to suffer? Because you are a sinner, and you live in a world that’s cursed by sin. And sin causes sorrow, like night follows day. And nobody born into this sinful world is going to get out without some grief. The guilt brings grief, like night follows day. But God’s grace brings glory. Now, there’s the guilt, and there’s the grief; but here’s the grace, and here’s the glory. Now, friend, don’t just see the grief and the guilt. See the glory and the grace.

Now, what we’re trying to say, and what Peter is saying is this: that you need to let your tears be turned into telescopes. You need to see that there’s more coming. The Apostle Paul knew that also. The Apostle Paul said in Romans 8:18, “*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*” (Romans 8:18) Few men suffered as the Apostle Paul suffered,

and here's what he said in 2 Corinthians 4:17: *"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."* (2 Corinthians 4:17) See? That's what he said.

And so, are you going through hard times, tough times? There's a better day coming. And that, my friend, is not pie in the sky. That's gospel truth. Jesus Christ, our Lord, who has suffered and ascended, is coming for us. We're going to be caught up to meet our Lord in the air. We're going to see Him face to face. And that will be glory for me.

## Conclusion

Now, friend, that ought to encourage you today. That ought to put some spiritual steel in you today. Sure, we suffer. Sure, we have heartache. Sure, we're being tried like gold in the fire. And one of these days that gold will be for the praise and honor and glory of our dear Lord at His coming. I want you to notice some words and I'm finished. But I want you to notice a little phrase. In verse 10, you read the little phrase *"unto you."* In verse 12, you read that same little phrase, *"unto you."* In verse 13, you read that same little couplet, *"unto you."* Now, pay attention, because, folks, all of this is for you. Why did the prophets prophesy? It was unto you! Why does the preacher preach? It's unto you! Why is Jesus coming again to give glory? For you!

Friend, you're right in the middle of it. Wouldn't it be a shame for you to miss it? Why should other people be saved and you go to hell? Why should other people have their hurts turned to hallelujahs? Why should other people have their midnights turned to mornings? Why should other people have their Calvary's turn to an Easter, and you miss it all? Friend, I want to tell you, whether you're saved or lost, you're in a world that's marked by grief and suffering; but Jesus turns our tears to telescopes. Jesus gives us a hope that's real. It's unto you!

You see, I can't be saved for you, and your parents can't be saved for you. If you were born into a Muslim home, you would be considered a Muslim because you were born into that home. If you were born into the home of devout Jewish parents who practiced the Jewish religion, you would be Jewish by religion because you were born into a Jewish home. But you do not become a Christian because you're born in a Christian home. No one is born a Christian until he's born again. Do you understand that? God has children, but He doesn't have any grandchildren. Your mother and daddy may be Christians, but that doesn't make you a Christian. You must receive Christ as your personal Savior. And, folks, it's unto you—unto you! And it's up to you!

# The Highway to Holiness

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** January 16, 1982

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 Peter 1:13–22

“As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.”

1 PETER 1:14

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## Introduction

Now, take your Bibles and turn, please, to 1 Peter chapter 1. We're going to begin reading in just a moment in verse 13—1 Peter chapter 1. Now, you should know by now that we're in a series from 1 Peter and we're speaking under the general heading of “Timeless Truths for Tough Times.” These are tough times. Times have always been tough for the children of God, but Peter gives us some timeless truths to help us to live in tough times.

Now, we take up our reading this morning—1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 13: Peter says, *“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ”*—now, the word

“revelation of Jesus Christ” means “His glorious display of glory when He comes in power at His Second Coming. The Bible calls that “the revelation of Jesus Christ”—His coming in power and great glory. Now, verse 14—*“As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation”*—now, the word “of conversation” means “behavior”—*“Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear”*—now, the word *sojourning* means “your pilgrimage,” and the word *fear* means “reverent.” So, you be a pilgrim here, living in reverence—*“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, from your vain conversation”—that is, “your empty behavior”—“received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God”* (1 Peter 1:13–21).

Now, the key verse I want you to notice is verse 15—look at it: *“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation”* (1 Peter 1:15). I want to talk to you today on “The Highway to Holiness.” And, if there’s a timeless truth that we need to learn in these last days, it is that in these last days and tough times God expects us to be holy. As a matter of fact, that’s the only way we’re going to successfully get through these days—is to live holy lives. Now, when you talk about holiness, Baptists get a little nervous. I mean, we don’t mind being saved; we’re just not all that keen on holiness. We’re interested in Heaven, not holiness. We’re interested in health, not holiness. We’re interested in happiness, not holiness. We may even be interested in helpfulness. But, how many of us are interested in holiness? How many of us say, “Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole”?

I had a privilege about two years ago—perhaps a little more now—to spend a day in prayer with Dr. Billy Graham and some other men. We met in a hotel room in Dallas for the purpose of spending a day in prayer, just sharing and seeking the face of the Lord. And, as we were sitting around a table sharing, Billy Graham said something that I shall never forget. He looked around at the rest of us and said, “Gentlemen, I long to be holy. I want to be a holy man. Pray for me, that I will be holy.” I wonder if you want to be holy. I wonder, is there in your heart and in your life a longing for holiness? Did you know that not only is there not a longing in our hearts for holiness—some people actually have a resistance against it, an antipathy toward holiness? I mean, we make fun of it: “Holy Joe. Holier than thou. Holy roller”—we make fun of it. The idea of being holy is kind of foreign to us, and almost it’s a stigma that has been attached to a person who wants to

be holy. And yet, the Bible clearly and plainly tells us—those of us who are living in tough times—that we are to be holy.

Now, what does it mean to be holy? Well, the word *holy* means “to be separate, to be distinct, to be separated for a special cause”—that’s what the word *holy* means. We’re to be separated unto God. Now, not just that we’re to be dead to the world, but we’re to be alive unto God. When you get married, there’s sense in which you are holy to your wife. That is, not only do you stop going with all the other girls, but you give yourself unto her completely, totally, wholly—W-H O-L-L-Y—and, in a sense, holy. That is, you are separated completely unto her. And, we are to be separated completely totally unto God. We are to be holy.

Now, to be holy means to be separate; it means to be different, but not odd. We have too many Christians who are odd, now—religious psychos and weird people, and they call themselves holy. No, no. It’s not primarily a matter of dress, and it’s not a place. You know, some people think a holy man is a man who goes away to a monastery. Well, you could be holy in a monastery, but that won’t make you holy. There’s no holiness in a hole. It’s not where you are; it is what you are, as you are separated unto the Lord. And, holiness is not just for pastors and priests; holiness is for God’s people. So, I want to talk to you today about “The Highway to Holiness,” and I want to give you some motivations for being holy, as Peter tells us in these last days that we are to be holy. Now, let me give you four marvelous, mighty motivations to walk this highway of holiness.

## I. Our Anticipation of His Coming

Number one: Our anticipation of His coming is a motivation to holiness—our anticipation of His coming. Look, if you will, in verse 13: Peter says, “*Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*” (1 Peter 1:13)—that is, at the coming of Jesus Christ. You see, being people who look for Jesus Christ to come at any moment, we ought to be living clean lives, holy lives.

For example, if you knew that you knew that Jesus Christ were coming this afternoon, do you think there are some things that you’d get right in your life? Huh? I mean, would there be somebody you might call this afternoon and want to make up with before Jesus came? Would there be, for example, some literature in your home you’d like to get rid of? Would there be some things that would change, if you absolutely knew that this afternoon you were going to meet Jesus Christ? You see, that’s what John said in 1 John 3, when he said, “[*He*] *that hath this hope in him*”—that is, “the expectation of Jesus”—“*purifieth himself*” (1 John 3:3). See what an inducement to holiness it is to know that at any moment we might meet Jesus Christ. **Some little girls were talking in**

the school, and one of them said to the other one, “I understand that the School Board is going to come and make an inspection of our school.” And, this little girl who had a messy desk said, “Well, one of these days, then, I’m going to clean up my desk. I’ll clean it up—even tomorrow.” But, her friend said, “But, what if they come today?” She said, “Well, I’ll clean it up this afternoon.” Her friend says, “What if they come this morning?” She says, “You know, I think I’ll clean it up right now and keep it clean.” Now friend, when we know that Jesus is coming...and He may come at any moment. “[He] that hath this hope in him purifieth himself” (1 John 3:3).

Now, what kind of an expectation of His coming are we to have? Notice what Peter says here in verse 13.

### **A. Have a Single Mind**

He says, first of all, “*gird up the loins of your mind*” (1 Peter 1:13). Now, that’s a figure of speech. In biblical days, men wore robes like the choir robes. And, when they would go to work, they would take the loose ends of those robes, and gather them up, and put them under their girdle, and that was called “girding up your loins.” Let me give you a figure of speech today that’s very similar: “roll up your sleeves.” It means exactly the same thing in a different idiom—“roll up your sleeves.” That is, “get serious about what you’re doing.” When a man rolls up his sleeves, he’s going to work. Now, what Peter is saying is that we need to have a single mind. That is, we’re to bring all the loose ends together and we are to get single-minded. Do you know, too many of us are not like the Apostle Paul who said, “*This one thing I do*” (Philippians 3:13). Our minds are spread out on all kinds of things. We’re interested in so many frivolous things that, a thousand years from now, are not going to make any difference at all folks. Have you ever heard the expression, “Don’t put all your eggs in one basket”? I believe Peter would say, “Put all your eggs in one basket, and watch that basket.” Jesus is coming soon, and you live with Him in mind. “*Gird up the loins of your mind*” (1 Peter 1:13); have a single mind.

### **B. Have a Serious Mind**

Secondly, he’s saying, “Have a serious mind.” Notice what he says in this verse: he says, “*Be sober*”—“*be sober*” (1 Peter 1:13). Now, he doesn’t say, “Be somber”—“sober.” He’s not talking about the fact that we’re to go around with a long face and a pious look. I believe in fun. I enjoy recreation. If you know anything about me, you know I enjoy a good joke and all of that. Now listen, weary pilgrim, in tough times, our Lord is coming—Jesus is coming. You anticipate His coming. You be ready, so when the Lord Jesus Christ comes...

*When He shall come with trumpet sound,  
Oh may I then in Him be found.  
Dressed in His righteousness alone,*

*Faultless, [holy,] to stand before the throne.*

—Edward Mote

What a motivation to live a holy life—our anticipation of His coming.

## **II. Our Identification with His Character**

But now, let me give you a second mighty motivation to walk this highway of holiness—not only our anticipation of His coming, but secondly, our identification with His character—our identification with His character. Begin to read now in verse 14: Peter says, “*As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which [has] called you*”—“*as he which hath called you is holy*”—“*so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy*” (1 Peter 1:14–16).

### **A. The Family Likeness to Wear**

Now, what is the character of God? Holy—God is holy. Do you know what the angels say around the throne? “*Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD [God] of hosts*” (Isaiah 6:3). He is the thrice-holy God of Israel: holy is the Father; holy is the Son; holy is the Spirit. “*Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD [God] of hosts*” (Isaiah 6:3)—Isaiah chapter 6 and verse 3. God’s character is holy.

Now, we are His children; and therefore, we are to be identified with His character. I mean, wouldn’t you expect to see the Father reproduced in the child? **Have you ever heard the expression, “Like father, like son”? That’s what he’s talking about right here. Now, I am a Rogers. My father’s name is Arden Duncan Rogers. He sired me; he fathered me. I have become a partaker of his nature. You would expect to find his traits—his characteristics—in me, because, in the physical realm, he has fathered me.** Now, the Bible says we are to be His obedient children. And, because we’re His children, then there ought to be His likeness in our lives; and His likeness is holiness. And, we are to be identified with His character. You see, there is the family likeness to wear: we are to be like our Father; we are to have the nature of our Father. “*Be ye holy; for I am holy*” (1 Peter 1:16).

### **B. The Family Love to Share**

But, not only the family likeness to wear—that comes by nature—but also the family love to share. You see, I love my father, and I want to honor him. And, I want to do those things that are pleasing to my father. And so I love my Heavenly Father. And, therefore, as the Bible says in verse 14, I want to be an obedient child (1 Peter 1:14), because I love Him.

You see, there are three reasons for obedience: a slave obeys because he has to; an employee obeys because he needs to; but a loving son obeys because he wants

to—he wants to. See, I want to serve Him. I don't work for my salvation.

*I cannot work my soul to save.  
That work my Lord has done.  
But I will work like any slave  
For the love of God's dear Son.*

—Author unknown

Jesus said, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me” (John 14:21). You see? That's the proof of our love for the Lord. And so, why? We identify with His character.

### C. **The Family Loyalty to Bear**

There, dear friend, is His likeness to where there is His love to share, and then there's the family loyalty to bear. He says, “*For I am holy*” (1 Peter 1:16). That's one of His names—holy. And, you see, when we are His children, we may disgrace the family name because His name is holy. That's the family name. We are a holy people, a different people.

When I was down in Florida, I pastored a church where there was a man who lived in the same community—at least, 30 or 40 miles from that community—who had the name Adrian Rogers—same name. He was about my age. One day it was put in the newspaper that Adrian Rogers was sick and in the hospital. I got a lot of sympathy cards. Well, I didn't mind that, but then one day it was reported Adrian Rogers had been put in jail, and what he'd been arrested for was he shot a turkey out of season. Now, I've never shot a turkey in season or out of season. I mean, I'm just not a... I've been turkey hunting, but they tell me the difference between a deer and a turkey is this—that every deer thinks a man is stump, but every turkey thinks a stump is a man. And, they are very hard to get close to, to shoot, but this man shot a turkey, this turkey—shot a turkey out of season. And, everybody was talking about what the preacher at this particular church had done, and I hadn't done a' thing. I was perfectly innocent. I never did get to meet this guy, but had I met him, I would have said to him, “Listen, mister, I'd appreciate it if you'd change your conduct or change your name.” Now, God would say the same thing to us.

You know, God's name is holy. God is holy, and there is the family loyalty—the family loyalty to bear. We want to be loyal to our Father in Heaven. What a mighty motivation to holiness it is! And, God says, “*Be...holy; for I am holy*” (1 Peter 1:16). “I am your Father. I have sired you. I love you. You bear My name. Be holy.” What right does a man have to call himself a Christian and a child of the Father if he does not bear the nature of the Father? God's nature is holiness, and we are partakers of the divine nature.

### III. Our Examination as His Children

Now, let me give you a third motivation of holiness: not only our anticipation of His coming, not only our identification with His character, but a third reason for holiness is our examination as His children—our examination as His children.

I want you to look not at verse 17 here: and he says, “*And if ye call on the Father*”—that is, if you say that He’s your Father—“*And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear*” (1 Peter 1:17). Now, what he’s saying here is that your work is going to be examined. Because you’re God’s child, God is going to examine you. God examines His children. He’s going to judge everything that we do. It passes by Him in dress parade. He’s not talking about the final judgment; that’s for the unsaved. We won’t be there. Our judgment is day by day, and this word *judge* here is not a word that means “to judge in order to condemn.” The Greek word is the idea of judging in order to find something good that you might reward. You see, God is judging His people. He is constantly examining those of us, and our judgment is here now. You’re being judged today. The eyes of the Lord are running to and from across this place. And, what God is looking for today is holiness. God says, “Holy are we to be.” And so, he says, “If you call upon Him as Father, then remember that He’s going to judge you; remember that He’s going to examine you.”

#### A. It Is a Family Judgment

Let me tell you about this judgment. First of all, it is a family judgment—a family judgment. And, that makes me feel good, because, you know, I scrutinize my children carefully, but I love them. Not only is our Father a judge, but the judge is our Father. It’s a family judgment. We can never be unborn; we can never be lost. He’s not going to condemn us. He’s not going to put us away. That’s not the idea at all. It’s not an idea that one day He might judge us and say, “You’re no longer my child.” We’re born into His family. We cannot be unborn. It is a family judgment.

#### B. It Is a Fair Judgment

Thank God for that. He loves us. But, I want to say something else about it: not only is it a family judgment; it is a fair judgment. Now, look again, if you will, in verse 17: the Bible says here that He judges “*without respect of persons*” (1 Peter 1:17). Do you know what that means? He will not allow any spoiled children in His family. That’s what it means—no spoiled children. The Father is a strict disciplinarian. And, I don’t care how long that you’ve served God in faithfulness, all of that service will not buy with Him one hour of disobedience. He is a Father that judges without respect of persons. He knows it’s eleven o’clock, and friend, He knows where His children are—He knows where His children are. Do you know who today’s dropouts are? Not the kids—the parents. Those

are the dropouts today—parents who have failed to understand where the children are and the solemn responsibility that God has given them. And, they want some daycare business or somebody else to raise the children that God has given them. Listen, friend—when God takes you into His family, He’s the kind of God who examines your life, scrutinizes your life day by day, and He does it without partiality, without respect of persons. It is a family judgment—yes, it is a fair judgment.

### C. It Is a Fearful Judgment

But, wait a minute—it therefore is a fearful judgment. Look at the last part of verse — look at it and see what he says: he says as a result of this, we are to “*pass the time of [our] sojourning here in*”—what’s that next word?—“*fear*”—“*fear*” (1 Peter 1:17). Now, this is not the cringing fear of slave, but it’s that holy reverence and respect for the Father who judges. Do you know what His judgment is? It is chastisement. You know, the Bible says, “*Whom the Lord [loves] he [chastens], and [scourges] every son whom he [receives]*” (Hebrews 12:6). In Hebrews 12 he tells us that. And then, he says, “[*And] if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye [illegitimate], and not sons*” (Hebrews 12:8).

Did your father ever whip you? Mine whipped me. My father was a professional. He knew exactly how to do it. We didn’t have a woodshed, but we had a pump house. We’d go out there, and my dad had a grip in his left hand just like a vice. And, he’d get around my wrist, clamp—just like a bulldog’s jaw; you couldn’t get loose. And, he had a very artistic movement. He could put his hand around my wrist and take off his belt just like that—one movement. And then, it would be around and around like this. I would be out there on the end trying to get away, and he’d be coming around like this. And, he had all the laws of leverage and physics working for him. And, I was out there at the end getting that centrifugal force that was coming, just swinging against me, as he was applying that board of education to the seat of knowledge. I was just getting it right there. And, you know, have you ever heard the saying, “Too soon old and too late smart”? Well, that’s what I am. You see, I should have known; I should have figured it out. That was the wrong way to do it. What I should have done was just get up around his knees, and get in as close I could, and grabbed him, and hug him and say, “Daddy, I love you. I love you. I love you.” It’s hard to whip somebody when they’re in close like that. You just...you can’t get the leverage. Now kids, that’s worth coming to church for. I mean, really—every kid ought to put another dollar in the plate today. That’s worth coming to church for. Now, my dad used to say, “Well, you know, I do this ’cause I love you.” Well, I was his favorite, I’m certain. But, he did love me. I want to tell you something: I love my father, but to this day—my father is about four years from 80—but I still have respect for him. A respect—that’s what the Bible is talking about.

*“Pass the time of your sojourning here [with respect]”* (1 Peter 1:17)—reverence. When I was kid, if we got a whipping at school, we didn’t come home and tell dad about the teacher—tell on the teacher. Oh, no—we didn’t dare do that. If I got a whipping at school and came home and told about it, I’d get one at home. I mean, you know—make sure I got enough. Oh, friend, listen: times have changed—haven’t they?—from those old-fashioned days when kids were taught to live with a certain... I’m not talking about cruelty to kids. My dad was not cruel to me; he was kind to me. And, I thank God for some character that he put in me. And, your Heavenly Father loves you too much to let you live in dissipation.

Well, you say, “Well, I’m a Christian, and He doesn’t chastise me.” Friend, I want to tell you something: if you name the name of Christ, and you claim to be a Christian, and you’re a member of this church or somebody else’s church, and you are living in worldliness rather than holiness, and God doesn’t chastise you, I’m going to tell you something—one of two things is certain about you, as certain as I’m standing in this pulpit: either you’re headed for the woodshed, or you’re headed for Hell. I mean, if you’re a worldly person, God, if you’re His child, is going to chastise you. If you’re not His child, He’s not going to chastise you; you’re going to die and go to Hell. Now, if you’re not living in holiness, but if you’re living in worldliness, either you’ve never been saved and you’re headed for Hell or you have been saved and God is going to chastise you. *“Whom the Lord [loves] he [chastens]”* (Hebrews 12:6). And, the Bible says He does it without partiality. He’s not overlooking you. He’s not going to spoil you. He doesn’t have any little darlings. I want to tell you, there are two reasons that I want to live a holy life: number one, I love my God; number two, I fear my God. *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom”* (Psalm 111:10). Is there some un-confessed, un-repent-ed of sin in your life—some unholy, some vile thing, that’s in your life? The Bible says, “If you call upon the Father, who judges without respect of persons, pass the time of your sojourning down here with reverence, with fear, with respect” (1 Peter 1:17).

Now, that’s the third reason for living a holy life. Remember what the first one was? Our anticipation of His coming—He’s coming at any moment. Let’s get serious, sober, and steadfast. The second reason, dear friend, is our identification with His character. He says, *“Be...holy; for [I’m holy]”* (1 Peter 1:16)—“you’re My children.” The third reason—our examination as His children. He’s examining His children. He judges His children. He does it without partiality.

#### **IV. Our Emancipation by His Cross**

Now, the fourth reason that we ought to travel that highway of holiness—the fourth mighty motivation to live a holy life—is our emancipation by His cross—our emancipation by His cross. Look, if you will, in verse 18: *“Forasmuch as ye know that ye*

*were not redeemed*”—the word *redeemed* is the word “to set a slave free, to emancipate a slave”—“*Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation*”—remember that means your empty behavior—“*received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*” (1 Peter 1:18)—our emancipation by His cross.

### A. The Provision of It

Oh, friend, listen—Jesus Christ has saved you, redeemed you, set you free from that old way of life. Think for a moment about the provision of His emancipation. You see, to be emancipated means to be set free from something. Well, what were you were set free from? Verse 18 tells us that you were set free from your vain behavior, your vain conversation (1 Peter 1:18). Do you know that the problem with most of the people in Memphis is not the vile way they live—it is the vain way they live, the vain way? Not that they’re in such deep, terrible, awful, hideous sin—they’re living such meaningless lives. He calls it “empty behavior”—your vain conversation, drawing your breath, drawing your salary, not amounting to anything.

I heard about a country couple who’d never been to the big city, and they came to the big city and they went to the county fair. And, they had just a few dollars to spend, and they spent most of it on a few trinkets and so forth—had 15 cents left. And, the old man saw the carousel, the merry-go-round, and wanted to ride it. She didn’t want him to ride it. It cost 15 cents, and that was all they had left. But anyway, he just, as head of the family, he pulled rank on her, and put down the 15 cents, got his ticket, got on the merry-go-round, went round and round and round and got off. She said, “Now, just look at you”—said, “You spent all your money. You got on that thing; you’ve gone around and around and around, and you got off right where you got on. And, you ain’t been nowhere.” That’s the way most folks are. I mean, they’re spending it all for vanity. They’re going in circles, and they’re going to get off right where they got on.

Have you ever thought about what Peter said on the day of Pentecost when he preached that great sermon and when he gave the invitation? He said, “[*And*] *save yourselves from this untoward generation*” (Acts 2:40). What does that mean? Get off this road to nowhere—get off this road to nowhere. “*Save yourselves from this untoward generation*” (Acts 2:40).

I was reading about the lemmings. Do you know what a lemming is? It’s a little animal. Somehow, in the mind of this lemming, he gets a weird idea—and all of them get it—and they go headlong on a journey. They start traveling in a certain direction toward the sea. Over the mountains they go, across the rivers they go, through the woods they go, over the moors and the marshes they go—on, on, on, ’till they get to the

sea. And, what do they do when they get to the sea? They jump in and drown. That's all they do. I mean, they're bursting everything to get there, and they go and that's it. Now, a lot of lemmings live in Memphis, and I mean they're working, they're striving, they're building—all to end in a Christless existence.

You see, He redeemed me. Listen folks, it's so great to be a Christian, to have a purpose in life. Did you know that? I mean, a purpose in life. You see, you don't have to be like the vain tradition received from the elders. You know, we want to do it because everybody else is doing it. You know, the chief religion in America is the cult of conformity. The hymn is "everybody's doing it, doing it, doing it," and the creed is "all be alike." God saved us out of that. You know, I'm so excited about being a Christian and serving the Lord. The wonderful thing... I'm not talking about being pastor. If I were a layman, I'd still be just as excited about it. I get tired in the work, but I never get tired of the work. It's a thrill to serve Jesus Christ. You see, He redeemed me from that meaninglessness, from that vain conversation received by tradition from the elders. That's—listen, friend—that's the provision of my redemption.

### **B. The Price of It**

And then, the price of my redemption—look in verse 18: *"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, [such] as silver and gold"* (1 Peter 1:18). In the Roman Empire at this time, there were thousands and thousands and thousands of slaves, but in that time a slave could free himself if he could get enough money. If he could raise enough silver and enough gold, he could buy his freedom, or somebody else could buy it for him and set him free. But, Peter says, "You can't buy this redemption; you can't be redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold." It takes *"the precious blood of Jesus, as...a lamb without [spot]...without [blemish]"* (1 Peter 1:19). He's talking here about the Passover lamb. Did you know they raised certain lambs here for the Passover in that day—and to sacrifice? And, certain shepherds raised them in a certain place. They were a certain breed of lambs, and they had to be so perfect that the rabbis and the priests would come in and examine the lamb. They'd go over him microscopically. Even his eyelids would be examined. And, if there were a spot or a blemish, he couldn't be used. Now, Jesus is God's spotless Lamb. Thank God for His spotless life and His sacrificial death. You see, you're not redeemed with silver and gold but with the silver of His tears and the gold of His blood. That's the price of your redemption. You're not your own; you're bought with a price.

### **C. The Purpose of It**

Now, we've noticed the provision of it and the price of it. What is the purpose of it? Well, verse 22 (1 Peter 1:22) speaks of purifying your souls. You see, why did He redeem you? Pay attention now. Jesus Christ did not come to save you from Hell; He does save

you from Hell, but that's a byproduct. The angel said, "*Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins*"—"from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). He didn't come to save you for Heaven; you will go to Heaven, but that's a byproduct—that's a fringe benefit. He came, dear friend, to make you holy. That is the purpose of your redemption. You have been redeemed to be a holy person. Jesus Christ did not bathe this planet with His blood to have you serve the world, the flesh, and the devil. You're not your own. "*[You're] bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's*" (1 Corinthians 6:20). Your emancipation by His cross is a mighty motivation to live a holy life.

We sing that song, and well we might:

*Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it!  
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;  
Redeemed [by] His infinite mercy,  
His child and forever I am (Fanny Crosby).*

And, that's good, but friend, there's something else that we ought to sing to when we think about that redemption. Was it Isaac Watts who said,

*When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of Glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.*

...

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my [life], my [soul], my all.*

—Isaac Watts

Now, I know what you're thinking—you're saying, "That's right, Adrian. Be holy; we want a holy pastor. You're a holy man." Friend, God wants you to be holy—you. Let me show you something. Turn to Zechariah—I'm almost finished, but turn to Zechariah. I want you to turn to the last chapter of the Book of Zechariah. Zachariah is looking forward into the future; he's looking forward to that day when men and women redeemed by the blood of the Lamb shall live. Did you know that in the old days—in the old days—the priest, who was a holy man, he wore a special garment, had a golden plate on his body, and that golden plate had in it an insignia, and it said, "Holiness to the Lord," and that's what he wore? He was a priest. And, nobody else—nobody else—could go into the holy of holies, and nobody else could handle the holy things, because he was a priest and he was a (quote) "holy man" (end of quote). But, Zechariah looks

toward the future; he looks toward what would happen at Calvary. He looks forward to the time when God would have a whole people, a whole priesthood—all of us would be priest unto God, a royal priesthood. And, he says in verse 20: *“In that day...there [shall] be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the LORD’s house shall be like the bowls before the altar”*—and now, notice verse 21—*“Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in [Judea] shall be holiness unto the LORD of hosts”* (Zechariah 14:20–21).

Now, what does that mean? He’s saying, “Listen, there’s coming a day when people are not going to be able to divide the secular and the sacred. There’s coming a day when we’re not going to say, ‘There goes a holy man; he’s different from me.’” Oh, no, we’re all to be holy, and even the bells on the horses will jingle holiness, holiness, holiness. When a man goes out to plow a field—holy, holy, holy. When a woman does her pots and pans, every pot will be holy to the Lord. Have you ever thought about that? Ruth Graham has, above her sink, a sign that says, “Divine services held here three times a day”—washing those dishes. What I’m trying to say to you, my dear friend, is when you go to the office tomorrow, you’re to go in holiness; and when you go to that factory tomorrow, you’re to go in holiness; and when you go to that school tomorrow, you’re to go in holiness. That is, God is saying, “Be holy—everything you do, every place you go, every day, is a holy place.” Every deed is a holy deed when we’re walking in the Spirit. *“Be ye holy”* (1 Peter 1:16).

## Conclusion

Do you want me to give you a timeless truth for tough times? God wants His people to walk a highway of holiness—that’s it. Let’s pray. †

# Southern Baptists and the Battle for the Bible

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: June 19, 1994**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 1:18–25**

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Power of the Word

II. The Purity of the Word

III. The Proclamation of the Word

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God's Word please and turn to 1 Peter chapter 1, and in a moment I'm going to begin reading in verse 18. I told you that tonight I wanted to speak to you on this subject, "Southern Baptist and the Battle for the Bible."

God called me to preach when I was a teenage boy, and I went off to our Baptist college, there in Florida. And when I was there at the Baptist college, I went on a two-fold scholarship. I went as a ministerial student because God had called me to preach, and I also went on a football scholarship. And, I wanted to play football, and I wanted to preach. And, of course, I wanted to go to college and prepare myself to preach, because the call to preach is a call to prepare. I really didn't know a lot about the Bible, but I knew that Jesus had saved me, and I had a Bible that somebody had given me for a graduation from high school. And I took that Bible with me to college.

And I ran into liberalism there in that Baptist college. I didn't know it was liberalism at the time. But I was told such things as that the Bible is a composite of things, that there wasn't someone named Matthew who wrote the gospel of Matthew, per se; or Luke who wrote Luke, or John who wrote John. And Moses didn't write the Pentateuch, or the first five books of the Bible—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—that these were put together by some priestly redactor—that means, an editor—later on. It was more of a paper and paste job as the scraps were put together. And, we studied that. That's called higher criticism. And I was told that there was no personal devil, no real devil, that Satan is just a personification of evil. That's the way people thought in that day—what they called demon possession was what we would know today as mental illness.

And, for a while, I kind of bought into that, because, after all, this was our school, and I was a student there, and this is what they were teaching. So I assumed that it was all right. But in my heart there was disquietude, because I had a Bible. And I looked down at that Bible, and I would listen, and I said, "There's something wrong here. What I'm reading and what I'm hearing doesn't square." And one day, I had the audacity in a sociology class taught by an ordained minister, as I listened to that man talk about the evolution of mankind, and explain away sin and the sinful nature of people, my spirit was grieved. And I did something, I suppose, that was a little audacious for a young preacher. But I went up to witness to my professor, and I said, "Sir, may I have a few moments of your time?" And, after the class, I said, "Sir, I don't want to be impertinent, but I want to ask you a question: Are you saved?" Do you know what that professor said to me? He said, "Well, I'm certain I'm not saved, according to your definition of salvation." I said, "Well, sir, what is your definition of salvation?" And these were his words he said to me: "Salvation is that experience where man comes to escape the consequences of maladjustment to his fellow man." And, I said, "Well, sir, I'm not talking about that. If you were to die right now, would you go to heaven or hell?" He said, "I don't know there is a heaven or hell. I've never been to either one of them." And I thought, you know, if some people knew that they were paying this man's salary to teach in a Baptist college, they'd be deeply grieved. And, I began to listen to that. And, I said, "Well, I'm going to find out some things. I want to know."

By that time, I had proposed to the girl that I'm married to. She and I were both freshman there in college, but we got married to begin our sophomore year. And, I dropped the football scholarship, because I was called to pastor a little country church. I began to buy books on theology and began to read them. And, I was almost like I was taking two courses. And Joyce said, "You're not going to graduate from college if you don't settle down to one thing." I said, "But I want to know—I want to know about the Word of God," and began to study. And deep convictions began to settle in my heart, even more so than I had as a general conviction, that the Bible is the Word of God.

And I knew that Southern Baptists were great people, because Southern Baptists were the people that spawned me. It was in a Southern Baptist church that I was saved and heard the gospel. And I knew what Mom and Pop Baptist believed at home and what I was hearing in that university were two different things. I knew there was a dichotomy there, and it grieved me. And I began to study more and more.

Then, when I left college and got into seminary, seminary, for a while, was like a breath of heaven, because, at least, in seminary, we opened our classes with prayer. And we were studying more and more of the Word of God. And I was not taught, full bore liberalism or evolutionism, and so forth. And part was good, and part was bad. Again, I was taught to look at the Bible as some sort of a composite, more of a human

instrument, it seemed to me, than the divine, holy, inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God.

And, as a preacher, I would be grieved, because I loved the denomination, and I felt that Southern Baptists were the greatest denomination on the face of the earth. And we are, you know, the largest evangelical denomination—wonderful, wonderful preachers. I looked up to the great preachers that were my boyhood heroes. One was the former pastor of this church, Dr. Robert G. Lee. I can remember one time when he came to speak to us at seminary. And I just had the privilege to take him back to the train station. He was traveling back to Memphis on the train. And I thought, of all the boys in this seminary, I have the privilege to just drive that man of God. What a thrill it was to me to take him back. I looked up to men like Dr. W. A. Criswell and the former pastor of this church, Dr. Ramsey Pollard, and others, as men, stalwart men, of God, and I knew that many of the great preachers believed the Bible and the Word of God was so true. And yet, I would see these things happening, and I would read the literature sometime in our Sunday Schools, and I would be grieved by it, not knowing what to do: wanting to be loyal to the Word of God, wanting to be grateful for my denomination, but grieved in my spirit. And I knew that the average person in the pew did not know, did not understand, what was happening as higher criticism, and German rationalism, and others, were coming like leaven, and just permeating some of our institutions. The school I went to, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary was much more conservative than some of our seminaries, and there was a battle raging.

We really didn't know how to change it until one day somebody, whose name was Paul Pressler, a judge from Houston, Texas, said, "I have looked at the way the Southern Baptist Convention is organized. It's the trustees who run the institutions." Well, how do you get trustees to run Southern Baptist institutions? Well, they are elected by the Convention. But who nominates them? Well, a Committee on Boards nominates them. Well, how do you get a Committee on Boards? Well, a Committee on Committees nominates the Committee on Boards. And the Committee on Boards is elected by the Convention. Well, who appoints the Committee on Committees? The President appoints the Committee on Committees. And there we see if we could get the right kind of a president, a president who would make the right appointments, if he would appoint the right committee that would appoint the right committee, or nominate the right committee, that would nominate the right trustees, before long, and it would take a long time to do it, as long as a decade, but we could change, we could change the atmosphere in the Southern Baptist Convention, if we would do this—if we would only appoint people who believed in the veracity, the integrity, the inerrancy, the infallibility of the Word of God.

So, that was in 1979. I went off to the Southern Baptist Convention in 1979 not

knowing who would be the candidate for the Presidency of the Southern Baptist Convention. Many people had spoken to me about doing that, but we were in the middle of a building program downtown. My kids were still in high school. And I didn't feel that I was the one, A, who was worthy or, B, who had the time, or C, who had the inclination to do it. So many had spoken to me about that, but I went off to the Convention, fat, dumb, and sassy, knowing that somebody else would be nominated, but not me, because I'd already made up my mind that I would not allow my name to be placed in nomination.

But, as I got to the Convention, many people had told me that they'd driven from across America to vote for me to be the President of the Southern Baptist Convention, were praying that I would be the President of the Southern Baptist Convention. Miss Bertha Smith, one of Southern Baptist's premier missionaries said to me, "Adrian, Brother Adrian," she would say, "I've been praying, and God says that He wants you to be the President of the Southern Baptist Convention." Now, if somebody else had said that, I would have said, "Well, ha, ha, okay," but Miss Bertha Smith said it, and she had a way of no stutter, no stammer. You'd think she was hotwired to heaven. And, but I took that even with, you know, I put it in my heart and, as Mary did, I pondered on it. But when I got there, others were saying to me with tears in their eyes, "We want you to allow your name to be placed in nomination." And then Dr. Charles Culpepper, premier professor at Mid-America Seminary, could not come to the Convention, but he sent word, and he said to someone, "Tell Brother Rogers that I have been with God, and he is to allow his name to be placed in nomination." Well, that was on Monday. The nominations were on Tuesday. The Convention began on Tuesday. And late Monday night, really, early Tuesday morning, on my knees, in tears and prayer with Dr. Jerry Vines and Dr. Paige Patterson, I felt that this was what I should do, not really having an idea that I would be elected. But I allowed my name to be placed in nomination and was elected the President of the Southern Baptist Convention on the first ballot in 1979, which was an unusual thing. Normally, there's always a runoff, but there wasn't a runoff. There were a number of others who were nominated, but I was elected as the President of the Southern Baptist Convention. And, we began a series of elections of conservative, Bible-believing Presidents. Now, we'd had conservative Presidents before, but they had never made the right kind of appointments. And so we began to make those appointments, asking, do these people love God? Do they love the Southern Baptist Convention? And will they—without apology, without stammer, without flinching, without blinking—will they only appoint people who take a clear stand on the Word of God? That was in 1979. It's been 15 years, and that has been happening.

The Boards of the Southern Baptist Convention, as a result, have been radically, dramatically changed. And so, the Convention has done something that no major

institution has done, so far as I can tell, in the history of Christendom, and, generally, outside Christendom; and that is, an institution that had begun to drift to the left has stopped and come back to her roots and her moorings. Generally, when institutions, agencies, schools, or whatever, drift to the left, they're gone, and you just simply have to start a new denomination.

What has happened in the Southern Baptist Convention has been a blessing, not only to Southern Baptists, but it's been a blessing to other denominations. I move in and out, when I meet with the other religious broadcasters, and in other trans-denominational meetings, and you'd have to be the man named Adrian to know how many people who would come to me and say, "Thank you, Southern Baptists, for what you do. Thank you for the stand that you've taken." I cannot tell you how many Presbyterians and Methodists and Episcopalians and others have come to me and said, "Thank you, thank you. And would to God the same thing could happen in our denomination, because there's a drift to the left, and we don't know how to stop it." The man, the woman, in the pew seem to be helpless.

We went to Orlando for the Convention this year, and we had a marvelous Convention. I was a little bit chagrined, and a little amused, as I read the newspapers when I got home. And they seemed to indicate that, somehow, what we've been about was mitigated, changed, or derailed, or whatever. Don't you believe that for one moment! Let me tell you that this is perhaps the most, solidifying conservative Convention that we have ever had, for which I am most grateful.

One of my dearest friends was elected as the president, Jim Henry. And Dr. Jim Henry had just spoken here not very long ago for our deacons retreat, and was here, actually, preaching, in this church the Sunday that I came to preach, and stepped aside and let me preach when I came to preach before the Bellevue Church. He's been a dear friend. And in January, I was with Dr. Henry, and I said to him, "Jim, I know you're praying about allowing your name to be placed in nomination, and I want to tell you beforetime, if you're elected, you will be my president, and I will follow you off a cliff." Jim Henry has said clearly and plainly he believes in the inerrancy of the Scripture. He would not appoint anyone who did not believe in the inerrancy of the Scripture, or anyone who himself would appoint someone who did not believe in the inerrancy of the Scripture.

The man that I wanted to see elected was Fred Wolfe. Fred Wolfe, who was just here for our deacons retreat is also a dear friend and a man of God. And so, I had wanted to see Fred Wolfe elected president simply for sentiment. I've been in the trenches with Fred. He's a buddy and a friend.

But the issue between Jim Henry and Fred Wolfe was not substance; it was sentiment. Fred Wolfe had been a partner of some of us in battles for Christ and the

Bible, and Jim Henry also, but we had that intimate relationship with Brother Fred, and some of us said, “We’re going to endorse and encourage Fred Wolfe for the Presidency, but we’ll never, ever do anything to stop Jim Henry, never say a bad word about him, because, if he’s elected, he’ll make a wonderful, wonderful president.” And so, both Jim Henry and Fred Wolfe were there at a victory party, hugging each other and encouraging each other.

Now, let me tell you what happened. There were two conservatives that ran. One got 55% of the vote. The other got 45% of the vote. The moderates got 0% of the vote. You need to understand that. And, of course, you know, in denominational politics, if you want to call it that, that’s in a way like national politics, afterward, the spin doctors go to work. You know what a spin doctor is? He takes what happens and tries to put his own particular twist on it. And, you will see that. And sometimes people in the secular press who don’t know what is going on, they pick up on that, but I can tell you that this Convention affirmed a man who was a very conservative man to be our President. Dr. Jim Henry is our President. I’m grateful that he’s our President. I love him. I have confidence in him. And it bodes good things for Southern Baptists.

The second most significant thing that happened is this: there is an organization of moderates who have resisted the renaissance. They call it a takeover. We call it a renewal. We call it a return to our roots. But they have said, “These folks have taken over our denomination.” Well, that’s kind of silly. How can the majority take over anything? The majority keeps on voting, and saying, “This is who we are, and this is what we want.” But they say, “Oh, our denomination has been taken over.” So, these people have formed another group.

The group that they have formed is called the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. And they want to be in the denomination, but not in. They’re kind of like Absalom sitting in the gate. And, they have become inclusive. They said, “You don’t have to believe in the inerrancy of the Scripture to be a part of this group. You can be more inclusive and more open.” The leader of that organization, Dr. Cecil Sherman, said, as there was some debate about a professor who did not believe in the virgin birth, he said, “Well, I don’t think a man ought to necessarily be removed just because he doesn’t believe in the virgin birth.”

Well now, folks, if you don’t believe in the virgin birth, I mean, what have you got? Without the virgin birth, you don’t have Christianity. The virgin birth is the incarnation of God. That’s fundamental. It’s not incidental; it’s not accidental. And then, here’s the kind of reasoning. He said, “Well,” he said, “it’s only mentioned in two of the Gospels.” You see, you get the idea there of what people think of the Word of God. I mean, how many times does God have to say something in order for it to be true, if God can’t lie? Only mentioned in two of the gospels. Well, as a matter of fact, the other two Gospels don’t

mention His birth at all. So, I guess He wasn't born. Do you see the fallacy of that? The Gospel of John doesn't mention repentance, so I suppose you think that repentance is not important. It's a major doctrine. But, you see, if Jesus Christ were not born of a virgin, then He's a son of Adam, and in Adam all die. If Jesus Christ is not virgin born, if He's not the Son of God, then He has a sinful nature. If He has a sinful nature, He's not sinless. If He's not sinless, He cannot be the sinless substitutionary sacrifice. If there is no sinless substitutionary sacrifice, there's no atonement. If there's no atonement, there's no forgiveness. If there's no forgiveness, there's no new birth. If there's no new birth, friend, there's no hope for you or for me. If you have questions concerning the virgin birth, you have difficulty with the character of the Word of God. You have difficulty with the character of Jesus, because He has a sinful nature. You have difficulty with the character of Mary, because Mary then would simply be a harlot, if Jesus were born in the circumstances described there in the Word of God, where Joseph said, "We've not yet come together as husband and wife." And, friend, I want to say something to you. If you have difficulty with the virgin birth, you've got difficulty with your own character, because you're doubting the Word of God. But that's what we're about.

And here's this group who say, "Well, you believe in the virgin birth. I believe in the virgin birth. But it's not necessary to believe in the virgin birth. That is not a cardinal doctrine." Friend, that is the kind of thought, that is the kind of philosophy, that would take Southern Baptists down the road that every other major denomination has gone, and soon we would not have the verve and the vitality that we need.

I want to tell you there's something very wonderful happening now in the Southern Baptist Convention, and we're seeing for three years record baptisms overseas—in the last three years. In the last six years, our churches on our mission fields have doubled in six years. And we are seeing more missionaries appointed. We're seeing better gifts, higher, and more thrilling things happen than we have seen happen, and we are just getting ready. We have been in this battle. It has been hurtful. It has been harmful. It has been voracious sometimes. I have taken a lot of slings and arrows. I don't mind it. I've not yet resisted unto blood. It has taken a lot of energy, but I want you just to keep on in the battle for the Bible.

Now, I don't say a lot about this from the pulpit. Most of you who are here are almost amazed that I'm talking tonight about this. I don't do this, I mean, I generally don't do it, because the time is too precious up here. And I just want to stand up and open this book and crack back and preach rather than talking about denominational policy and politics. But you need to know this, because as you read the paper—I'm talking the denominational papers sometimes, and the secular papers—you need to keep a filter on your mind.

Now, having said that, let me just talk to you a little bit about the Word of God. Look,

if you will here, beginning in verse 18. Peter says, “Foreasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation—that means your meaningless life—received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. And then here’s the part I want to zero in on: “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently; being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word by which the gospel is preached unto you.”

## **I. The Power of the Word**

Now, I want to tell you why the battle for the Bible is so important. And, first of all, and I’m going to be quite brief, but I want to talk to you, first of all, of the power of the Word of God.

Number one: You were conceived by the Word of God. Look in verse 23: “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God...” Now when you were conceived in your mother’s womb, you were conceived by your father’s seed. When you were conceived for the new birth, the seed was your heavenly Father’s seed. It was the Word of God. “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.” You cannot get a new birth without the Word of God any more than you could get corn by planting marbles. Again, listen to James 1:18. Put this in the margin: “Of his own will begat he us—that is, He fathered us—with the word of truth...”

Now, in a conception there must be two. And what are the two that come together for us to have a conception? The Spirit of God and the Word of God coming together bring about the new birth. Look in verse 22: “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth—that’s the Bible—through the Spirit—that’s the Holy Spirit.” When these come together, then you are conceived by the Word of God. The Word of God and the Spirit of God produce the new birth. Now, that’s why the Bible is so important. And this seed is incorruptible.

Now, not only are you conceived by the Word of God, but you’re cleansed by the Word of God. Look in verse 22: “Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth...” It’s the Word of God that gives me life. It’s the Word of God that gives me purity.

How can you stay clean? “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.”

In the Old Testament, before the priest would go in to minister in the tabernacle, or in the temple, there was a big basin there. It was called a laver. And they would wash in that laver. And that laver typifies the Word of God. They would wash before they would work, and before they would serve. And the way that I stay clean, and the way that you stay clean, is daily bathing in the Word of God. We’re purified by the Word. God’s Word is like water that washes, and cleanses, and purifies us.

But not only are we conceived by the Word, and cleansed by the Word, but we are completed by the Word of God. Look in chapter 2:1–2: “Wherefore laying aside all malice and all guile, and in, and hypocrisies and envies and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” Tonight, as I was welcoming the new members—I meet with them every Sunday night at 5:30—I met a man, a dear man, who has just recently, though he is a grown, mature man—just recently—said, “I’ve just given my life to Christ.” I have just been baptized.” And he said, “There is so much that I don’t understand. It’s all new to me.” And I thought to myself, I’m almost envious of you—all of the wonderful, sweet things you’re going to learn if you’ll just keep your heart open to the truth, because, “As a newborn babe, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.”

How do you come to completion? How do you come to fullness? How do you come to maturity? By feeding on the Word of God. So many folks are so weak and malnourished and they look like they are anorexic spiritually, and I say to them, “Well, what’s wrong with you?” “I don’t know, pastor. I just don’t have any power in my prayer. I don’t have any joy in my life. I don’t have any zip in my testimony. I just don’t have any whatever it takes to live the Christian life.” I say, “Well, what could be wrong with this person?” Well, suppose you came to me, and rather than talking about your spiritual life, you talk about your physical life. And I say, “Well, you look mighty weak.” You say, “Yeah, I can hardly get up out of this chair. I’m just tired all the time. My hands tremble. I have palpitations. I have headaches. I just feel so weak, my knees are about to buckle.” I say, “My! What are you eating?” “Well, I’m not eating anything.” “What?” “No, I just don’t eat. Well, I take a snack every Sunday at 11:00. But that’s all. I mean, I just don’t eat.” I say, “You’re not feeding yourself? You’re not getting regular meals?” I don’t even have to be an M.D. to tell you what’s wrong with you. And, friend, there are some of you who are not strong spiritually, and I don’t have to be a rocket scientist to tell you what’s wrong with you. You’re not feeding on the Word of God. The Bible is to you what bread and meat and potatoes and vegetables are to your physical life. “As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.” And when you’re finished with the milk, then you can get in with the meat of the Word. And what a lot of

folks are doing is they're coming on Sunday, getting a thimble full of milk, and they spill half of that on the way out of church.

## **II. The Purity of the Word**

Now, we are conceived by the Word. We are cleansed by the Word. We're completed by the Word. That's the power of the Word. Let me talk to you about the purity of the Word. Look, if you will, in verses 22 and 23: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying—now look at this—the truth..."—underscore that phrase, the truth. Look in verse 23: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible..."—underscore that. How did the Word of God come to us? The Word of God came to us by the Holy Spirit. Men wrote it down, but the Holy Spirit moved, motivated, and impelled what they said.

Go back in chapter 1 and verse 10 and look at it. It talks about our salvation. And verse 10 says, "Of which salvation—this is 1 Peter 1:10—Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come to you." Now I don't know whether you understand what that verse is saying or not, but it's saying that prophets wrote something down, and then said to themselves, I wonder what that means. They inquired. They wrote about our salvation. They prophesied about our coming Messiah. They were writing about regeneration, the new birth, and all of this. But even they did not understand fully and completely what they were writing. And verse 11 says, "Searching what, or by what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." They were saying, "What does the Holy Spirit mean? Why did the Holy Spirit tell me to write that? What time is this going to take place? When is Messiah going to come? When will all of this be?" They did not even have an understanding completely of what they were writing. Why? Because the Bible says it was the Spirit in them that was testifying. What you have is, when you have the Bible, you have the writing of the Holy Spirit. Surely, He used human instrumentality. Surely, many times they understood what they were writing. Sometimes they did not. And, therefore, it is called not the word of man; it is the Word of God. And the author of the Bible is the Holy Spirit. Do you have that down? Look at it, verse 11: "...the Spirit, which was in them did signify, when it testified..." That's talking about the Holy Spirit of God. And so, therefore, as we talk about the Word of God, we speak of its inerrancy. What does that mean? It cannot err. It is God's Word. And a God of truth cannot speak error.

Now, the great battle today is over the Word of God. Some people think we ought not to get excited about it. But John Calvin wrote a long time ago, "A dog barks when his master is attacked. I would be a coward if I saw that God's truth is attacked and yet

would remain silent without giving any sound.” Charles Spurgeon, the greatest Baptist preacher who ever lived, said this, and I quote: “The turning point of the battle between those who hold the faith once delivered to the saints and their opponents lies in the true and real inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.” And then, Charles Spurgeon said, and I quote: “If we have in the Word of God no infallible standard of truth, we are at sea without a compass, and no danger from rough weather without can be equal to the loss within.” That is well said.

We have had here in our church Dr. J. Sidlow Baxter. Dr. Baxter is getting old now. What a stellar man of God he is. I wish that I had in me just a fragment of the knowledge that’s in that man. But J. Sidlow Baxter was correct when he said this, and I quote: “The biggest division between Christians is no longer between one denomination and another, but between those who accept the Bible as the inspired Word of God and those who do not.” That’s what he said. And then Dr. Louis Chafer wrote this—a great theologian, who is now in heaven, wrote of the Bible—he said, “It is not such a book as man would write if he could because it condemns him, or could write if he would because it surpasses him.” Isn’t that good?

Now so, look at the Bible. We’re talking now about the purity of the Bible. We talk about its inerrancy. And right on the heels of its inerrancy, you have its authority. Look again in verse 23: “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible—now look at this next phrase—by the word of God...” It is not the word of man. It is the Word of God. Therefore, it is absolutely, totally authoritative.

You see, a big question in any proposition is this: Says who? I can hold this up and say, “This is what God says. This is what God says. This is the Word of God.” The more liberal a professor is, the less he uses the Word of God, and he talks about the biblical materials, or the record of God’s revelation, or something like that. But God’s favorite terminology for this book is “The Word of God.” That’s what it is called. And, therefore, because it is the Word of God, there can be no stutter, no stammer, no apology, or no retreat.

Dr. Billy Graham—thank God for Billy Graham, whom we all love—gave this testimony. He said, when he was studying in his earlier years, he had questions, problems, about the Word of God. And there are many questions. There are many things hard to understand about the Bible. And he found himself wavering, and he felt that he had doubts about the Word of God. So he went off to the mountains to pray, to get it settled in his heart. And he said to himself, I know that the Bible has to be the Word of God. I’ve seen its transforming power in so many lives. And he just laid it on a stump, and backed off, and said, “God, I accept it as Your Word. What I understand and what I do not understand I accept it as Your Word. I take it by faith, and I will trust You to make it clear to me what it means.” And Billy began to have power, incredible power,

on his ministry. And, you know, Billy Graham, through the years, before multiplied millions, has pointed that bony finger out, and says, “The Bible says—the Bible says.” And that’s where the power is.

Think of its inerrancy. Think of its authority. Think of its vitality. Look, if you will, in verse 23: “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth...” This is not like any other book. This book is alive. Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God is quick...” That means zao. It’s alive. It’s the word we get “zoo” from—“zoology.” It is quick and energetic—powerful. It pulsates with power. Not only do you read the Bible; the Bible reads you.

When I was a younger preacher—notice, I said younger—when I was a younger preacher, I had a fear. Do you know what it was? I’d run out of stuff to preach. Really. I thought, well, I’ve preached all there is in the Bible to preach, and I’ve just run out. But, oh, now I’m afraid I won’t live long enough to even step inside the door of God’s Word. How incredible is this book! I feel like saying with the apostle Paul, “Oh, the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out! Who hath known the mind of the Lord? Who hath been his counselor?”

Dr. R. A. Torrey once said, “Many men of strongest intellect, or marvelous power of penetration, of broadest culture, have given a lifetime to the study of the Bible, and no man who has really studied it has ever dreamed of saying he has gotten to the bottom of the book.”

New light is constantly breaking forth from the Word of God. The fact that it has proved itself unfathomable for these centuries is positive proof that in it are hidden the infinite treasures of the wisdom of God. The inerrancy, the authority, the vitality, of the Word of God.

Next, I want you to notice the eternity of the Word of God. Look again in verse 23: “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.” The Bible cannot fade or decay. It is timeless truth. And the gnawing tooth of time and the foul breath of decay cannot erode its blessings. Thank God, the Bible has withstood all of the assaults and insults of the centuries: the cults who twist it, the liberals who water it down, the humanists who ignore it, the atheists who deny it, those who try to distort it.

The Reader’s Digest published a condensed version of the Bible. Leave it to the Reader’s Digest to do that. They said they had reduced the Old Testament by 50% and the New Testament by 25%. I’ll tell you a verse they left out—Revelation 22:18-19: “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add to these things, God shall add to him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall

take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city; and from the things which are written in this book.”

Friend, it is the Word of God. It is not to be tinkered with. It is not to be added to or taken from. Psalm 119:89 says, “Forever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.”

I have in my office a big Bible. It is right by a chest where I walk out to come to this pulpit. That Bible stays open to Psalm 119. I look at a verse from Psalm 119 each day before I step out here to preach, because it’s all about the Word of God. I want to give you the one that I looked at tonight that God gave me. It put a fire in my bones. And 119:111—I want you to look at it and see if you don’t love this great, great verse from the Word of God: “Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever: they are the rejoicing of my heart.” The Bible, friend, is timeless, ultimate, indestructible, infallible; it is eternal. That is the purity of the Word of God.

### **III. The Proclamation of the Word**

The last thing I want you to see is the proclamation of the Word of God. Go back to our text, 1 Peter 1, and look in verse 25. Now, he says, “But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word by which the gospel is preached unto you.”

How will Bellevue Baptist proclaim it? How will Adrian Rogers preach it? How will you teach it? What should Southern Baptists do with the Bible? We should proclaim it faithfully—faithfully. Now, don’t stop, no matter what happens. Young people, after a while, this generation will be gone, and I want to say to you younger people who are members of this church: For God’s sake, for your sake, for Jesus’ sake, for this church’s sake, don’t forsake the Word of God. Stay with it. Be faithful to God’s Word. I don’t care what the scholars say. I don’t care what the politicians say. I don’t care what your peers and neighbors say. I don’t care what other denominations do. You stick with the Word.

There are two reasons I preach the Bible. Number one: I’m not smart enough to preach anything else. I preach five or six times every week. I’d run out of stuff if I had to draw from my own well. But, thank God, I’ve got a bottomless well to draw from. And I’m not smart enough to preach anything else. Second reason I preach it: I’m too smart to preach anything else, because I know the power of the Word of God. I’ve preached it long enough now, folks; it’s not a theory to me. I know the power of the Word of God. I’ve been standing by it, preaching it, loving it, watching it change my life, and other lives, in time and for eternity. We need to proclaim it faithfully.

We need to proclaim it fully. It deals with every area of life. Yes, read the newspapers. Yes, know human nature. Yes, understand current events. But see them all through the lens of the Word of God.

Proclaim it fully. And proclaim it freely. Look at it: “But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word by which the gospel is preached unto you.” Do you know

what the word gospel means? It means “good news.” What do you do with good news? Folks, you tell it faithfully, fully, freely. As God gives us breath, we’ll stand up for Jesus and His Word. Say amen.

## **Conclusion**

Thank You, Lord, for letting us be here tonight. Thank You for this church that has been built upon the solid rock of Christ and His Word. And, Lord, we pray that You’ll help us not to be mean-spirited, but not to be soft-headed. Lord, help us to be warm-hearted and clear-headed as we stand for Your Word. And give us courage and love. And, Lord, I pray that Bellevue will always be known as a lighthouse for the lost, and a greenhouse for the saved, that, Lord, we might be coming to Christ, and growing in Christ, as we feed on the Word of God. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

# The Ministry of the Word of God

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** July 28, 1999

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 Peter 1:22–2:2

*“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:”*

1 PETER 1:22

## Outline

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- A. To Be Conceived
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- C. To Be Completed

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## Introduction

I want you to take God’s Word, the Bible, and want you to find 1 Peter chapter 1 and I’m going to begin reading in verse 22. 1 Peter chapter 1, we begin in just a moment, in verse 22, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently. Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the Word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” And then going right on into chapter 2, “Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby.” There has not been a man that has been called into the ministry but what feels inadequate. And when others hear that he has been called, they think him unworthy.

I can remember being in my bedroom with the window open when my dad and another man set on our patio and my dad told that man, a man that I respected and admired very much, that Adrian wants to be a preacher, a minister. I can remember that man saying, as though it were yesterday, “he’ll never do it”—“he’ll never do it, he won’t make

it.” Well, I want to tell you, had not the Lord God put it into my heart that would have greatly discouraged me. But I thank God that there was a voice that told me that God had called me and that I would by His grace be adequate.

I found the other day something that’s very interesting. It’s an imaginary story. It’s about a personnel management consultant dealing with personnel. And it imagines that Jesus might have gone to this consulting firm to ask this consulting firm what they thought about the twelve that He had chosen to be His disciples and His apostles. It’s quite interesting, I want to share it with you. I’m going to read it. It’s a letter to Jesus, son of Joseph, Woodcrafters Carpenter Shop, Nazareth 25992 from Jordan Management Consultants, Jerusalem 26544. “Dear Sir, Thank you for submitting the resumes of the twelve men you have picked for management positions in your new organization. All of them have now taken our battery of tests; and we have not only run the results through our computer, but also arranged personal interviews for each of them with our psychologist and vocational aptitude consultant. The profiles of all tests are included, and you will want to study each of them carefully.

As part of our service, and for your guidance, we make some general comments much as auditor will include some general statements. This is given as a result of staff consultation and comes without any additional fee.

It is the staff opinion that most of your nominees are lacking in background, education, and vocational aptitude for the type of enterprise you are undertaking. They do not have the team concept. We would recommend that you continue your search for persons of experience in managerial ability and proven capability.

Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper. Andrew has absolutely no qualities of leadership. The two brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, place personal interest above company loyalty. Thomas demonstrates a questioning attitude that would tend to undermine morale. And we feel that it is our duty to tell you that Matthew had been blacklisted by the Greater Jerusalem Better Business Bureau—remember he was a tax collector folks—“James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus definitely have radical leanings, and they have both registered a high score on the manic-depressive scale”—but now listen to this—“Of all the candidates, however, one shows great potential. He is a man of ability and resourcefulness, he meets people well, he has a keen business mind, and has contacts in high places. He is highly motivated, ambitious, and responsible. We recommend Judas Iscariot as your controller and right-hand man. All of the other profiles are self-explanatory. We wish you every success in your new venture. Sincerely yours, Jordan Management Consultants.”

Well that just goes to show us folks that God choses things that the world calls “not worth much.” You see your calling brethren: How that not many mighty, not many noble are called. But, you know, God can take a man, cleanse that man, fill that man, put

God's Word in that man and use that man if he will be a man of the Word. I want to take our scripture tonight, and I want to just leave three thoughts in your heart about the ministry of the Word of God. What would you do and what should you do if you want to be a minister of the Word of God? And you don't have to be an ordained minister to be a minister of the Word of God, so this is not just a message to this quartet tonight. It's a message to every man and women that names the name of Jesus.

## **I. You Must Receive the Word**

Number One: You must receive the Word of God personally into your life. Let me tell you what the Word of God will do for you.

### **A. To Be Conceived**

First of all folks you are literally conceived by the Word of God. Just as a baby is conceived in its mother's womb, you are conceived by the Word of God. The Word of God is a seed that comes into you and produces life. Look in verse 23: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God." Friend in order to see Heaven, in order to have spiritual life, you must have a new birth. And in order to have that new birth, you must receive the Word of God. There's no way possible that anybody can be saved apart from the Word of God. The entrance of thy Word gives light. This Word is a life. James 1:18 says, "Of his own will begat he us with the Word of truth." Friends we're conceived by this Word. It was the truth of this Word that entered into me and new life began in me, and I was born again.

### **B. To Be Cleansed**

But not only are we conceived by the Word of God, folks we're cleansed by the Word of God. Look in verse 22, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love." This Word of God will wash you and cleanse you. That's the reason that it's so important that day-by-day, I want to say to these four and every one of us, that we let the Word of God dwell in us richly. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way by taking heed thereto according to thy Word." You have purified your souls by obeying the truth. There's no way possible friend that you'll live a victorious life without staying in the Bible—the Word of God.

### **C. To Be Completed**

But I want to say thirdly, not only are you conceived by the Word and cleansed by the Word, but you're also completed by the Word of God you're made strong by the Word of God. Notice in verse 2 of chapter 2: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby." God wants you to be mature. This Word will be to your spiritual life what milk is to a newborn baby.

Suppose you were to come to me and you were to say to me, "You know Pastor, I

just don't feel good. I can hardly get out of bed. I can hardly move across the room. My knees feel like rubber. I have palpitations around the heart. I've got a headache. My muscles are weak. I can hardly get my breath." I say, "Boy you are really in bad shape." "Yes, I really am. I'm just so weak." I say, "Well maybe it's something you ate." "No I don't eat anything." "You don't eat anything?" "No, I just don't eat. I don't know what's wrong with me. I'm so weak." I say, "Well, look, it's simple what's wrong with you, you're starved. You need to take some nourishment." People say, "You know I just don't understand why I'm so weak in my Christian life. I don't understand why I don't have any strength. I don't understand why other Christians seem to be so strong, and I'm so weak." Cause you're not feeding on the Word of God. Listen, you are made strong by the Word of God as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word. I've been around enough newborn babes to know one thing folks, they are interested in one thing and it's "MILK." Not a one of them has sent out an order to have the wallpaper changed. They don't give a hoot about that. They are born with a craving for milk, a suckling instinct. That's the way it is to be with you. You're to be like a newborn babe, to crave the Word of God. And so, if you would be a minister of the Word, first of all you must receive the Word.

## **II. You Must Respect the Word**

But secondly, not only must you receive the Word, you ought to respect the Word. Look again beginning in verse 22, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently. Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the Word of the Lord endureth forever."

I want to say several things gentlemen about this Bible, as you respect it. I want you to respect the inerrancy of the Word of God. Verse 22 calls it, "the truth." See you have purified your souls in obeying the truth. Verse 23 calls it, "the Word of God." There's no need to argue about it, no quibble about it. If it's the Word of God and God is a God of truth, then it can't have error in it. Our God of truth cannot inspire error. It is the product of the Spirit of God; it is thereby totally infallible because God is infallible.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the greatest Baptist preacher who ever lived, said this: "The turning point of the battle between those who hold the faith once delivered to the saints, and their opponents, lies in the true and real inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. If we have in the Word of God no infallible standard of truth, we are at sea without a compass and no danger from rough weather without can be equal to the loss within." J. Sidlow Baxter was correct in my estimation when he said, and I'm quoting him directly

now, “The biggest division between Christians is no longer between one denomination and another, but between those who accept the Bible as the inspired Word of God and those who do not.” People are lining up folks either for the Word or against the Word.

Lewis Chafer wrote this: “The Bible is not such a book as man would write if he could because it condemns him, or could write if he would, because it surpasses him.” Thank God for the inerrancy of the Bible. But not only should you respect its inerrancy, but if you respect its inerrancy, then you have to respect its authority, because it is the Word of God. Now when we were little kids, my brother, my sister would say, “Adrian go do this or go do that” and I would lip off at them and say, “Says who?”. And every now and then they’d say, “Daddy says so,” and I’d say, “Okay”—Daddy says so, says who.

You see when the Bible speaks God speaks. Awhile back I had the joy of spending several hours with Dr. Billy Graham in his home in Montreat, North Carolina and we set before a fire and talked and it was one of the most enjoyable times that I’ve spent. We had a cup of coffee and I asked him to tell me again about that time in his life when he got this matter settled about the Word of God. Billy Graham told me how he, as a youngster, had heard all of the machinations and all of the protestations of the liberal theologians, and he was being bombarded on every side. He said, “I went along in the mountains to get it settled. I took my Bible. I read it over and over and over again. I went out there and I prayed to God. Finally I knew I had to make a decision and I said ‘Lord God I have preached this Bible already enough to see its mighty effect, its power in the lives of men. I may not understand everything. I may not be able to answer all of the arguments, but God I believe that book is your Word and I’m going to preach it that way.’” And I believe if there’s been any secret to the ministry of Bill Graham, I know he’s made mistakes, I’ve made them, you’re made them, we’ve all made them, but God has honored one this: Billy has a way of preaching and saying, “the Bible says”—the Bible says.

Oh folks the inerrancy of God leads to the authority of the Word of God. But I want you to think not only of its inerrancy, and not only of its authority, but I want you to think of its vitality. Look again if you will in verse 23, “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth.” This book is alive. You read other books, but this book reads you. This Bible pulsates with life. Jesus said, “The words that I speak unto you they are Spirit and they are life.” Hebrews 12 says, “The Word of God is quick and powerful.” That literally means it’s alive, it is zoe and energeis. It is quick. It is powerful. Because it’s alive, it has power.

Friend I know this Bible has power. I’ve preached it long enough to see the power of God. Brother Bob I’ve had folks come to listen to me and they wonder, “Who is this guy? Where’d he come from? He’s another one of those religious flimflam artists.” You know people don’t understand that I can see them. Can you see me? I’ve watched them. They

sit there and look out under their eyebrows as if to say, “What’s his angle?” You know we’ve been lied to and jipped and conned and maneuvered and been flimflammed and pushed around so much that all of us have a built-in sales resistance, don’t we? But I’ve watched, dear friend, as I have taken the Word of God Sunday after Sunday after Sunday and preached that Word.

Do you know what the Bible says about the Word of God—“Is not my Word like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces.” You can take the hardest rock and a sledgehammer and just begin to tap—thump, thump, thump—it’ll break. By the way, which tap breaks it, the last one, or all of them? Think about it tonight in your sleep. You just keep tapping and the hardest rock will break. “Is not my Word like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces.” Why? Because folks, there is power in the Word of God. You’ll never tell me there’s not power in the Word of God. I’ve preached it so long. I know there’s power in the Word of God. Friend I have seen it change lives. I’m not talking about preacher’s little silly outlines and illustrations and all that. I am talking about this Word of God because of its inerrancy and because of its authority and because of its vitality.

But I want to speak not only about those things, dear friend; I want you to think about its eternity. Look in verses 23 and following, verse 23 says, “The Word of God lives and it abides forever.” Look in verse 25: “The Word of the Lord endures forever.” The Bible cannot fade. It cannot decay. It is timeless truth. It was here before you got here. It will be here when you are gone. There was a Roman emperor whose name was Diocletian. He hated the Word of God. He called in all copies of the Word of God that there were, burned them and erected a monument and he said this, “The name Christian is now extinguished.” Diocletian is gone friend. I am preaching the Word of God tonight. The Bible is always being attacked. Almost every week you’ll read something in some secular magazine or newspaper about why the Bible is wrong. You have the cults who twist the Bible. You have the liberals who water the Bible down. You have the humanists who ignore the Bible. You have so-call Christians, many of them, who claim to love it but they don’t study it. There’s enough dust on some Bibles to write “damnation” with your fingertips. “These hath got married and no man shall pardon.” Dust on the Bible and drought in the heart. But in spite of all of that, in spite of all of that dear friends, the Bible goes on endless, timeless, dateless, measureless. “Wherever O Lord thy Word is settled in Heaven.” Don’t be afraid of the enemies of the Bible, they’ll not destroy the Bible.

Years ago I read a story of a man who was commissioned to build a wall four feet high that could not be destroyed. So he said, “Alright, very well,” he said, “I’ll build it four feet high and five feet wide.” He said, “If they knock it over it’ll be taller than it was before they knocked it over.” And that’s the way the Bible is dear friend. People come

against the Bible but the Word of God lives and abides forever. It's timeless, ultimate, indestructible, infallible, and eternal.

### **III. We Must Release the Word**

Now one last thing I want to say. Not only must we receive the Bible, we are conceived by it, we're cleansed by it, we're completed by it. Not only must we respect the Bible, but oh ladies and gentlemen, we need to go that third step and we need to release the Bible. We need to preach the Bible. Look in verse 25: "Let the Word of the Lord endureth forever and this is the Word by which the gospel is preached unto you." How should we preach it? Not always from the pulpit. These men who are being ordained tonight, not a one of them will be what we will call a "pulpit" preacher. But every one of them will be a minister of the Word of God. And how should we release the Word of God? Well we need to release it faithfully. I've tried to be faithful to the Bible. I've had faults and God knows I have many of them and I hate them. But I believe if you would have followed my ministry for these thirty-five years, you'd say, "He's been a man of the Bible." Folks I believed it when I began and I believe it more now. I'm not finding hidden flaws—I'm finding hidden beauties. It's an amazing book and the more I study it the greater respect I have for the Word of God. I'm going to be faithful to the Word of God. And I'll tell you if there ever comes a time in my life when I don't believe the Bible is the Word of God, I'm going to be honest enough to resign and get out of the ministry. Rather than stand behind the sacred desk and prostitute the ministry. Preach it faithfully.

Do you know why I preach the Word of God? Two reasons. Reason number one: I'm not smart enough to preach anything else. Oh I'm not the dumbest guy in the world either. God's given me a fair mind. I could study hard and I could make some good speeches. I could give a few orations. I could talk on current events. I could give some moralistic book reviews, but after a while I'd run out of gas. I've been here fifteen years standing up here talking. I preach about six times a week, every week, and sometimes more than that. You know why I preach the Bible? I'm not smart enough to preach anything else. Folks I've got to have something to draw from. I've got to have some truth. I've got to have something behind me. I've got to have a well to dig out of. If I didn't have the Bible after a while you'd get sick and tired of listening to me, or anybody else for that matter. I don't care who, you'd be climbing the walls wanting to get out. But you don't get sick and tired of the Word of God. One of the reasons that I preach the Bible is, folks, I'm not smart enough to preach anything else.

I'll tell you the second reason. I'm too smart to preach anything else. My mama didn't raise a fool. Hey folks why preach anything else when you've got this? "Sweeter than the honeycomb." Oh this is the Word by which the gospel is preached unto you. We are

to preach it faithfully. We are to preach it fully. I try to preach the whole counsel of God. I try to preach from the Old Testament and the New Testament. I try to preach on doctrine and practical living. I try to preach on prophesy and praise. I try to give a balanced diet from the Word of God. And I want to say with the apostle Paul, "I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God." Pray for me that I'll do that. That I will not just settle down in one little corner of the Word of God and go to seed on something, but that I will give a balanced ministry. And I want you men who are being ordained to do that. Friend release it faithfully, release it fully and release it freely. Just give it out. It's like sowing seeds. As newborn babes desire it, but as men of God share it and preach it and proclaim it. Those early Christians argued very little about it. They lived it, loved it, stored it in their hearts, and poured it out as white-hot lava. Everywhere they went, they went scattering precious seed. Men of God be men of The Book, and God will bless your ministry.

## **Conclusion**

I want to ask those of you tonight who may not know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, if you'd like to know Him as your personal Savior? I want to help you to know Him. I want to tell you tonight how you can know that you know that your sin is forgiven. How you can know beyond any shout of a doubt that if you died you'd go straight to Heaven. How you can have God in your heart. And it is by trusting Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. He is the Son of God. He died on the cross for your sins. He was buried. He was raised again the third day by the power of God. He is shown to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. And the Bible says, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." To be saved means that every sin is forgiven. That Christ lives in your heart and when you die you'll go to Heaven. You would pray a prayer like this, "Lord Jesus I need you. I want you. I open my heart. I receive you as my Lord and Savior. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin and save me." I promise you, He will save you if you ask Him and trust Him to do so. Father I pray that many in this place tonight will say "Yes" to Christ and be saved. In His name I pray, Amen.

# Timeless Truth for Tough Times

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: January 30, 1983**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 1:22–2:2**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Infallible Word of God
- II. The Inexhaustible Word of God
- III. The Incorruptible Word of God
- IV. The Indestructible Word of God
- V. The Indispensable Word of God
  - A. It Is Indispensable for Salvation
  - B. It Is Indispensable for Sanctification
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Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles and I want you to turn to 1 Peter 1. You know that we are preaching through 1 Peter, and the title of our series is also the title of the message this morning. And the title of the series and the title of the message is this: “Timeless Truth for Tough Times”—“Timeless Truth for Tough Times.” And I want us to begin reading where we left off—1 Peter 1:22: *“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever...”*—and, by the way, this is the phrase that gives us our title, “Timeless Truth for Tough Times”—“*the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.*” Now, let’s continue to read right on through: *“Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.”* (1 Peter 1:22–2:2)

I’ve watched the news with amazement this past week, the storms that lashed the California coast. Have you seen that? Have you seen those relentless waves as they come in and tear those beautiful, gorgeous mansions and beachfront villas apart like they were made of matchsticks, and just take the piers and the boats and all of the roads and wash them away with the onslaught of wave after wave after wave on the

beach? And people stand there. For a while, they put up their sandbags. And after a while, they just stand back and watch as all they've dreamed for and schemed for and some of them have sold their souls for is washed out to sea. And I thought, "How like our times that is!" These are tough times. And it seems that one wave after another after another after another seems to be beating upon the beach of human existence. And so many are seeing things that they've held so dearly just being washed away. And they seem to have nothing solid and nowhere to stand. Friend, in times like these, we need a place to stand and something solid to stand on. And I want to tell you that is the Word of God—the Word of God—the rock, the Gibraltar of God's Word.

Now, friend, when you stand there, you may tremble on the rock, but it will never tremble under you. And I want us to learn something about God's timeless truth for these tough times in which we live, because Peter was living in tough times. He was living at the beginning of an age, and those were tough days. We're living at the end of an age, and these are perilous times. And yet we have God's Word to see us through. I want you to learn with me this morning several things that Peter teaches us about the Word of God.

## **I. The Infallible Word of God**

Number one: It is the infallible Word of God. Now we're going to go backward just a few moments and pick up two verses in chapter 1, verses 10 and 11, that we've not read yet this morning, but we've already read in previous messages. Peter is talking about our wonderful salvation, and he says, *"Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time"*—now, notice this next phrase—*"the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it"*—the Spirit—*"testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."* (1 Peter 1:10–11) Now, what Peter is saying is that centuries ago the Old Testament prophets as they wrote the Holy Scripture looked forward and they saw the sufferings of Christ and the glory of Christ. That is, they saw His crucifixion. They saw His coronation. They saw His first coming. They saw His second coming. They saw the cross, and they saw the crown.

Now, how did they do it? How did they prophesy these things so long ago before they ever came to pass? Well, he tells us in verse 11 that the Spirit of Christ was in them. That is, this is not the word of man; it is the Word of God. And this same Peter went on to say in his second book that *"holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."* (2 Peter 1:21) And the Apostle Paul says—and you might want to jot this down in your margin—in 2 Timothy 3:16 that, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God."* (2 Timothy 3:16) That is, all Scripture is the breath of God, just as my words now are my breath coming over my larynx and vocal cords formed and articulated by my

tongue, my teeth, and my lips. The Scripture is the breath of God. It is the Word of God, not the word of man. And since God is infallible, the Bible is infallible. Since God cannot err, the Scriptures cannot err. And so, since the Bible says it was the Spirit of Christ that was in them that did testify, I without stutter, stammer, fear, and apology say that the Bible is the infallible Word of God.

Here at Bellevue Church we believe in what we call verbal, plenary inspiration. *Verbal, plenary*: You want to read those words and understand those words and write them down. *Verbal*, coming from the Latin word *verbum*, meaning “word.” We believe in the word-for-word inspiration of the Scriptures: not just simply that God gave the thoughts; God gave the very words. Now, some people say, “Oh, you don’t have to worry about the words; it’s just the thoughts that matter.” Well, friend, you can’t have thoughts without words any more than you could have mathematics without numbers. And if you change the numbers, you change the math. And if you change the words, you change the thought. And you remember what Jesus said in Matthew 4:4, that “*man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*” (Matthew 4:4) And so, surely, God used human personalities. Sure, God shaped and molded the lives of these men who wrote the Scriptures. Surely, He did not always give it by mechanical dictation. Sometimes God told men exactly, precisely, what to write, and spoke to them, and they wrote it just like a secretary taking a letter—but not most of the time. Most of the time God the Holy Spirit moved on their inside and took their personalities and their backgrounds and all of it in a strange, wonderful, mysterious way. But the finished product is a word-for-word inspired book. Every word has proceeded out of the mouth of God.

We believe in verbal inspiration, and we believe in plenary inspiration. Now, the word *plenary* comes from the Latin word *plenus*, meaning “full.” That is, we believe in full inspiration. The Scriptures are fully inspired. Some parts are not more inspired than other parts. Now, some parts may be more inspiring than other parts. I mean, if I were shipwrecked on a desert island, I’d much rather have the book of Romans than, say, 2 Chronicles. Hadn’t you? Surely! But that’s not to say that 2 Chronicles is any less inspired than the book of Romans.

Now, friend, there is progressive revelation. That is, God started with the dawn of human civilization and history as we know it, and He revealed Himself progressively, unfolded His plan down through the centuries until we have the full-orbed revelation in Jesus Christ. Thank God for that. But now, wait a minute. That is progressive revelation, but not progressive inspiration. And the words that God first gave were just as inspired as the words that God last gave, because these men, even in the Old Testament, the Bible says, they were not speaking; it was the Spirit of God that spoke in them.

Now you say, “Well, why make such a big point about it?” Ladies and gentlemen,

there is a battle raging today over the Word of God. And if you do not believe in these days that you have an infallible Bible, then you're going to be swept away by the storm that is coming. John Calvin, for whom we named the theological system called Calvinism, said this: "A dog barks when his master is attacked. I would be a coward if I saw that God's truth is attacked and yet remained silent without giving a sound." I say *amen*.

And, you know, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, whom we preachers think was perhaps the greatest preacher who ever lived except the Apostle Paul, Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, "The turning point of the battle between those who hold the faith once delivered to the saints and their opponents lies in the true and real inspiration of the Holy Scriptures." And then Mr. Spurgeon went on to say, "If we have in the Word of God no infallible standard of truth,"—listen to this—"we are at sea without a compass. And no danger from rough weather without can be equal to the loss within."

And you know, dear Dr. J. Sidlow Baxter, who's spoken from our pulpit before and will be here again this spring, Dr. Baxter said something in one of his books that I have copied for you—he said, "The biggest division between Christians is no longer between one denomination and another, but between those who accept the Bible as the inspired Word of God and those who do not." That is where the division is in these last days. But thank God for the rock of God's Word. It is given by the breath of God. The Holy Spirit of God was in these prophets.

## **II. The Inexhaustible Word of God**

So, put it down: First of all, it is the infallible Word of God. Secondly, it is the inexhaustible Word of God. Now, look in verse 11. It tells us that these prophets were *"searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."* (1 Peter 1:11) Now, only did they write it as the Holy Spirit told them to write it, but after they wrote it, these prophets themselves had to search and scrutinize and study and pray over what they had written. You see, the Bible is deep. As a matter of fact, the Bible is inexhaustible. And you can search it and pray over it, and search it and pray over, and you'll always find more and more and more.

When I was a young preacher, nineteen years of age, I was called to pastor a little church, the First Baptist Church of Fellsmere, Florida, out near the edge of the glades. Most of you have never heard of it—a little town. I pastored the First Baptist Church, but it was also the last Baptist church, and also the only Baptist church out there, and just that one little church. I pastored that church out there, and I knew so little. But they heard me preach one time and called me after the first sermon. So I had to preach again, and I preached another one, and then another one. And, folks, by then, I was

finished. A panic gripped my heart. I said, “I’ve preached it all. I mean, there’s nothing left.” I had preached to them the whole Bible. I could not think. And I said, “I’ve got to come next Sunday and next Sunday and next Sunday, and they’re going to be listening to me. And I’ve already done it. Shall I start and preach again what I’ve already preached?” And I cannot tell you the fear that gripped my heart.

Now, today, I have a fear. My fear today is that I’ll not live long enough to delve into this book and to share and explain the marvelous truths that are in this book. Every now and then, somebody will say to me, “Pastor, I really appreciate the way you know the Word of God. I really appreciate the strategic grasp of the Scriptures that you have.” And I want to crawl under a rock when they say that, because, friend, I know that I have not begun to approximate one iota of a scintilla of the full-orbed revelation of God that is in this book.

Dr. R. A. Torrey said this—and, by the way, anything you read by Dr. Torrey is good. He was a preacher of another generation, one time the pastor of Moody Church and superintendent of Moody Bible Institute—Dr. Torrey said this: “Many men of strongest intellect, of marvelous power of penetration, of broadest culture, have given a lifetime for the study of the Bible. And no man who has really studied it has ever dreamed of saying he has gotten to the bottom of the book. New light is constantly breaking forth from the Word of God. The fact that it has proved itself unfathomable for these centuries is positive proof that in it are hidden the infinite treasures of the wisdom of God. And no scholar who is worth his salt would ever say he’s mastered the Bible.”

I’ve been studying the Bible now seriously for thirty-five years. I’m not finding hidden flaws. I’m finding hidden beauties. But I come with a greater and greater humility to the Word of God, and yet with a keener and keener anticipation. Even a brilliant scholar like the Apostle Paul, a man to whom the Lord revealed Himself in a vision, a man who was mighty in intellect and mighty in spirit, said in Romans 11:33–34, “*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?*” (Romans 11:33–34) Oh, thank God for the inexhaustible Word of God!

### **III. The Incorruptible Word of God**

The Bible says that these Old Testament prophets searched the Scriptures. Jesus said, “*Search the scriptures.*” (John 5:39) Are you searching the Bible? I mean, are you? Or are you just casually, carelessly, reading the Word of God? I want to tell you, my friend, it is the infallible Word of God. I want to tell you it is the inexhaustible Word of God. I want to say, thirdly, it is the incorruptible Word of God. Look with me now in verse 23: “*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God,*

*which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever.”* (1 Peter 1:23–25)

Everything we know, ladies and gentlemen, has in it the seeds of decay. And everything, no matter how beautiful, how glorious, how exquisitely fine, is decaying and passing away. Look at these flowers this morning. I mean, aren't they beautiful? Can you get this camera right up here tight on these flowers this morning? I want our television audience to see. And it never comes through just as beautiful on television as it does just in reality. Oh, how that reflects the handiwork of God! But if you think those are beautiful now, I'd like for you to have a look at them a month from now. What do you think they're going to look like a month from now, if indeed there is a vestige of them left? For the Bible says, *“For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever.”* That's what he's saying.

Did you know that in the Naval Observatory in Washington, D.C., they keep there the clock that we set all the rest of our clocks by? This clock is in a near-perfect vacuum. It rests on pylons that go down deep into the earth to keep it from vibration. It is electrically wound every twenty-eight seconds. And it's a very fine chronometer, but it still gets out of time. And they say it varies every six months about one fifty-thousandth of a second. And so they have to reset this clock so we can set the rest of our clocks by it. And you know what they do? They have a telescope. And they put that telescope out to a fixed star. And in that telescope are some cross bars, not made of human hair, because that's too wide; made of a spider's web. And at a fixed moment, that star comes across those crosshairs, and at that moment they set their clock by God's clock.

But I want you to know that not only do our clocks run down, but even this universe is running down. And one day even those stars will splinter and fade. But Jesus said, “Not one jot nor one tittle shall pass from this book. Heaven and earth may pass away, but not one jot, one tittle, will fail from the Word of God.” (Matthew 5:18) And the foul breath of decay and the gnawing tooth of time and the mossy fingers of corruption will not affect God's Word, for the Bible says, *“Forever, O LORD,”—“Forever, O Lord”—“thy word is settled in heaven.”* (Psalm 119:89) How we thank God for the incorruptible Word of God!

#### **IV. The Indestructible Word of God**

Now, let me tell you something else about the Word of God: It is the indestructible Word of God. Look again in the last part of verse 23. It speaks of *“the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”* (1 Peter 1:23) It has no seeds of decay within itself. Neither can any man destroy it from without.

Now, many have tried to murder the message. Many have tried to kill the book. And they've not been able to do it. Men scorned it. Men have burned it. Men have laughed at it. Men have made laws against it. There was a time in Scottish history when to own a Bible was a crime worthy of death. People ridicule it. It has many enemies today. Diocletian was a Roman emperor. He hated Christians. And he knew that the source of Christianity and the strength of Christianity was the Word of God. So he demanded that all copies of the Scriptures be destroyed. And he brought all of the copies, he thought, that were in existence, had them burned, burned a copy of the Word of God, the last copy, so he thought, and erected a monument over it—chiseled in marble: “The name of Christian is extinguished.” Diocletian had “destroyed” the Word of God. Did he? Anybody here have a Bible, would you hold it high today? Hold it up high—way up there! Television, can you just kind of sweep. Just hold it up and let's let the people at home see this. Wave them around. It's not showing on the camera very good. All right now, I think old Diocletian was wrong, don't you? He was wrong.

All right, you see, the Word of God abides forever. And, dear friend, even if you were to destroy every written copy of it, *“For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.”* It is the indestructible Word of God. When I was in college, I had one professor said he knew the Bible was the Word of God because it stood up under so much shoddy preaching. And the more I think about that, there's a lot of wisdom there. I mean, have you listened to some of the stuff that passes as preaching the Word of God? I mean, when you listen to so many fakers and so many charlatans and so many people who do not know the Word of God, and yet it persists, it stays, it's precious, it is powerful—today it endures forever—thank God for this Bible.

People have ridiculed the Bible, but I think—I know—that the Bible will withstand that. The cults have twisted the Bible. The Bible will withstand that. The humanists have ignored the Bible. The Bible will withstand that. Some of those of us who are Bible-believing, conservative Christians have sinned against the Bible by not studying it, by not believing it, and by not practicing it. But there's a subtle attack on the Word of God that's come in our last days.

Did you know that the *Reader's Digest* has now published a condensed version of the Bible? And someone will say, “Oh, how sweet! Now I won't have to see the movie.” A condensed version of the Bible: they have condensed the Old Testament by fifty percent, and they have condensed the New Testament by twenty-five percent. That is, they have gone through it and taken out what they consider to be the dull passages, the superfluous passages, the redundant passages, the confusing passages, and they have condensed the Bible for us nicely. I want to tell you it is a diabolical attack on the Word of God, whether they meant it to be that way or not. Interestingly enough, as they condensed the New Testament, there was a verse that they left out of the New

Testament in their condensing of the New Testament: it is Revelation 22:18–19. They left this out of the condensed version, *“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add to him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city; and from the things which are written in this book.”* (Revelation 22:18–19)

Now, friend, I want to tell you something. I have no difficulty whatever with a person taking a portion of the Scripture and distributing that portion of the Scripture. If he wants to print the whole Gospel of John and say, “Here’s the Gospel of John,” fine. If he wants to print the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel of John and say, “Here’s the fourteenth chapter,” fine. If he wants to get John 14:6 and say, “Here is verse 6,” that is fine. But when any man has the unmitigated gall to go into the Word of God and to edit it down, no matter how sincere he may be, I’d hate to give an account to my God over that matter.

But there are a lot of people say, “Oh, you know, I just think that’s sweet. Now I just don’t have to wade through all that.” Listen, my friend. Jesus said, *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”* (Matthew 4:4) There is an attack today on the Word of God, and it is coming from so many quarters and from so many places that we as Christians had better wake up and remember that God has given us His Word, and it is, thank God, hallelujah, the indestructible Word of God. And I want to tell you, you throw this old book in the flame, and it’s going to come out without even the smell of smoke in its garments.

I heard of a man one time who was told to build a wall four feet high that couldn’t be knocked over. So he said, “All right, I’ll build it four feet high and five feet wide; and, therefore, if anybody knocks it over, it will be higher than it was before,” amen? And that’s the way the Word of God is, friend. The enemies come, and they do their thing, and they try to murder the Bible, but the corpse has outlived the pallbearers.

## **V. The Indispensable Word of God**

Thank God, it is the infallible Word of God. It is the inexhaustible Word of God. It is the incorruptible Word of God. It, dear friend, is the indestructible Word of God. It is timeless, ultimate, indestructible, infallible, eternal. One last thing I want to say about the Bible this morning. It, my friends, is the indispensable—indispensable—Word of God. Now, look, if you will, in verse 25: *“But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”* (1 Peter 1:25) That is, this is the way we preach. This is our tool. This is what we use. Take away the Bible: we’ll close our church. Take away the Bible: I’m out of business. Take away the Bible: we

don't have anything left. *"This is the word by which the gospel is preached unto you."*

My dear friend, it is absolutely, totally, indispensable. Indispensable for what?

### **A. It Is Indispensable for Salvation**

Well, number one: It's indispensable for salvation. Look in verse 23: *"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."* (1 Peter 1:23) Why is it indispensable for salvation? Because we are conceived by the Word of God. You were conceived in your mother's womb by a sperm, by a seed. And that seed caused life.

Now, God is saying that we are born again by an incorruptible seed. Now, you see, I was born of corruptible seed. My daddy will die. His daddy died. And his daddy's daddy died, because we come from a long line of corruptible people. And do you know what I'm doing standing here in front of you? Corrupting. I'm just dying. And you're sitting there dying. And every moment you live, you corrupt a little more. I mean, that's what's happening to us, because we are born of corruptible seed.

But I want to tell you there came into my life a divine sperm, the life of God, and I was born again. And because that seed is incorruptible, I will never die. There's a part of me that can never die. Do you understand what I'm saying? You see, there's a new birth. And I have been *"born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God."* This book is absolutely indispensable.

Friend, people are not saved by anything else other than the Word of God. You know, sometimes people say, "Well, you know, I just want to so live that they'll see my life and want to be saved." You're full of arrogant pride. They're not saved by your life; they're saved by His death. And the only life you can lead is the life that comes by His death. And, friend, I don't care how much you live it, if you don't give it, if you don't preach it, if you don't sow it, there's no life without this seed. How we must share the Word of God! It is the indispensable Word of God. It is the Bible by which the gospel is preached unto you.

### **B. It Is Indispensable for Sanctification**

It is necessary for salvation, because we're conceived by the Word. But it's indispensable also for sanctification, because we're cleansed by the Word. Look, if you will, in verse 22: *"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth..."* (1 Peter 1:22) Do you see that? Sanctification means being made like Jesus, being made pure. You see, it is indispensable for salvation, because we're conceived by the Word. It is indispensable for sanctification, because we're cleansed by the Word. You have purified your souls by obeying the truth. You see, this book is what makes you clean. Jesus was praying for us, and He said, *"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."* (John 17:17) The psalmist said, *"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking*

*heed thereto according to thy word.*" (Psalm 119:9) The Bible speaks of *"the washing of regeneration"* by the Word of God. (Titus 3:5) *"Ye are clean,"* Jesus said, *"through the word which I have spoken unto you."* (John 15:3)

This book has a cleansing effect. It is a powerful detergent in your life. Listen to me. As those waves of sin are lashing the beach, as the world is coming apart all around you, and you're surrounded by all kinds of temptations, how are you going to stay clean? How are you going to stay pure? There's no way, people; there is no way apart from the Word of God. You've got to be loading up on the Word of God. It has a sanctifying power. The Bible says you purify your souls by obeying the truth. And if you don't know the truth, how are you going to obey it? And if you can't obey it, how are you going to be pure? I'm saying that it is the indispensable Word of God.

### **C. It Is Indispensable for Sustenance**

It is indispensable for salvation. It is indispensable for sanctification. And, friend, I want to tell you that it is indispensable for sustenance. Look in chapter 2, verse 2. He says, *"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."* (1 Peter 2:2) Indispensable for salvation, because we're conceived by it. Indispensable for sanctification, because we're cleansed by it. Indispensable for sustenance, because we're completed by it. You want to be complete? You want to be mature? You want to grow? Then you'd better get in the Word of God.

You know, I can't understand some people. They don't make a lot of sense to me. Suppose you come to me and you say, "Brother Rogers, boy, I just don't understand it, but I'm so weak. I haven't got any energy. I can hardly get one leg out of bed every morning. I'm short of breath. Look at my hands. They're trembling. My eyes are blurred. I'm just so weak." I say, "Man, you're in bad shape! What's wrong with you? Have you been eating regularly?" "No, I don't eat at all." "You mean, you don't eat?" "No. Oh, I eat a little every Sunday morning while you're preaching. That's all. What do you reckon is wrong with me, preacher? I feel so sick." I say, "You'd better get something under your belt," amen? Friend, listen. If you don't eat physically, you know what's going to happen to you. And people say, "Oh, Brother Rogers, you know, I just don't understand why I'm such a weak Christian." Well, I do. You're not feeding on the Word of God.

You say, "I just don't understand why I don't grow." Well, I know why you don't grow: you're not feeding on the Word of God. It's not hard to understand. Peter says, *"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."* How do you expect to be strong if you don't feed, if you don't nourish yourself on the Word of God? You come on Sunday morning and get a thimble full of milk and spill it on your way out, and you wonder why you're not growing. Do you know one of the marks of a newborn babe is that he has a desire for milk?

Boy, I want to tell you something. I have had the privilege of being there when two of the most beautiful granddaughters you've ever seen have come into this world. One time, by the grace of God and some careful planning, I was in Florida when Adrienne Renee was born—a precious little girl. And they're just so indescribable, those little grandbabies. But there's just one thing about them as you watch, you know. You get older, you know what to look for. I was scared to death when mine came. But this time, you know, and you just watch. And the same thing was true about little Angela Jo—when you watch them, the instinct they have. You know what they do when they come? And just when they're just put in that mother's arm, you know what they're doing? Have you ever watched them? Their little mouths are just working. They have a suckling, nursing instinct. And that little baby says, "I want milk."

You know, neither one of those grandbabies said, "You know, I wish you'd change the wallpaper in this room." And neither one of them really cared what kind of music was being played through the intercom. There is something interesting about it.

And Peter uses the word here that means for a baby that's just been born. He's saying that's one of the marks that you have: this spiritual life— *“as newborn babes, desire”*—“crave, earnestly yearn for”—*“the sincere”*—that means “the pure, unadulterated”—*“milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.”*

## Conclusion

I'm telling you, sirs; I'm telling you, ladies, that this Bible, which is the infallible Word of God; this Bible, which is the inexhaustible Word of God; this Bible, which is the incorruptible Word of God; this Bible, which is the indestructible Word of God, is the indispensable Word of God. It is necessary for salvation, because you're conceived by it. It is necessary for sanctification, because you're cleansed by it. It is necessary for sustenance, because you're completed by it. You grow as you feed on the Word of God. Now, friend, these are tough times. This is timeless truth. And it is God's timeless truth for these tough times.

# The Nature of the Word of God

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** December 27, 1998

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 Peter 1:23–2:2

*“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God,  
which liveth and abideth for ever.”*

1 PETER 1:23

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## Introduction

Now, take your Bibles and turn to 1 Peter chapter 1. While you're turning, let me tell you this: in a few years, it will be 100 years ago that a handful of people gathered to begin a work that would be known as Bellevue Baptist Church—almost 100 years. In 1903, they began this church. And, from that handful of people it has grown to be the wonderful church that it is today. Now, what distinguishes Bellevue from other churches? We have many similarities, and there are other churches that are like Bellevue Baptist Church. But, there is one distinguishing characteristic that is certainly true of this church: this church has been built on the Word of God. No stutter, no stammer, no apology nor equivocation—Bellevue is a Bible church.

Now, there are people who tell us today that you just can't build a church just

preaching the Bible—you've got to come off of that a little bit: "We live in a new and modern age, and we need a new and modern theology and a new and modern authority for building a church." But, that is not so! And, the pastors of this church... I have not known but three of them, including myself, and I know a little about me. But, I knew Dr. Pollard, loved him so well, and he was a great and special friend—knew Dr. Robert G. Lee, knew him and loved him well. I had the responsibility and the privilege of doing the funerals for Dr. Pollard and Dr. Lee. I can tell you one thing about Dr. Lee and Dr. Pollard: they would fight a buzzsaw for the Bible. They believed the Bible to be the Word of God. Bellevue has never stuttered or stammered about the Bible being the Word of God.

And, incidentally, this church has only had three pastors since 1927. Did you know that? Our pastors have stayed Sunday after Sunday after Sunday after Sunday, opening the blessed book and saying, "Thus saith the Lord." And, Bellevue will continue to be the church that she is—and even a greater church—if she stays by the blessed book. Do you agree to that? I hope you do. And, you know, yeah... Well, praise God! Yeah, amen! There is power in the Word of God. I have been a pastor long enough to know that. I know that God's Word is like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces. God's Word is like bread for hungry people. God's Word is like a fire that burns. It's like a sword that cuts. It's like a seed that grows. It's like a mirror that reveals. It is the Word of God—the incorruptible, indestructible, indispensable Word of God.

But, I want to tell you something, folks: there is a battle for the Bible today. Some twenty years ago, Southern Baptists entered into a battle over the Bible. Back in 1979, I was elected President of the Southern Baptist Convention with the intention to make some appointments that would ultimately change some trustee boards and ultimately change some teachers in some of our seminaries and some leadership in some of our denominational posts concerning people who were soft concerning the inspiration of the Word of God. And, I thank God that our great denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention, has come through this monumental struggle today. And today, one more time, Southern Baptists are not ashamed to say that they are people of the book, and I thank God for that. It's been a 20-year struggle, but God has blessed. But, we're seeing, today, a resurgence of people in other denominations and across the land as they challenge the Word of God.

John Calvin was a great theologian of yesteryear, and this is what he said—and I quote: "A dog barks when his master's attacked. I would be a coward if I saw that God's truth is attacked and yet would remain silent without giving any sound." And, we would be cowards today if we did not speak up when the Bible is under attack. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, which some believe was the greatest preacher outside the Apostle Paul who ever lived, said this: "The turning point of the battle between those who hold

the faith once delivered to the saints and their opponents lies in the true and real inspiration of the holy scriptures.” He’s saying that is the turning point. Show me what a person believes about the Bible and you’re going to find out which way they are going to turn. And then, the great Spurgeon went on to say: “If we have, in the Word of God, no infallible standard of truth, we are at sea without a compass, and no danger from rough weather without can be equal to the loss within.”

Another great that I love dearly—and I’ve had him here. He’s too old to come now. I can’t get Dr. Sidlow Baxter to fly from California anymore to come to Bellevue, but truly one of the great Bible teachers of all ages and all generations—J. Sidlow Baxter was correct when he said—and I want quote this: “The biggest division between Christians is no longer between one denomination and another, but between those who accept the Bible as the inspired Word of God and those who do not.” Now, he was just saying, in other words, the same thing that Spurgeon said, and John Calvin has said, and I know that you believe.

A little boy went to a church one time, and he came home. His parents were away that Sunday and didn’t attend. And, he said to his children—the Pastor said, “We’re going to have a re-Bible service.” And, they didn’t understand what a re-Bible service was. And so, they called the church and found out it was a revival service. The little boy had understood it wrongly, but I think he understood it rightly. I think what we need is a re-Bible service in a lot of our churches, where we get back to the blessed book.

Now, having said that, read with me, if you will, 1 Peter chapter 1. And, I begin in verse 23: the Bible says, *“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word by which the gospel is preached unto you”*—and then, over into the next chapter—*“Wherefore”*—you see, that refers back to verse 25—*“Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby”* (1 Peter 1:23–2:2).

## **I. The Nature of the Word of God**

Now, I want to talk to you, first of all, about the nature of the Word of God.

### **A. Authorship**

It is called just exactly that—the Word of God. Do you see that—*“the word of God”*—in verse 23? (1 Peter 1:23). *“But of incorruptible [seed], by the word of God”* (1 Peter 1:23). Now, what does that mean? Well, that means that God gave the Bible. It’s not the word of man; it is the Word of God. As you read the Bible, if you were to mark phrases

like “the word of the Lord,” or “the word of God,” or “God said,” or “the Lord spoke,” or whatever—just take those kinds of phrases—you would find over 2,000 of them in the Bible. Over 2,000 times the Bible claims to be the very Word of God. Therefore, if men wrote it and God did not write it, then it would be the greatest compilation of lies in the world today. And certainly, those who wrote it would not be good men; they would be bad men, because they would be telling a lie. The Bible is the Word of God.

Louis Shaffer said this concerning the Bible: “It’s not such a book that man would write if he could because it condemns him. And, it is not such a book that he would write if he could because it surpasses him.” There’s no way that you can explain the Bible apart from divine inspiration. So, since God is the author of the Bible—since the Bible is the Word of God—that means that the Bible is inspired.

And, I love 2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 16. We remember John 3:16. Then, just remember, as a companion, 2 Timothy 3:16, which says, “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God.*” And, that Greek word, as you’ve heard it said, is *theopneustos*, which means “it is God-breathed.” It is the breath of God. What you’re hearing are the words of Adrian tonight, and the words of Adrian are being formed by Adrian’s breath as I take air into my lungs. And then, my diaphragm is pushing that air up over my larynx. And, my tongue and my teeth are articulating the noise and forming it into little bits and pieces. And, what you’re hearing tonight is my breath coming out. I am breathing out my words. Now, that’s a technical phrase for “the inspiration of the Word of God.” It is not simply that God breathed inspiration into the scriptures; the very scriptures themselves are the Word of God. They are the breath of God; it is God speaking.

And again, you’re in 1 Peter. If you were to just turn over to 2 Peter chapter 1... You’re in 1 Peter chapter 1. Second Peter chapter 1—and look, if you will, in verses 20 and 21: Peter says, “*Knowing this first*”—that is, he doesn’t mean “that’s the first thing I’m going to tell you”; he means “this is a primacy”—“*Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation*”—and that doesn’t mean that we have to interpret it all together as some people think it means. It literally means (the Greek construction), “There is no scripture is of its own unfolding.” That is, it’s not self-generating—“*For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*” (2 Peter 1:20–21). And, the idea here of moving... It’s a picture of a ship with a sail up. Those men who wrote the Bible—sure, they were human penmen, but the wind of God—the breath of God—was in their sails. And, they spoke as they were moved, impelled by the Holy Spirit. So, it is inspired; and because it is inspired, it is infallible.

Now, we don’t have a Baptist pope that we say is infallible; we have a paper pope—the Bible. The Bible is the infallible Word of God. The word infallible means “having the quality of never deceiving.” The Bible will never, never, never deceive you. It is totally

trustworthy. You can carry it to the bank. And, because it is inspired and because it is infallible, it is inerrant. That means “it contains no error.” It is free from error because it is God-breathed, and a God of truth could not inspire error. And, Jesus said in John chapter 10, verse 35: *“the scripture cannot be broken”* (John 10:35). Now, if you follow Jesus, your view of the Bible is going to have to be Jesus’s view of the Bible. And, Jesus said, *“The scripture cannot be broken”* (John 10:35). So, what we’re talking about now, as we talk about the nature of the Word of God—we’re talking first about its authorship. It is the Word of God—inspired, infallible, and inerrant.

## **B. Authority**

Now, right on the heels of its authorship, I want you to think of its authority, because the authorship of the Bible and the authority of the Bible hang together. If God said it, then when the Bible speaks, God speaks. Verse 25: it is called *“the word of the Lord”* (1 Peter 1:25). Now, when I was growing up, the kids in our youth group used to have a little slogan that said, “God said it. I believe it, and that settles it.” And, I like that, but, you know, God said it—that settles it, whether you believe it or not. I mean, it has absolute authority.

I have had the privilege of visiting with Billy Graham, being in his home, having a meal with him, and having him on programs that I have chaired, and spending time with him in an automobile—an all-day prayer meeting, and other things. I’m not trying to drop names but to tell you that I count Dr. Billy Graham as a dear friend. I know him and love him—been a guest in his home. Dr. Graham has made, perhaps, a greater impact on our generation than any living Christian. I think we would all agree with that. We need to pray for Dr. Graham because he’s reaching his years. But, he is a dear, sweet, blessed man of God. But, when Billy Graham began his ministry, Billy Graham went to some seminaries, read some theological treatises and so forth that cast doubts and dispersions on the Word of God. And, Billy Graham was torn about questions that he had concerning the Word of God. Finally, one day, Graham decided that he needed to get it settled, and he went to the mountains and took his Bible. And, he read it, and read it, and read it, and finally came to this place where he said, “God, I don’t understand it all. I cannot answer all of the problems that people bring to me concerning it. But, I accept it by faith as Your Word. I will preach it. I will leave it up to You, Lord, to teach me what it means and to help me as I preach Your Word.” And, Billy Graham’s ministry was touched from that point on with a new dynamic. And, I think all of us can know one thing that we’ve heard Billy say so many times: “The Bible says... The Bible says... The Bible says...”

And, if you would explain Bellevue Baptist Church, you could not explain Bellevue Baptist Church apart from the Bible. If you were to explain Billy Graham, you could not

explain Billy Graham apart from the Bible. What I'm trying to say—when we talk about the Bible as being the Word of God, we think about its authorship. And then, right along with that, we think about its authority.

### C. Agelessness

And then, right along with that, we think about its agelessness. Look, if you will, in verse 23 again: *“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever”* (1 Peter 1:23). The Bible is not the book of the month; it's the book of the ages. Now, it took some 1,500 years for the Bible to be written. That spans some 50 or some 30 generations. And, the Bible that I have in my hand tonight is translated from scriptures that were written 2,000 to 3,000 years ago. And, I'm standing here at the end of the 20th Century. I'm here talking to medical doctors like the one sitting right up here to my left. I'm talking to lawyers like some sitting over there. I'm talking to business entrepreneurs. I'm talking to PhDs and linguists. I'm talking to urban, sophisticated, intelligent people. But, we hang on to every word of this book. Now, you think about it: 2,000 to 3,000 years old and it still is alive and it is fresh. Century after century, it has had its enemies. They tried to burn it. They tried to bury it. The kings of the earth have set themselves against it, but the old book lives on.

There was a Roman emperor whose name was Diocletian. In 303 A.D., Diocletian banned the Bible, had all of the Bibles that he could find in his kingdom burned, and then over the ashes of one of these Bibles he erected a monument, and it was a monument to the destruction of the Bible. And, the monument said, *“Extincto nomine Christianorum”* which simply is, *“The name of Christian is now extinct”*—“it's extinct.” And, he thought he had done away with Christianity. But, a few years later, in 325 A.D., Constantine made the Bible the infallible judge of truth for his entire empire. And, as we've often said, there are many who have attended a funeral of the Bible, but the corpse has outlived the pallbearers. The Bible cannot fade; it cannot decay. It is timeless and true because it is the Word of God. And, the Word of God endures forever. And, the gnawing tooth of time and the foul breath of those who preach and rail against it have not destroyed the Word of God. Its enemies cannot destroy it, for the Bible says in a verse I quoted this morning—Psalm 119, verse 89: *“For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven”* (Psalm 119:89). The Bible, Bellevue people, is timeless. It is ultimate. It is indestructible. It is eternal. You throw it in the fire—it will come out without even the smell of smoke in its clothes.

Now, that is the Word of God. That's the nature of the Word of God. And, what we've said concerning the nature of the Word of God is...we talked about its inspiration; we've talked about its authority; we've talked about its ever-living, never dying, quality.

## II. The Necessity of the Word of God

Now, why is that important? Well, let's think not only about the nature of the Word, but the necessity of the Word. That's what Peter is telling us about. What does the Bible do?

### A. Message

Well, number one, it provides the Church with its message. Look in verse 25: *"But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you"* (1 Peter 1:25). You see, God gives us the Word so that we can have the message. It is the Bible that provides the church with its message. The message of the church doesn't need to be rethought; it just needs to be re-taught.

If you're on a pulpit committee that's ever calling a pastor, don't ask that pastor any more, "Do you preach the gospel?" because he'll say, "Yes." It used to be that was a good enough question. Don't ask him that anymore. Ask him, "What is the gospel?" Ask him, "What is the gospel?" Have him explain to you what the gospel is and see if he can give you a Bible gospel. You see, it is the Bible that gives us, the Church, its message. Look at it again: *"By the word of the Lord which endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you"* (1 Peter 1:25).

### B. Method

It provides the Church with its message, and it prescribes the Church's method. What is the Church's method? Preaching—preaching! *"This is"*—look at it—*"this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you"* (1 Peter 1:25).

Now, they tell us today that preaching has gone out of vogue and today we need some other method to grow churches. As a matter of fact, in a lengthy article in *The Church Newsletter*, Joseph Westley Matthews of Chicago Ecumenical Institute said—and I quote: "But that thing called *preaching* that we do Sunday morning, I think, is finished. I think that people will gather at the temple, let us say, about every other week, or once a month, and on Easter and Christmas. This is already the trend in suburban churches, where the number of people who attend each Sunday is very low." Well, I can understand why. As a matter of fact, Dr. Lee, one time, was preaching at Bellevue Baptist Church, and a lady met him at the door. He'd invite the people back on Sunday night. She was a guest. She said, "Dr. Lee, I'm not a Baptist." She said, "In my church, we only attend once on Sunday." You know Dr. Lee was very quick. He said, "Lady, if I had to listen to what you have to listen to, once a Sunday would be enough for me." There are those who are giving up the preaching of the Word of God. But, the Bible says God gave His Word to provide the message and the method.

Now, we have other things here. I thank God for our sports program. I thank God for our musical program. I thank God for the pageants. I thank God for all of these things.

But friend, none of those—or all of them together—can make the preaching of the Word of God obsolete. And, Bellevue will ultimately unravel and fall apart if we do not keep the pulpit central, where the man of God stands behind the desk of God, opens the book of God, preaches the Christ of God and the power of God through the Word of God. That's what it is. It is—it is, it is—the Word of God!

Now, we have a generation today that wants to move away from that. That's inspired of the devil, for the Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 18: *“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God”* (1 Corinthians 1:18). And then, 1 Corinthians 1, verse 21: *“For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe”* (1 Corinthians 1:21). He didn't say “foolish preaching”—there's been too much of that—but *“the foolishness of preaching”* (1 Corinthians 1:21). What we're doing... What we do here at this church Sunday after Sunday after Sunday—people say, “That's passé. That's extinct, that's. We need to do away with that.” No, we don't! No, we don't!

### **C. Members**

It is the Word of God that provides us with the message. It is the Word of God that provides us with the method. And, therefore, it is the Word of God that provides us with the members. How does Bellevue Baptist grow? Well, look again in verse 23: *“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God”* (1 Peter 1:23). Now, a church, in order to be a strong church, needs a regenerate membership—that is, members that have been born again. And, what produces life is the Word of God, because the Word of God has life. Only life comes from life. And, the Word of God is a seed. Look at it again: *“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible”* (1 Peter 1:23). And, the seed takes on the nature of that—or, what springs forth from the seed takes on the nature of the seed.

When you come, when you're born of the Word of God, then the very nature—the life—that's in the Word of God is in you. That's the reason the Bible calls itself the Word of Life. Philippians 2, verse 16: *“Holding forth the word of life”* (Philippians 2:16). Or, Hebrews 4:12: *“For the word of God is quick, and powerful”* (Hebrews 4:12). The word *quick* is the word we get our word *zoo* from—*zoa, zoa*. It is alive and powerful. That's the word we get our word *energy* from—*energes*. The Word of God pulsates with power. This book is not like any other book. It has life in it. Jesus said in John chapter 6 and verse 63: *“It is the spirit that quickeneth”*—“to quicken” means “to be made alive”—*“the flesh profiteth nothing”*—and then, He said—*“the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life”*—*“they are life”* (John 6:63). You see, there is life in this word. It pulsates with life.

### **III. The Nourishment of the Word of God**

Now, I've talked to you about the nature of the Bible, and I've talked to you about the necessity of the Bible. Now, let's talk for a few moments, and I'll be finished, about the nurture and the nourishment of the Bible. Go on now, if you will, to chapter 2, and look in verses 1 and 2: "*Wherefore*"—that is, "on the basis of all that he said"—"*Wherefore*"—"because of this"—"*laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings*"—"Get rid of that junk. Lay it aside. Don't fill your mind with that trash"—"*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that [you] may grow thereby*" (1 Peter 2:1–2). May I put it to you plainly? You're not going to grow up until you begin to love and feed on the Word of God. That's the "therefore."

#### **A. Our Accountability**

Now, what is our accountability as a church? Well, our accountability is just to take those folks that came down this aisle this morning to give their hearts to Jesus Christ and give them the Word of God to help them to grow. We would be guilty of criminal negligence—we would be guilty of child abuse—if we did not feed these newborn babes. It is our responsibility to take care of them. And, that's the reason that we have our Bible-teaching, Bible-preaching ministry here. That's the reason we have Fellowship Bible Classes. That is the reason we have a bookstore over here. That is the reason that we have this entire program, whether it be sports or music, saturated with the Word of God—to give these newborn babies what they need. That is our responsibility—excuse me, our accountability.

#### **B. Our Responsibility**

Our responsibility is to feed them the Word of God. When Paul talked to the Ephesians elders, he had come to Ephesus and he gathered the ministers together, the elders, and he told them, in 1 Peter 5, verse 2: "*Feed the flock of God*" (1 Peter 5:2). We're to feed them. We have people today who, somehow, they want to be entertained, but they don't want to be fed. Too many newborns are not given a balanced and an adequate diet. And, no wonder they're stunted in their growth.

#### **C. The Possibility**

And, what is the... We talked about our accountability and our responsibility. What about the possibility? That they may grow. It's a joy to watch people grow in the Lord. There's a young man sitting right here on the very front. Brother Jerry, down here. He's a new Christian. How long you've been saved, Jerry? Since 1996 he's been saved. I traveled to Israel with Jerry. I'll tell you, that man knows the Word of God and he's a vibrant Christian. You know what he's doing? He's not sitting in the back talking to his girlfriend or thinking about whatever he's going to go, whether he's going to Chili's

tonight after church. He's up here on the front row, saying, "I want to learn the Word of God." He has a desire for the Word of God. And, that's the reason he's growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior (2 Peter 3:18). There's nothing wrong with you folks in the back row. That's all right, but I want to tell you something—I'm going to tell you something seriously: when I was in college, I could improve my grade almost a whole letter from moving to the back of the class to the front, because everything between you and the speaker—everything between you and the professor—that's one more distraction. Did you know that? You need to get down by the spout where the glory comes out. Now listen—you need to be hungry for the Word of God.

I see folks come to church sometimes. There are none of them here tonight. Maybe there are some here. Well, I'd better...I better...I'll back off. All right, you need to feed on the Word of God. We're not here just simply to make decisions; we're here to make disciples. That's the reason we have Vacation Bible School. I get a thrill when the kids come to Vacation Bible School. It blesses me when they hold up that Bible and pledge allegiance to the Bible: "I pledge allegiance to the Bible, God's Holy Word, and will make it lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path, and will hide its words in my heart, that I may not sin against God." We need to get the Word of God in the hearts and minds of our children.

You say, "Well, I'm getting my child educated." Education gives you facts; the Bible gives you truth. Facts are like a recipe; truth is like a meal. Digest a truth, and it will change your life. Why did God write this book? It's called the *Word of Truth*. Why did God give the Holy Spirit? He's called the *Spirit of Truth*. Who is Jesus? Jesus said, "*I am the...truth*" (John 14:6). What is the church? It is the pillar and the ground of truth. What should be the ambition of every parent? "*I have no greater joy than...that my children walk in [the] truth*" (3 John 1:4)—to know the truth. Truth is to your spirit what food is to your body. "*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that [you] may grow thereby*" (1 Peter 2:2).

### **1. Devotional Truth for Your Heart**

Devotional truth for your heart. Don't just read the cookbook—eat the meal!

### **2. Doctrinal Truth for Your Mind**

Doctrinal truth for your mind. There's too much sloppy agape. You need to understand what you believe and why you believe it.

### **3. Practical Truth for Your Will**

Practical truth for your will. Get your body, and your heart, and your mind pumping to move out to do the will of God.

Dr. R.A. Torrey once said this—and I quote: "Many of the strongest intellects of marvelous power of penetration or broadest culture have given a lifetime for the study of

the Bible. And no man has ever really, and no man who has ever really studied it has ever dreamed of saying that he's gotten to the bottom of the book. New light is constantly breaking forth from the Word of God. The fact that it had proved itself unfathomable for these centuries is positive proof that in it are hidden the infinite treasures of the wisdom of God." As a newborn babe....if you're a new Christian, the best thing I can say to you is get in, in the Bible.

I met Charles Colson shortly after he was saved. He and I were in Chicago at a convention. And, I said to Charles Colson—I said, "Mr. Colson, you're a brilliant man—a brilliant man," and he is. But, I said, "I want to beg you—I want to beg you to saturate your soul with the Word of God." And, he said to me, "Adrian, I'm doing just that." And, that's the reason I believe that God is using Charles Colson the way that He is. He was a newborn babe, but he grew, and grew, and grew, and grew because he began to feed on the Word of God.

Can I challenge you this New Year? This New Year will you say, "By God's grace I'm going to be not only a Bible-believer, but a Bible-reader and a Bible-obeyer." We have given you, and there is available to you, a slip. It was in your bulletin this morning. There are some in the back. That will help you to read through the New Testament this year. Why don't you say, "By God's grace, I'll do it." As a newborn babe or as an older Christian, just get in the Word of God. Folks, this is the book that has built this church, and it's the book that will build your life. It is the indispensable, incorruptible, infallible, inerrant, authoritative Word of God.

## Conclusion

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father God, help me, as a pastor, to know and love this book in a way that I never have. And Lord, I agree with Dr. Torrey—I have not even begun to even think about getting to the bottom of the book. Lord, there's so much there in Your Word. Open our eyes, that we may behold wondrous things in Your law (Psalm 119:18). And, give us, dear Lord, in what we believe to be the closing days of this dispensation, a greater love for Your Word and a greater tenacity. May we get a bulldog grip on truth. For we pray in name of Jesus. Amen.

I told you this morning that the Bible has one hero—His name is Jesus; one villain—the devil; one message—"Jesus saves." And, if you've never received Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior, would you pray and say, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart, forgive my sin, and save me tonight"? And, if you'll trust Him to do it, He will do just that. For the Bible says clearly and plainly, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*" (Acts 16:31). To be saved means that every sin is forgiven. To be saved means that God, through the Holy Spirit, lives in your heart. And, to be saved means that when you die or when He comes, you're going straight to Heaven. †

# The Word of God

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: September 22, 1996**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 1:23–25**

*“But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”*

1 PETER 1:25

## Outline

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## Introduction

And I remind us all, too, that heaven is just a heartbeat away. You know, sometimes, we think of eternity as way out yonder, but the truth of the matter is eternity, heaven, is only a heartbeat away, or as with Stephen, only a stone’s throw away.

Be finding 1 Peter chapter one—1 Peter chapter one. In a moment, we’re going to read verses 23 through 25. We’re continuing this series of Bible studies entitled Kingdom Authority. And I have been so blessed as we are discovering Kingdom Authority learning how to get under it, and then, to exercise Kingdom Authority in our own lives.

I’ve told you, when you were born again, you were born to win. God does not expect you to be defeated by the world, the flesh, and the devil. God saved you, and then God gave you dominion. God means for you to rule on this earth as kings and priests, and to have dominion. But we have taught you, and hope to teach you, through this entire series, that we can never be over those things that God has put under us, until we’re under those things that God has put over us. Remember that. We can never be over those things that God has put under us, until we are under those things that God has put over us. That is, God does not give kingdom authority to rebels. If you have a

rebellious spirit, no wonder God cannot trust you with kingdom authority.

Last week we talked about the lordship of Christ, when the king is supreme. Today we're talking about the Word of the King, the Word of God. Now, Peter is describing the Word of God, beginning in verse 23, and he tells us how we were saved through the Word of God, being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible. By the Word of God—underscore that—by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever, for all flesh is as grass and the glory of man is the flower of grass. The grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away, but the Word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word by which the gospel is preached unto you. The lordship of Jesus and the Word of God stand together. The Word of the Lord and the Lord of the Word are inseparable.

Now here, the Bible calls itself the Word of God. I wonder, what is your relationship to the Word of God? Some despise it. There are those who literally hate, they despise the Bible. There are none like that here today unless you've come to make fun—and if you have, may God have mercy on you. But there are others who deny it. They say, I just simply don't despise it, but I don't accept it. I don't believe it is the Word of God. There are others who distort it. They claim to believe it, but they twist it. As the Bible says, they "wrest the scriptures to their own destruction." Then there are some who dissect it. They claim to believe it, but they read it more like a math book rather than a love story. They can split a theological hair into 16 equal divisions, but they don't seem to get the message of the Bible. They're ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

But I suppose the greatest danger in this crowd are not those that deny it, those that despise it, or those that distort it, or those that dissect it, but the problem with many of us is that we disregard it. We disregard it. We say we believe it, but many in this building spend far more time with the newspapers and television than you do with the Word of God. You don't understand the Bible. Many could not name all the books of the Bible if you gave them a thousand dollars. Yet, we say that we believe it. We wonder why we don't have more kingdom authority in our hearts and in our lives—could it be that we do not listen to the words of the King who wants to give us that authority? These hath God married, and no man shall part: dust on the Bible and drought in the heart.

## **I. The Incontestable Word of God**

Now, look at the Scripture today. And I want you to notice four things about the Word of the King—four things about the Bible. And I pray that these things will be emblazoned upon your heart. First of all, the Bible is the incontestable Word of God—incontestable Word of God. No contest, no controversy, no denying it—the Bible is the Word of God. Look at it here in this verse—verse 23: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God." Now, it is not the word of man; it is the Word of God.

How was the Bible written? Well, you're in chapter 2; go back to chapter 1, and look in verse 10. It speaks of the prophets in the Old Testament who were writing about salvation. And it says, "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, searching what, or by what manner of time the spirit of Christ which was in them did signify when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." Now, this verse says that the Old Testament prophets prophesied because the spirit of Christ was in them, the Holy Spirit was prophesying through them. The Bible, though it had human penmen, was not written by men; it was written by the Holy Spirit of God. The Bible is the Word of God.

Now, let me tell you something very interesting. There are many, many descriptions for the Bible, but the best description that I can think of, and God's favorite description for the Bible, is the Word of God. Now, if you think about that—God, Himself, calls the Bible the Word of God. Let me just give you a few representative verses, and I could give you hundreds of them. Acts chapter four, verse 31—don't turn to these, but listen to it: "And they spake the Word of God with boldness." Romans 10, verse 17: "So faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." Ephesians chapter 6, verse 17: "And take the sword of the Word which is the Word of God." Hebrews 4:12: "For the Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword." First Thessalonians 2, verse 13: "For this cause also we thank God without ceasing, because when ye receive the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God."

Over five hundred times in the first five books of the Bible, God says, this is my Word. Over a thousand times in the prophets, God says, this is my Word. Over four thousand times in the Old Testament, the Bible is alluded to as the Word of God. Forty-four times in the New Testament it is called the Word of God. Now, wait a minute, Pastor—why are you saying that over and over again? I accept that the Bible is the Word of God. Friend, if you really believe that the Bible is the Word of God, if you really believe that when the Bible speaks, God speaks, it's going to have some incredible implications in your heart.

Let me give you some. For example, if it is the Word of God, that means that it's absolutely perfect, doesn't it? It's absolutely perfect. I mean, can a God of truth speak error? Put this verse down—2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 16: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." The word Scripture means holy writings. All Scripture—not some, all Scripture—is given by inspiration of God. That means it is the breath of God. Jesus Christ, when He was tempted by Satan to turn stones into bread, said, in Matthew chapter 4 and verse 4, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." So He is saying that the Scripture, the

written Scripture, has come out of the mouth of God; it is given by inspiration of God. It is absolutely perfect. The writer of Proverbs said, in Proverbs chapter 30, in verse 5, “Every word of God is pure.”

Now, if the Bible is the Word of God—the incontestable Word of God—then think what that means. Did you know that Jesus and the Bible are not identical, but they are inseparable? Did you know that God gave the same name for Jesus that He gave to His book? He calls His book the Word of God. We’ve seen that, but now write down in your margin, Revelation chapter 19 and verse 13. It speaks of Jesus coming in power and great glory, and it says this: “And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and his name is called the Word of God.” Now, what is the Bible called? The Word of God. What is Jesus called? The Word of God. A man and his word may be different, but Christ and His Word are not different. I’m not saying that Jesus and the Bible are identical; what I am saying, however, is that they are inseparable.

Let me show you how Jesus and the Bible are so much the same. Both have come from God. Galatians 4:4 tells us that Jesus came from God. God sent forth His Son. Second Peter 1, verse 21, tells us that the Bible came: “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” The Son of Man came from God; He, Jesus, came from heaven above; the Word of God came from heaven above. Both live forever. Jesus is alive forevermore—Revelation 1:18: “I am he that liveth and was dead and behold I am alive forevermore.” The Bible is forever—1 Peter 1, verse 25: “The Word of the Lord endureth forever.” Both are unchanging. Jesus can never change—Hebrews 13, verse 8: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever.” The Word of God will not change. Jesus said, “Till heaven and earth pass not one jot nor tittle shall in any wise pass from the law.” Matthew chapter 5, verse 18: both the Lord Jesus and the Bible are light in a dark place. Jesus said, in John chapter 8, verse 12, “I am the light of the world.” The Bible says, in Psalm 119, verse 105, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.” Both are absolute truth. Jesus said, in John 14:6, “I am the truth.” Jesus said of the Bible, in John 17, verse 17, “Thy word is truth.” Do you see what I’m showing you? I’m telling you that God calls the Bible the Word of God, God calls His Son the Word of God, and the things that are true about Jesus are in many ways true about the Bible. And, therefore, the Word of God has awesome power. The Bible says, in Hebrews 4:12, “For the Word of God is quick and powerful.” The word quick is the word *zoon*. It’s the word we get zoology from; it means it’s alive. And powerful is the word *energes*; it’s the word we get energy from. The Bible is alive, and it is vibrating with power.

One man was translating the Bible, putting it in a different translation, and he said, as I got into the Word of God and studied it, he said, I felt like I was rewiring a house without cutting off the main switch. There’s the power in the Word of God. The Word of

God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. I want you to understand this, as we're thinking about kingdom authority.

And the first point is this: the incontestable—incontestable—Word of God. We cannot refuse it; we cannot deny it; we cannot distort it; we cannot dilute it; we must bow before it, if we would have kingdom authority.

## **II. The Incorruptible Word of God**

Secondly, not only is it the incontestable Word of God; it is the incorruptible Word of God. Look in verse 23: “Being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God.” Now, what does it mean when it says it is the incorruptible Word of God? It means there's no taint in it, there's no blemish in it, there's no corruption in the Word of God. Do you know how I know the Bible is the incorruptible Word of God? It's stood up under so much shoddy preaching. You think about it. You think of all of the silly things that have been said in the name of the Bible—and yet, the Bible stands. Atheists have railed against the Bible. Agnostics have smiled cynically at the Bible. Liberals have moved heaven and earth to disprove the miracles of the Bible. Materialists have ignored the Bible. Radicals and false cults have twisted the Bible. And yet, it is the incorruptible Word of God.

A former pastor of this church, Dr. Robert G. Lee, said something wonderful, and I want to quote it verbatim. He said concerning the Bible, “All of it's enemies have not torn one hole in its holy vesture, or stolen one flower from its wonderful garden, nor diluted one drop of honey from its abundant hive, nor broken one string on its thousand-stringed harp, nor drowned one sweet word in infidel ink.” Don't you love that? You see, the Bible—the Bible—is the incorruptible Word of God. You say, well, Pastor, what if modern science disproves the Bible? You have nothing to fear from science. Just give the scientists time—maybe one day they'll catch up with the Word of God. And, I want to tell you something: if a scientist says something good about the Bible, that doesn't give me any more faith in the Bible, just a little more faith in the scientist. The Bible is the incorruptible Word of God. It is the incontestable Word of God. It is the incorruptible Word of God.

## **III. The Indestructible Word of God**

Now, here's the third thing. It is the indestructible Word of God—the indestructible Word of God. Look in verse 23—the Bible says of itself that it lives and abides forever. And then, verse 25 says that the Bible endureth forever. The Bible is not the book of the month; the Bible is the book of the ages. Now, it took 1,500 years for the Bible to be written. It spanned some 30 generations. And the Bible was completed more than 2,000 years ago, most of it—some 1,900 years or so. But yet, it is a fresh and living reality

today.

I read the Bible today, this morning, and it spoke to my heart. It was food and nourishment to me. I read the newspaper today also; it did very little for me. How fresh, how wonderful is the Bible. Century after century, people have tried to burn it or bury it. And the kings of this earth have set themselves against it. And, the public schools in America seem to be dead set against it. But it's still the Word of God. It endures forever.

There was a Roman emperor. He was a wicked, ungodly man. His name was Diocletian. And, he was in the fourth century. Diocletian hated the Word of God. And he just could not stand the Bible. And he made a war against the Bible. Bibles were destroyed, Christians were put to death and tortured for the faith, and Diocletian decided that he would strut a little, so he burned a Bible, and over that Bible he erected a monument, and he said, "Extincto nomene christianorum"—Latin. In English, "The name of Christian is extinct." That was his monument built on the ashes of the Bible. That's 303. However, in 325, Constantine was enthroned, and he made the Bible the infallible judge of truth to all the empire.

Now, I want to tell you this, folks: there have been plenty of people who've pronounced the Bible dead, but the corpse has outlived the pallbearers. Remember this. The Bible lives, and abides forever. The Bible is incorruptible and indestructible. It cannot fade; it cannot decay. Jesus said, "Not one jot, not one tittle, shall fail from the law, till all be fulfilled." And the gnawing tooth of time, and the foul breath of decay, and all the prognostications of the scientists, and Carl Sagan, and all of the rest of them, can have their say, but here in this twentieth century, this book, the Word of God, is the most widely circulated book in all of the world. It has endured the centuries. Thank God for that.

People have tried to push it over. They told a man one time, we want you to build a wall that can't be pushed over, that won't fall. So, he went to work, and he said, "I've done it." Said, "I've built a wall that is four feet high and five feet wide." And he said, "If they push it over, it'll be a foot higher than it was before they pushed it." And, friend, that's the way the Bible is. It just seems like the more that they work against it, the more it grows. It is the incontestable Word of God. Friend, I want you to know it is the incorruptible Word of God. I want you to know it is the indestructible Word of God.

#### **IV. The Indispensable Word of God**

And now, I want you to learn, finally, that it is the indispensable Word of God. It is the indispensable Word of God. Look, if you will, in verse 25, now, of this text. And, verse 23 tells us that, "we are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." And then, verse 25: " But the Word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word by which the gospel is preached unto

you.”

#### **A. It Provides the Church’s Message**

Now, let me just talk to you a little bit about how the Word of the King works in the church and in the world. First of all, it provides the church’s message. What is the message of the church? The gospel. And where do we get the gospel? We get the gospel by the Word of God. And the Bible says, in verse 25, “And this is the word by which the gospel is preached unto you.” Now, the gospel doesn’t need to be rethought, it needs to be re-taught. And the message of the church is the gospel. You couldn’t say anything better about me that would make me feel better than to say Adrian Rogers leads a clean life and is a gospel preacher. We are to preach the gospel. There are other people who can preach the gospel better than I can, but nobody can preach a better gospel than I can, because there’s only one gospel, and you get that gospel out of the Word of God. And we don’t need a new and a modern gospel for a new and a modern age. The Word of God, the Word of the King, provides the church’s message. Have you got that?

#### **B. It Prescribes the Church’s Method**

Now, what else it does, it prescribes the church’s method. The message is the gospel. What is the method? The method is the preaching of the gospel. “And this is the word,” verse 25, “which by the gospel is preached unto you.” Did you know that in many churches preaching is going out of vogue? Many people are saying, well, we don’t want to hear preaching anymore. Give us plays; give us dramas; give us pageants; give us concerts. And those things all are fine. We do them here. They all have their place. But it is splendid nothing without the preaching of the Word of God. And no church will ever grow and prosper and be a New Testament church until the pulpit is central and the gospel is central in the pulpit.

I was reading a church article written by a man who was a leader in his denomination. It was written in the church newspaper, and this is what he said—listen to this: “But that thing called preaching that we do on Sunday morning, I think is finished. I think that people will gather at the temple, let’s say, about every other week, or once a month, and on Easter and Christmas.” He’s just saying they’re not coming anymore, and preaching is finished. But I want to say this: that preaching the gospel is not obsolete, and it is not optional. As Vance Havner has well said, “My Bible does not say, how shall they hear without a brass band? but it says, how shall they hear without a preacher?” We must—we must—with a certain sound and a clear voice, articulate the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Word of God. It provides the church’s message, the gospel; it prescribes the church’s method, and that is the preaching of the gospel.

Let me give you some verses—1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 18: “For the preaching

of the cross is to them which perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God.” Listen to 1 Corinthians 1, verse 21: “For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” There is no substitute for the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **C. It Produces the Church’s Members**

And because it provides the church’s message, and because it prescribes the church’s method, it provides the churches members. Look, if you will, in verse 23: “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God.” Now, a New Testament church must have a regenerated membership. To be born again is not optional; it’s fundamental to having church membership. The church is a family, and you get into a family by being born into a family. And in order to go to heaven, you must be born again. And, if you’re not born again, you’ll not see heaven. If you’re only born once, you’ll die twice. The first death is the physical death; the second death is eternal death. But, if you’re born twice, you can only die once. You can die physically, but you cannot die eternally, and you must be born again. And Jesus told Nicodemus, you must be born again. Well, how are you born again? Well, look in verse 23—the Bible says, “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God.” I’ve been preaching long enough to know that my illustrations, my stories, my outlines, don’t give life. But the Word of God impregnates with life. You are born again by the Word of God. There is life in the Word of God. There is life-giving force in the Word of God.

He says it’s like a seed—not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible. A seed has a germ of life, and that seed produces life like life that is inherent in the seed. And when the seed of God’s Word gets into you, and the Spirit of God breathes upon that, then life comes forth. That’s the reason Jesus said, in John chapter 6, verse 63, “The words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life”—the words that I speak unto you. Folks, this book is the Word of the King. It is the Word of the King. It is different than any other book. These words are alive. The Bible is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword. It gives life. That’s the reason the apostle Paul spoke of his preaching as holding forth the Word of Life. There is power in the Word of God.

Any church will be a powerful church that makes much of the Word of the King. And we can never have Kingdom Authority, speak with authority, preach with authority, witness with authority, live with authority, until we get under the authority of the Word of God. It is the incontestable Word of God. Friend, it is the incorruptible Word of God. It is the indispensable Word of God. I hope you believe that. Do you? Now, if you believe that, if you believe that, if you believe it is the Word of the King, and you want kingdom authority, then you better hear what the King is saying, and you better get under that authority, because if you don’t get under it, you will never be over those things that God

wants you to be over.

I was reading an article by Billy Graham, and I want you to listen to what he says. He's talking about biblical authority in evangelism. And it's a lengthy article, but I'm going to read from it. He says, "No one who once heard Jesus could ever again be the same. And what was the secret of this master teacher? How did he hold those crowds spellbound?" And then, he quotes this: "And it came to pass when Jesus had ended these sayings that the people were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one having authority." And then, Billy Graham gives this testimony. He said, "In 1949, I had been having a great many doubts concerning the Bible. I thought I saw apparent contradictions in Scripture, some things I could not reconcile with my restricted concept of God. When I stood up to preach, the authoritative note so characteristic of all great preachers of the past was lacking. Like hundreds of other young seminary students, I was waging the intellectual battle of my life. The outcome could certainly affect my future ministry.

"In August of that year, I had been invited to Forest Home, a Presbyterian conference center high in the mountains outside Los Angeles. I remember walking down a trail, tramping into the woods, and almost wrestling with God. I dueled with my doubts, and my soul seemed to be caught in the crossfire." Now, listen to this: "Finally, in desperation, I surrendered my will to the living God revealed in Scripture. I knelt before the open Bible, and said, 'Lord, many things in this book I do not understand, but thou hast said, the just shall live by faith. All I have received of thee I have taken by faith. Here and now, by faith, I accept the Bible as thy Word; I take it all, I take it without reservations. Where there are things I cannot understand, I will reserve judgment until I receive more light. If this pleases thee, give me authority as I proclaim thy Word, and, through that authority, convict me of sin, and turn sinners to the Savior.

Then, he went on to say this: "Within six weeks, we started our Los Angeles crusade, which is now history. During that crusade, I discovered that changed my ministry. I stopped trying to prove that the Bible was true. I had settled in my own mind that it was. And this faith was conveyed to the audience. Over and over again, I found myself saying, 'The Bible says.' I felt as though I was merely a voice through which the Holy Spirit was speaking. Authority created faith, faith generated response, and hundreds of people were impelled to come to Christ. A crusade scheduled for three weeks lengthened to eight weeks, with hundreds of thousands of people in attendance. The people were not coming to hear great oratory, nor were they interested merely in my ideas. I found they were desperately hungry to hear what God had to say through His Word. I felt as though I had a rapier in my hand, and as though the power of the Bible was slashing deeply into men's consciences, leading them to surrender to God. Does not the Bible say of itself, 'For the Word of God is quick and powerful and sharper

than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder soul and spirit, and the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.' I found that the Bible became a flame in my hands. That flame melted away unbelief in the hearts of people, and moved them to decide for Christ. The Word became like a hammer breaking up stony hearts and shaping them into the likeness of God. Did not God say, 'I will make my words like fire,' and 'Is not my Word like as a fire and a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?'"

And then, he went on to say, "It is my conviction that the preaching of the gospel is to be authoritative. If it is to produce conviction of sin, if it is to challenge men and women to walk in newness of life, if it is to be attended by the Spirit's power, then the Bible, with it's discerning, piercing, burning message, must become the basis of our preaching. I use the phrase, the Bible says, because the Word of God is the authoritative basis of our faith." Don't you like that?

No wonder God has used Billy Graham. So many times I've heard him, Brother Bobby, say, "The Bible says, the Bible says..." and he is appealing to the Word of the King. What I'm saying is this: that the Word of the King provides the church with it's message, the gospel. It prescribes the method, the preaching of the gospel. And it produces the membership. It is the Word of God that causes souls to be saved. You are born again by the Word of God. When you hear the truth of the gospel, that, my friend, inculcates faith in your heart and in your life. And I'm telling you, if you want to believe, you can believe, because God will give you faith. And don't you ever say, well, it's not my fault that I don't have faith. Some people can believe, and others cannot believe. The Bible says, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Your problem is not intellectual.

Billy Graham said, "When I surrendered my will, I got it settled." Your problem is in your will. You don't have intellectual problems, if you don't believe the Bible; you have moral problems. Your problem comes out of your heart; not out of your head, but out of your heart. The Bible says, "Beware, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief." The Bible, the Word of God, inculcates faith in your heart, and if you want to know, you can know, and your heart will respond to the Word of God like your eye responds to light, when your eye is right, and your ear responds to sound, when your ear is right. Your heart responds to the Word of God, when you're ready to hear the Word of God.

## **Conclusion**

Would you open your ear today? Would you say, Lord Jesus, I believe your Word? I believe it when it teaches that you are the Son of God. I believe it when it teaches that you died upon the cross for my sin. I believe it when it teaches that you rose again from

the dead. I believe it when it teaches, if I will believe on you and trust you, you will save me; and you said in your Word, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and I do believe. I do trust you right now with all of my heart, once and for all, now and forever, I receive you as my Lord and Savior, and I stand upon your Word.

Where are you going to get assurance? Where are you going to get assurance? You're not going to get assurance from your feelings. I got saved as a teenage boy, but I didn't have assurance, because I was looking into myself for that assurance. Sometimes I thought I was saved, and sometimes I thought I was lost.

I can remember stopping on the corner of 39th street and Calvin Avenue in West Palm Beach, Florida, on that corner a block from my girlfriend's house, the lady I'm now married to, and a block from my house. I'd walked Joyce home. It was a summer night; the stars were out in Florida. I was miserable. I did not have assurance. I wanted assurance. I began to pray. By then, I had learned what the gospel was all about. I didn't bow my head, but I looked up into the sky—not out of arrogance, but I wanted to look into the face of God. And I said, "God, I don't know whether I'm saved and the devil is trying to make me doubt it, or whether I'm lost and the Holy Spirit has me under conviction, but I know I don't have peace." And I quoted back to Him the Word of God that said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. And I said, "God, this is your Word. And, right now, once and for all, now and forever, I'm going to stand on your Word," and looked up into the heavens, and I said, "Lord, now, if I have never received you, I receive you this moment—right now. If I've done it before, this won't take it away. But I'm driving down a peg right now. I'm standing on your Word. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me. Thank you for doing it. I don't look for a sign. I don't ask for a feeling. I stand on your Word." And when I said that, a river of peace began to flow in my heart. From that moment on, I've had the blessed assurance that He lives in me, because I stood not on my emotions—not on my good life, but on the Word of God.

Jesus said in the Bible, in John chapter 5, verse 24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life." John says, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God that ye may know that you have eternal life." It is written that you might know. Friend, I'm telling you this: the Bible is the incontestable Word of God. It is the incorruptible Word of God. It is the indestructible Word of God. It is the indispensable Word of God. It produces the church's members. And when the Bible is preached, the Word of God is the seed that causes salvation. And God sent me here today to tell you that.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, friend, this is the Word of the King—not the word of the preacher, but the Word of the King, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. If you want to be saved, I want to help you to get saved right now. Would you just pray right now this prayer? If you're not

absolutely certain that you're saved, you might be like I was on that street corner and you want to get it settled. Why don't you pray this way? Dear God, I know that you love me, and I know that you want to save me. Jesus, you died to save me. You promised to save me, if I would trust you. I do trust you. I confess that I'm a sinner. I confess that my sins deserve judgment, but I need mercy. I want to be saved. Thank you, Jesus, for paying for my sin. Thank you. Thank you that you took my sin to the cross. Thank you, Lord. I believe that God raised you from the dead, and now, by faith, I trust you. I receive you into my heart, as my Lord and Savior, once and for all, now and forever. And, Lord, because you died for me, I'll live for you. And help me never ever to be ashamed of you. Give me the courage to make this public. In your holy name I pray. Amen.

Now, look up here. If you prayed that prayer, listen. Don't gather your books. Just look at me. If you prayed that prayer, or you want to pray that prayer, and you need some more help, I'm going to ask you to do something very wonderful. I'm going to ask you to do something that will settle it and seal it. I'm going to ask you to leave your seat and come forward. The Bible says, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." Jesus said, "If you'll confess me before men, I'll confess you before my Father in heaven." Walking a church aisle doesn't save you, but what it indicates is what saves you: that you're trusting Jesus, and you're not ashamed of Him. For the Scripture says, when we believe on Him, we'll not be ashamed of Him. So there'll be a minister standing at the head of each of these aisles. There'll be a minister standing along in that broad aisle way up in the balcony. We're going to sing a little song that says, Lord, I believe; Lord, I receive; Lord, I confess you now. You believe, you receive, you confess. And so, when we stand and sing, and if you prayed and asked Christ to come into your heart, I want you to leave your seat and come forward. Or, if you still need some guidance and help, we've got an open Bible. I want you to come and tell the minister that you're trusting Christ, or that you need some more help, but you want to trust Him. And what we want to do is give you some Scripture to stand on and seal it in prayer. It'll take a few moments, but they'll be glorious moments. If you're in the balcony, you needn't come all the way down here; there'll be a minister up there, just go tell him, I'm trusting Jesus, or I want to be saved. Put it in your own words; he'll know why you're coming. And don't let the crowd bother you. All these people, most of them, have already done what they're praying you will do. They'll rejoice when you come, I promise you.

Others of you today have been saved, some of you for a long time, but you've never had believers baptism. You ought to come and say, I want to make an appointment for my baptism; I want to be baptized in obedience to Jesus and added to the membership of His church.

Others of you may want to come transferring your membership from another church.

You want to come and say, I want to place my membership here. From all over the building, I want you to come, as soon as we stand. Don't look around to see what someone else is going to do. Let's stand together.

# The Word of God

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: September 22, 1996**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 1:23–25**

*“But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”*

1 PETER 1:25

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Incontestable Word of God
- II. The Incorruptible Word of God
- III. The Indestructible Word of God
- IV. The Indispensable Word of God
  - A. It Provides the Church’s Message
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  - C. It Produces the Church’s Members

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and turn to 1 Peter chapter 1, and, in a moment, we’re going to begin reading in verse 23. We’ve been talking about Kingdom Authority, and God put you into His kingdom, He has given you back the dominion that Adam lost, and He wants you to have authority in your life. You’re not to be a slave of the world, the flesh, and the devil. You’re not to be a victim; you are to be a victor. You are to be living in this life, reigning in this life, in authority, but we have taught you that in order to have authority you must submit yourself to authority. You can never be over those things that God wants you to be over until you’re under those things that God has set over you. Does that make sense to you? You must be under in order to be over. Now, God does not give His authority to rebels. If you have a rebellious spirit, if you rebel against the authority that God has set over you, then God is not going to give Kingdom Authority to you. And, if you live without Kingdom Authority, what a tragic loss!

Now, last week we talked to you about the King in the kingdom, and we talked to you about the lordship of Christ—When the King is Supreme. Today, we’re going to talk to you about the authority of the Word of the Lord. Last week, we talked to you about the Lord of the Word, today the Word of the Lord, because when the King is supreme, then

His Word is supreme. So we're talking to you today about the Word of the King, and the Word of the King is the Word of God.

Now, let's read what the Scripture says about the Word of God. And we're going to break in, in verse 23. It tells us how we are saved: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word by which the gospel is preached unto you." Now, it's very obvious that the theme there is the Word—the Word of the Lord, the Word of the King. What can you do with the Bible?

Well, there are some who despise the Bible. They hate Christ, they hate the Bible, they hate churches, they hate you, they hate me, and they despise the Word of God. There are none like that here today, unless you've come to make fun; and, if you have, may God have mercy upon you, if you've come to ridicule and to jeer. But not only are there those who despise the Bible; there are those who deny the Bible. They just simply say, "I don't believe it. I don't accept it as the Word of God, and that settles it." Then, there are others—they don't despise it or deny it, but they distort it. They claim to believe it, but they twist it, and get fanciful interpretations, and lead men astray, claiming to believe the Bible, but they actually distort the Bible. Then, there are others who don't distort it, but they dissect it. Rather than reading it as a love story, they read it as a math book; and these are the people who can split a theological hair into 16 equal sections, but somehow they hear the words, but they never get the music. They don't understand the message of the Bible, though they call themselves theologians.

But these are not the greatest danger today. The great danger in this crowd are those who disregard it. They claim to believe it, but very, very frankly, they know very little about it. Many of the people in this congregation could not name all the books of the Bible. Many who've been Christians for many years have not read all of the Bible. You're not conversant with the Bible. You don't know the themes of the Bible. You don't understand the great chapters of the Bible. Now, obviously, no one has mastered the Bible, but many of us have done so little to understand God's Word. Is it not true that many people spend a great deal of time with the newspapers and the television?

I want to ask you a question: How many of you believe with all of your heart that the Bible's the Word of God? Let me see your hand. Now, take it down. How many of you believe everything you read in the newspaper and see on television? I didn't see anybody lift their hand, and I'm glad. Now, here's the third question: How many in this congregation spend more time with the newspapers than you do with the Word of God, reading something that you don't believe and neglecting something you say you do believe? Don't you think there is time for adjustment? Don't you think that we better get

things in priority? This is the Word of the King, and we're going to learn how to have authority when we get under the authority of the Word of God.

## **I. The Incontestable Word of God**

Now, let me give you four things about the Bible that I pray will burn themselves into your heart, four things about the Word of the King. First of all, it is God's incontestable Word—God's incontestable Word. What I mean by that is this: that we cannot—we cannot—come up against the Bible successfully; there is no contest there, because the Bible is just what it says it is—the Word of God. Look again in verse 23: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God." Now, the Bible calls itself by many terms, but God's favorite expression for the Bible is simply this: the Word of God. Now, you find it here. Let me give you some other scriptures, and don't turn to these because we won't have time, but just think of these kinds of scriptures. For example, Acts 4, verse 31: "They spake the word of God with boldness." Romans 10, verse 17: "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 17: "...and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Hebrews 4:12: "And the word of God is quick, and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword." Then I love this one—1 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 13: "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God."

Now, you say, "Pastor, why is that important? Why do you call it the Word of God?" Because, you see, if it is the Word of God—and it is—over 500 times in the first five books of the Bible it is called the Word of God or something similar. Over 1000 times in the books of the prophets it says this is the Word of God. Over 4000 times in the Old Testament it uses this equivalent: the Word of God. Forty-four times in the New Testament, the Word of God. If that is true, that this book is the Word of God, then you can say this: When the Bible speaks, God speaks. Now, listen. When the Bible speaks, God speaks, and if God is speaking in the Bible, what conclusions must you therefore draw? If it is the Word of God, then it must be perfect. Amen? All right? It's absolute perfection if it is the Word of God, for the Bible says in 2 Timothy chapter 3 verse 16, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." And a God of truth could not inspire error. It is the Word of God, and the Bible says in the book of Proverbs chapter 30 and verse 6, "Every word of God is pure." Jesus said in Matthew chapter 4, verse 4, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." The Bible was given by God. He used human penmen; their ideas, their expressions, their personalities are all reflected in the Bible, but "holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Let me show you something beautiful. Did you know that God gave the same title to

Jesus that He gave to the Bible? What does God call the Bible in our text in verse 23? The Word of God. What does God call His Son in Revelation chapter 19 and verse 13? Here's God's description: "And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and his name is called the Word of God." Now, a man and his word may be different, but God and His Word are not. What I mean by that is that Jesus and the Bible are not identical, but they are inseparable, and you cannot separate the Word of the Lord from the Lord of that Word. And the Lord of the Word is called the Word of God, just as the Word itself is called the Word of God.

Think of the similarities between Jesus and the Bible. Both have come from God. The Scriptures have come from God, and the Bible says, in Galatians 4, verse 4, that God sent forth His Son. The Scriptures will last forever. First Peter 1, verse 25: "The Word of the Lord endureth forever." And Jesus endures forever. Revelation 1:18—He says, "I am alive forevermore. Amen." Both are unchanging. Jesus said, in Matthew 5 verse 18, "Not a jot nor a tittle will fall from the law, till all be fulfilled." And Jesus as described in Hebrews chapter 13, verse 8, as the One who changes not: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to day, and for ever." Both Jesus and the Bible are lights in a dark world. Jesus said, in John 8, verse 12, "I am the light of the world." And the Bible says of itself, in Psalm 119, verse 105, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." John 17, verse 17, says that the Bible is truth. Jesus said, "Thy word is truth." But in John 14, verse 6, Jesus said, "I am the truth."

You see, if you believe in Jesus, you have to believe in the Bible. If you believe in the Bible, you have to believe in Jesus. You cannot separate the two. You think that the Bible as the incontestable Word of God has incredible power. That's the reason the Bible says in Hebrews chapter 4, verse 12, "For the word of God is quick and powerful." Now, what does that mean—quick and powerful? Well, the word quick is a translation of the word *zoon*; it's the word we get "zoology" from, or "zoo" from. It means alive! It has life, and the word powerful is the Greek word *energias*. It means it pulsates—it throbs—with power. It's not like any other book. You read other books; this Book reads you. It has life, and it has power. And I've learned that about preaching the Bible. I've preached the Bible long enough to know this is not an ordinary book. It cuts, it burns, it crushes, it has power.

One man was translating the Scriptures, and the more he got into translating the Scriptures, he said, "I became so impressed with the power of the Word of God, I felt like I was trying to rewire a house without cutting off the main switch." That's the power of the Word of God. So, put this down in your heart and in your mind: It is the Word of God! It is not like any other book. Believe this! Believe this. When the Bible speaks, God speaks. Say "amen." When the Bible speaks, God speaks. It is the Word of God. It is the incontestable Word of God.

## **II. The Incorruptible Word of God**

Now, here's the second thing. Not only is it the incontestable Word of God, it is the incorruptible Word of God. Look now in verse 23: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God." Now, why do we say it is incorruptible? Because it has not a taint nor a blemish of any corruption upon it, and it will remain that way. There's nothing men can do to add any corruption to the Word of God. Now, plenty have tried. One man said, "One way I know the Bible is the Word of God, it has stood up under so much shoddy preaching." Amen? You know, you think about any other book that's had so many wackos and weirdos and fruit loops claiming to believe it, it would have gone the way; it would have been corrupted. But it stands today ever pure. "Every word of God is pure." Atheists have railed against the Bible. Cynics and agnostics have smiled at it. Liberals have moved heaven and earth to remove its miracles. Materialists have ignored it. Radicals and false cults have twisted it, and yet it is the incorruptible Word of God.

Dr. Robert G. Lee was my predecessor once removed, a dear man. I had a lot of fellowship with Dr. Lee before he died, and he and I were friends, and I had the responsibility and the privilege to preach his funeral when he died. But Dr. Lee said this about the Bible, and I've copied it down. It is so beautiful. I want you to listen to it. We're talking about the Bible being incorruptible, and he said, "All its enemies have not torn one hole in its holy vesture, or stolen one flower from its wonderful garden, nor diluted one drop of honey from its abundant hive, nor broken one string on its thousand-stringed harp, nor drowned one sweet word in infidel ink." Don't you like that? The Bible is the incontestable Word of God, because it is just that. It is the Word of God. It is the incorruptible Word of God.

You say, "Well, Pastor, we live in a day of modern science. Does it bother you when science contradicts the Bible?" No, it does not. Friend, I am not worried about modern science. Give the scientists time. Maybe one day they'll catch up with the Word of God. And don't worry about it. Don't worry about it. When a scientist has something good to say about the Bible, that doesn't give me any more faith in the Bible, just a little more faith in the scientist. It is the incorruptible Word of God. It is the incontestable Word of God. It is the incorruptible Word of God.

## **III. The Indestructible Word of God**

Now, here's the third thing I want you to learn about the Bible. It, friend, is the indestructible Word of God—the indestructible Word of God. Look, if you would, in the last part of verse 23. It is "the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." And then, look, if you will, in the last part of this text, verse 25: "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever." The Bible is not the book of the month; it is the book of the ages. Now, it took

some 1,500 years to write, and the writers span some 30 generations of world history, and the Bible was written by men who died some 2,000 to 3,000 years ago, but today it's the most widely circulated book in the world. I have read from the Bible this morning; I've also read the newspaper this morning. But, very frankly, what's in this morning's newspaper a few days from now will not be all that important. You know, today's masterpiece wraps tomorrow's fish. Now, that's the news, but thank God for this book. It is fresh! It is alive.

Here we are in the twentieth century facing a new millennium, and yet here is a group of people, many of you with post-graduate degrees, many of you who are brilliant, and yet you take this book and hug it to your bosom. You live it, you love it, you teach it, you stand upon it. What other book is like the Bible? It is the indestructible Word of God. Century after century, men have tried to bury it or burn it. The kings of the earth have set themselves against it, and even the public schools in America seem to be dead-set against it.

Many centuries ago, there was a Roman emperor whose name was Diocletian. He hated the Bible. In the year 303 A.D. he declared a war against the Bible, and Bibles were confiscated and destroyed, and Christians who named the name of Jesus were put to death, many of them with excruciating pain. He so hated the Bible that he took a Bible and burned it, and then on top of that burned Bible he erected a monument and had chiseled on that monument these words: extincto nomini Christianorum. What does that mean? The name of Christian is extinct. That's what Diocletian said. But Diocletian died and went to hell, and in 325 A.D. Constantine enthroned the Bible as the infallible judge of truth in the first general church council, and the Bible came forth like that dove out of Noah's ark. What are we saying? We're saying that the Bible is the incorruptible Word of God, and in spite of all of the rantings and ravings of the naysayers, the Bible cannot fade nor decay, and the foul breath of time and the annoying tooth of decay cannot destroy the Word of God. Thank God for that.

I read somewhere where a man was told to build a wall that would not fall down. He said, "All right." He said, "I'll do it." And he built a wall that was four feet high and five feet wide, and he said, "Now, if anybody pushes this wall over, it'll be a foot taller than it was before they pushed it over." And, friend, that's the way the Word of God is. It seems that the more men come against the Word of God, the more the Word of God seems to prosper and to grow.

#### **IV. The Indispensable Word of God**

Now here's the final thing—and we're going to slow down here just a moment when we get to the final thing. We said the Bible is the incontestable Word of God, because it is just that, the Word of God. We said that the Bible, this wonderful book, is not only

incontestable, but we've said that it is incorruptible. It's the Word of God—incorruptible seed. And we said it's indestructible. But here's the thing I really want you to see. The Word of God, the Bible, is the indispensable Word of God—the indispensable Word of God. Look, if you will, in verse 25: "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word by which the gospel is preached unto you." Now, no Bible, no church. No Bible, no Christianity. Why is the Bible so important? He's talking about the Word, and he says, "This is the word by which the gospel is preached unto you."

#### **A. It Provides the Church's Message**

I want you to notice three things about this right now. The Bible, the King's Word, provides the church's message. What is the church's message? The gospel. We have no other message but the gospel! Paul said, "I knew nothing among you, except Jesus and Him crucified." Friend, everything that we preach springs from the gospel and relates back to the gospel. That is the message of the church! Do you know what I want to be known as? I want to be known as a gospel preacher. And what is the gospel? Christ died for our sins; He was buried; He was raised again the third day. That's the gospel. He died for our sins, and He was raised from the dead. I hope you believe the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That's history's central event, and that gospel doesn't need to be rethought, it needs to be re-taught. We don't need a new and a modern gospel for a new and a modern age. I am content to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the Bible from cover to cover that tells about the gospel.

Don't get the idea that the gospel is only found in the New Testament; the gospel is found in the first pages of Genesis, and it goes all the way through the Bible. The Bible teaches us that Jesus saves. The Bible has one villain—the devil. It has one Hero—Jesus, and it has one message—Jesus saves. I hope you understand that. "This is the word by which the gospel is preached unto you." I enjoy being called a gospel preacher. I'd rather be known as a gospel preacher than be known as an intellectual; and I know that there are a lot of people who can preach the gospel better than I can, but nobody can preach a better gospel than I can, because that gospel comes right out of the Word of God. And I'm not a prophet. I am not an apostle. But I'll tell you what: I can preach with the authority of a prophet and an apostle if I preach what the prophets and the apostles preached. Isn't that wonderful? You see, the Bible says we are built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, so I can stand up and say to you without stutter or stammer, "This is the word of the Lord." And so, this book that we love so well, it provides the church's message, and the church's message is the gospel."

#### **B. It Prescribes the Church's Method**

Now, secondly, not only does it provide the message, but, folks, it prescribes the method. Now, the message and the method are tied together. Now, look in verse 25:

“But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word by which the gospel is—what’s that next word?—preached unto you.” The method is preaching. I don’t say that because I’m a preacher, but I’m telling you that God’s plan for the church is for the gospel to be preached. Now, in many churches, preaching has gone out of vogue, out of style, and we’ve tried with pageants and plays and suppers and concerts and many other things, and musicals, to somehow get some substitution for the preaching of the Word of God. But the Bible makes it very clear that the method is the preaching of the Word of God. First Corinthians chapter 1, verse 18, says, “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” And 2 Corinthians 1, verse 21 says, “For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believed.” Doesn’t say “foolish preaching,” but the “foolishness of preaching.” You see, the church’s method is the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It may be preaching from a pulpit. It may be preaching in a Bible study. It may be going door-to-door, but taking the message of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and proclaiming that message.

### **C. It Produces the Church’s Members**

Now, here’s the third thing. Listen. It provides the church’s message—that’s the gospel. It prescribes the church’s method—that’s the proclamation of the gospel, the preaching of the gospel. And here is the wonderful thing: it produces the church’s members. Look, if you will again, in verse 23—look at it: “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” You see, the Bible is seed that is alive, and you put a seed in the ground, and it brings forth life that corresponds to the life that was put in that ground. I have preached long enough to know that there is life in the Bible. God’s Word is like a sword that cuts. It’s like a fire that burns. It’s like a water that quenches thirst. It is like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces. It is like seed that brings forth life. And it is the Word of God that produces the church’s members. And the Bible says we’re born again, not by corruptible seed, but by incorruptible—by the Word of God.

The Bible teaches a regenerate church membership. The Bible teaches that those who are members of the church are not members simply because their parents were members of the church. They must be born again. They must have a new birth. Jesus said to Nicodemus, who was already religious, “You must be born again.” You see, if you only are born once, you will die twice. The first death is the physical death; the second death is eternal death in the lake of fire. And, if you’re only born once and die twice, you’ll wish you’d never been born at all. But, if you’re born twice, you can only die once. Your physical body may die, but your spirit, forever wed with the Lord, will be with Him in glory; and, as we heard this morning, heaven is only a stone’s throw away. You

cannot die but once. You cannot die but physically, and so the Lord said, “Don’t fear those who are able to kill the body but are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” Born once, you die twice. Born twice, you can only die but once. And, how are you born again? “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God.”

It is an astounding thing. It is an amazing thing, but I’ve seen it happen now for over four decades that I’ve been preaching the Word of God. Preach the gospel. Tell the truth. Pray. Be anointed by the Holy Spirit, and there’s something supernatural that takes place. People’s lives are radically, dramatically, eternally changed by the Word of God. Isn’t that wonderful? It’s seed that fructifies and gives life, as you preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, and people hear the Word of truth. That’s the reason that Jesus said, in John chapter 6, “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” That’s the reason the apostle Paul described his preaching as “holding forth the word of life.” You see, it is the indispensable—indispensable—Word of God. May Bellevue Baptist Church forever stand on the holy Word of God with no stutter, no stammer, no apology, no retreat, no amendment. It’s the Word of God! It is the incontestable Word of God! It is the incorruptible Word of God! It is indestructible Word of God! And, therefore, it is the indispensable Word of God.

Now, when we get under that Word, we have incredible authority. I had an article that I clipped from a magazine—Billy Graham is talking. Billy Graham said that, when he started his ministry as a young man, he had those questions many times that young students have. And he said he had some doubts in his mind concerning the Word of God, and he said he had very little power in his ministry. And then, in this article that I want to share with you, he tells what happened to him in the year 1949. He got alone in the mountains of Los Angeles, and this is what he said. He said, “I’d been having many doubts concerning the Bible. I thought I saw apparent contradictions in Scripture—some things I could not reconcile with my restricted concept of God. When I stood up to preach, the authoritative note so characteristic of all great preachers of the past was lacking. Like hundreds of other young seminary students, I was waging the intellectual battle of my life. The outcome could certainly affect my ministry.” And then, he says, “I remember walking down a trail tramping into the woods and almost wrestling with God. I dueled with my doubts. My soul seemed to be caught in the crossfire. Finally in desperation...”—and here’s the key—“I surrendered my will to the living God revealed in Scripture. I knelt before the open Bible, and said, ‘Lord, many things in this Book I do not understand, but Thou hast said the just shall live by faith. All I have received from Thee I have taken by faith. Here and now, by faith, I accept the Bible as Thy Word. I take it all. I take it without reservations. Where there are things I cannot understand, I will reserve judgment until I receive more light. If it pleases Thee, give me authority as I

proclaim Thy Word, and, through that authority, convict me of sin, and turn sinners to the Savior.”

And then, he tells how he began that great Los Angeles crusade where multiplied thousands were swept into the kingdom of God, and Billy Graham’s ministry then began to have a worldwide import, and he said, as he was preaching the Word of God, he says there, “The people were not coming to hear great oratory, nor were they interested merely in my ideas. I found they were desperately hungry to hear what God had to say through His holy Word. I felt as though I had a rapier in my hand, and as though the power of the Bible was slashing deeply into men’s consciences, leading them to surrender to God. Does not the Bible say of itself, ‘For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and the marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart’? I found that the Bible became a flame in my hands. That flame melted away unbelief in the hearts of people, and moved them to decide for Christ. The Word became a hammer breaking up stony hearts and shaping them into the likeness of God. Did not God say, ‘I will make My words in thy mouth fire, and is not My word like as a fire and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?’” And then, he sums up this article by saying, “It is my conviction that the preaching of the gospel is to be authoritative. If it is to produce conviction of sin, if it is to challenge men and women to walk in newness of life, if it is to be attended by the Spirit’s power, then the Bible with its discerning, piercing, burning message must become the basis of our preaching.” Do you know why Billy Graham is being used of the Lord? He goes on to say, “I use the phrase, ‘The Bible says,’ because the Word of God is the authoritative basis of our faith.”

## **Conclusion**

That’s what I’m trying to say to you! “This is the word by which the gospel is preached.” No stutter, no stammer, no apology—I have found out that when you don’t apologize for the Bible, but preach the Bible, it goes through the devil’s lies like a cannonball, a white-hot cannonball through a crate of eggs. There is power in the Word of God—power to proclaim it—and Satan does not want you to understand the authority of the Word of God. When Satan came against Jesus, and tempted Jesus, and tried to get Jesus into sin, what did Jesus do? Jesus did not come against Satan with emotion. Jesus did not come against Satan with reason. Jesus did not come against Satan with threats. Jesus took the Word of God, and said, “It is written; It is written; It is written.” And three times, Jesus ran him through with the Word of God, and Satan retreated. Satan does not like the authority of the Word of God. And, when you get under authority, when the Bible becomes your authority, when the Word of the Lord and the Lord of the Word become your authority, then, when you stand on the Word of God, Satan and all of his minions

will flee, and you are going to have authority for your life.

How do you know that you're saved? How do you know that you're going to heaven? Because of your goodness? Because of your deeds? Because of your emotions? As a teenage boy, I professed my faith in Jesus Christ and was baptized, but for two years I had no real assurance of my salvation—up and down, up and down—till one day I learned the gospel from the Word, really understood it. I bowed my head on a street corner, the corner of 39th Street and Calvin Avenue in West Palm Beach. I'd just walked my sweetheart home, the sweet lady I'm married to right now, and I was a teenage boy. I had to get it settled. I began to pray. I said, "Lord, I don't know whether I'm saved and the devil's trying to make me doubt it, or whether I'm lost and the Holy Spirit has me under conviction, but I have no peace and I need to get it settled." And I said, "Lord, Your Word says—Your Word says—'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'" I said, "God, that is Your Word!" And I looked up into the heavens, not in disrespect, but I wanted to look into the face of God with my eyes wide open, and I said, "Lord, now, once and for all, now and forever, as much as in me is, I receive You as my Lord and Savior. I trust Your Word! I don't look for a sign. I don't ask for a feeling. I stand on Your Word. Save me! If I was saved, I still am; but if I wasn't, I am now. I drive down a peg. I trust You now as my Lord and Savior." And I stood on the Word of God. And I can tell you, by the authority of the Word, I knew that moment and from ever forward that I know the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior. That is the authority of the Word of God! It's authority when you proclaim it. It is authority when you stand on it. The Bible is the Word of the King, and if you want Kingdom Authority, you're going to have to be under those authorities that God has put over you—first of all, the Lord of the Word; secondly, the Word of that Lord, the Word of the King. Bow your heads in prayer.

# Life on the Rock

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** February 13, 1983

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 Peter 2:4–9

*“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”*

1 PETER 2:5

## Outline

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## Introduction

Now I want you to take your Bibles, friends, and turn with me to the book of 1 Peter. We're studying 1 Peter together under this major topic: "Timeless Truth for Tough Times." Now, times have always been tough for the children of God, but Jesus Christ has always been sufficient. He has, He will be, and I want you therefore to learn some truths today. Our subject today is "Life on the Rock." Not life on the rocks, but "Life on the Rock." And that rock is Jesus.

Now, let's begin reading in verse 4—1 Peter chapter 2 and verse 4. We're going to break right into the middle of a sentence. He's speaking about the Lord, and he says of the Lord, "...to whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an

*holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood...*”—and I’m going to stop reading right there in the middle of that sentence. (1 Peter 2:4–9)

The *Reader’s Digest* said some time ago that in order for a person to be happy and in order for a person to have fulfillment, three things were necessary: Number one: They needed something to believe. Number two: They needed someone to love. And number three: They needed something worthwhile to do. Now, that’s true, but not because the *Reader’s Digest* says it. That is true, and I think the Bible would confirm that in order for us to find fulfillment and happiness and meaning in life, we must have something that we can believe in—I mean, really believe in it. And then, we must have someone to love and to love us. And then, we must have something worthwhile to do rather than just merely drawing our breath and drawing our salary and fighting to live while we live to fight. There must be more to life.

Now I believe in the Scripture that I’ve just read to you. You’re going to find out in the Scripture that Jesus Christ is indeed the fulfillment of all three of those needs. And we’re going to point it out to you as we’re thinking today about the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. And I want to tell you, the grandest organization this world knows anything about is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe that with all of my heart and all of my soul: that the grandest organization and organism in this world is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, Peter is talking about rocks, stones. If there’s anything that Israel has a lot of, it’s rocks, stones. If they could find a way to export rocks—and I’ll tell you what: if somehow automobiles ran on rocks rather than oil—it would be something. They’ve got plenty of rocks. And Peter was interested in rocks. One day Jesus called him a rock. One day Jesus said, *“Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.”* (Matthew 16:18) And the word *Peter* there means “rock.” You know, Jesus gave him a nickname: Rocky. That’s right: he was Rocky. Jesus called Peter “Rocky.” “You are a rock, and upon this rock I will build my Church.”

Now, Peter, I believe, still has that in his mind as he’s writing this epistle to us. And Peter here is talking about the Church, and how it’s built, and how it functions, and so Peter here talks, first of all, about the cornerstone of the Church. And then, he talks about the construction of the Church. And then, he talks about the character of the

Church. When he talks about the cornerstone of the Church, he tells us something to believe in. When he talks about the construction of the Church, he's really talking about someone to love and to be loved by. And then, when he talks about the character of the Church, he's talking about something to do. Let's see if that's not true.

## I. The Cornerstone of the Church

Now, first of all, he's talking about the cornerstone of the Church. I want you to look with me for just a moment in chapter 2, verse 4: "...to whom coming, as unto a living stone..." (1 Peter 2:4) He's talking about Jesus—chapter 2, verse 4. And then, verse 6: "Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone." (1 Peter 2:6) Now, that cornerstone, the cornerstone of the Church, is Jesus Christ. Our church is built—this church, any church, any Christian church is built—upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I want you to think of the figure of speech that Peter is using as he calls Jesus a stone.

### A. He Is a Supernatural Stone

In the first place, He is a supernatural stone. Look in verse 4. In verse 4, He's called "a living stone." So, right away, you know he's talking in supernatural terms, because stones don't have life. Stones are dead. As a matter of fact, if you want to say something's really dead, what do you say? "Stone dead," right? Or "dead as a rock." Even your pet rock: dead. I mean, they're dead. And yet, here Jesus is called "a living stone."

What Peter is doing by a play on words is saying that Jesus Christ gives supernatural life. He was the One who said in John 10:10, "I've come that you might have life, and that you might have it abundantly." (John 10:10) You know, He spoke of living water, living bread. Now, here He's called the living stone.

Hey, are you looking for life—I mean, real life? Not existence. You know, there are a lot of people who have existence, but they don't have life. There are a lot of people who want to go to heaven who don't have life. They have existence. I want to tell you, my friend, that heaven would be hell for you without Jesus Christ. You want to spend all eternity in heaven? You don't even know what to do on a rainy afternoon. What would you do if you went on living endlessly with the same condition that you have in your heart right now? You'd get sick and tired of heaven without eternal life. Jesus Christ came not to give existence—you already have that. You will always be in existence. There will never be a time when you are not. When God made you, God breathed into your nostrils the breath of life and you became a living soul. And you will go on endless, timeless, dateless, measureless. Your soul will be in existence somewhere when the

sun, the moon, and the stars have grown cold. But only in Jesus do you have life. He is a supernatural stone.

### **B. He Is a Select Stone**

But not only is Jesus Christ a supernatural stone; He's also a select stone. Look again in verse 4: "...disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious." (1 Peter 2:4) Jesus Christ is that very special, that very select stone: none like Him among the sons of men. He is precious to the Father. Jesus would hear the Father say to Him, "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*" (Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5; 2 Peter 1:17) Friend, Jesus Christ is the object of the Father's love. Jesus Christ is a precious stone, chosen of God.

Now, pay attention. There is no way that you can know God the Father without knowing God the Son. There is no way that you can ignore God the Son without ignoring God the Father. There is no way that you worship the Father except through the Son, for Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*" (John 14:6) He is, my dear friend, that select stone—none other like the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **C. He Is a Slighted Stone**

But I want you to notice something else about the Lord Jesus. In spite of the fact that He's precious to God, He's not precious to all men. So the One who is this supernatural stone, and the One who is the select stone, is also the slighted stone. Look in verse 4: "...to whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, disallowed indeed of men..." (1 Peter 2:4) And then, verse 7: "*Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner.*" (1 Peter 2:7)

Now, what does that mean? It means that not everybody is going to love the Lord Jesus Christ. Some people have the idea that Jesus Christ is not the Messiah of the world because not everyone follows Him. Friend, I want to tell you, if everybody in the world believed on Jesus Christ, that would prove He's not the Son of God, because He Himself said that not everyone would believe on Him. He said, "*Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which enters unto life, and few there be that find it.*" (Matthew 7:14) And the Bible here plainly and clearly prophesies that there are some who are going to slight this stone. There are some who are going to refuse this stone. And this phrase "*disallowed indeed of men,*" it means "to examine, and after having examined it, to say 'I don't want it.'"

Now, what's going to happen to those who've never heard of Jesus Christ? Well, I have a message on it. Some people say, "Brother Rogers, what about a person, a man, a woman, a boy or girl who dies without ever hearing of Jesus Christ? What happens to

them? Can they go to heaven without Christ?” That’s a big question. And there’s a Bible answer to it. But let me tell you something that’s even a greater question than that: What is God going to do with people who sit in an air-conditioned, upholstered church, and hear a preacher tear his heart out and preach Jesus Christ, and they examine Him and then say, “I don’t want Him”? What’s going to happen to those people? I want to tell you that the hottest part of hell is reserved for those who, having examined God’s precious stone, disallow it; those who, having seen God’s precious Son, slight Him and reject the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bible says, “That servant that knew not his master’s will and did things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few stripes. But he who knew his master’s will, and then did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with many stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of the same shall much be required.” (Luke 12:47–48) And Jesus Christ said in Matthew 11 to the city where He did His most wonderful works, “*And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.*” (Matthew 11:23–24)

Do you know what that means? That means, ladies and gentlemen, that those of us who’ve heard the gospel and those of us who’ve known Jesus Christ and yet rejected Him will have a more severe judgment than the vile people of the city of Sodom who lived in open sodomy and rebellion against God. I tell you the greatest judgment is for that man, that woman, who pours contempt on the Son of God.

#### **D. He Is a Stumbling Stone**

Jesus Christ is a supernatural stone. Jesus Christ is a select stone. Jesus Christ is a slighted stone. Jesus Christ is a stumbling stone. Look in verse 8, if you will. And the Bible there calls Him “*a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.*” (1 Peter 2:8) Some people stumble on the cornerstone. Now, you see, listen: Every man, every woman, every boy, every girl somehow, some way, comes in contact with Jesus Christ—some way, somehow. And, dear friend, Jesus Christ will be for you either a steppingstone into heaven or a stumbling stone into hell. Now you can’t be neutral about Jesus Christ. Either you rise on Him, or you fall on Him. Either you’re saved by Him, or you’re judged by Him. And if Jesus Christ is not for you a cornerstone, Jesus Christ is for you a stumbling stone. So I say you will either stand on Him or fall by Him, but you will not walk around Him. You will deal with Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is inescapable. Jesus Christ is inevitable. Jesus Christ is unavoidable. You cannot be neutral of Jesus Christ. And what you do with Jesus Christ determines what Jesus Christ will do with you. To many, He is a stumbling stone.

## E. He Is a Strategic Stone

Now I want to say also that Jesus Christ is a strategic stone. Look again in verse 6—and the Bible says, “*Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone*” (1 Peter 2:6)—not an ordinary stone; a strategic stone. You see, in the architecture of this day, when a building was built, in the foundation there would be a chief cornerstone. This was the stone that set the angles of the walls. This was the stone that gave symmetry and strength and significance to the building. This was the stone upon which the building rested. It locked the corners together. It was generally a massive stone, not like a little cornerstone we set in a building today to commemorate the building. This stone was such an integral part of the building that if you were to take it out, the building had no more strength and significance. Everything was locked on it and built around it.

Now, Jesus Christ is indeed that strategic stone. He’s the One, dear friend, who gives significance and direction and strength and substance to your life. The Bible says, concerning Jesus, “*By Him all things consist.*” (Colossians 1:17) He is strategic in your life. And so many have been trying to build without Him, and you can’t understand why you can’t get the job done.

There is a tradition that comes to us down through the centuries, that when Solomon’s Temple was being built, they quarried the stones—we know from the Bible—in a quarry, and brought them and shipped them to the Temple Mount, because when the temple was being built, they didn’t want the sound of a hammer and the sound of a chisel. And so, these stones were cut in the right shapes in the quarry and then carted to the Temple Mount. And as they were building the temple and laying the foundation for that temple, there was one stone, a large stone, in the middle of the construction yard, and the workers kept stumbling on it; they kept falling over it. They had to work around it. It didn’t seem to fit in, anyway. It was sort of a strange shape, and it didn’t seem to fit. After a while, the construction foreman said, “What is that stone for? Where does that go?” No one could figure it out. And they said, “Well, it’s in the way. Get rid of it.” They said, “Well, we might...” “No,” he said, “get rid of it. It’s been around here so long. Get rid of it.”

And so, what they did was to take their bars and begin to pry that stone and to move that stone and to tumble that stone. And they tumbled it off the Temple Mount, down between the Temple Mount and the Mount of Olives, into the brook Kidron, into that valley there, and then they continued their work. Finally, they came to the place for the placement of the cornerstone. And they sent to the quarry and said, “We’re ready for the cornerstone. Send the cornerstone.” They said, “We’ve sent it.” “No, you haven’t sent it. We don’t have it.” “You’d better check your inventory. We sent it.” “Well, we’ve checked our inventory. We don’t have it. Send us the cornerstone.” “We sent the cornerstone.”

“Go down there, fellows, and look in the brook Kidron.” “Measure that stone. Is that it?” “That’s it! Bring it back.” Here it is, hauled up the mountainside, back to the Temple Mount. Let me tell you, “The stone which the builders rejected, the same became the head of the corner.”

And Jesus Christ uses that as an illustration of Himself, because this world is trying to build without Jesus Christ. We say, “We’re tired of Him. We stumble over Him. He’s in our way. Get rid of Him, and we’ll go on and build our lives.” But, friend, you can’t build without Jesus Christ. *“Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”* (1 Corinthians 3:11) If you’re not building upon Jesus Christ, you’re just not building. And one of these days, if your spiritual temple is ever completed, you’re going to have to come and make Jesus Christ the cornerstone of your life, because He is a strategic stone.

#### **F. He Is a Solid Stone**

But also, He’s a solid stone. You see, Jesus Christ is a rock. When you believe in Jesus Christ, you’re not walking around on eggshells and Jell-O. Jesus Christ is solid. Therefore, the Bible says that whenever a person believes in Him, he will not be disappointed. He’ll not be ashamed. He’ll not be confounded. Look again in verse 6: *“Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect and precious:”—now, watch this—“and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.”* (1 Peter 2:6)

Do you know what that means? He’s solid. He’s solid. Actually, it means “he’ll not be ashamed.” It literally means “he’ll not be in a hurry to get away.” You know, have you ever been in a restaurant and somebody starts talking about Jesus, and a church member, who’s not really saved, gets all embarrassed, hot under the collar? And you say, “Let’s thank God for our food,” and the back of his neck starts to burn. He’s wondering if anybody’s looking. Or you just start talking about the Lord, and he’s just kind of in a hurry to get away? Friend, I’m not in a hurry to get away when I’m talking about Jesus.

You know, people say, “Oh, why do you want me to come down this aisle and confess Christ as my personal Savior? That’s a private matter. I can just do it here in my heart.” I want to tell you something, friend. If they would give me an opportunity, I would stand on top of the Empire State Building and broadcast to the world that I love Jesus Christ. I’m not ashamed of Him. I’m not in a hurry to get away. He is a solid stone. You can stand on Jesus Christ. We have people who think they’re Christians, but they’re ashamed of this One called Jesus. “He that believeth on Him shall not be ashamed.” He’ll not be in a hurry to get away. He’ll not be confounded.

Thank God for the cornerstone of the church—a supernatural stone; a select stone;

a slighted stone; a stumbling stone—but I want to tell you, dear friend, to those of us who are saved, a strategic stone, and a solid stone. The head of the corner is the Lord Jesus Christ.

I heard of an old lady who was dying. And she was right at death's door. Her loved ones were around her bed. And one of them said, "Oh, she's sinking." The old lady heard them. She looked up, opened her eyes, and revived for a moment, and said, "Sinking? How can one sink through a rock?" Amen? How can one sink through a rock? If you're on a rock, how can you sink? You'll never sink. I told you a few days ago, you may tremble on the rock; it will never tremble under you, friend. You'd better learn to build upon Jesus Christ, the solid rock.

## II. The Construction of the Church

Now, let's change the figure: Not only do we see Jesus Christ as the cornerstone of the church, but we see ourselves as individual building blocks in that church. And so, let's think about the construction of the church. Look in verse 5: "*Ye also, as [living] stones,*"—it says "*lively stones.*" That means "living stones"—"*are built up a spiritual house.*" (1 Peter 2:5) So now, notice what he's saying: "*Ye also...*" That is, the things that are true of Jesus Christ, in a sense, are true about us. Because He's a living stone, He is in us, and we're in Him. Therefore, we bear His nature. Therefore, we also have supernatural life. We also are living stones. We're to be like Him.

That's the reason Jesus gave Peter the name Rocky. Have you ever heard somebody say of a boy, "He's a lot like his dad. He's a chip off the old block"? A chip off the old block: what does that mean? He shares the nature of his papa. And, friend, I want to tell you there's a sense in which every child of God is a chip off that block. We are living stones. We are like our dear Lord, a part of Jesus Christ.

Now, because this is true—because this is true—I want you to notice three things with me.

### A. We Are Built Together

First of all, we are built together. Notice this in verse 5: "*Ye also, as [living] stones, are built up a spiritual house.*" (1 Peter 2:5) Now, notice He's talking about a spiritual house, not a material house. You know, so many times we say, "Bellevue Baptist Church," and what do we mean? The buildings. But these are not the buildings. God forbid, if something should happen to these buildings, there would still be a Bellevue Baptist Church. We'd meet in a stadium, a field, a city auditorium, but the church would still exist. Never confuse the building with the church. *Don't be like that man, when they asked him in a form to fill out, "What is your church preference?" he said, "Red brick."* No, friend, listen. The red brick is not the church; it is the building the church meets in.

We are the church: the people. But he speaks of us in a metaphor, in a simile, as in a figure of speech, as being blocks, bricks, stones in that building built upon Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone.

Now, the very first thing is that we are built together. Now, you see, what is the significance of a stone out on the ground? Not much. Not much to see. You step over it. You pay no attention to it. But you take that stone and put it with a lot of other stones, and it becomes a beautiful temple, as the master architect assembles these stones together.

Now, friend, that's what Jesus Christ is doing with us. By ourselves, we're not all so much. You know, some people have the idea, "Well, I believe in Jesus, but I just don't believe in the church." **How many one-brick buildings have you seen? I mean, just take one stone: anybody can just roll it around and move it around. But take a lot of them together, and there's strength.** And that's what our Lord is doing to us. He is building us together. And I am to gain strength from you, and you are to gain strength from me. And it's amazing what we can do as we are built together.

## **B. We Are Bound Together**

But not only are we built together; because we're built together, we are bound together—bound together. Brother Tommy had us to sing this song, "We Are One in the Bond of Love." And the mortar that holds us together is love. But we are committed one to another. Don't you ever tell me, dear friend, what you do is none of my business, or what I do is none of your business. If you're a member of this church, what you do is very much my business, and what I do is very much your business. We are in it together. We're bound together.

Suppose the stones in the basement of this building said, "Well, it's none of their business what I do, so I'm going out this afternoon," and down comes the roof. I mean, we're in it together. We're in it together! I am standing on others. They're standing on me. I'm standing with some, and they're standing with me. And we, dear friend, are built together, and we are bonded together.

Many of you have never made that kind of a commitment. You're trying to be a Lone Ranger Christian. You can't say, "Jesus, yes, and the church, no." If you love God, you'll love Jesus; and if you love Jesus, you'll love what Jesus loves—and Jesus loves the Church, and Jesus Christ gave Himself for the Church. You say, "Well, can't a man be a Christian without being a member of the church?" Can a bee be a bee without a hive? Can a sailor be a sailor without a ship? Can a person be a parent with a family? I suppose you might figure it out some way, somehow, for a little while that that might be so. But it's not normal. It's not natural. We need one another.

You're not saved by being a member of a church. I'm not preaching *churchianity*; I'm

preaching Christianity. But Jesus said, *“Upon this rock I will build my church.”* (Matthew 16:18) He didn’t say, “I’ll build your Church,” or, “You’ll build my Church.” He said, “I will build my Church.” And it’s made up of people who’ve been born again. And I have a deep suspicion of the so-called Christianity of anybody who says, “I believe Jesus Christ is the cornerstone, but I don’t want to be built together with other brothers and sisters into a beautiful building.” You see, dear friend, we’re bound together, and it is together that we have significance. Any individual block or brick is not all that handsome or that beautiful. That’s not the point. It is together that we have our significance.

The first church building that I had the privilege of leading a church to build was right after I got out of seminary. We built a church in Fort Pierce, Florida—at least, an addition to the church. And there was an elderly architect who was over our job. And as we were looking at the plans, he said something to me I think I shall never forget. I said, “Mister, it can’t be expensive, because we don’t have much money.” He said, “My boy...”—and I want you to listen to this—“My boy, good architecture is not an arrangement of beautiful materials; it is a beautiful arrangement of materials.” Isn’t that good? “Good architecture is a beautiful arrangement of materials.”

You see, the Lord can take us, and, folks, we *ain’t* so hot. But the Lord, taking these kind of bricks, these kind of stones quarried from the quarry of sin, shaped by His grace and by His Word, locked together, fitted together, how wonderfully beautiful is the temple of truth! And God says of us, *“Ye are the temple of God.”* (1 Corinthians 3:16) Friend, we are built together. And because we are built together, we are bound together.

You say, “Well, you know, I just go down there. There are no friends down there. I’m looking for a friendly church.” Well, friend, if you’re looking for a friendly church, you can find one almost anywhere.

*I went out to find a friend,  
And could not find one there.  
I went out to be a friend,  
And friends were everywhere.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Amen? “He who would have friends must show himself friendly.” (Proverbs 18:24)

I’m speaking to some of you who are listening to me on television, and you’re taking notes, and you belong to Bedside Baptist. Well, let me tell you something: These services are never meant to be a substitute for church attendance. We don’t expect everybody to come to Bellevue Baptist either, but somewhere near where you live there is a good Bible-believing, Bible-preaching, church; and you ought to go and get in it, and you ought to stand with those other spiritual stones in a fellowship of love and commitment. And if you’re not growing in Christ, it’s because there’s no commitment.

Some people go to church three times in their lives: to be hatched, matched, and dispatched—sprinkle water on them, sprinkle rice on them, and sprinkle dirt on them, and that’s about it. The Bible says we are not to forsake *“the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”* (Hebrews 10:25) I am not saying that you have to be a church member to be saved; but I’m saying that a saved man will love what Jesus loves, and Jesus loves the Church. And if we share His nature, then we’re going to be built up.

### **C. We Are Blessed Together**

Now, listen to me. We, dear friends, are built together. And because we’re built together, we are bound together. And because we are bound together, we are blessed together. He speaks here in verse 5 of *“a spiritual house.”* (1 Peter 2:5) Now, what does he mean by that? He means a house inhabited by the Holy Spirit.

Did you know that when you go to church, God goes to church? Did you know that the Lord is here, in a sense, where He’s not somewhere else? You say He’s omnipresent. In a sense, there’s no place where God is not, even in hell. But, friend, let me tell you something. There is a special sense in which the Lord is present with His people when they assemble together, because we are a habitation for the Spirit. Ephesians 2 tells us that He lives in us; He dwells in us. (Ephesians 2:21–22) You see, He says, *“Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”* (Matthew 18:20)

Remember on the Day of Pentecost the Bible says the house was filled? (Acts 2:2) You see, friend, He is with us corporately as we meet together. That’s the reason I exhort people who just simply read books and listen to television and radio messages to go get into a warm fellowship: because God meets with His people. There’s something about it when people are praying—that God is here. We together are a spiritual house inhabited by the Holy Spirit.

It’s amazing why some people come to church. In a particular church, it was noised abroad that the President of the United States was going to attend services. The Secret Service and others had come and checked it out. And then, for some reason, the President could not come. But news was already out around town. Boy, everybody planned to be in church on that Sunday. And, you know, they were wondering, “Are we going to let visitors in, and that kind of thing? Who’s going to make certain they get the best seats? Who’s going to get to see the President?” One lady called. She wasn’t a member of the church. She asked the pastor, “Pastor, is it true that the President of the United States is going to be in your services Sunday? If so, we’d like very much to come, if it’s possible.” He said, “No, madam, the President of the United States will not

be there, but the King of kings will, and that ought to be good enough for you.” Amen?

The King of kings, Jesus, meets with His people. “*Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*” (Matthew 18:20) We are blessed together. We are a spiritual house inhabited by our Lord—a house of the Spirit. That’s what it means: a house of the Spirit. And so, dear friend, we are built together. Because we’re built together, we’re bound together. And when we’re bound together, we’re blessed together.

### III. The Character of the Church

Now, there’s one other thing and I’ll be finished. I want us to think not only of the cornerstone of the church, the Lord Jesus; and I want us to think not only of the construction of the church, living stones; but I want you to think with me about the character of the church. Look with me again in chapter 2, verse 5. He says, “*Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house,*”—now, notice this next phrase; look at it—“*an holy priesthood.*” (1 Peter 2:5) Not only are we the temple, the stones, but we’re also the priests who minister in the temple. You see, we ourselves are a priesthood.

Now you say, “Well, the Roman Catholics have priests; but Baptists don’t have priests. The Episcopalians may have priests, or the Greek Orthodox; but Baptists don’t have priests.” Friend, you’re wrong. You want to see a Baptist priest? Look right here. But not just right here; look up there in the choir. They’ve even got robes. Look at the priests. But *there’s* a priest, and *there’s* a priest, and *there’s* a priest, and *there’s* a priest. We’re all priests of God. Now I back into my collar; I don’t walk into it—but I’m a priest. We’re all priests of God. All of us are priests. You see, that is the great truth of the fact that we have been born again, and by Him we have direct access to the Father. I don’t have to go to someone else to have access to God; I go directly to God for myself.

#### A. Our Privilege as Priests

Let me talk to you about our privilege as priests. Hebrews 10:19–20—listen to it: “*Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new a living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.*” (Hebrews 10:19–20)

You say, “What does that mean?” Well, let me tell you. In the Old Testament, the temple had three parts: the outer court, the inner court, and the innermost court. That innermost court was called the Inner Sanctum or the Holy of Holies, and only the high priest could go in there once a year to make atonement for the people. And he had to just lift up the corner of the veil and he would slip under. And he would go in there and sprinkle blood upon the Mercy Seat. And if anyone else went in, or anybody went in

without blood: immediately, sudden death. And the people had to stay outside. And the priest went in on their behalf.

But you remember when Jesus Christ died? The Bible tells us that the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom—not from the bottom to the top, but from the top to the bottom; not as though man had done it, but as though God had done it—which, indeed, He had. Now, that was highly symbolic, because Jesus Christ was saying by His death, no more animal sacrifices are needed; by His death, that Old Testament economy is done, and now every one of us now have become priests and every one of us can enter into the Holy of Holies.

Have you been there yet today? I have. I have come boldly into the Holy of Holies to meet with my Lord. What a privilege! I tell you, the most sacred privilege that we have, absolutely, totally, beyond the shadow of any doubt or peradventure, is to go into that holy place. And how often we neglect it! We come by the blood of Jesus, come boldly before the throne of grace to find help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16) Oh, dear friend, how we ought to be going and exercising our privilege as priest!

### **B. Our Practice as Priests**

But what is our practice as priests? Look at it again. The Bible says in verse 5 we're to "*offer up spiritual sacrifices.*" (1 Peter 2:5) Now, in the Old Testament, that priest would offer an animal sacrifice, and that animal would be put to death. What do I offer? Romans 12:1 says I'm to present my body a living sacrifice, amen? (Romans 12:1) "Here I am, Lord. I give myself away. 'Tis all that I can do." In the Old Testament, the priest would burn incense. What do I do? Well, the Bible says here in Hebrews 13, verse 15, I am to offer to Him "*the sacrifice of praise...continually.*" (Hebrews 13:15) That is, just as the incense would be going up out of that temple, out of my heart, out of my life, day by day, moment by moment, there's to be praise to my wonderful Lord. That's what I do as a believer priest. I'm offering the sacrifice not of incense, but of praise; not of the blood of some bull or goat or lamb—those things are done—but I present my body a living sacrifice. My practice as a priest is to sacrifice. Are you doing it?

### **C. Our Profession as Priests**

Now, let me talk to you not only about our privilege and our practice, but let me talk to you about our profession as priests. Look in verse 9—and the Bible says, "*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*" (1 Peter 2:9) Do you know what I'm to be doing as a priest? I'm to be making God known to man, and I'm to be bringing man to God—telling people. I'm to represent God manward, and man Godward—and so are you. I'm to show forth His

praises. I am to be professing Him.

And by the way, I want you to jot this verse down in your margin so you can read it when you get home—Exodus 28:33–35. (Exodus 28:33–35) And do you know what that tells us? It tells us about the garments that the priest would wear when he would go in to minister. Remember I was talking about going into the Holy of Holies? Well, this priest had an ephod or a robe. And around the hem of that robe were sewn in the hem golden bells and then beautiful pomegranates. Do you know what a pomegranate is? Nod your head. Look intelligent. Do you know what a pomegranate is? Okay. It's a fruit, a beautiful fruit, indigenous to the Middle East. And so, there would be a golden bell and a pomegranate, then a golden bell and a pomegranate, then a golden bell and a pomegranate, and a golden bell and a pomegranate all around the hem of the priest's garment. And when the priest would go in to minister, the people would be listening for the bells. And if they didn't hear the bells, they would say, "Uh-oh, God killed him." You know, they were listening to see if he went in with blood, if he did everything just right, because the Bible said if those bells didn't ring, he'd die—he'd die!

Do you know what that tells me? That tells me, ladies and gentlemen, that if I do not confess Christ as my personal Savior and Lord, I have no spiritual light; I die spiritually if I don't confess Him. The bells speak of profession; the pomegranates speak of possession—and both are to be there.

Now, suppose a man says, "Well, I believe, but I'll not confess." That makes him a coward. Suppose a man says, "Well, I'll confess, but I don't believe." That makes him a hypocrite. But when a man confesses what he believes, that makes him a Christian: *"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."* (Romans 10:9)

Now, friend, as a believer-priests, therefore, you're to ring those bells. And if your bells are not ringing, you're dead! Dead! You're not saved. Jesus said, "If you are ashamed of me and of my word before this sinful and adulterous generation, I'll be ashamed of you when I come in the glory of the Father with the holy angels." (Mark 8:38) The Bible says here we are to show forth His praise. Why, when I preach, do I say, "Come openly and publicly and confess Christ"? Because the Bible teaches it, my dear friend. You, as a believer-priest, have a bell to ring.

But not only are we to ring the bells and tell the people; friend, we're to wear the fruit and show the people, amen? Not only the bells, but the fruit. Now, what about a man who's always confessing Christ but there's no fruit in his life? He's not saved. You're not saved by bearing fruit, but you're saved to bear fruit. And so, there's a beautiful thing here: a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate. There is that profession and that possession. How beautiful it is! And on the hem of my garment today I want those golden bells and I want that

luscious fruit. I want the fruit of the Spirit of the Lord Jesus to show in my life because He has made of me a holy priesthood, and of you, and my privilege is to go into the throne room.

My dear friend, my practice is to offer spiritual sacrifices. And my profession is to show forth His praises and let those golden bells ring and to ring the bells and tell the people and bear the fruit and show the people that Jesus Christ is Lord. We're priests of God and of Christ.

## **Conclusion**

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, I pray today, O God, that many, many in this building will say yes to Jesus Christ.

# Christian Citizenship

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: July 3, 1994**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 2:11–17**

*“Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.”*

1 PETER 2:17

## Outline

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- I. The Christian Citizen and His Righteousness
- II. The Christian Citizen and His Responsibilities
- III. The Christian Citizen and His Relationships
  - A. In Our Social Life
  - B. In Our Political Life
  - C. In Our Church Life
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Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God’s Word, the Bible, find if you will 1 Peter chapter 2 and I’m going to begin reading in verse 11. We’re talking about Christian Citizenship today—1 Peter chapter 2 and verse 11: “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul: Having your conversations”—that word literally means your behavior—“honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may be your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.” That means observation—when they see you; when they inspect you. And then verse 13: “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.”

America is a great nation. Now why is America a great nation? Because of her natural resources? Other nations have natural resources. Because of Yankee ingenuity? Other people are clever, industrious and have a high I.Q. Why is America a great nation? America is a great nation because of her spiritual strength, because of her

Christian faith. No nation ever had such a Christian beginning as this nation had. When those pilgrims came to our shores, they came seeking religious liberty. In 1620, those pilgrims huddled beneath the deck of that little Mayflower ship that brought them there. They wrote together a document, and they called that document the Mayflower Compact. It began with these words, “In the name of God, amen.” And they said in the Mayflower Compact that the reason they came to these shores—are you listening?—was this: “For the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith.” Our government, our nation, is rooted in belief in Almighty God. And only dishonesty would quibble with that. We celebrate today the birthday of our nation. Born in 1776, and when our nation was born, it was born with a Declaration of Independence from Great Britain, and dependence upon Almighty God. As a matter of fact, that Declaration of Independence says, “we hold these truths to be self-evident.” That is, we don’t argue about this. This is a given. “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are endowed by their”—what?—“Creator.” Did you know that you can’t teach creation in school today? “All men are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights.” The government didn’t give them; God gave them. The government should not, therefore, endeavor to take them away. And, as we heard Jamie sing, the men who wrote our Constitution were godly men; they believed in God. Fifty of the 55 men who framed the Constitution of the United States were professing Christians, 30 were bold Christians, and 20 believing Christians.

In 1788, James Madison—we have a Madison Avenue here in Memphis, Tennessee named after this man. He was the architect of the Federal Constitution. He was the fourth president, and I want you to listen to the words of James Madison. Listen carefully: “We have staked the whole future of American civilization not upon the power of government. Far from it. We have staked the future upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves and to sustain ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God.” Now, this man was the architect of the Constitution. Did you know that in America today you cannot even post the Ten Commandments on the classroom walls? And yet, Madison, the architect of the Constitution said, We have staked everything upon that. No wonder Daniel Webster—we heard him spoken of also—Daniel Webster said, and he said this in 1820—listen to this: “Let us not forget the religious character of our origin. Our fathers brought hither their high veneration for the Christian religion. They journeyed by its light, labored in its hope. They sought to incorporate and to infuse its influence through all their institutions: civil, political and literary.” That is, they believed in the separation of church and state, rightly understood. But they never believed in the separation of God and government and morality. As a matter of fact, in 1845, President Andrew Jackson said, “The Bible is the rock upon which our republic rests.” We’ve come a long way, but friend, we have come the wrong

way.

In March 1931, U.S. Congress adopted the Star-Spangled Banner as our national anthem. And this is what it says—listen to it. “Praise the power that hath made and preserved us a nation. Then conquer we must when our cause it is just and this be our motto—what?—In God is our trust. Don’t let these revisionist historians somehow tell you that this nation was not founded by a belief in the Almighty. That’s the reason we sing in our national hymn: America, we sing, and our fathers’ God, to Thee, author of liberty—to Thee we sing. Long may our land be bright with freedom’s holy light. Protect us by Thy might—what?—Great God our King. You say, Americans don’t have a king. Oh listen. We have a king, but He lives in glory. We didn’t vote Him in, and we can’t vote Him out. He is the King.

## **I. The Christian Citizen and His Righteousness**

Now, what is our responsibility? How are we going to maintain our liberties as we celebrate the birthday of our nation? Because America that was born in 1776 needs to be born again or she will join the graveyard of the nations. Thankfully we have here in the Word of God a statement as to how a Christian citizen is to live. And the very first thing I want you to notice is the Christian citizen and his righteousness.

Look again in 1 Peter chapter 2, verses 11 and 12: Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims...” Now, what does that mean? It means this this world is not our home. We’re just passing through. A traveler away from home is a pilgrim. We’re just pilgrims. We’re not vagabonds; we have a home. But we’re pilgrims. We are headed home. “I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul: having your conversation”—your behavior—“honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day—of inspection—of visitation.” What does that tell us? It tells us that if we’re going to make an impact on this community, if we’re going to make impact on this society, and on America, we must renounce all that is wrong, verse 11. We must embrace all that is right. Listen to me today, and let me talk to you about righteousness. The Bible says that righteousness exalteth a nation. Sin is a reproach to any people. What is the most patriotic thing you can do? Not wave a flag, shoot off a bottle rocket. The most patriotic thing you can do is to get your heart right with God. Remember this: that it is character that produces liberty. Did you get that in your mind? It is character that produces liberty. Character and liberty are inextricably interwoven. You cannot have one without the other. Another word for character is responsibility. A person with character can accept and carry out responsibility.

For example, a little baby whose character is not yet developed can be given no

responsibilities and so he has no freedoms. He has no liberties. He has no responsibilities. He doesn't have to clean the house. He doesn't have to carry out the garbage. He doesn't have to mow the lawn, but he doesn't also get to choose what he's going to have for lunch, whether it's strained beets or pablum. He doesn't get to choose that. He doesn't get to choose where he's going to sleep, what he's going to do, what he's going to say. He's carried around. He has no responsibilities. He has absolutely no liberties. But as he gets older and older, and he begins to learn, as his character develops he is given more and more responsibilities, until one of those days Dad hands him the keys to the car. He now is getting freedom. Because dad says, and dad says, Oh, I hope I'm right. But dad says, I believe that the boy has developed enough responsibility, enough character, to be given this liberty and this freedom. You see, freedom and character are woven together. Freedom and responsibility are first cousins. But now, let's suppose that a man begins to act irresponsibly. Let's suppose that he breaks the laws of the land. He does some egregious crime. What happens to him? That man is put in prison. Why? Because he has acted without character. He has acted irresponsibly. And now his liberties are taken away. Now he is put in prison. He no longer has liberty. Now he has no responsibilities. He doesn't have to turn out the lights, but he also can't unlock the door. Do you understand what I'm talking about? He has acted without character, and therefore he has no liberty. Now, what is true of individuals is true of a nation. America is losing her national character. America is losing her national morality. And, as a result, we are losing our liberties. Does that make sense to you?

America was born in the fires of a revival. From 1740 to 1770, Jonathan Edwards was preaching with a heart on fire. George Whitfield was preaching the Word of God up and down the hills and the valleys, little churches in open fields, and there was a great moral, spiritual revival. And out of the fires of that revival, our revolution came. Out of the fires of that revival our Constitution was written. But America that was born in the fire is now living in the smoke. And we see our national morality, our conviction, receding over the horizon. And, as our convictions and our morality and our righteousness recede, coming from this direction is more and more governmental control. Listen: the founding fathers believed that the best government is the least government. And so what we have here is a constitutional government. Now, what is a constitutional government? It is a government by law. And it is a government that has a balance. A government with checks and balances constructed on law, a representative government. That is, our officials govern for us with the consent of the governed. That's what we have. This kind of a government, a constitutional republic, was made by a principled people, for a principled people, and can only be maintained by a principled people. Liberty is responsibility assumed. And when we fail to be responsible, when we

fail to live with character, then we will lose our republic. Please listen to me. There cannot be self-government without self-control. And there cannot be self-control without a moral and spiritual strength that comes by faith in Almighty God. That's what it's all about.

You see, what happens is, first of all, decadence. People begin to confuse liberty with the ability to, quote, "do their thing"—to have their own way. And then, when the decadence comes in, we lose our responsibility. We begin to lose our liberty, and then we begin from decadence to go to dependence. People begin to equate security with dependence on the government. And the government then begins to provide things that people ought to be providing for themselves. And a growing government first provides for the people, and they love it, but people fail to realize that the government cannot give what it does not first take away. First decadence, then dependence, and then dominion. The government gets more and more powerful, and it begins to regulate the lives of these people who cannot act responsibly. A man had some wild pigs on his property, and he couldn't catch them. He said to a man who knew the ways of nature: can you pen these pigs up? Indeed, just give me a chance. So he went out there in an open place and just put some corn on the ground. Backed away, the wild pigs came, saw it, sniffed it and ate it. Then again he did it the next day. After a while, that was their feeding place. Then he put a post in the ground. The pigs saw the post. They didn't like it, but they continued to eat. Then another post, and another post, and then another post, and another post, and then one strand of wire, then another strand of wire, and now the pigs are coming in a gate. A trap is being set. Finally, at the right moment, he stepped forth, and dropped the gate, and he penned those hogs. And then he said, I have learned a long time ago that anything that will depend upon me for its subsistence, I can control—anything that depends upon me. See, that's what government does. Government, we see, this thing, this thing, this thing, this thing, this thing, but we still have our noses in the trough, until it is too late.

Learn this about government, friend. Government is here to protect life and property, not to sustain it. Our founding fathers were so wise to provide for the common defense—you and I can't raise an army. To promote the general welfare—not to provide the general welfare, but to provide the common defense, to promote the general welfare. We as Christians need to live righteously. We need to live responsibly. The late, great Francis Schaeffer said there are five great principles that Americans ought to stand up for—principles of righteousness, where we abstain from fleshly lusts, when we embrace that which is right. Number one, the dignity of human life. Number two, the importance of the traditional family. Number three, religious freedom of speech, where we can preach or pray in our schools, in the public square, in private, in public, outwardly, vocally. Number four, human rights, and the need for justice in our world;

freedom, liberty for everyone. Number five, the compassionate use of accumulated wealth. That is, to have mercy upon the poor and those who are in need. These are principles that we must stand for.

## **II. The Christian Citizen and His Responsibilities**

First of all, think with me about the Christian citizen and his righteousness. That's verses 11 and 12. Now secondly, think with me about the Christian citizen and his responsibilities—his responsibilities. We have a generation today that's talking about its rights, its rights, its rights. Well, rights and responsibilities go hand and hand. And when you teach a man his rights without teaching him his responsibilities, you have a revolution. But when you teach him his rights with his responsibilities, you have a revival. Look, if you will, in verse 13. Here is our responsibility: "Submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God"—this is the will of God—"that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as servants of God." Now, what does this mean? It means that God has established authority. Look in verse 13: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme"—or governors, or whomever they may be. Whatever form of government, if you are a child of God, if you're a believer in Jesus Christ, you are not to have a rebellious spirit against your government. Now, sometimes that's hard to say. Sometimes there are some who don't like things that are going on. And I want to say, frankly, without stutter, stammer, apology or equivocation, there are a lot of things happening in our government today that I detest. I want you to know that, in case you misunderstand what I'm saying today. But I am saying that God's Word, you know, when this was written? When Nero was the emperor. Now, Nero was not exactly a boy scout. You need to understand that Nero was unspeakably wicked. But yet, the Bible teaches that we are to submit to government. Governmental authority is necessary—why? C. S. Lewis, a brilliant man, said this—he said, "I am in favor of democracy, not because everyone is equally intelligent, or equally qualified to have an equal say, but because everybody is equally sinful, and we all need to keep an eye on one another." That's the reason we have to have this government of balances. But, you see, friend, no government, no civilization. You leave this house of worship today, and go off the ramp on the wrong way getting on the expressway—you take the on ramp and try to get off that way—and you'll understand why government is necessary. You see, no government, no civilization.

Now, we are to have respect for our civil authorities. We can respect them, without

esteeming them, or admiring them. There are some I do not esteem, I do not admire, but we are to respect them, and that's what the Bible says: Submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. You say, well, what about if it's a bad law? I'm going to say something about that in just a moment. And I want to say something here about our respect for the government. We dare not, we must not, equate Christianity with any political party. None. Be it Democrat, Republican, or Independent. Why? We need to be free to tell all of them to repent and get right with God. You see, we will line up behind a party if that party espouses the right principles, but we are above all that. You see, as Christians, now, I'm talking about as Christians, I'm talking about the church and the state. The church must never become the servant of the state. And the church must never become the master of the state, but the church must always remain the conscience of the state. And we will speak. We will be civil, but we will not be silent. We will speak. Nathan was a prophet. He warned king David. Elijah was a prophet; he spoke to Ahab. Eleazar was a prophet; he spoke to Jehoshaphat. Daniel was a prophet; he spoke to Nebuchadnezzar. Moses was a prophet; he warned Pharaoh. And while we will submit to every ordinance of man for the king's sake, we will not be silent in our land because of what is happening. As long as they're killing babies in the mother's womb, we will stand up, speak up, and say, that is wrong before Almighty God—it's wrong. As long as we are normalizing sexual perversion and sodomy and adultery, fornication and pornography, we will say, that is wrong. As long as there are those who are telling free-born Americans with liberty and freedom that they somehow have their rights abridged and their freedom of speech abridged, and they cannot pray vocally and publicly in public schools, or anywhere else, we'll say, that is wrong, and we will say it clearly without stutter and without stammer. And we have someone who's supposed to be protecting the health of our kids, passing out condoms to 13-year-olds in schools. We will say that is wrong, and we're opposed to it. We will say it clearly and plainly, nothing is politically right that is morally wrong. That's what we need to understand. We need to stop, friend, looking to government to make us good.

Learn this about government. Government cannot make us good. It was never intended to make us good. Government is given to restrain evil, not to inculcate righteousness. The government can't make you good; only God can make you good. People say you can't legislate morals, you can't legislate morality. Well, friend, that's all the more reason that we need to legislate against immorality. Now, follow me. There's not any law on earth that can make you love me, so I've got to have one to keep you from killing me. That's the reason we have a moral law, just like the Ten Commandments say, Thou shalt not kill. That's a moral law. But only God can make us good. And we must see to it that government is free to do what only it can do, that the church is free to do what only she can do. As the government administers God's justice,

the church administers God's grace. Only God can make us good. Now, what if the government therefore tells us that we're to do something that is contrary to the law of God? We must obey every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. But God puts a proviso there; God puts a spiritual caveat there in Acts chapter 5, verse 29, that says, We ought to obey God rather than men. I mean, if there's a time when the government tells us to do something that transgresses clearly and plainly the law of God, the principle of obedience to God takes priority over the principle of obedience to a lesser person. I could give you some examples in the Bible. Pharaoh said, put the little babies to death, but the midwives hid the male babies from Pharaoh. Were they right or wrong? They were right. Jochabed, Moses' mother, hid little baby Moses in the bulrushes. She broke the Pharaoh's command, but she did it in order to save her baby. Daniel was told, you can't pray. But Daniel said, you can't stop me from praying, and I'm going to pray, when the king and his law said that it is unlawful. As much as is possible, we as Christian citizens must obey the laws of our land, but there is a higher law that we are subject to; if we go to jail, if whatever comes comes, but we're going to stand up and be right and righteous in these days.

### **III. The Christian Citizen and His Relationships**

I've talked to you, friend, about the Christian and his righteousness, and I've said we cannot hold this republic without righteousness. It is by a character people for a character people. I've talked to you about the Christian and his responsibilities. He is to be a good citizen of this land. And Daniel Webster said, whatever makes a man a good Christian, makes him a good citizen, at the same time. Let me say thirdly, speak to you about the Christian and his relationships. Continue to read here in God's Word. Look at it. He says in verse 17, "Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king."

#### **A. In Our Social Life**

Here's our fourfold relationship. First of all, in our social life, we're to honor all men. If you're a Christian, you will see every man that walks the face of this earth as precious in God's sight. The Bible says in Acts chapter 17 that God hath made of one blood all men for to dwell upon the face of the earth. The Bible teaches that there is no respect of persons with God. Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight. And the Bible says that we are to honor all men. The word honor literally has the idea of preciousness. You see that man, I don't care what kind of a condition he is, I tell you he is precious in the sight of God, and Jesus would have died for him or her, if he or she had been the only one that needed it.

### **B. In Our Political Life**

Secondly, in our relationships, not only in our social life, but in our political life. Look in verse 17—the Bible says: Honor the king—honor the king. Now, whether our government is led by a king or a president, the principle is still the same. First Timothy 2, verses 1 and 3: I exhort therefore that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men for kings and for all that are in authority. I pray regularly for our governmental officials. Joyce and I, on Sunday morning especially, join hands, and pray Sunday after Sunday after Sunday for those that lead our nation. Now, we don't pray that they will prosper in wickedness. But we pray that God in His own way, whatever that means, whatever He wants, either in judgment or by revelation, by a new birth, a regeneration or whatever it takes, that God will bring these people to righteousness to lead this nation. The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, and as rivers of water he turns it whithersoever he will. That's our relationship to the government. And don't you teach your children to be disrespectful to the government. You're breeding a rebel if you do that.

### **C. In Our Church Life**

Number three, what is our relationship in our church life? Look in verse 17: "love the brotherhood." What's the brotherhood? That's us. We are Christians. This is a special love. We are to honor all men, but we're to love the brotherhood. One of the most patriotic things that any of us could do who name the name of Jesus would be to fervently, passionately love one another. May this world look on us, and say, Behold, how they love one another.

### **D. In Our Spiritual Life**

And then, I've saved this one to the last. In our spiritual life, we are to fear God. The Bible teaches that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Do you know what's wrong in America today? May I tell you what's wrong in America today? Simply put, there is no fear of God. Did you know that you can get on television, and say a word against the Jewish people, and people would come down on you like a hammer/ And they should—they should. I thank God for His ancient people Israel. I love the Jewish people. You could get on television or radio and say a word against the blacks, and people would come down on you like a hammer. And they should—they should. Because with God there is no respect of persons, and we are to honor all men. But, friend, today in America you can blaspheme the Almighty, and nobody would say a word. Isn't that true? You know why? Because we honor the creature more than the Creator. There is no fear of God. And America is laughing her way into hell. I have spoken to you about liberty, friend. I am speaking to you about freedom. First of all, we need internal freedom—freedom from lust and hate and pride. And Jesus gives that.

Then we can have external freedom, and we can have eternal freedom forever with our Lord in heaven by knowing Jesus.

## **Conclusion**

Do you know Him? I didn't ask if you were Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, or Episcopalian. I'm asking you this— listen to me carefully: Are you born again? I mean, do you know, if you died today, you'd go straight to heaven? You ought to know it, say yes, thank God, I know that I know I've been saved, that burden of sin has been lifted. Jesus has whispered peace in my heart. I'm on my road to heaven, and I have a Bible reason for knowing it. I know— I know—that I have been born again. Isn't it wonderful to be saved? Praise God. Aren't you glad you know Jesus? Don't you wish everybody did? And, friend, everybody can, if they just open their heart, repent of their sin, say, come into my heart, and save me, Lord Jesus. You don't have to beg for it. You can't buy it. You'll never deserve it. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. America needs a moral revival. And you need Jesus. Let's bow our heads in prayer. While heads are bowed, eyes are closed. Don't even gather your books. Begin now to pray for those around you who may need the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Precious friend, if you would pray a prayer like this, O God, I'm a sinner, and I'm lost, and I need to be saved, and I can't save myself. Jesus, you died to save me. I believe you're the Son of God. I believe God raised you from the dead. I open my heart. I receive you now by faith as my Lord and Savior. Come into my heart, forgive my sin, and save me, Lord Jesus. Pray it and mean it. Save me, Lord Jesus. The Bible says, for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Hallelujah. Father, I pray that many will pray that prayer, and give their hearts to Christ. In His wonderful name. Amen.

# Christian Citizenship

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: May 24, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 2:11–17**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Character that Christian Leadership Demands
- II. The Compliance that Christian Citizenship Demands
- III. The Conduct that Christian Citizenship Demands

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God's Word and turn to 1 Peter chapter 2? Memorial Day is a day that we remember those who've suffered, bled, and died that we might have the freedoms that we enjoy tonight, to be here in this place without fear, and be able to praise God to hear this kind of music. We have been so blessed. But the freedom that we enjoy tonight may not long be here unless America has a new birth. If America is not born again spiritually as a nation, I believe we're going to join the graveyard of the nations. The Star Spangled Banner says, "Blest with victory and peace, may the heaven-rescued land praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation! Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just; and this be our motto: "In God is our Trust!" Americans may believe in separation of church and state if it is rightly interpreted, but we certainly do not believe in the separation of God and government. We believe that God is the one who has made America. God is the one who preserves America. And God is the one that America desperately needs. And, our national hymn, America, gives these words: "Our fathers' God, to Thee, author of liberty, to Thee we sing: Long may our land be bright with freedom's holy light; protect us by Thy might—now listen to this next phrase—Great God, our King!"

Now, often you hear people say that America doesn't have a king. But for years we have sung to Him, and said, "Great God, our King!" But I must say with a broken heart that something has happened in America in a decade or so that is very un-American. Actually, it's older than a decade old. Charles Colson said this—he has reminded us, and I quote from Charles Colson right now—quote: "The hard truth is that despite the much ballyhooed religious resurgence of the last decade, Christian values are in retreat. We Western Christians are losing the struggle for the hearts and minds of our neighbors. We see this most obviously in the erosion of moral values, sexual

promiscuousness, the blatant parading of perversion, the continual casual disposal of unwanted, unborn children, the breakup of the family, the consuming obsession with self and material acquisitions. Or just look at the crime, for one example.” And then, he says, “There are 100 times as many burglaries in Christian America as in so-called pagan Japan.” America is sick.

And I think the clearest indication of this is what is happening in abortion. I am well aware that some people don't like for us to speak about abortion, and I, frankly, don't like to speak about it, but I cannot be silent. I must say something, and I must remind you again that *Roe vs. Wade* in 1973 was absolutely tragic. That was the ruling not of a nation whose values are rooted in the Bible, but of a secular state. And what the court did in that time was to redefine the personhood of little babies in the mothers' womb, so that they could be treated as an object rather than as a person. This is what Hitler did when Hitler redefined the Jews as non-persons, for the convenience of exterminating the Jews: just simply say that they are non-persons. And somebody says, “Well, really, it's none of the government's business what a person does in his own body or her own body.” Well, what if Hitler had said, “It's nobody's business what I do in my personal crematoriums.” Those little babies are babies. They are human beings. Some time ago, a father in the delivery room took a newborn baby, looked at the baby, picked the child up, threw it against the delivery room wall, and killed the baby. The father was arrested and charged with murder, and he should have been. But irony of all ironies, just a few hours before that time, a doctor could have killed that baby and been paid for it.

Now, there's something desperately wrong in America when we have almost 5,000 abortions every day. Ninety-seven percent of the deaths of these little children are for convenience sake. Somebody says, “Well, Pastor, we're really not certain whether that little baby is a human being or just a fetus.” And, by the way, “fetus” is merely the Latin word for baby; just giving it a Latin term doesn't make it no longer a baby. But they say, “Well, we're not certain.” Well, suppose you are out hunting with a high-powered rifle and you see a movement in the bushes. And you say, “Well, that could be another hunter or it could be a deer, so I'll just kill it.” You see, if you're not certain whether or not it's a baby, then you ought to give that life the benefit of the doubt.

Well, I'll only say that to say that we are, as a nation, on this Memorial Day, needing to think one more time about Christian citizenship. So I begin in 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 11, and here's what God's Word says. Listen to it. “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims...”—and, by the way, this world is not our home. We're strangers here and we're pilgrims. A stranger is away from home, and a pilgrim is headed home. Thank God for that—“...as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation—that is, behavior—honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may by your good

works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.” That, the day of visitation, means when they observe you, when they look you over in the day of observation, the day of inspection. And then, he tells us how to live that way. Notice in verse 13: “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men; love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.”

Now, I want to talk to you about Christian citizenship for just a little bit. We’re coming into this season of the year where soon we’re going to be celebrating the 4th of July.

## **I. The Character that Christian Leadership Demands**

What is the character that Christian leadership demands? It’s in verses 11 and 12. Look at it again. He says that we should approve what is right. Notice in verse 12: “Having your behavior honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak evil against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God...” If you are a Bellevue Baptist member in this community and in this nation, you should live a life that approves what is right, and you should live a life that renounces what is wrong. Look in verse 11: “...I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul”—the soul of the individual, the soul of the church, the soul of the nation, and the soul of the world. These things destroy a nation. Fleshly lusts—they war against the soul.

Now, if you will learn one thing about American government and American citizenship, it is this: that it is character that produces liberty. Now, please don’t forget this. Don’t think that’s just a little bit of sophistry. If you don’t hear anything else that I hear tonight, learn this: that liberty and character—and character is nothing more than a responsibility assumed—liberty and character are inextricably interwoven. The more character you have, the more responsibility you assume; the more responsibility you assume, the more liberty you’re given. For example, a little baby has no character. Now, babies are sweet, but they don’t have character. They may be little characters, but they don’t have character. Character is developed as you teach a child to do right and wrong and assume responsibility.

Now, a little baby doesn’t have any liberty. A little baby doesn’t even decide, really, where it’s going to sleep, what it’s going to eat, what it’s going to wear, the color of the curtains, or anything else. That baby is carried around. It has Pabulum shoved in its mouth. The baby is under the control of somebody else. But, as the baby developed character, the baby assumes responsibility. After a while, the child is able to carry out

the trash, pick up the toys, use manners at the table, say, “Yes, sir; no, sir; yes, ma’am; no, ma’am.” After a while, the child is able to cut the grass, to do the dishes, to make good grades in school, to show himself or herself trustworthy. And while the parents are watching this, what are the parents doing? The parents are giving that child more and more liberty. There finally comes a time when the child gets to be 16, gets his or her driver’s license, and then comes that day when they say, “Dad, Mom, Popsy, can I have the car?” “Yes, but, ta-da-ta-da-da.” And you’re waiting to see if they’re going to act responsibly. And if they are responsible, more and more liberty is given. You see, character produces responsibility, and responsibility produces liberty.

But now, suppose that the child begins to act irresponsibly. Suppose you give that 16- 17-year-old boy the car. Suppose he picks up some friends. They buy some marijuana. They buy some beer. They’re driving recklessly through the city. They’re smoking dope. They hit a pedestrian, kill a pedestrian. The police are called. The car is wrecked. What happens to your boy? He’s put in jail. You come see him in jail. What has happened to all of his liberties? They’re taken away. His liberties are totally taken away, and now, he doesn’t even have to turn out the lights. But he can’t unlock the door, either. He is there in jail, and he has lost his liberties, because he has lost his responsibility; and he lost his responsibility because of the character that was there.

Now, what is true for individuals is true for a nation. When a nation loses its character, it is not long before that nation will lose its responsibility. And when it loses its responsibility, it will lose its freedom. Whenever you had a loss of character, you always have a growth of government. Let me say that again. Whenever there’s a loss of character, there’s always a growth of government. You cannot be irresponsible and remain free as a nation.

Now, this nation, the United States of America, was born in a revival. Actually, in 1740 to about 1770, there were some preachers who were going up and down the land before this nation was born. Jonathan Edwards was one of them. George Whitfield was another. And they were preaching what was called the Great Awakening. And out of that religious revival, spiritual revival, schools were built; principles—Christian principles—were instilled in the hearts and minds of people. Character resulted, and we had what we called a Declaration of Independence. And what that Declaration of Independence really was, was just simply a rebirth of liberty. When this character came, this responsibility was assumed; there was a Declaration of Independence.

Now, be very careful. The Declaration of Independence was at the same time a declaration of dependence upon Almighty God. They did not say that, “We’re independent of Almighty God; but that we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are endowed by their Creator with these unalienable rights.” And so, what happened is that our nation was born in a revival, and our founding fathers gave us a

Constitution. And to our founding fathers the best government was the smallest government. And so, what we have is not really a pure democracy. What we have is a republic. That is, we have government by elected officials who represent us, and it is a government that is balanced, constructed by law, and these people rule with the consent of the government.

Now, this kind of a government, the American government, which, by the way, I believe is the best on earth, best ever devised, still imperfect, but this government was for a people with character. There are people who say, “Well, today, I don’t care what the president, what his character is like, just so long as he gets the job done.” Now, listen, folks. This form of government that we have is for a characterized people, and it is by a characterized people, and only characterized people can maintain it. If we lose our character, it’s only a matter of time that we’re going to lose our freedom. Character is responsibility assumed. It is not “Do your thing.” You cannot have self-government without self-control.

Now, government becomes more and more powerful as people lose their character. And when we trade freedom for security, when the government that is to be a watchdog to be fed becomes a cow to be milked, then we are in great, great danger. The late Francis A. Schaeffer, a true Christian philosopher, said this—he’s one of the most foremost Christian thinkers of our time, and he was a man before he died who warned us so severely of what was going to happen. And exactly what Francis Schaeffer said was going to happen has happened, as he wrote, “How Then Shall We Live.” But he said, “There are five priorities—there are five priorities—that, if we do not maintain these, we are going to lose our freedoms.”

And what are these five priorities in the Christian’s agenda? Number one: the dignity of human life—that’s number one. Number two: the importance of the traditional family. Number three: religious freedom of speech in schools—in private and in public. Number four: human rights and the need for justice in our world. And number five: the compassionate use of accumulated wealth. Those five things, he said, ought to be our agenda.

## **II. The Compliance that Christian Citizenship Demands**

And so, Paul here talks, first of all, about the character that Christian citizenship demands. And then, I want you to notice not only the character, but the compliance that this citizenship demands. Look in verses 13 through 16: “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of

maliciousness, but as the servants of God.”

Now, a Christian citizen is to submit himself. And submission is not weakness. Submission is one equal voluntarily placing himself under another equal, that God may thereby be glorified. You see, God has established authority. Look in verse 13: “Submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake...” When you rebel against the laws of a land, you really rebel against God. Romans 13 tells us that these civil authorities are the ministers of God. When you rebel against constituted law, your rebellion makes you like Satan. When you submit, you’re like the Lord Jesus.

Well, you say, “Pastor, I might submit to government, if it’s good government.” I want you to know that when this was written, Nero was the emperor. Never a person more vile, more wicked than Nero, and yet Peter said, “We are to submit to every ordinance of God for the Lord’s sake...” Why is that? Because if you don’t have government, you have chaos. And if you have chaos, you have no civilization. And so, we are to submit, humbly.

Now, that doesn’t mean we’re to respect leadership. I’m sure that Simon Peter had no respect for Nero. And, certainly, there are some of us who have lost respect for some of our leaders. But whether we respect them or not, we are to esteem them. We are to esteem the office. And we can esteem them without admiring them. The Bible says that we are not to have a spirit of maliciousness, and we’re not to use our liberty as a cloak of maliciousness.

Now, you say, “Pastor, does that mean that I’m to do everything my government commands me to do?” Not necessarily. The God who gave authority to the government is the God who Himself can overrule that authority. Your ultimate obedience belongs to God. Now, the scripture that shows that is Acts chapter 5 and verse 28 when the apostles were told not to preach in the name of Jesus. Acts chapter 5, verse 28: “And they took them, saying, Did we not straightly command you that ye should not teach in this name? And, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine; and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us? Then Peter and the other apostles answered, and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.”

Now, if the government tells me I cannot preach, I’ll have to preach anyway. If they put me in jail, I’ll have to preach. If the government tells me that I have to ordain a homosexual, I’ll say, “I’ll not do it.” They say, “Well, we’ll take your property.” Well, you just take it—just take it. If the government says that we have to somehow put little babies to death, as they do in China and in other places, we’ll just simply say we won’t do it—we won’t do it. We will not do it. Kill us if you will, but we must obey God rather than men.

You have Bible examples of this. The midwives hid the little babies, in the time of Egypt when Pharaoh said the little male Jewish babies were to be put to death.

Jochabed hid little Moses in the bulrushes. Daniel prayed when the king and his law said that you're not to pray. And so we, as Christians, should have a spirit of submission, but we always ought to obey the ultimate authority. That's Almighty God.

### **III. The Conduct that Christian Citizenship Demands**

Now, I want you to see not only the character, and the compliance, but I want you to see the conduct, and then I'll be finished—the conduct that we need in these days. Look, if you will, in verse 17 and following. First of all, he says, "Honor all men, love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the King." Now, in our social life we're to honor all men. And this is something so desperately needed in the day in which we live. We're to honor all men: red, yellow, black and white. Christians in the South have been slow to coming to the fact that we're to honor all men, and there's a racism that has been a curse, a terrible curse, upon the church of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And we need, if we have any of it in our hearts, to repent of it as individuals. If we have any of it in our corporate systems, we need to repent of it. The Bible says we are to honor all men: red, yellow, black, and white; they are precious in His sight. And the Bible tells us in Acts chapter 17, verse 26: "God hath made of one blood every nation for to dwell upon the face of the earth..." With God there is no respect of persons. And the word honor here is a Greek word from which we get our word "preciousness." Every human being is intrinsically precious in the sight of God.

So he talks about in our social life. And then, he says, in our political life we're to honor the king. Notice in verse 17. Now, that may go down hard today, especially if you have strong feelings about the government today. But whether the government is led by a king or a president, the principle is the same. And 1 Timothy chapter 2, verses 1 to 3 says, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all who are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior."

And, friend, I want to tell you something. You can complain all you want about the government, but if you do not earnestly, sincerely, in the name of God, pray for political leaders, you, too, are guilty before God. And Joyce and I make it a practice to pray together for the leadership of this nation. And, I didn't do it because I could preach about it tonight. I just thought about it right now. But this morning at breakfast, Joyce and I held hands and prayed for the President of the United States, and prayed for the Vice President of the United States, and prayed for the governor of this state, and we prayed for the mayor of this city, and we prayed for the county mayor; and, yes, we prayed for the mayor of Lakeland, where I now live, this morning, because God has taught us that we are to do this. We are to pray for our leaders.

Now, again, we're to do this in our social life. We're to honor all people. They are precious in the sight of God. We're to honor the king. And then, not only in our social life and political life, but in our church life. Look in verse 17. He says here, "Honor all men, love the brotherhood..." Oh, thank God for that. We are to love the brother. What's he's talking about when he says the brotherhood? He's talking about the church, the brothers and sisters in Christ. Nobody, in my estimation, can be a true patriot of a loyal citizen without loving the church. Oh, when we have the unity that we ought to have in this church, it's going to impact this city for Christ.

We don't all agree on everything. I mean, not everybody would agree with all the music done tonight. Not everybody will agree with this sermon. Not everybody will agree with the loud tie I'm wearing tonight. Now, listen. People don't agree about everything. But, folks, listen. We agree on Jesus. We love Jesus Christ. And because we love the Lord Jesus Christ, we are to love the brotherhood. I hope you love me. I love you. We love one another. "By this shall all men know that we're His disciples, if we have love one for another."

So, notice what he says: in our social life, in our political life, in our church life; and then, in our spiritual life. Notice what he says here—he says, "fear God." Do you see that in verse 17? Fear God. When Paul wanted to expose the marks of man's sinfulness, the leading thing he said in Romans chapter 3, verse 18: "there's no fear of God before their eyes." When people no longer fear God, man is hopelessly depraved and dangerously lost—when he has lost the fear of the Lord. And what is the fear of the Lord? Psalm 111, verse 10: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments; and his praise endureth forever."

## Conclusion

Well, I just want us to think about that, because, folks, we have a nation, a great nation, a nation that has been bought with blood. And may God give us one more time genuine Christian citizenship.

Let's pray together. Would you just bow your head, and silently, but fervently, would you pray. "God, bless America." And then, would you pray, "Lord, help me to have that character, and that compliance, and that conduct, that Christian citizenship demands." Now, how many in this building tonight would say, "Pastor Rogers, you're talking to Christians tonight, but I'm not sure that I'm a Christian. I'm not sure that I'm saved. I believe in God. I believe in eternity. And I know that God loves me. And I believe that Jesus died on the cross. But I just don't have the assurance of my salvation, and I want to know that I'm saved. And I, in the prayer that you're about to pray, would you please just remember me in prayer?"

While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, and if you want me to pray for you, would you just slip up your hand right now and hold it up. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. Others? “I’m just not sure that I’m saved. I want to know that I’m saved.” Anyone else? Hold your hand up. I’ll not embarrass you or point you out in any way. Slip it up and take it down. Anyone else? Yes, God bless you. Hold it up. “Pray for me.” All right now, how many would say, “Pastor Rogers, I know I’m saved, but, as a Christian, somehow, I’ve gotten cold; I’ve gotten away from God. If I would be honest, I would have to say that I don’t love God like I could and should, and even like I used to. I need a spiritual revival in my heart. Pastor, would you pray for me?” Would you just slip up your hand and hold it up? Aha. Thank you. Now, one other thing before I pray. How many would say, “Pastor Rogers, I am saved. I know I’m saved, but I’m not a member of Bellevue. And would you pray with me that, as a Christian, I might know and do God’s will about my church membership? If He wants me to be a member here, would you just pray that I might do God’s will concerning that”—may I see your hand? Hold it up. Yes. Are there others? Are there others? Yes. Yes. Yes. Okay.

Now, let’s pray: “Father God, in the name of Jesus, I pray for these who have said, ‘I’m not certain that I’m saved.’ But, Lord God, they want to be saved or they would not have lifted their hand. Lord, they said they believe in You. They know that Jesus died for them. But they don’t have that full assurance of their salvation. And I pray tonight, dear Lord, that You would help them, that they would get this everlastingly settled, because the soul is so precious. And, Lord, don’t let a one of these die and go to hell without being saved. And, Father, of course, if they are saved, they cannot die and go to hell. Lord, help them to come to know Jesus tonight, not just to know about Him, but to truly trust Him. And then, Father, for these who have just gotten cold and gotten away from You, Father, I pray that before they go to sleep tonight, that somehow in a quiet place that they might just get alone with You and give everything, Lord, back to You totally, 100%, and, Lord, just rejoice in You, to be filled with all the fullness of God. Lord, if they need more understanding, dear Father, give it. If they’re under an assault from Satan, help them to know that You are greater than anything Satan can do. And, Lord, just help them to trust in You, and to know that victory comes not by trying, but by trusting; not by striving, but by surrendering. And, Lord, may they do that. And then, dear Father, for these precious ones who need a church home, I ask You, Lord, if it can be Your will that You would give them to us in fellowship and love. In Your holy name. Amen.

# The Demands of Christian Citizenship

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: June 28, 1992**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 2:11–17**

*“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims,  
abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;”*

1 PETER 2:11

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Character That Christian Citizenship Demands
  - II. The Compliance That Christian Citizenship Demands
  - III. The Conduct That Christian Citizenship Demands
- Conclusion

## Introduction

This has been a wonderful, wonderful service. Thank you, Jim. Thank you, choir. Thank all who've had a part. And tonight we're going to have a wonderful service also.

First Peter chapter two, and in just a moment we're going to begin reading in verse 11. I make no apology whatever for saying, without stutter, without stammer, without fear, without reservation, I am a loyal, red-blooded, flag-waving patriotic American. Amen? I am. I still get a lump in my throat, when they we sing the Star-Spangled Banner. And I still get a my eye when Old Glory goes by, and I hope that my pulse will always quicken just a little bit when we get into these kind of services, because with all of our failures, with all of our faults, and all of our disappointments, America is still the greatest nation on the face of this earth, and not because of our own doing, but from the grace of God which I want to show you from God's Word.

Today, I want to talk to you on the demands of Christian citizenship, because a Christian is a citizen of this world, and the world above. And down here the Bible gives us some demands that we are to live, some ways we are to live in this earthly pilgrimage. Begin reading in verse 11, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day

of visitation." Now the word visitation literally means in the day of observation, that is when they inspect you, when they look you over, they are going to have to say even grudgingly "There is something different about those people." It goes on to say, Submit yourselves to ever ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men; love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

A reporter asked a pedestrian, "Do you know what the two biggest problems in this country are?" The pedestrian said, "I don't know, and I don't care." He said, "You have them both."

And, my dear friend, ignorance and apathy are the two biggest problems that we have in America. And so, my prayer to God is that God will open your mind, and God will stir your heart, that you will learn today from the Word of God, and that, dear friend, God will work in your heart and move you from ignorance and apathy to information and zeal, and a genuine God-given patriotism. Patriotism, my friend, is a gift from God, and it is a Bible quality that we need to inculcate. And our scripture today speaks of it. Now there are several things I want you to see.

## **I. The Character That Christian Citizenship Demands**

And, first of all, I want you to see the character—the character that Christian citizenship demands. You're going to find that in verses 11 and 12, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.

First of all, you are to live a righteous, godly life. There is to be in your heart and in your life none of what the Bible calls fleshly lust. A child of God ought to be pure and clean as the driven snow. There are certain things that war against the soul, and the word war, incidentally—I looked that up early this morning—the word war is not the idea of hand-to-hand combat. The word for war here is the word that speaks of a strategy, of a conspiracy. There is a conspiracy born in hell, my dear friend, that wars against your soul, the soul of your family, the soul of your church, the soul of this nation. We are at war with unseen forces from the very pit of hell. There is a battle, and to be prepared for the battle, first of all you must be absolutely and totally clean. You must renounce, abstain from everything that is wrong.

And then what you must do is embrace everything that is right. Look in verse 12. "Having your conversation", that means your behavior, "honest among the Gentiles:" the word Gentiles speaks of those that are not saved, "that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers," and they will, they love to badmouth the church, and especially if

you're a Bible believer, oh do they love to excoriate and to lampoon and to ridicule you. Where they speak against you as evildoers, "they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of" expectation or "visitation." What that literally means is, you're going to have to live such a pure, godly, clean, righteous, honest forthright life, that even grudgingly, even grudgingly those that hate you will have to admit that there is a difference.

Now let me talk to you about this character for just a moment, the character. Our nation is a nation that exists because of the character of her people. America is great because America is good. If America ceases to be good, America will cease to be great. Why is America the greatest nation on the face of this earth? Not because Americans are bigger than other people, not because of our genes and chromosomes, not because of Yankee-ingenuity, not because there are more minerals in our land, not because the grass grows greener here in America, not because of any of those things. Other nations and other people have those things. America is a great nation because of her character. And I want to show you that in just a moment beyond any peradventure. And I want you to learn, dear friend, that character, which we will call responsibility—responsibility and liberty are linked together. And when a nation loses its character, that is, its ability to act responsibly, then that nation, ipso facto, loses its liberty.

For example, who has less responsibility than anyone that you could possibly think of? A newborn baby—a newborn baby has no responsibilities. A newborn baby doesn't read the newspaper, doesn't check the stock market. It doesn't order the groceries. It doesn't check the temperature in the house. It doesn't order its food. It has absolutely no responsibility. It doesn't have to lock the door. It doesn't have to turn out the lights. It doesn't have to feed the dog. It doesn't even have to change its own diapers. It doesn't have to do a thing in the world. But also a newborn baby has no liberties. He doesn't say, "Well I don't think I'll sleep in this bed." They put him down, that's where he sleeps. He doesn't say, "Well, I don't think I'll want that brand of milk." He gets it. Whether it's homogenized out of a can. He's going to get that can of milk. He's just going to get, he's going to get strained beets, whether he likes it or not. And he has no choices. I mean he just he absolutely has no liberties. He's carried around, he's put here and there, but he has no responsibilities. Now as he continues to grow, he begins to learn. After a while he can clean up his own room. After a while he learns how to cut the grass. After a while, he goes to school, he studies, and as he gains more and more responsibilities, what does he get, more and more liberties. After a while, dad gives him the keys to the car, because he says, "Now, son, I believe you're responsible enough to take care of this." And his dad lectures him. But as he grows in his character, that is his ability to respond and his ability to be responsible, he gets more and more and more liberty given to him. But if he acts totally irresponsible again, then all of his liberties are taken away. If

he becomes a criminal, then what do they do to him? They put him in jail. Every liberty is now gone, he has no responsibilities. He doesn't have to turn out the lights, but he can't unlock the door either. He is in jail. And you see, because he lost his character, he lost his liberty.

Now, that's exactly what happens to nations. The liberty that we have as a nation is in direct proportion to our character. And as we lose our character, we lose our liberty as night follows day. A nation, like an individual, cannot be irresponsible and remain free.

Now let me tell you about America. America was born in a revival. You may not have known that, but America was born in a revival. From 1740 to 1770, there was a great awakening in the United States. We call that the Great Awakening. There were two preachers who primarily led this great awakening. One of them was Jonathan Edwards. Jonathan Edwards was a mighty man of God, preached a sermon called, "Sinners in the hands of an angry God." And people, when they would hear Jonathan Edwards preach would actually hold on to the pillars of the church and hold on lest they slip into hell—Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.

The other preacher that preached was George Whitfield. Up and down this land these preachers preached, and there was a birth of righteousness and spirituality, and schools were built, and towns were built, and families were built, and character was instilled, and our American Revolution was on its way. And the Constitution that we have, and the Declaration of Independence that we have, all of this came out of this spiritual revival. Our government was built, framed, by a people with character, and it can only be maintained with a people of character. The Declaration of Independence grew out of a desire for liberty.

Now let me tell you how our nation got started. You'll not find this today in many of our schoolbooks, and it is a crime. The American dream was put into the hearts of our founding fathers by God himself. When the Mayflower pilgrims came to this land in 1620, they came seeking religious liberty. And those pilgrims huddled beneath the deck of that little Mayflower ship, and they wrote something called the Mayflower compact. That was a covenant that they agreed on. They began with these words, "In the name of God, Amen..." And then they said in that Mayflower Compact that the express purpose for coming to this land was for the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith. That's why they came.

And then after the spiritual awakening, Americans decided that they would no longer live under the tyranny of Great Britain, and so they wrote what we call the Declaration of Independence. And as you know, it says, "We hold these truths to be self-evident." That is, we don't quiver about this; we don't argue about this. We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are endowed by their" what? "Creator." They believed in creation.

Today you can't teach that in public schools. They believed in creation. "All men are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights." That is the government doesn't give these rights. God gave those rights. We don't argue about this. All men, everyone, has these rights. That was the Declaration of Independence, but, my dear friend, while it was the declaration of independence from England it was a declaration of dependence upon God, at the same time.

And so out of this Declaration of Independence, the Constitution was framed. And of those who wrote the Constitution, of those 55 men, 50 of them were evangelical Christians. Thirty of them, what we would call, bold, soul-winning Christians. These were the kind of men who wrote the Constitution of the United States of America. And I want you to listen to this: in 1788, James Madison, who was the chief framer and architect of the federal constitution, and also the fourth president of the United States, said this.

Now, I want you to listen, this is not the ranting or the babblings of a Baptist preacher. This is James Madison. I want you to listen to what he said—and I quote, "We have staked the whole future of the American civilization," now let me just pause right there and say, he's talking about everything, friend. We have staked the whole future of the American Revolution, the American government, the American civilization; we've put everything on this one thing. I wonder what he's going to say. This is the man who was the chief architect of the Constitution. He said, Everything rests on this. Now listen to it: "We have staked the whole future of the American civilization not upon the power of government, far from it, we have staked the future upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves, to sustain ourselves, according to the Ten Commandments." Which Ten Commandments, my dear friend, you cannot even post in the classrooms of America's schools today. You can't even put the Ten Commandments on the wall, and yet the writer of the Constitution, the chief architect said, we've built it all upon that.

In December 1820, Daniel Webster said, "let us not forget the religious character of our origin. Our Fathers brought hither their high veneration for the Christian religion, they journeyed by it's light, labored in it's hope, they sought." Now listen to this statement—this is Daniel Webster now, "they sought to incorporate and to infuse it's influence through all their institutions, civil, political and literary." That is every institution in America ought to be infused with the spirit of Christianity. Listen to it again. Now listen to it. "Let us not forget the religious character of our origin, our fathers brought hither their high veneration for the Christian religion. They journeyed by it's light, labored in it's hope. They sought to incorporate and to infuse it's influence through all their institutions, civil, political, and literary."

And now we're told we cannot even pray in our public schools. I've just come back from Russia. May I tell you what the Russians have that Americans don't have, and

what Americans have the Russians don't have. America has a communist party. The Russians don't. The Russians may now pray in school. Americans cannot.

Yet, Daniel Webster said that our fathers said, that this spirit should infuse the principles of civil government with the principles of Christianity. He went on to say "From the day of the declaration, the American people were bound by the laws of God, which they all, and by the laws of the Gospel, which they nearly all acknowledged as the rules of their conduct." That's what Daniel Webster said on June the eighth, 1845.

President Andrew Jackson said, "The Bible is the rock upon which our republic rests." You cannot even really understand the Constitution of the United States of America unless you understand that it was born in the womb of a revival. It is infused with Bible principles from beginning to end.

My dear friend, how foolish we are to forget this book. No wonder, in his inaugural address on April the thirtieth, 1789, Washington said, "My fervent supplications to that Almighty being who rules over the Universe, who presides in the counsel of nations, and whose providential aids can supply every human defect, that his benediction," that means His blessing, "may consecrate to the liberties and happiness of the people of the United States a government instituted by themselves for these essential purposes. We ought to be no less persuaded. Oh listen to this, my friend: "We ought to be no less persuaded"—here's George Washington—"We ought to be no less persuaded that the propitiates smiles of heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rule of order and right, which heaven itself has ordained." Washington said, You can't have the smile of God and fail, and you cannot succeed without the smile of God. And the smile of God comes if you do not disregard the eternal rule of order and right which heaven itself has ordained. Now, what's he saying? George Washington said, There is a right and there is a wrong. He's saying, there are values.

Now, where are we going to get those values? Oh the educators stand up and say, "We need values." The politicians stand up and say, "We need values." Whose values? How are we going to know right or wrong? Are we going to get our values from the homosexual lobby? Are we going to get our values from television and Hollywood? Are we going to get our values from the humanist and the atheist? Are we going to get our values from the civil libertarians or ACLU? Where are we going to get our values? Your ideals as good as mine, unless we have a fixed standard of right and wrong, and my dear friend, our founding fathers believed we had one, in the Word of God. No ifs, ands, and buts about it.

Abraham Lincoln—this was his farewell address. Abraham Lincoln said in 1861, "Unless the great God who assisted Washington shall be with me and aid me, I must fail, but if the same omniscient mind and mighty arm that directed and protected him shall guide me and support me, I shall not fail. Let us all pray that the God of our fathers

may not forsake us now." You ought to read that to the Supreme Court. "In regards to this great book, I have this but to say," this is Abraham Lincoln; he's talking about the Bible. "In regards to this great book," the Bible, he said, "I have but this to say: it is the best gift God has given to man. All the good the Savior gave to the world was communicated through this book, but for it, we would not know right from wrong. That, my friend, is what Abraham Lincoln said. Apart from the Bible, you won't know, and I won't know, right from wrong. All things most desirable for man's welfare here and hereafter are to be found portrayed in it.

In 1913, President Woodrow Wilson said, "America was born to exemplify the devotion to the elements of righteousness which are derived through the Holy Scriptures. In March 1931, the United States Congress adopted the "Star Spangled Banner" as our national anthem, and the fourth stanza says, "Praise the power that hath made and preserved us a nation, then conquer we must when our cause it is just, and this be our motto is In God is our trust. I wonder what the ACLU would have said if Congress tried to do that today.

In 1952, United States Supreme Court justice William O. Douglas said, and I quote, "We are a religious people, and our institutions presuppose a Supreme Being." In 1954, Congress adopted the phrase "under God" to be added to the Pledge of Allegiance: "One nation under God indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." And in July 1956, by joint resolution, Congress adopted a bill providing that the national motto of the United States of America is this, "In God we trust." I wonder what would happen in the school today if someone were to take a dollar bill out and just hold it up and soon read it, "In God we trust." Just read our currency. Now they say, would that be a prayer? You know, it's an incredible thing. Well, they say, "Well, you know, if you pray in school, you may cause someone's feelings to be hurt." Well, friend, Christian kids are having their feelings hurt every day—every day. The First Amendment is not there to protect you from having your feelings hurt. God's name can be blasphemed, but we've come to a place now where His name cannot be praised. Our national anthem and hymn both speak the power of God in this land. I love America. That wonderful piece of music says, "Our fathers' God, to Thee, author of liberty, to Thee we sing." I wonder if you cannot sing that song in school anymore. You're singing a prayer. You're singing a prayer. "Our fathers' God, to Thee we sing; long may our land be bright, with freedom's holy light, protect us by Thy might, great God, our King."

You say, Americans don't have a king. Oh yes, they do. You didn't vote Him in, and you can't vote Him out. "Great God our King." Well, you're singing a prayer. Do you see the convoluted nincompoopery that these intellectual high muckety-mucks have gotten us into? Friend, there are those who would rob us, and defraud us, and take away our Christian heritage; but I want to tell you that this land was build by people with

character, and it will only be maintained by people with character. And as character diminishes, government grows.

And the government, my dear friend, was meant to only do certain things. How wise were the writers of our Constitution. They wrote that the government was "to promote the general welfare, provide for the common defense." They were not to provide the general welfare. They were to promote that. Give us a land where men can do business, but provide the common defense. You and I can't raise an army, nor should we go around killing people. Government, my dear friend, is a watchdog to be fed, not a cow to be milked. We fail to understand that. And we're going further and further away from the liberties that we had, that we gained when we had the character that brought this nation into existence to begin with. Now, I'm talking to you about the character that Christian citizenship demands. That's 1 Peter chapter one and verses eleven, and 1 Peter chapter two, verses eleven and twelve.

## **II. The Compliance That Christian Citizenship Demands**

Secondly, and very quickly now, I want you to see, not only the character that Christian citizenship demands, but I want you to see the compliance that Christian citizenship demands. Look in verses thirteen and fourteen, "Submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well." A person who is a God-fearing American is going to be a law-abiding American. He's going to submit himself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, to the laws he likes, and to the laws he does not like. And he, as we're going to see, is going to learn how to honor and pray for his government, whatever his government may be. You say, "Well I could do that if I had a good government." Well, I don't know if you're Republican, Democratic, or Independent. I don't know whether you're Bush, Clinton, or Perot, or something else, but I'm going to tell you this, my dear friend: the Bible teaches that if there is in you a spirit of rebellion, the spirit of Satan is in you. If there is in you a spirit of submission, the Spirit of Jesus is in you.

Now, that brings a real problem, because, what about wicked rulers? Well, when Peter wrote this, Nero was most likely the ruler, and there's never been a more wicked ruler than this, than Nero was. And yet He says, that you are to submit to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake. What does all of this mean? Well, it means in every law that does not contradict the law of God, you are to be submissive. There is a higher power, and if the laws of man contradict, absolutely contradict the law of God, then you must do what the Apostles did in Acts chapter five, when they looked at those who commanded them no longer to preach, and they said, "We ought to obey God rather than men."

If someone were to tell me, Adrian, you can't preach anymore; it's against the law, I'd have to still preach, even if I went to jail. If someone tells you that you have to do things that are absolutely contradistinctive to the will and the plan of God, then you have to go with God. The midwives hid the little babies in the days of Pharaoh, and they should. Or the male babies from Pharaoh. Jochabed hid little baby Moses in the bulrushes. Was she breaking the law? She was, but not the law of God. Daniel prayed when the king forbade prayer, yet Daniel prayed and got in trouble. But on other matters, Daniel was an exemplary Christian. And there was nothing could be said against Daniel, except when Daniel was commanded to contravene and contradict the law of God.

My dear friend, a Christian is to have character and he is to have compliance. And he is to obey every rule of man for the Lord's sake. They ought not to look at us as renegades and lawbreakers. They ought to look at us as the best and most productive citizens in this land.

### **III. The Conduct That Christian Citizenship Demands**

The third and final thing I want to say, and it speaks not only of character and compliance, but it finally speaks of conduct. Look, if you will, in verse 17: "Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. And honor the king." And in one sentence, by divine inspiration, you have the conduct of the Christian citizen. First of all, he says, "Honor all men." Do you see that? Look in verse 17. The word honor is a Greek word, which means, to give worth to. It's the idea of something being precious. You see, every man, woman, boy and girl as precious in the sight of God. Honor all men. Every person is intrinsically precious, and the Christian citizen will see him that way. And, if there is in you, my dear friend, racial prejudice, or if there is in you racial pride, or if there are people in this world that you do not see as precious, you do not understand the demands of Christian citizenship. There is this demand in your social life that says, red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight. Honor all men—that's your social life.

And, my dear friend, then I want you to look in your church life. Look in verse 17—he says, "Love the brotherhood"—love the brotherhood. What's he talking about now, when he says the brotherhood? He's talking about the church. We're to honor all men, but all men are not our brothers. Don't let anyone pawn off on you the universal fatherhood of God, and the universal brotherhood of man, because friend, that's just not true. God is the Father of those who've been born into His family through a new birth. And brothers and sisters in Christ are brothers and sisters because they are in Christ. You say, "Well, God made everybody, that makes us all children of God." No we're not all children of God, we're all creatures of God. God made rats, roaches, buzzards, and rattlesnakes. He's their creator, not their Father. Listen, my dear friend. God becomes the Father—

God becomes the Father of those who've been born again. And, when God becomes our Father, we become brothers. And he says here, we are to love the brotherhood. And the word that he uses for love here is the word agape love. You want to be a good citizen, you want to be a good Christian, my dear friend, you love the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to tell you with all of the unction, function, emotion of my soul, the answer to America's problems are not in the White House, not in the Pentagon, and not in the Capitol or the state house, or even in the schoolhouse, but in the church house. God says, "If my people who are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land." Listen. In our social life, honor all men. In our church life, love the brotherhood. In our spiritual life—look at it—fear God—fear God. Do you know what's wrong in America today? There's no fear of God. Our situational comedies and our stand-up comics today take great delight in lampooning holy things. You show me what a nation laughs at and what a nation weeps over and I'll tell you the spiritual condition of that nation. We have a nation today, and it frightens me, there is no fear of God. People laugh and mock at holy things. And sir, you can laugh your way into hell, but you won't laugh your way out once you get there. Fear of God. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. In our social life, honor all men. In our church life, love the brotherhood. In our spiritual life, fear God. And in our political life, honor the king. Honor the king. That's what he says here in verse 17, honor the king. Now whether it be a president, whether it be a governor—and I believe if we would criticize less and pray more, God may change some of these people. The Bible says, the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord and as rivers of water He turns it whithersoever He will. But, my dear friend, you can honor them without venerating them or even liking them. We are to be good citizens in this land, and that speaks, my friend, of our character, our compliance, and our conduct. And may it be so.

## **Conclusion**

I'm only one, but I am one. I can't do everything, but I can something. And what I can do and what I ought to do, that by the grace of God, I will do. My friend, let's have revival in America. If we can't have revival in America, let's have revival in Memphis. What do you say? And if we can't have revival in Memphis, let's have a revival in Bellevue. And if we don't have revival in Bellevue, let's have a revival in your family. And if we can't have a revival in your family, how about let's just having a revival in you? When you stop looking around and wondering what everybody else is going to do, and just draw a circle on the floor, and get inside that circle, and say, God, start a revival in this circle. May God help us to be Christian citizens. Father, stir our hearts, I pray. And Lord, deliver us from both apathy and ignorance. In Jesus' name. Amen.

# The Duties of Christian Citizenship

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: October 23, 1988**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 2:11–17**

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*“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake.”*

1 PETER 2:13

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Character That Christian Citizenship Demands
  - II. The Compliance That Christian Citizenship Demands
  - III. The Conduct That Christian Citizenship Demands
- Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God's Holy Word and turn with me please to 1 Peter chapter 2, and in a moment we're going to begin reading in verse 11. I want to talk to you today about "The Duties of Christian Citizenship." Christian citizenship. In a few days, Americans are going to make one of the greatest decisions we've ever made. We're going to elect a man to the highest office in America. And how important it is for those in this auditorium and those in our Love Worth Finding network to know the heart, the mind, the will of God. First Peter 2:11: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they may speak of you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, or as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. As free, not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king." Now look up here. I want to tell you how to vote. Go into the booth, pull the curtain, and press the lever. That's how to do it. I'm not going to tell you who to vote for, but I'm going to give you some principles today that I

hope will get into your heart and into your mind. A reporter asked a pedestrian, "Can you tell me the two biggest problems in America?" The man said, "I don't know, and I don't care." He said, "You have them both." Ignorance and apathy. And these are days that we cannot afford to be ignorant and, certainly, we cannot afford to be apathetic. Now I want to lay some things on your heart, and I want to tell you at the beginning I believe with all of her faults America is still the greatest nation on the face of the earth. Amen? I believe that with all of my heart and all of my soul. I am unashamed to be a flag-waving American. I still get a thrill to stand at attention when Old Glory passes by. I still feel a lump in my throat when we say the Pledge of Allegiance, one nation under God. I am not embarrassed when a tear comes in the corner of my eye as we sing The Star-Spangled Banner. I am proud and grateful to be an American. Hey, folks, America is a great nation! I believe, the greatest nation on earth. But now, wait a minute. Not because Americans are great, not because Americans are great. Not because we are bigger, stronger, more intelligent than other people. That's not it. Not because of our natural geography. Not because we have more minerals or more rivers, more mountains, more prairies. That's not what makes us great. Not because it just rains more on America or because we have more sunshine. Why is America great? America is great because she has been blessed of God. That's it. She's been blessed of God. No nation, as I'm going to show you in a moment, ever had such a Christian beginning as did America. And the Bible says, "Blessed is that nation whose God is the Lord." The Bible says, "Righteousness exalteth a nation," and our nation was born in a spiritual revival, as I'm going to show you in a few moments. And it is our Christian heritage, not our Yankee ingenuity, that makes us great. You know, when the pilgrim fathers came over here, they came over here seeking religious freedom. They came seeking a place to worship God. They weren't trying to be more wealthy or more prosperous, ah, more adventurous. That's not why they came. They came seeking God. And in that little Mayflower, they got beneath the decks and they wrote a document called The Mayflower Compact. And do you know how it begins? It begins with these words, "In the name of God, amen." That's not the way it ended; that's the way it began. "In the name of God, amen." And then they wrote down their express purpose, and this is what they said it was for. "For the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith." That's why our founding fathers came, "For the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith." A South- American president was talking with Roger Babson some years ago, and they were talking about the difference between North America and South America. South America is rich with forests, hills, mountains, rivers, a great land mass. But South America has never had the providential blessings of God upon it as has North America. And they were trying to determine the difference. And that south- American president said to Roger Babson, he said, "I think I can tell you the reason. I

think I can tell you the difference. Those who came to our shores came seeking gold; those who came to your shores came seeking God.” And I believe that is the difference. Now the ACLU and others would tell us that we have no right as Americans to talk about our Christian and Judeo, ah, background, and, and, ah, they, they would try to make us a little intimidated about that. But, my friend, if you’ll go back to the history of our, ah, founding, you’ll find out that, ah, we have been born in the fires of revival and spiritual faith. And, ah, our founding fathers, when they wrote the Declaration of, of Independence, as many of us know, ah, began this way: The Preamble. We learned it in school. “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights.” By their what? Creator. Did you know you can’t even teach creation in public schools today? You can’t teach creation in public schools, but the founding fathers said, “We wouldn’t even argue about that. I mean, that’s not even up for debate.” We hold that to be self-evident, that all men are endowed by their Creator, by their Creator with inalienable rights. And at the same time, while it was a declaration of independence from England, it was a declaration of dependence upon God. That’s what it was. A declaration of dependence upon Almighty God. Now when we wrote that, ah, Constitution, fifty-five men who were the framers of that Constitution, of those fifty-five men, fifty of them were believing Christians, thirty of them were bold Christians, taking a bold stand for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. James Madison, who was the architect of that Constitution, said this, and I want you to tune me in, and I want you to listen to what James Madison said. He said, and, by the way, he, he wasn’t a backwoods Baptist preacher. He was the fourth President of the United States. You listen to what he said, and I quote. “We have staked the whole future of American civilization not upon the power of government: far from it. We have staked the future upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves, to sustain ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God,” those same Ten Commandments you can’t even post in the schoolroom in America. Tell me what’s wrong? I mean, when the framer of the Constitution said, “We have placed it all to govern ourselves and to sustain ourselves according to the principles of the Ten Commandments.” John Quincy Adams said in 18, ah, 21. I want you to listen to this. Let it burn itself into your soul. “The highest glory of the American Revolution (now when you say the highest, you’re talking about the very most. I mean, not just one of the glories), the highest glory of the American Revolution was this: It connected in one, ah, in one indissoluble bond (indissoluble meaning something that can’t be taken apart), one indissoluble bond the principles of civil government with the principles of Christianity.” He said, “We have linked together in America in a bond that cannot be broken the principles of civil government and the principles of Christianity.” He went on to say, “From the day of the Declaration, the American people were bound by the laws of God.” Now this is back in

1821. He wasn't a Johnny-come-lately. "By the laws of God, which they all, and by the laws of the gospel, which they nearly all, acknowledged as the rules of their conduct." Is it any wonder that President Andrew Jackson said in 1845 when he spoke of the Bible, he said, "The Bible is the rock upon which our Republic rests." The Bible is the rock upon which our Republic rests. Now in 1913 another American President, Woodrow Wilson, said, and I quote, "America was born to exemplify the devotion to the elements of righteousness, which are derived from Holy Scriptures." He said, "This is why we were born. America was born to exemplify the devotion to the elements of righteousness, which are derived from Holy Scriptures." So we might, ah, not be surprised at all in March 1931 when the Congress adopted The Star-Spangled Banner as our national anthem. And you know what the fourth stanza says? It says, "Praise the power that hath made and preserved us a nation. Then conquer we must when our cause it is just. And this be our motto, (help me with it), "In God is our trust." In God is our trust. This is our motto. In 1952, ah, Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, said this, and I quote: "We are a religious people, and our institutions pre-suppose a Supreme Being." President Dwight Eisenhower said something of the same thing, and I quote. In 1954 he said, "The purpose of a devout and united people was set forth in the pages of the Bible. This biblical story of the Promised Land inspired the founders of America. It continues to inspire us." In 1954, ah, Congress, by a joint resolution, provided that the national motto, excuse me, ah, Congress adopted the phrase, "Under God" to be added to the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States, ah, the flag of the United States of America. I don't mind saying that, do you? One nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. And then in 1956 by a joint resolution, the Congress added as our national motto, "In God we trust." Don't you let anybody put you back in a corner and say that we have no right to be proud, grateful, and thankful for our Christian and Judaic heritage. It is here, friend. It is written into the very fabric of things. And I tell you, God has blessed America, and America is good, great because America has been rooted in certain spiritual principles and truths. Faults, we've had plenty of them, but God has blessed America. But I want to tell you right now, my friend, that America is sick and she is sick unto death because she has forgotten God. I could give you many illustrations of this. I could talk to you about the liquor industry. I could talk to you about the blasphemy of Hollywood. I could talk to you about pornography. I could talk to you about the breakup of the home. I could talk to you about galloping secularism. But let me just talk to you one more time about the horror of abortion, because that perhaps is the clearest indication that we have become a secular state and we have gotten away from God. Do you know what we have done? We have learned a lesson from Adolph Hitler. Do you know what Adolph Hitler wanted to do when he wanted to exterminate the Jews? He reclassified them as non—persons, and

then he could do what he wanted. Now the architects of abortion today have done the same thing. They say that the little baby in its mother's womb is a non-person, and so, therefore, they can do with that little baby as they wish. Now when I talk this way and preach this way, there are certain secularists and certain humanists who don't like the idea of me standing in a pulpit and preaching this way, because they say that, that, ah, ah, abortion is a political, ah, mat, matter, and that, ah, we, as, ah, as preachers, ought to stay out of politics. Now, friend, let me tell you something that gives me a pain I can't locate, and sometimes gives me a pain I can locate, okay. Now listen, listen. Let me tell you what really irritates me. If you'll take one of these pussyfooting politicians and you ask him, "How do you feel about abortion?" "Well, personally, I'm against it, but that's a religious matter." Do you ever hear them do that dodge? "Personally, I'm against it, but that's a religious matter." But then you let a man in the pulpit get up and preach against it, they'll say, "Stay out of politics." Hmmm. I don't care whether you call it religious or political, it's wrong to kill babies. It's wrong to kill babies. Some time ago, a father took his little newborn baby – he was there in the delivery room – he took that little, newborn baby because it was malformed and smashed it against the floor of the delivery room and killed it. Do you know what they did? They charged him with murder, and they should have, they should have. Oh. But do you know a few hours before that, a doctor could have legally killed that baby and been paid for it and gone home an honored citizen? Now you tell me if that makes sense. Did you know in America that if you are caught crushing the egg of a bald eagle, they can fine you \$5,000 and put you in prison up for a year, up to a year. You know why? Why, they say, "There's a little eagle in there." The egg of an eagle. Do we care more about a bald eagle than we do about human beings made in the image of God? I'm telling you, my dear friend, there's something drastically wrong in America. Oh well, they say, "Now, wait a minute. You just assume that's a baby in its mother's womb. We don't know when life begins. We're not so sure about that." Suppose I'm a hunter and I go out hunting, and I see some movement in the bushes. I don't know whether it's a deer or a man. BAM! Oh, it was a man. I'm sorry. I wasn't sure. I, ah, you know, it could have been a deer. I wasn't sure whether it was a man or a deer, so I, BAM, I just killed it. Friend, if you're not sure that's not a human being, don't kill it. I'm sure it is. I'm sure it is. You say, "Well, we've not proven when life begins." My friend, what kind of life is that in the mother's womb? Is it vegetable life or animal life or human life? Answer the question. We're talking about human life. Now what I'm trying to say to you is this: What I'm trying to say to you is this, that we have a problem in America. Now I know that the media loves to talk about the fetus and pro-choice. They're masters of words. What they mean by pro-choice is the choice to kill a baby. It sounds high-falooting when you talk about pro-choice. Did you know that in 1982 Jane Fonda's exercise book (I don't have time to talk about Jane

Fonda this morning), but Jane Fonda's exercise book was listed in the New York Times as the number one best seller in America? But do you know what the number one best seller in that year was? Francis Schaeffer's "Christian Manifesto, Manifesto." Chran, Francis Schaeffer's "Christian Manifesto sold twice as many copies as Jane Fonda's exercise book, and it wasn't even listed, wasn't even listed. You see, we've just been cut out. We've been exorcized. We've been cut out. And it's time that Christians get themselves informed. Now I want to talk to you about Christian citizenship, and I want to say three things about Christian citizenship today that I pray God the Holy Spirit will burn into your heart and into your mind.

## **I. The Character That Christian Citizenship Demands**

First of all, I want you to see the character that Christian citizenship demands. Look, if you will, again in verses 11-12: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles; that, whereas they speak to you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." Verse 11 tells us the character that we have must abstain from all that is wrong. Verse 12 tells us that the character that we have is that we must approve all that is right. Now listen, listen. If you don't get anything else that I'm telling you this morning, I want you to learn this: It is character that produces liberty. Now write that down, because that can go past you. It is character that produces liberty. Responsibility and character are two ways of saying the same thing. Responsibility or character are inseparable, and, are inseparably linked together with liberty. For example, a little baby has no responsibilities. He doesn't have to worry about anything. Everybody takes care of the little baby. He doesn't have, he doesn't have to carry out the garbage. He doesn't have to cook a meal. He doesn't have to buy any groceries. He doesn't have to vote. He doesn't have to do anything. He's a little baby. He has no responsibilities. But he has no liberties. I mean, he does what he's told to do. He eats that pabulum. He eats those strained beets. They, they, they bathe him when, and they put him to bed. They get him up. They do this. They do that. He has no liberties at all because, but he has no responsibilities. As he grows in responsibility, as he learns more and more, there comes a time when his father will give him the keys to the car. He is assuming more and more responsibility. He gets more and more liberty. But if he takes that car and he act irresponsible with it, what happens? The father takes the keys back again, and his, his liberties are taken away from him. If he acts really irresponsible, they'll put him in jail and all of his liberties are taken away now. He has no more liberties, but he doesn't have any more responsibilities. He doesn't have to turn out the lights, but he can't unlock the door, you see. His, his responsibilities are gone and also his liberties are gone. What I'm trying to say to you, my dear friend, and I want

you to get it down big and plain and straight, that, that character and freedom are linked together. Now if we lose our character as a nation, we are going to lose our liberty as a nation. When we lose responsibility, we lose liberty. And always, listen, always when there is a loss of character there's a growth of government.

You think it through. When there's a loss of character, there's always a growth of government. You see, the reason that Americans have been free is because they've been people of character. Did you know that our nation was born in a spiritual revival? You see, in 19, in 1740 through 1770 Jonathan Edwards was preaching. Have you ever hear of him? Ah, my dear friend, ah, ah, George Whitfield was preaching. There was a great revival that swept across the plains and the prairies of America. And out of the matrix, matrix and context of that revival there came the American Revolution. Schools were built. Principles were instilled. Character resulted. The Declaration of Dependence grew out of this. There was a rebirth of liberty. As I say, it was a declaration of independence from England and dependence upon Almighty God. And for these founding fathers the least government was the best government. We've got a Republic, and that's a wonderful thing. A Republic is a government for a people with character. It was for a characterized people. It was by a characterized people. And only people with character can maintain it. Do you know what liberty is? Liberty is responsibility assumed. That's what it is. It is not just do your thing. We cannot have self government without self control. As character degenerates, government grows. And as government grows, people begin to equate security with dependence upon government. And so, the government begins to give to the people, and the people like it. But they fail to understand that the government cannot give them anything that it does not first take away from them. And then, as the government begins to take it and give it back, then it begins to regulate, and we get regulated more and more and more and controlled more and more and more. Let me tell you, my dear friend, what the government is for. The government is to protect life and property, not to sustain it. Now let that get in. You see, our founding fathers were very wise. And so they wrote in that original document, "Here's what, ah, our, our government is for. It is to protect, excuse me, provide for the common welfare, excuse me, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare." Listen to it. "Provide for the common defense; promote the general welfare. Provide for the common defense; promote the general welfare." It did not say provide the general welfare. "Promote the general welfare; provide for the common defense." We can't go out and get an army. We can't be vigilantes. We can't start shooting people and hanging people. We need government to do that. That's what government is for, to provide for the common defense and then to promote the general welfare. Listen, my dear friend, the government is a watchdog to be fed; it's not a milk cow to be milked. Our founding fathers understood that. But we want the government to give and to give

and to give and to give. And they say, “Yes, we’ll take it and give it back. And when we do, we will control you more and more.” When character degenerates, liberty degenerates. Our Republic is by a characted people, for a characted people, and only a characted people can keep it. Oh, the character that Christian, ah, citizenship demands. Now you’re going to vote before long, and I trust God every one of you will vote. Francis Schaeffer, brilliant mind, one of the foremost Christian thinkers of our time, has given five principles that ought to be in your heart and in your mind. These things, my dear friend, don’t deal with personalities. They don’t deal with parties. They don’t deal with politics as such. These are principles. Number one: The dignity of human life. Number two: The importance of the traditional family. Number three: Religious freedom of speech in schools, both public and private. Religious freedom of speech. Religious freedom of speech in schools, both public and private. Number four: Human rights and the need for justice in our world. And number five: The compassionate use of accumulated wealth. Those are five principles that ought to be in the heart and mind of every child of God, that you ought to pray over these things. You ought to look over the party platforms and see which ones take these stands.

## **II. The Compliance That Christian Citizenship Demands**

Now I’m talking to you about the character that Christian citizenship demands, verses 11 and 12. And then I want to talk to you, secondly, about the compliance, the compliance that Christian citizenship demands. Look in verse 13: “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, or, excuse me, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. As free (listen), and not using your liberty for a coke of maliciousness, but as servants of God.” Go back to verse 13: “Submit yourselves...” to the government authorities. What is submission? Submission is one equal willingly and voluntarily placing himself under another equal, that God may theref, thereby be glorified. Now in a Christian and a Bible-ordained society there will always be authority. God Himself has ordained authority (verse 13). And when you rebel against that authority, you really rebel against God. Rebellion makes you like Satan. Compliance makes you like the Lord Jesus who humbled Himself and submitted Himself. Now you say, “Yes, I, I would submit myself to a good government, but I wouldn’t submit myself to a bad government.” Question: Who was the emperor when this was written? Nero, Nero, never a more ungodly leader than Nero. And yet they were told to submit. Why? Because without that submission, without that civil authority you cannot have civilization. You say, “Well, I don’t need civilization.” Okay. When you leave here, you get on the expressway and start going the wrong way

and see what happens. I don't care what it is, dear friend, there needs to be some law, there needs to be some order. No government, no civilization. Now, you say, "Well, I don't respect them." Well, you need to respect them. You can respect them without liking them. You can respect them without admiring them. You can respect them without agreeing with them. Well, you say, "What if my government tells me to do something that's contrary to the law of God?" Don't do it. Don't do it. You do have a right of civil disobedience when the government tells you to do something that is in direct contradiction to the law of God. Classic example of that is Acts 5:28. They told the apostles not to preach any more, and they said to this: "Did we not straitly command you that you should not teach in this name? And, behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men." Amen? "...We ought to obey God rather than men." All human authority is limited. And the greater principle of obedience to God takes precedence over the obedience to a lesser person. Yet we should never use the lesser as an excuse to break the Great. God will give you wisdom in this matter. The compliance that Christian citizenship demands.

### **III. The Conduct That Christian Citizenship Demands**

One last thing. I want you to think not only about the character and the compliance, but I want you to think about the conduct that Christian citizenship demands. In verse 17 there are four crystal clear, distinct commands that if the people in our so-called God-blessed America would put into practice, we would turn our nation around overnight, overnight! Look in verse 17: "Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king." That, my friend, is the conduct of Christian citizenship. Now look at it. First of all, he talks about our social life, our social life. Honor all men. Now the Bible tells us God has made of one blood all nations for to dwell upon the face of the earth. And he says all men, all men, all men. The word *honor* is the word we get our thought of preciousness from. It means to see every man as precious in the sight of God – red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight. Honor, honor, honor, honor all men. Are you willing to start doing that? Are you willing to put your rotten prejudice down and look at every man as a man for whom Jesus Christ died, and see that man as precious. Wouldn't America be changed if we just start doing that? Just that one thing. Just honor, honor, honor all men. There he's talking about our social life. And then let's go on down and talk for a moment about our political life. Go to the last command, command. "...Honor the king." Now whether the government is led by a king or a president, the principle is the same. Don't you let your children hear you talking slanderously about the president or the governor or the mayor or the sheriff or the city councilman. Don't you let them hear you do that, even if you disagree. Explain to your

children why you disagree and where might be, what, what is happening may contradict the Word of God. But even there, you speak with respect, with respect. Again, honor the king. Richard Halverson, chaplain of the U. S. Senate, remarked, “We’re quick to criticize political leaders, but slow to pray for them.” And you have no right to slanderously speak against leadership rather than the pray for leadership. Honor the king. That’s our political life. And then, what about, dear friend, in our church life? Look, if you will, in verse 17. “...Love the brotherhood...” The brotherhood. That’s the church. Americans need to get into the house of God and the work of God. And it needs to be said of Christians across this land, “Behold, how they love one another.” Somebody said we’re the only army that shoots its own wounded. We need to love one another. And I’m not just talking about somebody says, “Give me that old-time religion that makes the Baptists love the Methodists..” I’m looking for religion that cause the Baptists to love the Baptists and the Methodists and the Presbyterians and every blood-bought child of God. The apostle said, “I’m a companion of them that fear thee and all such as keep Thy commandments.” Love the brotherhood. Oh, there needs to be a fervent love. “By this shall all men know that you’re My disciples...” What if the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ had such a holy baptism of love that it would bring us into unity? There’s hardly an evil in America that could not be crushed if we began to love the brotherhood. See, every man is precious. Live in respect to the civil authority. Love the brotherhood. And then, last of all, fear God, fear God. Oh, that’s the sum total of the whole thing. When the Bible wants to epitomize evil, the Bible says there’s no fear of God in their eyes. When the Bible wants to show wisdom, the Bible says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. We live in a nation that no longer fears a holy and a righteous God, and it’s time for America to get on her face before God, before God. Fear God. What is wrong in America is this: That, basically, no longer is there a fear of a righteous and a holy God. And I want to tell you, my dear friend, I am not afraid of what the Communists are going to do to us. God can take care of them. I’m afraid of what God is going to do to us if we don’t get right before Him. And the Bible says, “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and every nation that forgetteth God. Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” Fear God. Fear God. Fear God. And there God tells us how we’re to live in our social life, in our political life, in our church life, in our spiritual life.

## **Conclusion**

You say, “But what can we do?” I’ll tell you what let’s do. Let’s pray for a revival in the world. You say, “Well, we can’t have revival in the world.” Then let’s pray for revival in America. Well, if we can’t have revival in America, let’s pray for revival in Memphis. And if we can’t have revival in Memphis, let’s pray for a revival in Bellevue. And if we can’t

have revival in Bellevue, let's pray for a revival in your family. And if we can't have revival in your family, let's pray for a revival in you, okay. And we can handle that one, can't we? Can we handle that one? A revival in you! I mean, quit making excuses and get right with God. Get right with God. You. I'm only one, but I am one. I can't do everything, but I can do something. And what I can do, I ought to do. And what I can do and what I ought to do, that, by the grace of God, I will do. If you'll say that, and I'll say that, and they'll say that, we'll turn this old nation around. That's Christian citizenship. Let's bow in prayer. Would you pray it from your heart with a sigh and a sob, "God, bless America, and God, give us space to repent. And, God, may the man of Your choosing be elected President to lead us." Now while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, how many in this auditorium would say, "Pastor, if I died today, I know that I know that I would go to heaven because I have repented of my sin. I've trusted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and Lord. And God's Holy Spirit tells me in my heart, as well as the Word of God tells me, that I am truly saved.," may I see your hand? Would you hold it up? "I know I'm saved. I know I'm saved." Praise God. Take it down. How many would say, "Brother Rogers, I can't say I know I'm saved, but I am concerned about my soul. I need to be saved. I ought to be saved. I'm concerned about it. I couldn't lift my hand with assurance, but I want to know. And I wish you would remember me in the prayer that you're about to pray. I want to be saved." And I'm not going to embarrass you or point you out in any way, but I do want to pray for you. If you would just say, "Pray for me." While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, would you just slip up your hand and then take it down. Hold it up. Let me see it and then take it down. Yes, yes. Others? Slip it up. Hold it, ah, hold it for a minute and then take it down. "I'm not certain that I'm saved. I need to be." Up in the balcony, slip it up and then take it down. Hold it up until I see it and then take it down. "Pray for me. I'm not saved, not certain I'm saved. I need to be, ought to be, want to be." All right. How many would say, "Pastor, I'm not a member here, but if God wants me to be, I want to be. Would you pray with me that as a Christian I might know and do God's will about my church membership?" May I see your hand? Hold it up. Yes, yes, yes. Are there others? Hold it up for a moment and take it down. All right. Father God, for these who need Jesus, I pray that today they'll trust Him. O God, I bind away the power of darkness from them. And in the name of Jesus, I bring, dear God, Your Holy Spirit upon these people. And, Lord, for these who need a church home, give them, Lord, a, a knowledge of Your will and liberty and obedience to do it. O Father, bless this invitation in Jesus' dear name, amen.

# The Problem of Unworthy Authority

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: November 3, 1996**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 2:11–19**

*“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;”*

1 PETER 2:11

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Principle of Submission
  - II. The Places of Submission
    - A. Godless Government
    - B. Bad Boss
    - C. Mean Mates
  - III. The Problems of Submission
- Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and be finding 1 Peter chapter 2 as we continue our series on discovering Kingdom Authority. If there’s ever a day and an age in which we need to discover and to deploy Kingdom Authority, this is the day, and this is the age. Now, before I read the Scripture—and we’re going to be reading from 1 Peter chapter 2, beginning in verse 11—before I read the Scripture, let me just tell you something about the Christians to whom this scripture was written. They were going through tough times. It was open season on Christians. They were being accused, and they were being slandered by the enemy. Let me tell you some of the things they accused them of. They accused them of incest, because they called their wives or their husbands brother or sister. They were accused of cannibalism, because, when they took the Lord’s Supper, they said, we are partaking of the body and the blood of the Lord Jesus. They were accused of insurrection, because they said, Caesar is not Lord; Jesus is Lord. And so, they were hunted and hounded and killed. And do you know why they were? Because they were like the Lord Jesus, and the servant is not better than his master. Jesus said that they’ve hated me; they will hate you. And Jesus was slandered. They called Him a

winebibber and a glutton. And I'm going to tell you this: that anybody who lives for the Lord Jesus Christ in this day and this age, or in that day and that age, or any age, is going to find himself going against the tide. We're twice-born people in a world of once-born people, and what we practice, and what we believe, begins at a different source, it follows a different course, it arrives at a different conclusion; and we're going to be going against the tide.

## **I. The Principle of Submission**

Now, the chief weapon—the chief weapon—that God has given us in these days, other than our faith in Him, is a principle that many of us don't like to practice. It is the principle of—listen—submission. You say, now, wait a minute. It would seem like, if we're going to be overcomers, it ought to be the principle of rebellion. No. It's the principle of submission. And this principle is such that it will close the mouths of those who oppose us. Look in verse 11: “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against your soul; having your conversation”—that means your behavior—“honest among the Gentiles”—that's the pagans—“whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works”—and we're going to show you what those good works are in just a moment—“which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.” Now, the day of visitation is not talking about when Jesus comes again; it literally means the day of inspection, or the day of observation. And then, notice what he says in verse 13: “Submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake.” Did you see that? Submit yourselves.

Now, skip on down to verse 18: “Servants be subject to your masters in all fear.” Turn over to chapter 3 and verse 1: “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands.” That's an interesting thing. He speaks of evildoers, and he says we're to do something that will cause them to recognize in us a quality that is absolutely astounding and amazing. And look down, if you will, in verse 15: “For so is the will of God that with well-doing, you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.” People who oppose God's people are ignorant and they're foolish. And how do you silence them? Submission. Submission. Submission. And this word silence literally means in the Greek language to muzzle like you would muzzle a yapping dog.

## **II. The Places of Submission**

How are we going to make a statement in this world? How are we going to exercise Kingdom Authority? By submission. You say, now, wait a minute. Submission doesn't sound like authority. You see, that's the secret of the whole thing. Remember again, that centurion who said to Jesus, Jesus, I know how you operate. I know why you have authority over this disease, because I also am a man set under authority. And I say to

this man, go, and he goes, and to this man come, and he comes. And, Jesus, all you need to do is to speak the word, and my servant will be healed; for I know how you work. And Jesus said, I've not seen faith like this in all the land of Israel. This man who was under the emperor was over his soldiers. You can never be over those things that God has put under you until you get under those things that God has put over you.

Now, that's what we're talking about this whole series: Kingdom Authority. Let me say it again: you will never be over those things that God has set under you, until you remain under those things that God has set over you. Kingdom Authority is not for rebels. And God cannot trust us and give us the release of the spirit until we know the restraint of the spirit. So he says here that we're to submit. We're to submit to civil magistrates. We're to submit to those who work us on the job. We're to submit domestically in the home. This is what God says that we're to do. And, by the way, what we're talking about—because I failed to tell you when we began—we're talking about The Problem of Unworthy Authorities.

How do you submit to an ungodly government? Godless government. How do you submit to a bad boss? How do you submit to a mean mate? What if they ask us to do something wrong, ungodly? What do we do? How can we live this principle of submission in a wicked, lascivious age? Good question. All right now, let's look at it. Let's just take the Word of God, and look at it. Look at the very principle of submission. Again I remind you, verse 13 says, submit yourselves; verse 18 says, servants, be subject; chapter 3, verse 1, says, wives, be in subjection.

What is submission? We're talking about the principle of it. What is submission? Submission is one equal—one equal—voluntarily placing himself under another equal that God may therefore be glorified. Submission is simply getting under the authority that God has established, not for that authority's sake, but for the sake of God himself, who established that authority. Look in verse 13: "Submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." When you submit yourself to some governmental authority, you're not doing it for his sake; you're doing it for Jesus' sake. And that makes a difference. You see, God has established authority everywhere. And God is behind all authority. So, when you're submitting, you're not submitting to some human being; you're submitting, really, ultimately, to Almighty God, and when you do that, God begins to invest in you Kingdom Authority.

Remember that when you have the spirit of rebellion, you're like Satan. He was the original rebel. When you submit to authority, you're like the Lord Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation; being found in form as a servant, he humbled himself and became obedient. Now, Satan said, I will exalt myself. God says, you're going down. Jesus said, I humble myself. God says, I'll give you a name that is above every name. Now, Jesus has this

incredible authority because of this principle. Remember what Samuel told Saul, that rebellion is as witchcraft. First Samuel chapter 15, verse 23: When you have a rebellious spirit, you are practicing the same spirit that made the devil the devil to begin with, and that is witchcraft.

Now, you want Kingdom Authority? I do, too. I want to live victoriously. I want power over the world, the flesh, and the devil. But come up close and I want to tell you something. Authority and submission are heads and tails of the same coin. Authority flows out of submission. That's a principle that we need to understand. And being submissive does not demean you; it exalts you. It makes you like the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, that is the principle of submission.

### A. **Godless Government**

Now, let's talk about some places of submission. We've already mentioned them, but Peter picks out three very hard places. Number one, he's talking about being submissive to a godless government. Let me tell you who was on the throne of Rome. His name was Nero. Well, first of all, let's read verse 13: "Submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well, for so is the will of God that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men as free"—we're free—"and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

Well, you say, if they had a good king, I can understand that. Well, let me tell you who was the king. His name was Nero. Let me read what one man said about Nero: "He was just three years old when his father died. It was little loss to the boy, for his father had been a killer, a bully, and a cheat. His mother took over the family trade, and continued the boy's education. She murdered his stepfather with a dish of poisoned mushrooms. He was reared in squalor and proved a notable son to his parents. While still young, he committed his first murder, killing a teenage boy who stood in his way, and watching him die with callous indifference. He married at fifteen, but soon had his wife killed. He married again, and slew his second wife also. In order to marry a third time, he murdered the husband of the woman he wanted. His mother annoyed him, so he arranged her murder, first by guile, but, when that was unsuccessful, he murdered her without pretense. He was an ugly man with a bull neck, a beetle brow, a flat nose, and a tough mouth. He has a potbelly, spindly legs, bad skin, and an offensive odor. At the age of 31, he was sentenced to death by flogging. He fled to a dingy basement in the house of a slave, cut his own throat. He survived that, and he gave the infant church it's first taste of things to come. His name was Nero. He was the first of the persecuting Caesars of Rome. That's the one that Peter says, honor the king—honor the king.

That's incredible. Well, why is this? Because verse 14 teaches us that authority is necessary. C. S. Lewis said this about democracy. He said that he was in favor of democracy, not because everybody is equally intelligent, or equally qualified to have an equal say, but because everybody is equally sinful, and we all need to keep an eye on each other. That's why he said we are in favor of democracy. Well, whatever it is, whether it is a king, or democracy, and oligarchy, whatever it is, there can be no civilization without government. We are to have a submissive spirit to the government.

And an attitude of rebellion is as bad as the rebellion itself. Look again in verses 16 and 17: "We are free, and not using your liberty as a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God"—now, look at this—"honour all men." In our social life, we're to honor all men—every man, red, yellow, black, white, young, old, Christian, pagan—every man in the similitude and image of God is to be honored. The word honor is a Greek word. It's the word from which we get our word preciousness. Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight. All men are intrinsically precious to God. Do you believe that? I hope you do. I don't care who he is. It matters not what he's done. The Bible says, honor all men—in our social life. And then, in our church life. In verse 17, it says, "Love the brotherhood." Now, we are special. There is a special love that we are to have for our brothers and sisters in Christ. I love all people but my wife, my beloved, she is above all other women in my life. And in the Christian world, our brothers and sisters in Christ are special. We are to love one another with a very special love. And so, the Bible says we are to honor the brotherhood. And then, in our spiritual life. He says, "Fear God"—verse 17. If there's one thing that we need in America today, it is to bring back the fear of Almighty God, for the Bible says, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, and America has lost that. But then, he says, finally, in our political life; not only in our social life, our church life, our spiritual life, but in our political life, we are to honor the king. Whether that government is led by king or president, the principle is the same.

Put in your margin 1 Timothy chapter 2, verses 1 through 3: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." And so, we are to submit to godless government.

## **B. Bad Boss**

Not only should we submit to a godless government, but to a bad boss. Look, if you will, in verses 18 and 19: "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thank worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully." Now, the word servant here literally means household slave. It's not talking about a domestic servant like we have today who is paid, but it's talking about a person who is a slave. And these slaves were

not inferior people. In that day, a man would have a doctor slave to take care of him; he would have a teacher slave to educate his children. But Aristotle, his philosophy had come to full flower, and he said—Aristotle said—master and slave had nothing in common. A slave is a living tool, just as a tool is an inanimate slave. Slaves were not treated as persons; they were treated as things. And yet, Peter says, Slaves, be in submission to your master as unto the Lord. You say, well, now wait a minute. Shouldn't we be against slavery? With all of our heart! And what Peter taught here brought slavery crashing down. He was speaking of reality. We're going to say more about that later on. They found themselves in a situation over which they had no control. But he said, now, guard your spirit. Have a submissive spirit.

Maybe some of you today are not a slave in that sense, but you work for what you call a slave driver. Let me tell you something. There is no better place for you to demonstrate the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ if you have unfair or an ungodly boss. Any pagan can gripe and rebel when things are wrong. But notice what he says in verse 19: "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief suffering wrongfully."

### C. **Mean Mates**

Now, he mentions a third case of unworthy authority. How do you react toward unworthy authorities, godless government, bad bosses, mean mates. Look in chapter 3, verse 1: "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word"—this is not talking about a Christian husband; it's talking about an ungodly husband who will not obey the Word of God—"they may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;"—that is—"while they behold your chaste of pure behavior, joined a coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be the outward adorning of plaiting of the hair or the wearing of gold or the putting of apparel;"—now, ladies, he's not saying it's wrong to fix your hair or to wear gold. If it is, it's wrong for you to wear clothes. He's not saying that. He's saying that is not your adornment—"but let it be the hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price." This is so contrary to the wisdom of this world, that a wife is to be submissive even to an ungodly husband. But the Bible teaches that the home cannot function without the head.

First Corinthians 11 and verse 3: "But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God." Are God the Son and God the Father coequal and coeternal? Of course! Are a man and a woman, are they coequal? Of course! She is not inferior to him. Submission is one equal placing himself or herself voluntarily under another equal, that God, thereby, may be glorified.

Galatians 3, verse 28, says, "There's neither Jew nor Greek, neither is there bond

nor free, neither is there male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” That is settled. But God teaches authority. And what should a wife do if she has an ungodly, unworthy husband. She is not to lecture him, according to the Scripture, she is not to leave him; she is to love him. Mrs. Billy Graham said, “It is your job to love your husband; it is God’s job to make him good.”

Now, let’s move on quickly. We’ve talked about the principle of submission; that is, that we will never be over those things that God has put under us until we get under those things that God has put over us. We’ve talked about the places of submission. And Peter mentions three of them: the government, the job, and the home.

### **III. The Problems of Submission**

Now, let’s talk about the problems of submission, because there are some real problems. Suppose you work for a man and he asks you to do something dishonest. He asks you to cook the books, to juggle things, to steal for him, and you try to be in submission. Suppose you are in a government, and the government enforces upon you an unjust law, and asks you to do something that is contrary to the will of God. Suppose the government were to tell me that I could not preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let me say this, and I want you to listen carefully. Submission is not always the same as obedience. Submission is not always the same as obedience. Your ultimate loyalty belongs to God. Your ultimate loyalty belongs to God. You’re to render unto Caesar the things that belongs to Caesar, and unto God the things that belong to God, but never give to Caesar the things that belong to God. Never give to Caesar the things that belong to God.

Let me give you an illustration of that. The apostles were preaching the Lord Jesus Christ and the big muckety-mucks, the magistrates, said, Be quiet. You’re upsetting the status quo. Don’t preach any more. Put this verse down in your margin—Acts chapter 5, verses 28 and 29—they caught them there and they told them not to preach, and I’m beginning in verse 28: “Saying, did not we strictly command you that you should not teach in this name? and, behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine and intend to bring this man’s blood upon us. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.” Do you have that? We ought to obey God rather than men. Now, for their disobedience, they were thrown into jail. They submitted as far as they could, and, as far as I can tell, they did not resist when they were thrown into jail. But they did not stop preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. All human authority is limited.

There are some commands that are qualified, and there are some commands that are not qualified. Let me give you an example of a command that is qualified. Now, the Bible says we’re to live in peace. But Romans 12, verse 18, says, “If it be possible, as

much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” Now, the reason that sometimes it’s impossible is we can’t control other men. We must be submissive if possible, as much as lieth in us. But if there comes a time when somebody commands us to do something that is antithetical to the Word of God, the truth of God, then we obey God rather than men.

You see, the greatest principle is that of obedience to God. And it always takes priority over the lesser principle of obedience to men. You can find examples of this all in the Bible. I was just thinking something that jumped in my mind there. When they cut off the head of John the Baptist for preaching the gospel, and brought John the Baptist’s head in there on a platter, remember that? I believe that mouth was still preaching—repent, repent.

Listen, folks. If they told me not to preach anymore, I’m just going to keep on preaching. They may take off my head, but I’m going to keep on preaching, because has told me to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. And if that’s disobedience, so be it.

The pharaoh, in Moses’ day, said all the little boy babies are to be killed. Well, the godly midwives would not kill the little boy babies. That was disobedience. And if you work in a hospital, and they’re performing an abortion, you just say, I’m out of here. I’m out of here. I am not going to participate in the killing of a baby. Fire me, if you will. If it ever gets to be a law, arrest me, if you will. But I am not going to do it. You, if you’re a medical doctor here in a hospital, just say, no, count me out. I am not going to do it. Now, it was the law in Herod’s day, but they did not do it. They told Daniel, Daniel, you cannot pray, but Daniel prayed. Daniel prayed. Now, we must have a spirit of submission, but my friend, let me tell you this. Submission is not always obedience.

There was a pastor in Hitler’s day, Martin Niemoller. Martin Niemoller saw what Hitler was doing and they tried to shut him up, and they said, you can’t preach this anymore. Hitler doesn’t like it. And Martin Niemoller said, God is my Fuhrer. God is my Fuhrer. They put him in a concentration camp. All human authority is limited. We render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; we render unto God the things that are God’s; but we will not render unto Caesar the things that are God’s. We, as believer’s in Christ, need not identify the church with any political party, but always with the kingdom of God. We need to be able to tell both parties to repent and get right with God.

The church is not the servant of the state. The church is not the master of the state. The church is the conscience of the state. We will be civil, but we will not be silent. Nathan warned David. Elijah preached to Ahab. Daniel remonstrated with Nebuchadnezzar. Eliazar looked Jehoshaphat in the face and told him he was wrong. Moses was a prophet of God to Pharaoh. And as long as they’re killing babies, there’s one preacher who will not be silent standing right here today.

As long as we have a government that’s trying to normalize sodomy, I cannot be

quiet. Distributing condoms to children in school and trying to normalize illicit sex, we dare not be quiet. As long as a freeborn American is told he cannot pray vocally anywhere, any time, we cannot be silent. Yes, give God a hand. Nothing is politically right that is morally wrong. Government cannot make us good; only God can make us good. Government is here to restrain evil, and God's plan is a free church in a free state, and when the government does what it alone can do, that is, restrain evil, the church is free to do what she alone can do, and that is to preach the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. There are problems with submission, but we need to understand that we must obey God.

What if a wife has a husband who is physically abusing her, and the Bible says be in submission? The Bible says also, if it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. If I had a daughter who was being physically abused and battered, I'd get her out of that situation. I wouldn't say, well now, the Bible says, submit. Yes, she is to have a submissive spirit. But there is a time when there is a higher law that takes precedent; and so, remember that our ultimate allegiance is to Almighty God.

A man was praying for a politician. The politician said, Oh, I'm so glad you've learned to pray for those who are in authority. He said, That wasn't the verse I had in mind. I was praying for those you persecute you. Now, folks, listen. We are to have a submissive spirit. Now, I must wrap this up. I've talked to you about the principle; I have talked to you about the places; I've talked to you about the problems. Let me talk to you about the price of submission. You think this is easy? This is the hardest thing we're asked to do.

Look, if you will, in verse 19—he says, “For this is thank worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow in his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile in his found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” That is, He appealed to the Supreme Court of the universe, and the word means He just handed himself over to God. He had undeserved suffering, un-retaliating suffering, un-frustrated suffering, because He was counting on God to even the score. Well, you say, Pastor, that doesn't sound fair. Look at verse 24, speaking of Jesus, “who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live under righteousness.” That is, He bore our sin; He took our sin.

Think of a doctor who makes himself sick in order to make the patient well, and then turns around and pays the hospital bill. That's King Jesus. Now, that wasn't fair; but

thank God He did it, amen? And He left us an example that we should follow in His steps. And because of that, God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name that is above every name. And I'm telling you, folks, God will do the same thing for us when we begin to obey Almighty God.

## **Conclusion**

You see, it was the spirit of these early Christians that brought the Roman Empire crashing down, because God gave them Kingdom Authority. And they turned that world upside down, because they learned the strength of submission. They did not give in to evil. They overcame evil. Submission does not embolden tyranny; it destroys it. And they were just honeycombing that entire Roman Empire, that mountain of evil, with gospel dynamite, and it brought the whole thing crashing down. God gives authority to those who understand submission. We will never be over those things that God has put under us, until we get under those things that God has put over us. The Lordship of Christ, the Word of God, those institutions that God has put in place.

They were killing the Christians up in the Coliseum. It would seat 50,000 people. I've stood there many times. Underneath the ground, in the catacombs, were the Christians worshiping God and praying to God. Up here, Caesar was lord. Down here, Jesus was Lord. But Caesar's gone, friend and Jesus is still Lord. He's King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We have victory in Jesus. One day soon, there's going to be a coronation. Hallelujah. Let's pray together.

Father God, seal the message to our hearts. And help us, O God, help us to be men and women of God. Give us faith, Lord, to believe. Oh, Victory in Jesus. Thank you, Lord, for this. And, thank you, Lord, that you give to us Kingdom Authority.

I want to ask you a pertinent question. Do you have the absolute assurance if you died today you would go to heaven? Do you know beyond the shadow of any doubt that Christ lives in your heart, that your sin is forgiven, that you're a child of God? The Bible says, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. The word believe means trust; not intellectual belief, but trust—trusting. To be saved means that your sin is forgiven, that Christ lives in your heart, that heaven is your home, that you have a purpose for living, and power for that purpose. If you've never given your heart to Jesus Christ, if you've never received Him as your Lord and Savior, I'm going to ask you to do it right now.

# Godless Government, Bad Bosses, and Mean Mates

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** February 27, 1983

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 Peter 2:11–3:2

*“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake.”*

1 PETER 2:13

## Outline

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## Introduction

Take your Bibles today and turn, if you will, please, to 1 Peter the second chapter. We’re going to begin reading today in verse 11. Now we’re studying the book of 1 Peter under this general heading: “Timeless Truth for Tough Times.” And the specific title of our message today is “Godless Government, Bad Bosses, and Mean Mates.” So, fasten your pew belt and hang in there, because there’s something for you in the message today, I’m certain: “Godless Government, Bad Bosses, and Mean Mates.”

Now, chapter 2, verse 11: *“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;”—*that is, “which make a battleground, a battlefield, of your mind; that war against the soul, and the soul being the *psuche*: the mind, the emotion, and the will—*“having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake.”* (1 Peter 2:11–13)

Just put a hold right there. We’re going to read a great deal more scripture, but let

me tell you that in Peter's time it was open season on Christians. They were speaking evil of these Christians. And they were saying unbelievable things about them. You can't believe. Well, maybe you can believe, because what they say about us today is what they were saying about the Christians in Peter's day. They were accusing them, for example, of cannibalism. They said, because in the Lord's Supper they were talking about eating the body and drinking the blood of the Lord Jesus, that they were cannibals. They also accused them of incest, because they called their husband or their wife brother and sister. They also accused them of insurrection and rebellion, because they would not bow down to Caesar and worship Caesar. They had all kinds of things they said about these early Christians, just as they say all kinds of things about us.

Now, Peter is writing to tell how to muzzle them. As a matter of fact, he says in verse 15 that "*ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.*" (1 Peter 2:15) And that word "*put to silence*" means "to muzzle," like you'd muzzle a yapping dog. He's telling us not only how to stop the criticism, but he tells us further how to go and win those who are criticizing us and bring them to Jesus Christ. He gives us a very powerful weapon.

And do you know what that weapon is? Are you ready for it? You're going to be amazed when I tell you what this mighty, powerful weapon is and this method that not only is going to stop the criticism but convince the gainsayers. Do you know what it is? Submission. You say, "That doesn't sound very strong to me. It sounds weak to me." But you're going to find out it is the mightiest force that God could give to those of us who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, let me show you several verses. Look in verse 13: "*Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake.*" (1 Peter 2:13) Look in verse 18: "*Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear.*" (1 Peter 2:18) There it is again. Look in chapter 3, verse 1: "*Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands.*" (1 Peter 3:1) Three times in just a few short verses God tells us to be submissive. And if we don't learn how to do it, we're not going to have the victory that these early Christians had when it was said of them that they turned the world upside down—which really meant they turned it right side up, because it was upside down to begin with.

I heard about a little girl who said to her mother, "Mother, do you remember that heirloom, that priceless vase that we all love so much, that's been handed down in our family from one generation to another generation, that is so very, very valuable?" She said, "Yes." She said, "This generation just dropped it."

Now, friend, we can't drop it. I mean, this faith that we have, it's been handed down from generation to generation, and this is the generation now that has it in its hands. And we must not fumble the ball; we must not drop the priceless heirloom that God has placed into our hands.

So, let me tell you the might of meekness and the strength of submission. And God

will enable you by submission to do phenomenal things where you live.

## I. The Principle of Submission

Now, first of all, I want to talk to you about the principle of submission. What is submission, anyway? When the Bible says we're to submit to every ordinance of man, when servants are to be subject to their masters, when wives are to be in subjection to their own husbands, what is submission? *Submission is one equal voluntarily placing himself under another equal, that God may be glorified*—one equal voluntarily placing himself under another equal, that God may be glorified.

Now, a person without a spirit of submissiveness is never more like the devil. You want to be like the devil? Then just have a rebellious spirit. You see, it was rebellion that made the devil the devil, to begin with. He rebelled against the authority of God. And that's what made him the devil.

Now, old Saul in the Old Testament was a king. And God told Saul to do thus and such, and Saul refused to do it. And God's prophet, Samuel, came to Saul. And this is what God's prophet said to Saul—and I want you to understand what God said to this rebellious king through His prophet Samuel. In 1 Samuel 15:23, he said this—now, listen to it—are you ready? *“For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.”* (1 Samuel 15:23)

Now, why did he say that? Because, dear friend, when you have a rebellious spirit, you get over in the devil's territory. You begin, as it were, to practice the occult when you have a rebellious spirit. And as a matter of fact, it was not long after that until old Saul was going to see a witch and he was dabbling in the occult, because he already had the spirit of witchcraft in his heart, which was the spirit of rebellion. Old Saul was a man after the devil's own heart. Now, David, who took over the kingdom from Saul, was a man after God's own heart, (1 Samuel 13:14) because he had a spirit of submissiveness. And old Saul rejected the Word of the Lord.

Now, Samuel went on to say in 1 Samuel 15:23, “Saul, because you have rejected the word of the Lord, God has rejected you from being king.” (1 Samuel 15:23) Now, are you ready for a great truth? Friend, when a person gets a rebellious spirit, God takes away their authority: “Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord has rejected you from being king.” There is a biblical principle that, if you would be over, then you must first be under. And if you refuse to be under, you can never be over. God only gives authority to those who live in submission. And if you don't have a submissive spirit, if you have a rebellious spirit, then God is going to take away your authority.

Now, let's just turn that around. You're never more like the devil than when you're living in rebellion; you are never more like Jesus Christ than when you're living in submission. As a matter of fact, the Bible says in Philippians 2:5, *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not*

*robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:5–11)*

Now you see, Jesus, when He became submissive, was exalted. Saul, when he became rebellious, was demoted. What I’m trying to say to you, there is a principle that, for you to have authority, you must know submission. Do you remember that man who was a centurion—he was a Roman army officer—and he had a servant who was sick? Jesus was on His way to heal the centurion’s servant, and the centurion, the Roman army officer, sent a message to Jesus, and he said this to Jesus: “You don’t even need to come into my house. All you have to do is just speak the word, and my servant will be healed.” And then, this is the rationale and the argument he gave for that. He said, “For I too am a man set under authority. And I say to this man, Go, and he goes; and I say to this man, Come, and he comes.” And when Jesus heard that centurion say that, Jesus stepped back and marveled, and He said, “I haven’t seen faith like this in all the house of Israel.” (Matthew 8:5–10)

Here was a Gentile who understood more how the kingdom of heaven worked than his Jewish compatriots did. Because what had that man figured out? That man understood that there was a system, a chain of command, in heaven—authority—and that the Lord Jesus Christ was submitted to authority, and therefore the Lord Jesus Christ had authority. This man was an army officer. And being a centurion, he knew how the army worked. He was a leader of officers. And so he would say to the sergeant, “Go,” and the sergeant would go. He would say to the lieutenant, “Come,” and the lieutenant would come.

But I want to ask you a question. Suppose this centurion slapped the general. Then does he say to the sergeant, “Go,” and the sergeant goes, and he says to the lieutenant, “Come,” and the lieutenant comes? No, because he’s in the guardhouse, right? I mean, if he lives that long in that day. You see, listen. The only way that he could continue to have the authority that he had as an army officer was to be under the authority that was over him.

Now I want you to learn this. He had figured out how the kingdom of heaven works. He said, “Jesus, I know that you have authority over this disease because you’re under the Father. I too am a man under authority.” Now, friend, listen. Do you want to live by authority? Do you want authority? Would you like to pray with authority? Would you like to preach with authority? Would you like to witness with authority? Would you like to

raise your children with authority? Would you like to experience the authority that a Christian ought to have in this world? You'll never have it with a rebellious spirit. Only when you're under will you be over. And there are many mothers who don't have authority over their children because they're rebellious to their husbands. There are many pastors who do not have authority with their congregations because they are not submitting to the authority of the Word of God. And on and on I could go. There are people who refuse to be under, and therefore they will never be over.

Now, listen. If you don't learn any other truth today, I want you to learn this truth. Are you ready for it? Submission and authority are heads and tails of the same coin. And real authority flows out of genuine submission. And if you have a rebellious spirit, God will never ever give you the authority that you ought to have. And there are many people who are not living lives of spiritual authority because they have refused to do what Simon Peter said to do here in just a few short verses: "Be subject—"Be subject"—"Be subject." There is a principle of submission.

You say, "Well, that will just make me an old weakling. That will just make me a doormat." No, it won't. Listen. Saul was the weakling; Jesus was the strong one. And because Jesus was submitted, the Bible says that God has *"given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* (Philippians 2:9–11) Isn't that wonderful?

## **II. The Places of Submission**

Now, the second thing I want you to notice: Not only the principle of submission, but I want you to notice the places of submission. Now, Peter could mention many places, but he chooses three that are very difficult and very hard just to illustrate what he's talking about. He talks about three tough situations. First of all, he talks about godless government. Secondly, he talks about bad bosses. Thirdly, he talks about mean mates. And he tells us in all of these situations we're to be in subjection.

### **A. Godless Government**

For example, look in chapter 2, verse 13: *"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man..."*—now, the word *ordinance* here does not mean "law," as such, but it means "institution"—*"every [institution] of man for the Lord's sake:"*—not for man's sake, but for the Lord's sake—*"whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do good."* (1 Peter 2:13)

You say, "Well, sure you'd to be in subjection to a good government like all those

wonderful kings they had back then, but we're living in different times today." I want to ask you a question. Who do you think was the king back there when Peter said this? Who do you think was the emperor back then? Nero. Nero! "Well," you say, "what was Nero like?" Let me just read a description of old Nero that I jotted down for you here, taken out of a book in my library: "He was just three years old when his father died. It was little loss to the boy, for his father had been a killer, a bully, and a cheat. His mother took over the family trade and continued the boy's education. She murdered his stepfather with a dish of poisoned mushrooms. He was reared in squalor and proved a notable son to his parents. While still young, he committed his first murder, killing a teenage boy who stood in his way, and watched him die with calloused indifference. He married at fifteen, but soon had his wife killed. He married again and slew his second wife, too. In order to marry a third time, he murdered the husband of the woman he wanted. His mother annoyed him, so he arranged her murder." It goes on to describe what he looked like: "He was an ugly man with a bull neck, beetle brows, flat nose, and a tough mouth. He had a potbelly, spindly legs, bad skin, and offensive odor. At the age of thirty-one, he was sentenced to death by flogging. He fled to a dingy basement, and in the house of a slave cut his own throat. He survived that. He gave the infant church its first taste of things to come. His name was Nero, and he was the first of the persecuting Caesars that were to come." And it was while this man was the king, it while, was while this man was the emperor that Peter said, "Be subject"—"be subject to godless government."

You see, dear friend, we need government. And even bad government is better than no government. You know what C. S. Lewis had to say? C. S. Lewis said he was in favor of democracy, not because everybody was equally intelligent or equally qualified to have an equal say; Lewis said that he was in favor of democracy, because everybody was equally evil and sinful, and we need to watch one another. Amen? You see, you cannot survive without some form of government. You say, "Well, I don't want government; I just want to do my own thing." All right, get out here on the way home and just go the wrong way on the expressway, and see how long your self-government is going to last.

Now, when we rebel against the civil authorities, Paul says in Romans 13 we're rebelling against God. (Romans 13:2) And Peter says here, "*Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake.*" (1 Peter 2:13) And not only should we submit outwardly, but we should submit inwardly. We must not have a spirit of rebellion. Now I don't care whether you're a Democrat or a Republican—if you go around with a sneer on your lips talking about old Reagan or somebody else like that, you are committing a sin. You are to honor your president. You say, "Well, I don't like his politics." That has nothing to do with it. Listen to what the Bible says in verses 16 and 17—listen to it: "As

*free, but not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness,*”—don’t you let your freedom in Christ make a rebel out of you—*“but as servants of God.”* Now, notice verse 17: *“Honour all men. Love the brotherhood.”* That is, “Love your brothers and sisters in Christ.” *“Fear God.”* You don’t fear any man: *“Fear God.”* But notice this: *“Honour the king”*—*“Honour the king.”* (1 Peter 2:16–17) You give him that reverence and that respect that is due to the office. And if not, you have a spirit of rebellion.

You know, there’s an interesting passage over there in the book of Jude, verses 8 and 9, where Michael the archangel and the devil were having a dispute over the body of Moses. And the Bible uses this as an illustration of some people who have a spirit of rebellion. And the Bible speaks of these people with a spirit of rebellion, and this is what the Bible says about them: *“Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of [dignitaries].”* Have you ever been guilty of speaking evil of dignitaries? And then he illustrates it this way: *“Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.”* (Jude 1:8–9)

Do you understand what that means? It means that Michael didn’t even smart off at the devil. Now it doesn’t mean that he agreed with the devil; but it means that Michael, this archangel, had such a respect for dominion and dignitaries that he spoke respectfully, as it were, even to the devil. We have raised a generation of rebels, and we wonder why the Spirit of God does not rest upon us. The devil was a rebel. John Milton said of the devil that he said in his heart and in his mind, “I had rather rule in hell than serve in heaven.” The truth of the matter is, he will not rule in heaven or hell, because he is a rebel and he will suffer in the lowest hell. And God said to Saul, “Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord has rejected you from being king.” (1 Samuel 15:23) My friend, you will never ever be over until you are under.

## **B. Bad Bosses**

And that is true with respect to the government; but not only when you have a godless government, but also a bad boss. Anybody here work for a bad boss? You say, “That slave driver!” Well, let’s see what the Bible has to say about that slave driver—verse 18: *“Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear...”*—you say, “Sure! Got a good boss? Work hard for him.” But now, listen to what he says—*“Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.”*

Now, *“the froward”* means a bad boss; I mean, a mean two-legged devil. And you are to be subject to him. As a matter of fact, Paul says in the book of Colossians you are to work for him as though he were Jesus Christ. (Colossians 3:22–24) You say, “That guy?” That’s right. You’re to serve him. You’re not to be in rebellion against your bad boss, but you are to serve him. You say, “Well, I don’t understand that. He’ll take

advantage of me.” We’re going to show you a little later that when you get in submission to him, it’s your way not only to shut up his criticism and the criticism of those round about you, but to bring that man to Jesus Christ, because you’re practicing the mightiest force upon the face of this earth: now you are to be subject to a bad boss.

Now, when the Bible says “*servants*” here, he’s talking about household slaves. In that day, in Rome, there were millions of slaves. And these slaves were not necessarily ignorant. As a matter of fact, a man would have a doctor slave. He would have a lawyer slave. He would have a teacher slave to teach his children. And many of these slaves were learned, wise, and cultured. And many times the master was cruel and froward. But yet, the servant, according to the Word of God here, was to be subject to his master. The philosophy of Aristotle had come to full blossom. Aristotle said there must be a distinct difference between the master and the slave. He said a slave is a tool, and that a slave is a living tool, and a tool is an inanimate slave, and there’s no difference between the two. The difference between a man’s slave and a man’s shovel is, one has life and one doesn’t. That’s what Aristotle said. And that was believed and practiced in that day.

And yet you do not find Peter moving out here into some kind of a social movement against slavery, as such, at this particular point. But what he does is infuses that whole mountain of slavery, he’s boring holes in it and sticking in gospel dynamite. And after a while, *boom*, and it’s all coming down, because there is a new system, and it is a system, a powerful thing, that is making men mighty, for Jesus said, “*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*” (Matthew 5:5) Be subject not only to the good, but to the bad, to the froward.

### C. Mean Mates

Now, let me go on and say if you’re married to a mean mate, look what he says to you: Not only a godless government, and a bad boss, but chapter 3, verse 1: “*Likewise, ye wives...*”—now, “*likewise*” refers back to the slaves— “*Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives.*” (1 Peter 3:1) Now, let me just re-read that and paraphrase it for you. “Likewise, you wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if anybody’s husband is not a Christian, that if he’s not obeying the Word,”—that word *word* there should be capitalized, because it speaks of the Bible— “they may also without a word”—the definite article is not there— “but they may without a word...” Not without the Word of God. Nobody’s saved without the Word of God, because Peter has already told us we’re “*being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*” (1 Peter 1:23) He does not mean that they can be won without the Word, but without a word—without

your nagging, without your constant preaching to him. They're going to be won without your nagging—*“by the conversation of the wives.”* And this word *conversation* means your daily behavior, not just simply what you say. A wife is to be in subjection to her husband.

Now I know this is contrary to the philosophy in this day of feminism, and especially, even when somebody would say, “Well, you mean I’m expected to submit to an unsaved husband?” Right, just as you’re expected to submit to a bad boss, and just as you’re expected to submit to a godless government. Why? Well, dear friend, without a king, or without government, you have anarchy. Without a boss, you have no real business. And without a head, you have no home.

Now, *anything with two heads is a freak, and anything with no head is dead.* So God has given a head to the home, and the head of the home is the man. Now you might want to jot in your Scripture 1 Corinthians 11:3. Paul said, *“But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.”* (1 Corinthians 11:3)

Now, that’s a wonderful verse, because it shows us there that there is no inferiority or superiority implied by submission. You see, look. The head of every man is Christ. Man is to be in subjection to Jesus. Fine, we can understand that. And the head of Christ is God. Now, pay attention. If you know anything about your basic Christian theology, you know that we believe as New Testament Christians that God the Father and God the Son are equal, aren’t they? Remember the Scripture I just quoted, Philippians 2:5? *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant.”* (Philippians 2:5–7)

Now therefore, submission does not mean inferiority. Remember what I told you that submission was? One equal voluntarily placing himself under another equal, that God may be glorified. And so our Scripture, when it says that the head of Christ is God, the head of the man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, is not talking about superiority or inferiority, but just simply God’s chain of command, that the home would function as God intends for it to function.

So, what’s a wife to do if she has an ungodly husband, if she has an unsaved husband? Well, let me tell you what she’s not to do. First of all, she’s not to leave him. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7, “You stay with him: you may bring him to Jesus.” (1 Corinthians 7:10–16) She is not to leave him. Number two: She’s not to lecture him. You’re not going to nag him to Jesus. Don’t go around writing little notes on the mirror, pasting John 3:16 on a beer can and constantly nagging him. Any woman with horse sense will not nag her husband. Let me tell you something. You’re not going to nag him to Jesus. It is not your job to lead him, nor to lecture him, but to love him. And by

submission, as I'm going to show you in a moment, you're going to unleash upon his head one of the mightiest forces of this world knows anything about. I'm talking to you about the strength of submission. I'm talking to you about the mightiness of meekness, as we're going to see here in just a moment.

### **III. The Problems of Submission**

All right, let's move on to the next category. We've talked to you some about the principle of submission. We've talked to you some about the places of submission. Now I want to talk to you just a little bit about the problems of submission, because I know that some of you have some real questions in your mind right now. All of us do. You say, "What about your government if your government commands you to do something that's contrary to the Word of God?" or "What if you work for a boss and he tells you to juggle the books, or he tells you to misrepresent a product, or he tells you to steal for the company?" or "What if you're married to a husband, an unsaved husband, and he wants you to practice wife-swapping, or he wants you to smoke dope with him, or he wants you to break a moral command of God? Do you mean to say that I'm to obey him and to do what he tells me to do when I know that the Word of God clearly contradicts that?" Of course not! Of course not!

You see, dear friend, it is one thing to have a spirit of subjection; it is another thing to always obey. And submission and obedience are not always the same. There may be a time when you disobey your government. There may be a time when you disobey your employer. There may be a time when you disobey your husband. Why? Because there is a higher command that takes precedence over it.

Now, let me give you an example of what I'm talking about. For example, in the fourth chapter of the book of Acts, the apostles were commanded not to preach or to teach any more in the name of Jesus. But what had Jesus commanded in Matthew 28:19–20? *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost...and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."* (Matthew 28:19–20) And we are commanded to witness to all nations. But the civil magistrate said, "You cannot preach anymore in the name of Jesus."

Well, what did they do? Did they stop preaching? Of course not! They continued to preach. And I want you to notice what they said to these men in Acts 5:28: *"Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us."* I want you to notice how Peter answered these men: *"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men."* (Acts 5:28–29)

Now, do you understand? Every place where you can, you should submit to the

ordinance of man, and you should always have a spirit of submission even when you cannot obey. They arrested these men and they put them in prison. And when they arrested them and put them in prison, they did not revile, they did not resist. They took that submissively, and they submitted to that authority, even when they could not obey that authority. Then they still took the consequences, and they suffered for doing good. But they had a spirit of submission even when they did not obey that human authority.

All human authority is limited. And if a husband commands his wife to do something that is morally wrong, that husband has gone beyond the limits of his authority. You see, there are some limited commandments and there are some commandments that are irrevocable.

Let me give you an example of a limited commandment. In Romans 12:18, the Bible says, *“Live peaceably with all men”*—*“As much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”* (Romans 12:18) Now, why did he say, *“As much as lieth in you, live peaceably?”* That is, *“Do it as best you can.”* Some people you can’t live peaceably with. You know why? They won’t let you. And you cannot control their conduct. So he says, *“As much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”* That is, you are to do your very best to submit to your government. You’re to do your very best to submit to your boss. You’re to do your very best to submit to your husband—*“as much as lieth in you.”* But if there is a direct conflict between a clear-cut command of God and that of your human authority, then you must obey God rather than man.

And we have examples of that in the Bible. You remember when old Pharaoh said all the little boy babies were to be killed? And some of the midwives said, *“We’re not going to murder these little boys.”* They were right, weren’t they? I want to tell you, if I were a nurse or a doctor in a hospital, and somebody wanted me to perform an abortion on some innocent little baby, I wouldn’t do it if I got fired. I wouldn’t do it if I got fired. *“We’re not going to murder those babies,”* those midwives said. (Exodus 1:15–22) And Jochebed took little Moses and hid Moses in the bulrushes. Now she had a submissive spirit, for later on she served Pharaoh as a nurse to help raise Moses. But she did not contradict the Word of God. (Exodus 2:1–10)

Old Daniel—they told Daniel, *“Daniel, you can’t pray.”* And Daniel said, *“I’m going to pray, and I’m going to keep on praying just like I’ve always prayed, even if it’s against the law.”* But he didn’t do it with a rebellious spirit. (Daniel 6)

Now, what I’m saying to you, ladies and gentlemen, is this: There are some problems in this matter of submission, and there are some times when our human superior and our divine God may come into conflict. Then, God’s law always takes precedence over that. And the greater principle of obedience to God takes priority over the lesser principle of obedience to man. But never use the lesser as an excuse to break the greater, which is to have a spirit of rebellion.

## IV. The Price of Submission

Now, let me speak to you about something else: Not only the problem of submission, but let me talk to you about the price of submission. Now, if you think I'm talking to you about something that's easy or cheap, forget it. Let's look, for example, here in the Word of God in chapter 2, verse 18: *"Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy,"*—and that word literally means this is grace. Actually, it's the Greek word for *grace*. This is grace! Do you know what grace is? Grace is not giving to someone what they deserve, but what they need. Your boss doesn't deserve that, but he needs it. Why? Because you're going to bring him to Jesus. This is grace—*"if a man for conscience toward God endure"*—what's that next word?—*"grief,"*—just underscore it—*"suffering..."*—that's the next word. Underscore that—*"grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted"*—underscore the word *buffeted*—*"for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it,"*—underscore that word again—*"ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called..."*—called for what? Called to suffer. Called to suffer! You know, in the first two services, we haven't had a great number of folks to join the church. I'll tell you why: because I told them right here, I believe, when Jesus calls you, He says, "Come and suffer." When Jesus calls you, He says, "Come and suffer." When Jesus calls you, He says, "Come and suffer"—*"hereunto were ye called:"*—called to what? Called to suffer. Let's continue to read—*"because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps."* (2 Peter 2:18–21)

You say, "Well, I don't want to suffer." You're going to suffer anyway, saved or lost—saved or lost! But I'll tell you what, dear friend: When you come as a Christian, submitting to the Lord Jesus Christ and obeying the Word of God, God is going to arch a rainbow of hope over your suffering, and He's going to write Romans 8:28 over it. And when you get under, God is going to pull out His grace and His power upon you, and you are going to have an effect on those round about you.

Let's continue to read. It speaks of Christ—that we should follow in His steps. And the Bible says in verse 24, speaking of this Christ, *"who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."* (1 Peter 2:24) Did you ever hear of a doctor who made himself sick to make the patient well? You say, "That's not fair!" No, but that's Calvary—*"by whose stripes ye were healed."*

Now, when I talk about submitting to godless government, when I talk about submission to bad bosses, when I talk about submission to mean mates, somebody will say, "Brother Rogers, that is not fair!" Right. We're not talking about fairness; we're talking about grace. We're talking about Calvary. We're talking about the just suffering

for the unjust, that we might bring them to God. Thank God that the Lord Jesus, when He looked down upon this world and He saw that cross, thank God He didn't say, "That's not fair!" Thank God that He came, He submitted, He died, and God *"hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow."* (Philippians 2:9–10)

I know wives who are members of this congregation who have suffered hell on earth and who've gone through their own personal Calvarys to bring their ungodly husbands to Jesus Christ—and they've done it! And as far as the world is concerned, they had every right to tell that guy to take a walk. They had every right to leave him, to sue him, and to do all manner of things, as far as the world is concerned. But they took that hurt in, and they suffered that Calvary, and they took up their cross, and they became submissive, and they showed that love, and they lived that life, and God said, "Young lady, I'm going to pour out on you grace and power and authority over men and demons and hell. And you're going to pray with authority and live with authority, and that man is going to come to Jesus Christ."

The Bible says they without a word will be won by the behavior of the wives, as they behold your chaste conversation, your pure behavior, coupled with fear. (1 Peter 3:1–2) I tell you, there is going to be many a man in heaven because some lady has endured her own private Calvary. But, thank God, she's known her own private Easter also, as God has brought heaven into that home, and as God has moved in, and as God has done only what God could do, because she was willing to be subject, as God says.

## **V. The Power of Submission**

And I'm getting ahead—I'm getting ahead—because I want to close our message this morning by talking not only about the price of submission—suffering; but I want to talk to you about the power of it—the power of it. Oh, how powerful is this spirit of submission! Again, I want to remind you that Jesus said, *"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."* (Matthew 5:5) Who is more powerful than those who are going to take over the whole thing? I mean, that's powerful, isn't it? *"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."* God gives great power to those who submit.

Now I want to ask you a question: Have any of you ever taught your children how to drive? Boy, that's a hairy experience, isn't it? Now, what do you do? What's the very first thing you show them? I daresay, if you're like I was, even before you show them the ignition switch, much less the accelerator, what do you show them? The brakes, right? You say, "Honey, those are the brakes. That's what stops this thing. Now, put your foot on it." Now, suppose you're teaching that child: "And I don't want to know anything about the brakes, Daddy. Forget the brakes. Where's the accelerator?" I say, "Forget the accelerator," right?

I mean, look. You say, “Well, I don’t want to know anything about submission. Brother Rogers, you’re not interesting me at all. That’s just against my nature. I want you to tell me today how to have power and authority. That’s what I’m interested in. I don’t want to see the brakes.” God says, “You’ll not see the accelerator, either.”

Friend, listen. If you cannot be under, you’ll never be over. Until God learns that He can trust you, till God sees that spirit of obedience, and God sees that spirit of meekness, and God sees that spirit of submission, God is not going to pour out His power upon you. But when God sees that spirit of submission, when God sees that you’re willing to be under, when God sees that you’re controllable, then God Almighty is going to move heaven and earth on your behalf, and God is going to start working through you as God started working through that early church, and this Christianity is going to go through this community like a cannonball through a crate of eggshells when we begin to live as we ought to live for Jesus Christ. I tell you, if we had some mighty meek and some strong, submissive people who were to go out here today and get under authority, and let God baptize them and fill them with great authority, and make them over because they’re under, and God were to highly exalt them because they humble themselves, we’d change this society.

We have Christians today that have a spirit of rebellion, and therefore they don’t have power with God, nor do they have power with man. You know what’s going to happen? Listen. The Bible says, for example, in chapter 3, that that husband is going to behold that wife. (1 Peter 3:2) And that word *behold* means he’s going to watch her carefully. He’s going to scrutinize her. He’s going to observe her. Then he’s going to say, “What makes her different?” And he’s going to get more and more and more under conviction.

Now he may seem to get meaner, because he’s going to try and break her. He’s going to try to get her to compromise, because he knows if he can get her to compromise, it will make him feel better. So he’ll get meaner and meaner. But as he’s getting meaner and meaner, that conviction is on his heart. And God not only is going to bring him under conviction, but God is going to start pouring out power upon that wife from the top, and God is going to fill her with spiritual authority so that she can pray and bind the demons of hell that hold that man in their grasp. Before long, when that conviction and that authority get together, there’s going to be an explosion. And when it comes back together, it will be a Christian home. It’s God’s way. It’s going to change the world.

Listen. Look in chapter 3. You say, “Brother Rogers, that might be dangerous.” Well, let’s see what happens. Look, if you will, in chapter 3, verse 12: “*For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers:*”—you want God to give you authority? All right, submit—“*but the face of the Lord is against them that do*

*evil.*” You want God to take away authority and turn His face from you? Rebel. But now, notice verse 13: *“And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?”* Now, the Bible says, *“But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake,”*—in verse 14—*“happy are ye...”*—I’m not talking to you about a way of moroseness. I’m talking to you about a way of thrill and happiness and victory. Now he says, *“Who is he that will harm you...? But...if ye suffer...happy are ye.”* What he is saying is this: that suffering will not harm you; submitting will not harm you; that God is going to move in, and God is going to watch over the whole thing. And what is the bottom line of this? Verse 14—*“But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;”*—“don’t be afraid that somebody’s going to take advantage of you.” But here’s what’s going to happen. Verse 15—*“but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”* (1 Peter 3:12–15)

## **Conclusion**

Now we’re always trying to witness. We go from door to door witnessing, passing out tracts. If God’s people started living as they ought to live, do you know what would happen? They would be coming to us, knocking on our door, and saying, “Tell me what’s the reason of this hope that’s in you? What is it that has so changed you? What is it that makes you so different?” Not only will we shut their mouths when they criticize, but we will open their hearts to want what we have when they see the spirit of grace and glory and power and spiritual authority resting upon God’s mighty meek who will inherit the earth; the strength of it as they’re coming saying, “Give me a reason. Explain the gospel to me. I need to be saved.”

# Communicate or Disintegrate

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: April 14, 1996**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 2:21–240 3:1, 7**

## Outline

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- I. The Awesome Power of Communication
- II. Some Problems in Communication
  - A. Lack of Communication Skills
  - B. Self-Centeredness
  - C. Bitterness
  - D. The Distractions of Life
  - E. Differences in Temperament
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- III. How to Practice Proper Communication
  - A. Husbands, Learn to Be More Sensitive
  - B. Both Partners Deal with Self-Centeredness
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  - D. If There Is a Closed Spirit, Try to Find out Why
  - E. Make Time for Communication

Conclusion

## Introduction

Well, praise the Lord! What a blessing today! Would you be finding 1 Peter chapter 2, and when you've found it, look up here—1 Peter chapter 2. I heard of a woman who went to the lawyer and said, My husband wants to divorce me. And, the lawyer said to the lady, Well, what's the problem? Does he have any grounds? Well, she said, He has about 20 acres. He said, No, I don't mean that. Does he have a grudge? She said, No, I think it's a carport. And he wrinkled his brow just a little bit and said, No, no, no, no. Does he beat you up? She said, No, I get up before him every morning. He said, Lady, what is the problem? She said, He says we can't communicate. Well, I can understand a little bit that some homes are on the rocks because of a lack of communication.

That's what we're talking about today: communication in marriage. One Lord—One Love: Communicate or Disintegrate. The number one problem in many marriages is the failure of husbands and wives to adequately communicate. And some marriages that are okay still need a lot of help in communication.

I was reading where one psychologist said that 80 percent of those that come in for

counseling really come in because of communication problems. I asked Michael Carrier about this some time ago. He said, Pastor, it's more like 100 percent. Well, whether it's 80 percent, 100 percent, or whatever, it is a big percentage. And I'm telling you that those of us who are married, those who may be single, those who are planning to get married, whatever, all of us, as Christians, brothers and sisters in Christ, need to learn to communicate. For the Bible says, "Life and death are in the power of the tongue, and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof."

Now, let me read you some scriptures here, first of all, talking about the Lord Jesus, who is the example for us in all things, especially in husband and wife relationships. Now, look, if you will, in chapter 2, verse 21—Peter says, "For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example."

Now, underscore that phrase, leaving us an example—"that ye should follow his steps, who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."

Now, I'm going to skip to chapter 3, verse 1: "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands." Now, I'm going to skip down to chapter 3, verse 7: "Likewise, ye wives, dwell with them according to knowledge." Now, what does the "likewise" refer to? It refers to Jesus. Jesus is the pattern and the power for communication in marriage.

First of all, it talks about Jesus, and then he says, All right, wives, you do the same way. You follow in His steps. He talks about Jesus, and then he says, All right, husbands, here's the example; follow in His steps. We need to learn to communicate, and the pattern and the power is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, there are actually five basic levels of communication. First of all, there's what we call the frivolous level. People just talk about the weather, or they talk about sports, or they talk about clothes, etc. It really doesn't amount to much; it's just banter, it's just frivolous talk. Many people are overheard mostly saying nothing. Now, that's the frivolous level.

Now, the second level of communication is the factual level. People talk about facts. We report facts and talk about them, but there's no real personal involvement. It's kind of like the man who delivers the evening news—he just simply gives you the facts, or like Sergeant Friday in Dragnet, if you remember that: Just the facts, ma'am—just the facts.

Then there's a third level of communication: not only the frivolous level or the factual level, but there is the fellowship level. Not only do we talk about facts, but we begin to express ideas and judgments and philosophy, and that's the level that most of us are on with one another here at the church today—the fellowship level.

But then, that deepens, and you get down to the feeling level. You begin to talk

about how you feel—where you hurt, what your desires and aspirations are, where your failures and your faults are, what really moves you inwardly. Most of us never get to that place with anyone, the feeling level, where we're really opening up and telling what we really, really feel behind this mask and this camouflage that we wear.

But there's a deeper level than that, and that is the freedom level, where we share totally, completely, nothing held back; we're not ashamed, and we're not afraid, and we're not worried about rejection; we are seeking for somebody to know all about us and still love us—freedom.

Now, folks, when husbands and wives come to that place, they have a wonderful, wonderful marriage. When friends come to that place, they have a wonderful, wonderful friendship. But that is not easy to get to.

Now, we strive for intimacy in marriage. We're talking about achieving intimacy. I want to tell you—there can be no intimacy without communication, there can be no communication without trust, and there can be no real trust without the Lord Jesus Christ. The supreme goal of marriage is to know one another intimately, and still love and respect one another.

The problem with the intimacy is, in our society, when we talk about intimacy, everybody's thinking sexually. But real sexual intimacy cannot have its fullest meaning or fullest expression without psychological and spiritual intimacy. When husband and wife would come together in Bible times in the act of marriage, the Bible uses this term: "they knew one another." That speaks of true intimacy—physical, emotional, and spiritual intimacy.

Now, if you as husband and wife don't learn to communicate, I can tell you, your marriage is going to drift apart. After the honeymoon is over, after the children are up and out, when the bitter toil of life sets in, you're going to find yourself slowly, almost imperceptibly, drifting apart. The goal of marriage is, no longer I and I, but we. They, too, will become one flesh.

Now, I want to say three basic things, but a lot of sub-basic things today, as we're talking about communication. And remember, now, that Jesus is both the power and the example. He left us an example that we should follow in His steps.

## **I. The Awesome Power of Communication**

Now, first of all, I want you to think about the awesome power of communication—the awesome power of communication. Notice again, Jesus is the example, in verse 21: "That ye should follow in his steps who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, who when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." Jesus spoke truth. He was called the Word. His life was full of grace and truth.

And Jesus, who knew this, taught us that real communication comes out of the heart. Jesus said, “Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh.” If you want to know what’s in the heart, listen therefore, to words.

They say in the country, what’s down in the well comes up in the bucket. Harsh words—a harsh heart, an angry heart. Negative words—a negative heart. Overactive words, talking all the time—an unsettled heart. Boastful words—an insecure heart. Filthy words—a dirty heart. Critical words—a bitter heart. Encouraging words—a happy heart. Gentle words—a loving heart. Truthful words—an honest heart. You want to know what’s in the heart, listen to the words.

Now, you’re in 1 Peter; I want us just to put a bookmark there and just turn over to James for just a moment—James chapter 3—because James also ramifies what we’re saying, and I just want to go over there for just a moment. And turn to James chapter 3, and read with me just the first ten verses: “My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.”

Now, what that means is that if you try to tell and teach other people, God’s going to judge you more severely. Every preacher needs to read this and listen to it carefully. And then, he says, in verse 2, “For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able to bridle the whole body.” When you get your tongue in line, you become mature, and you can take care of everything else.

Friend, it is the tongue that is causing problems in most marriages. If you are able to tame the tongue, you’re able to bridle the whole body. Then he gives an illustration: “Behold, we put bits in the horse’s mouths that they may obey us and we turn about their whole body.” You can turn a little teenage girl who weighs 110 pounds and put her on a 2,000-pound stallion and he has a bit in his mouth. And, it is the bit that gives direction to that horse. And, what James is saying is, it is the tongue that gives direction to life.

Now, if you don’t like where your home is headed, remember that your words are to your marriage what a bit is in a horse’s mouth. He says the same thing about ships: “Behold, also, the ships, which though they be so great and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.” What’s he saying? He’s saying you can take a mighty ship, and with a little rudder you can steer that mighty ship through fierce winds. Again, if you want your home to come into a safe harbor, watch your words; the tongue gives direction.

But not only does the tongue give direction; the tongue brings destruction. And look in verse 6: “And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. So is the tongue among our members, it defileth the whole body and setteth on fire the course of nature, and it itself is set on fire of hell.” The tongue not only gives direction; it brings destruction. You can burn down your marriage with your tongue. Your tongue can be like a torch that sets

afame your house of harmony and happiness, and burn it down.

And then, he says, in verse 8: “But the tongue can no man tame. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.” Not only does the tongue give direction, not only does the tongue bring destruction, but the tongue brings pollution; it brings defilement, it’s like a poison.

Did you know that you can poison your marriage, lady, just as surely as if you were putting a few drops of arsenic in your husband’s tea in the morning, with your tongue? Sir, did you know that you can poison your marriage with your tongue? No wonder we need the Lord Jesus Christ to be the example here.

## **II. Some Problems in Communication**

And so, I want us to talk, first of all, about some problems in communication—some problems in communication. We talked about the power of the tongue; let’s talk about some problems in communication.

Go back to our text; go back if you will, please, to 1 Peter chapters 2 and 3. Now, one of the first problems is this. Are you ready? And I want you to jot these down, if you will.

### **A. Lack of Communication Skills**

One of the first problems is this: we lack the skills—we lack communication skills, because we have never learned, and we have not learned because we have not studied the Word of God.

Now, Peter talks about the Lord Jesus, and he says, Here is the example, Jesus is the example; and then, he says, in chapter 3, verse 1, Wives, do like this. And then, he says in chapter 3, verse 7, he says, Husbands, you do like the Lord Jesus Christ. And he tells wives not to talk so much, and he tells husbands to wise up. Now, we both need to learn, and somewhere we need to meet in the middle.

I asked my wife, as I was preparing this sermon, I said, Joyce, what is the basic problem in communication? She didn’t even think. She said, Men. One word answer, and, you know, I got to thinking about it, and I think she’s right. I think the problem, sirs, men, guys, is primarily with us, and that’s the reason that he says to men to dwell with your wives according to knowledge—that means to wise up. You see, we men are limited when it comes to communication. We are limited when it comes to communication.

I was reading Dr. Gary Smalley, and Dr. Gary Smalley said this—he said in the 18th through the 26th month of gestation, when a little baby is in his mother’s womb, that little baby’s brain gets a chemical bath of certain hormones, of sex-related hormones, causing changes in the brain of a little boy that does not cause that same change in the brain of a little girl.

Now, remember last week we talked about that the brain is divided into two halves, or two hemispheres, and they're connected by a fibrous tissue that these physiologists call the corpus colisum, and, with this corpus colisum between these two hemispheres is a connector between the two, sending back signals back and forth. When that testosterone bathes the brain of this little boy in his mother's womb, this corpus colisum begins to shrink back in a little boy. He does not have the connectivity between the two hemispheres of the brain that women have. And, the left side of his brain works more adequately than the right side of his brain.

Now, the left side of the brain, you know, deals with the logical, the analytical, the factual, the aggressive centers of thought. Now, this is not bad, because what did God make a man to do? Remember, we told you last week. God created man to do two things: to tend the garden, and to keep it. That is, he is to be the provider, and he is to be the protector. And so, God gave him a stronger outer psyche. That's what he is to do. He is the protector, and so, he is not so emotional in many ways, and cannot afford to get too emotional sometimes in the decisions he has to make.

But, what did God make the woman to do? Woman is the mother of all. That's what Eve—the very word Eve—means, is the mother of that which lives. And so, God made her with the emotional nature. And so, both sides of her hemispheres are working at the same time. And you ladies have always thought that we men were not in our right mind. You're right! We're in our left mind. That's just the way we work.

Now, that's by divine design, but it makes it hard to communicate. A man is built for achievement; he's built for competition, he's built to overcome; he's built to get out there and be aggressive. That's the reason you have so much trouble on vacation. You're going on vacation—what does the woman want to do? She wants to pull off this side road, she wants to stop here, she wants to dawdle in the restaurant—and what does the husband want to do? Zmmmmmm. Five hundred miles in one day. Why? He is achievement-oriented.

Do you know what a husband does not like to do? Let his wife drive. Why? He wants to be in control. Why will he not stop and ask for directions? Because that's a surrender. He doesn't know how. He has to admit that he doesn't know, if he stops and asks for directions. It's like giving in, and he doesn't want to do it. Now, I'm just telling you, folks, that we are different. God made us different that He might make us one.

Ladies, your husband will keep on being interested in football, when you want to watch those hospital shows. He doesn't want to watch people get well; he wants to watch them getting hurt. There's just something about his nature that is aggressive.

And little girls talk sooner than little boys. As a matter of fact, they have photographed the lips of little girls in the nursery. I mean, little girls just born. Before they can even utter a syllable, their lips are moving more than little boys. I'm serious.

Their lips are moving more than little boys in the crib.

At Harvard University, they did something. They wired little boys and little girls for sound on the playground, just to see what little boys would say and what little girls would say. The little girls were talking all the time and they were talking in words and sentences, and the little girls were not talking to other people; the little girls were talking to themselves—all the time, just talking. But the little boys, same age, only 68 percent of what they said were words; the rest of it, noises. Zzzmmmm! Aaaahhhh! Yaaaahhhh! Just noises! Not words! That's little boys. They're listening to them, because these little boys are out of their right minds. That's the reason, lady, your husband today just grunts—grrrrt! That's all he knows how to say.

So, the very first reason we have trouble communicating is, hey, we're different. And that's the reason God gives instruction to the woman in chapter 3, verse 1; says, really, basically—look at it—don't talk so much. And that's the reason he says to the man, in chapter 3, verse 7, Wise up; live with her according to knowledge.

## **B. Self-Centeredness**

I'll tell you another reason for failure to communicate—and that's self-centeredness. Look, if you will, in chapter 22, verse 24—the Bible speaks of Christ, “who his own self bare our sins in his own body.” That's the ultimate mark of selflessness. What is the biggest problem in marriage? Selfishness. We get selfish. We want to be the king or queen on the throne of our own lives.

We say we have our rights. But Jesus, the Lord of glory, “thought it not robbery to be equal with God, then made himself of no reputation.” He laid down His life for the church, which is His bride. Self-centeredness is a hindrance to good communication. Let me tell you, most of the problems that you as husband and wife are going to have—you want me to tell you what they are? They're not really over problems; they're egos. There are no problems too big to solve—just people too small to solve them.

And the problem is, we're so full of rotten pride, that rather than attacking the problem, we attack one another, because we are selfish by nature, and we're so full of pride; we want to be right. But, if both husband and wife would center on the problem rather than trying to prove who's right or wrong, then we would have communication. So, lack of knowledge is one of the problems—we're different. Another reason is selfishness, and that's the reason Peter gives us this example of the selfless life of the Lord Jesus. And then, he says, “Likewise ye wives,” and “Likewise ye husbands.”

## **C. Bitterness**

I'll tell you another reason for poor communication, and it is bitterness—unresolved problems and unforgiving spirits. Now, look at what Peter says in verse 23. He says we'd be like Jesus. Notice in verse 22: “Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his

mouth, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, and when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.”

Now, he’s saying you’ve got to get rid of that bitterness. Bitterness, the root of bitterness, will defile your marriage. Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 15—the Bible says we’re to be “looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.”

There are some who are listening to me now, you’ve been married for 15 or 20 years, and you’re still nursing the same grudges. You have a root of bitterness. You say, Well, I’m not aware of it. No, because it’s a root; it’s underground. But you can see the fruit of it, the constant bickering, those old things that just keep coming up; they’ve never been resolved, they’ve never been buried in the grace of God’s forgetfulness, they’ve never been committed to the Lord, they’ve never truly been forgiven.

One man said, When my wife and I argue, she gets historical. He said, You mean hysterical. He said, No, I mean historical. She brings up everything I ever did in the past, and she keeps bringing it up and bringing it up. What does God do with our sins when He forgives them? He buries them in the grave of His forgetfulness, never to bring them up again. And, the problem with many of us, folks, I’m telling you, is the problem of bitterness. It is a real problem.

Now, let me tell you another problem in communication. And, by the way, the way to get rid of bitterness and to keep from letting it build up is to keep a short account. You know, the Bible says, in Ephesians 4, “Don’t let the sun go down upon your wrath”; don’t go to bed back-to-back. Don’t go to bed angry; get it settled before you go to sleep. Because the Bible says, if you don’t, you’re giving a place to the devil—Neither give place to the devil. The devil just comes, and you’re just saying, Devil, come on in and wreck our home. One couple read this verse and said, we stayed up for three straight weeks over that.

#### **D. The Distractions of Life**

Here’s something else that hinders communication, and that’s the distractions of life. I mean, we’re so busy! Now, notice in chapter 2, when we’re talking about the Lord Jesus, here, and what the Lord Jesus does. In chapter 2, look, if you will, in verse 25—it says, “But ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the shepherd and bishop of your souls.” What does that mean? Well, you and I strayed away from our Lord—all we like sheep go astray—but the Lord Jesus, who is the shepherd and the bishop, He’s gone out seeking us, nothing is distracting Him from seeking His sheep. Then, he says, now, wives, you do the same thing. Husbands, you do the same thing.

Make this the prime thing in your marriage—to seek peace. And, again, the Bible says—go over here, if you will, in chapter 3, verse 11: “Let him eschew evil, and do

good; let him seek peace.” That means, make it your prime goal to communicate. Seek peace and ensue it.

You know one of the biggest problems that keeps us from communicating as husbands and wives is television. Might as well admit it. I mean, one of the great enemies of communication is television. Somebody sent Ann Landers this letter, had a little poem, I want to read it with you. I’ll read it to you:

In the house of Mr. and Mrs. Spouse,  
He and she would watch TV.  
And never a word between them was spoken  
until the day the set was broken.  
Then, How do you do? said he to she,  
I don’t believe we’ve met.  
Spouse is the name, what’s yours, he asked?  
Why, mine is the same, said she to he.  
Do you suppose that we could be,  
but then the set came suddenly right about  
and they never did find out.

Oh, it is the distractions of life, and we have to make up our mind that we are going to seek peace. And children, hobbies, business, whatever it is, all of these things come and get ahead of us, to keep us from communicating.

#### **E. Differences in Temperament**

And then, I’m going to tell you something else that keeps us from communicating. Not only the differences between the sexes—the male and female differences, the way we’re wired—but the differences of the temperaments among either sex. Joyce and I are psychologically different temperamentally. Now, some people are the same, but Joyce and I are different.

Brother Bob Sorrell gave us a test one time, and he gave all the staff a psychological profile, and Joyce and I took that, and we, when we compared it, we found, factually, what we’d always suspected. Folks, not only are we opposite sexually; we’re just plain opposite. The very things that I’m high on, I’m radically high. The things that I’m high on, she is radically low—not just low, radically low. The things that she’s radically high on, I am radically low on—not just low, I’m off the charts. It’s only the grace of God that’s kept us married. I’m telling you the truth. We have a wonderful marriage, we have a wonderful marriage, but I think it must be God’s joke. You know, God puts people who are different together, and then they have to work at that marriage.

And I just thank God for the grace of God that keeps us together, but differences can sometimes drive us apart. Look, if you will, in chapter 3, verses 7 and 8: “Likewise ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel and as being heirs together of the grace of life that your prayers be not hindered. Finally, be ye all of one mind.” What does he mean by that? Well, he talks to husbands and wives, and then to everybody. He says you’ve got to come together; you’ve got to agree, even though you may be psychologically different.

#### **F. Insecurity and Fear**

Let me tell you another reason for failure to communicate. It’s insecurity and fear. We are afraid to reach that freedom level of communication. You know why? We’re afraid if somebody knew us—really knew us—they wouldn’t love us any more. Look, if you will again, in chapter 3, verse 8: “Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one to another.” Love as brethren; be pitiful, be courteous.

Have you ever felt like I couldn’t really tell her how I really feel, or I could not tell him how I really feel? We have to wear this camouflage, we have to stand behind this mask, we have to pretend even with those that we love the most, because we feel, if they knew how we really feel, they wouldn’t love us any more, if they really knew us—and, after all, this is all I’ve got, so I’ve got to hide it, because, if I just show them what I really am, then they might not love me any more. And so, fear keeps us from communicating.

Brother Carrier, I have found out—where is Brother Carrier? He was here somewhere—there you are. I talked to you on this side of the stage earlier on, so you fooled me. I have found out that men basically don’t like to pray with women. Most women desire for their husbands to pray with them, and they just want him to get down on his knees with her, and pour out his heart before God, and tell God of his needs, his wants, his fears, his joys, his victories. Men don’t like to do that. You know why men don’t like to do that? Because that’s not macho.

I mean we’ve got to have this shell. I mean, we’ve got to have this tough crust. And when a man will tell God those things, maybe you don’t think your husband prays. He may pray a whole lot more than you think he prays; he just doesn’t like to pray with you, because he feels if he prays with you, he’s on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, if he just uses the camouflage when he’s praying with you, he knows he’s a hypocrite before God. But if he tells God what he really feels, he’s made himself vulnerable to you. And so, therefore, what we need to do in life is to overcome this fear and this insecurity, and that’s what Peter is telling us.

Love as brethren. Be courteous; be pitiful. Have the kind of love for your wife, and have the kind of love for your husband, that you can share anything, and not be criticized and condemned, but that you can have that receptivity. And, fellows, I’m not

giving you an excuse not to pray with your wives; you ought to pray with your wives, and the Bible commands it in verse 7, but the Bible says that you are to “dwell with them according to knowledge, that your prayers to God be not hindered.”

### **III. How to Practice Proper Communication**

Well, I wish I had more time to deal with all of these things, but let’s move on. In four minutes, let me give you the whole third point. All right, I’m not a good communicator this morning. But let me just go down some things. I wish I had some more time, but we’re just laying out the problems this morning. Let me give you some things now to practice proper communication.

#### **A. Husbands, Learn to Be More Sensitive**

Husbands, learn to be more sensitive. Chapter 3 and verse 7—listen to your wife. One man said, I’m concerned about my wife; she goes around the house talking to herself all the time. His friend said, Does she know she’s doing it? He said, No, she thinks I’m listening to her. Learn to be more sensitive.

#### **B. Both Partners Deal with Self-Centeredness**

Number two: both partners deal with self-centeredness. I’m telling you the problem in your home, if you’re having a problem, is ego and pride. Die to yourself. Most marriages need two funerals and one wedding, where you die to yourself and take self off the throne, and enthrone the Lord Jesus—chapter 3, verse 8.

#### **C. Be Willing to Overlook Your Partner’s Problems**

Number three: be willing to overlook your partner’s problems. You are not a perfect person, and this person is not a perfect person, and if they are negative, overlook it for a while, in order to get things right. Stop being so worried about yourself.

#### **D. If There Is a Closed Spirit, Try to Find out Why**

Number four: if she has a closed spirit, or he has a closed spirit, try to find out why—chapter 3 and verse 11. I hope you’ll look at these. If you notice that your wife is sullen, or your husband is quiet, or cold, or distant, begin to work on that.

Create some areas of commonality. Put some fun back into your marriage. Lighten up. Laugh at yourself. Laugh together. Don’t let your marriage be dull. Lighten up. Not only do you need to work at your marriage; you need to play at it. Keep on dating.

A man comes home, and his wife is cold and distant, her spirit is closed up; maybe she snaps and growls at him. He could learn a little bit maybe from the paperboy. The paperboy is sometimes a better psychologist with the neighborhood dog than he is from his wife. The paperboy gets a new house on the route, and there’s a dog there behind the fence, and he has to go behind that fence and deliver the paper, and that dog is

growling and snapping; the little boy, if he's smart, will get down off his bike, and very slowly and very carefully, through the wire of that fence for a little while, and make friends with that dog. Pssk, Pssk, come here, come here, gal, and he touches the dog, and scratches the dog behind the ear a little bit, rubs it a little bit; the dog begins to wag his tail, then from there on they're friends.

Now, why was that dog barking? Well, it wasn't that the dog disliked the paperboy; the dog's just afraid, or there's something the dog is fearful of, that this may be an intruder, not a friend; so the dog is barking. You come home, and your wife snaps at you, or growls. Don't just growl back. Jesus, when He was reviled, reviled not again, but Jesus overcame evil with good. What she may need is the same thing that dog needed; she may need some affection. She may need you to be gentle, and come to her, and speak to her gently. Oh, I wish I had more time to deal with this.

### **E. Make Time for Communication**

But, last of all, make time for communication. Plan for it. Our verse tells us to seek peace. To seek peace you need to get out of the house. You, as husbands and wives, need, at least a half an hour four times a week, as a minimum, when you get away. Take her to a restaurant—doesn't have to be expensive; go for a drive; get away from the kids; get away from the television; don't bring up all those negative things. Just begin to talk, communicate; drown insults in a river of love.

I'll tell you, there's a price to pay, and, if you'll think about it, folks—if you'll think about it—this whole second chapter—this whole second chapter—tells about Jesus dying on the cross, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. He took the initiative. We love Him, because He first loved us.

What you need to do in your home—listen very carefully—is quit trying to change your partner, and change yourself. Do you know the only way you're going to change your partner? Listen very carefully. The only way you're really going to change them is to give them something different to react to. You change yourself, and then they cannot be the same, because you're not the same. They have to react to you in a different way, because you are different. That's the whole thing.

## **Conclusion**

Christ—the just for the unjust. Quit trying to prove who's right or wrong, whether you be the husband or the wife. There's a price to pay. Jesus paid a price with His own blood. The result is that we love Him with all of our hearts. You lay down your life for your wife, for your husband. Practice chapter 3, verse 1, wives, and verse 2, and verse 3. Husbands, practice chapter 3 and verse 7, and you'll find out that you have something very, very wonderful: a home where you both communicate, and it'll be a

little bit of heaven.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Father, I pray today that many will come to Jesus, and they'll give their hearts to Him, and be saved. Lord God, I pray that homes that have been unraveling and disintegrating will begin to come back together. I pray, Lord, that all of us who have been so full of pride, and selfishness, and trying to be right, would lay our rights down, and accept our responsibilities. For we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Now, look at me. We're going to sing, in a moment, an invitational hymn.

# Communicate or Disintegrate

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 28, 1997

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 Peter 2:21–24; 3:1, 7–8

*“Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.”*

1 PETER 3:8

## Outline

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## Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and find 1 Peter chapter 2. When you’ve found 1 Peter chapter 2, I want you to look up here, and I want to remind you that we’re talking today about One Lord, One love: Building Intimacy into Marriage. The title of the marriage is “Communicate or Disintegrate.” There’s no way that your marriage can be what it ought to be, not a thriving marriage, unless you as mates, as husband and wife, learn to communicate.

There’s an old story about a woman who came to a lawyer, and said, I need help; my husband is trying to divorce me. The lawyer looked at this lady, and said, does he have any grounds? She said, he has about twenty acres. He said, no, I don’t mean that. Does he have a grudge? She said, no, I think it’s a carport. He said, no, no, no, no.

Does he beat you up? Oh, no, she says, I get up every morning before he does. He said, lady, what is the problem? She said, he says we can't communicate.

Well, I think that's the problem in a lot of marriages. I was reading somewhere where a counselor said—a marriage counselor—that eighty percent of the marriage problems that come to him deal with communication. I asked one of our own counselors, "Is that true here in our counseling, here at the church?" He said, "Pastor, it's more like one hundred percent of couples who cannot get along, because they have not learned to communicate." Now, who is the master communicator? The Lord Jesus Christ. And we're going to find out that Jesus is both the pattern and the power for husbands and wives communicating.

Look, if you will, in chapter 2 and verse 21: "For even here unto were you called because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example." Now, underscore that phrase, leaving us an example. He is a pattern; He is an example, that we should follow His steps.

Now, what is His example? Look at it: "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, who when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. Who his own self bear our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin should live unto righteousness by whose stripes ye were healed."

Now, what he talks about here is that the Lord Jesus Christ—as I heard Bob Sorrell recently pray—the Lord Jesus Christ is the great emancipator, and He is the great communicator. He died for our sins to free us, but He is the great communicator. So much so, He is called the Word of God. So He left us an example of suffering, the just for the unjust, as He did for us, and then, as the Lord Jesus becomes the great communicator to us. Now that's important, because the Bible says He left us an example, that we should follow His steps.

Now, look in chapter 3 and verse 1: "Likewise ye wives." Do you see that? What does he mean by likewise? He's saying, as the Lord Jesus, the great emancipator and the great communicator, likewise, wives. Now, skip down to chapter 3, verse 7: "Likewise, ye husbands." What does it mean, likewise? Like, as Christ, who gave us a pattern, who left us an example, that we should follow His steps. And then, look down, if you will, in verse 8: "Finally, be ye all of one mind," whether you're a husband, wife, married, single, whoever. It's all to be like the Lord Jesus Christ, who's both the pattern and the power for emancipation and communication.

Now, we communicate, generally, on five basic levels. First of all, there's what I would call the frivolous level. Well, it's hot, isn't it? Or, what about the Tigers? Or, we're just talking frivolously about whatever we can find to talk about. That is the frivolous level. There's a lot of that that goes on, does it not? Many people are often overheard

frequently saying nothing—the frivolous level.

But then, you move beyond the frivolous level to the factual level, and we begin to talk about facts. It may be the news, it may be politics, it may be sports, it may be health; but we talk about those facts very much like a news broadcaster talks about the news. He does not get emotionally involved; he just simply talks about facts—and that’s the second level of communication.

Now there’s a third level. Not only the frivolous, or the factual, but there’s the fellowship level, where we begin to share our ideas, our thoughts, how we feel politically, what is the state of our health, or we’re interested in your health, or, what really motivates us. And that’s the way that many of us today in churches communicate—on what I would call the fellowship level. And that’s good, except sometimes, when we share our ideas, our philosophies, if they’re challenged, we don’t feel comfortable; we just hunker down, and we retreat.

Now, there’s a deeper level than the fellowship level and that’s the feeling level, where we tell people really how we feel. We call this bearing our souls. We tell where we hurt. We tell where we fail. We express the deepest aspirations and desires of our hearts. We do this with our friends sometimes. If you have a friend you can deal with on the feeling level, you’re blessed.

But the deepest level, the fifth of these, is what I call the freedom level—that is where there are no holds barred, that we know one another with such intimacy that we’re not afraid, not ashamed, not intimidated to completely, honestly, openly be intimate with one another in the deepest part of our lives. You know the word intimacy comes from the Latin word *intimus*, meaning inmost.

Now, many times we think of intimacy in America, in our sex-saturated society, as being sexual intimacy. But the truth of the matter is that many who are practicing what they call free sex don’t understand intimacy, because there can be no true sexual intimacy unless there’s spiritual intimacy and emotional intimacy. These people who talk about being intimate, that’s the one thing they are not. Now, it takes real intimacy to have a marriage.

## **I. The Power of Communication**

There’s great power in communication. Look, if you will, in chapter 3, verse 10—look at it: “For he that will love life...”—do you love your life? Look at it—“For he that will love life and see good days...”—how would you like for the next days to be good days?—“let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips that they speak no guile. Let him eschew evil, and let him do good. Let him seek peace and ensue it.” What’s he saying? He’s saying the secret of getting along and having a good life, a peaceful life, is to make communication the number one aim of your marriage. The Bible says, in the book of

Proverbs, that life and death are in the power of the tongue.

I'm talking to you now about the power of communication. Life and death are in the power of the tongue. You can kill your marriage, or you can give it life, by learning how to communicate. James the third chapter gives us some figures of what the tongue is like, and he says the tongue is like a bit in a horse's mouth. You can take a 2,000-pound horse and put 110-pound teenage girl on that horse, that mighty stallion, and she can guide it one way or the other, because the tongue gives direction. If you don't like the way your home is headed, it's the way you're using your tongue.

He says also the tongue is like the rudder of a ship, and even though the wind is blowing fiercely, that one rudder, the helmsman, can steer that ship by the rudder, that mighty ship in fierce winds. If your home is headed for the rocks, it's because of the way you're using your tongue; you're not bringing it into a safe harbor.

And then, he says that the tongue is like a fire, a world of iniquity. It can bring warmth, or your tongue can be an arsonous torch to destroy your marriage. Direction and destruction are in the tongue. And then, he says, James says, the tongue is like a deadly poison. You can pollute and poison your marriage with your tongue. It's important that we as husbands and wives learn to communicate, because the title of this message is simply this: communicate or disintegrate. There's not much choice—and I would say this: that most of us know very little about communication in marriage.

So, I'm talking to you about the power of communication. And look again in verse 10: "For he that will love life and seek good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips that they speak no guile."

## **II. The Problems in Communication**

But let's move on, and talk not only about the power of communication, but the problems in communication. I want to list about seven problems that are real problems, and I think they're all alluded to in these two chapters that deal with communication between husband and wife, because actually, this passage, both chapters 2 and 3, deal primarily with husband and wife, even though it talks about the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and His wonderful life. Peter takes it, and applies it to husbands and to wives, okay?

### **A. Gender Differences**

When I was preparing this message, I asked my wife—I said, Joyce, what is the number one communication problem in marriage? She didn't stutter, stammer or hesitate. She said, men. And after I picked myself up off the floor, being so wounded and shocked, she said with a twinkle in her eye, I'll have to confess. But I had to think, you know, she is right. She is right. Most of the time, we men fail to do what Peter says

in 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 7, is to dwell with our wives according to knowledge. But sometimes the problem is with women, because Peter also says in the first several verses of chapter 3, he just seems to infer the women are talking too much. Now, men talk not enough; women sometimes are given to talking too much.

As a matter of fact, as we alluded to in the message last week, and Dr. Gary Smalley has well pointed out, that our brain has two hemispheres, the right and the left, and those hemispheres are connected by a fibrous tissue called the corpus callosum. It's sort of a central station between the two hemispheres that allows the connectivity between those two halves of the brain.

Now, when a baby is in gestation in its mother's womb, some time in the early weeks of that gestation, that baby gets a chemical bath, a hormonal bath, if he is a little boy baby, and certain testosterone, and other chemicals, bathe that baby's brain, and it causes that connector between the two hemispheres to recede and to pull back. And this does not happen typically in a little girl's brains, but it does in a little boy's brains. And so, this connector between the right hemisphere and the left hemisphere is not as strong in little boys as it is in little girls.

Now, what is the left hemisphere? What does that do? Well, the left side deals with the analytical part, the factual part, the aggressive center of thought. And that part is more active in little boys than it is in little girls, and in grown men than it is in ladies. Now, that's more than a theory. They're now showing this with brain waves scientifically. It can be proven now scientifically what many of us have thought about for a long time. And, ladies, you're not going to make him like you. You use both sides. Your husband is out of his right mind. He may take a sojourn over there every so often, but he thinks differently than you think; and, because of that, you come at things differently. And women are more global, using both hemispheres.

Because God made the man to do what? What did God create the man to be? In the home, man is to be the provider and the protector. Isn't that right? What did God tell Adam to do? To dress the garden—you're the provider; to keep it—you're the protector. So, God gave him this type of mind, because in doing the job that men are wont to do and supposed to do, they've got to have sort of an analytical and, not to say hard, but a tough, mind to get out there and deal; they cannot let their emotions get involved too much, or they won't get the job done.

But, what did God make the woman to do? Well, her name is Eve—that means she is the mother of all living. She is a nurturer. She is to be tender and soft and loving and receiving, because she is to be that heartbeat of the home; so God made her that way. She uses both sides, as she ought to use them; not that she's not logical, but she goes beyond that, and she brings the emotion in there, because that's the way God made her. That's the reason, when you go on a vacation, what does your husband want to

do? Does he want to stop and shop and look at curios, or spend a leisurely lunch at a restaurant? No, brrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr—500 miles in one day. Why? Because he's wired that way.

Why is it he will not stop and ask for directions? Well, that shows he's out of control, he doesn't know; he's got to show he's in control. Why is it he doesn't like for his wife to drive the automobile? The worst backseat drivers are not women; they're men. You put a man in a car and let the woman drive. He says, watch the curb; you're too close to it. I do it, I confess. Man, the reason I have to do that is Joyce is here this morning, so I'll just go ahead and confess.

We're made differently. You know, if my wife had a choice between watching a hospital show and watching a football game, she would watch the hospital show on television. I'm not interested in making people well; I'm interested in knocking people down. She has just one side of that emotional side; they want to get in there and cry and weep, and look and feel. Men are not that way. Neither one is better; we are just different. And that's the reason that Peter says, "Look, dwell with your wives according to knowledge." That's the reason Peter says to the woman, look, be in submission to your own husband as unto the Lord.

Do you know what? They have photographed little babies in the nurseries, in the hospitals, when they're born. They put the camera on them, and you know what? The lips of little girls are moving more than the lips of little boys. Fact—fact.

Do you know what they did at Harvard preschool? They wired the playground, and they listened to little girls talk, and little boys talk, on the playground. You know what they found out about little girls? They were constantly talking, they were using sentences, and they were using words; and if they were not talking to their playmates, they were talking to themselves. But talking, talking, talking. Do you know what they found out about the little boys? Only 68 percent of their noises were words. The rest of it was Zzzzzzooom! or Arrrghh, or Pssst, or Banng, or Boooo. That's why your husband grunts today.

Speech pathologists, those who deal with speech problems, will tell you the great preponderance of those who come in who have speech problems are not girls; they're boys. Every now and then, a girl will have a speech problem, but you think about it. You probably know somebody who stutters. How many of you know a girl who stutters? Very few. Most of those who stutter, the great, great majority of those who have pathological speech problems, are boys. We are not as verbal. God made us different. We might as well admit it. That's one of the problems in communication.

## **B. Bitterness**

I'll tell you another problem in communication, and that is bitterness. Now, look, if

you will, in chapter 2 and verse 23. It speaks of the Lord Jesus, “who when he was reviled, reviled not again. When he suffered he threatened not but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” And then, he says, likewise ye wives; then he says, likewise ye husbands; then he says to all of us, be of one mind.

The Bible speaks of a root of bitterness that defiles many people. And the reason that sometimes marriages have problems in communication is there are feelings that have never been resolved, there are unforgiving spirits, there is bitterness, there is, you have hurt me, and I owe it to you; I’ll get even with you somehow. We stuff it sometimes, we cram it down, but it is never dealt with. The Bible says, in Ephesians the fourth chapter, that we’re not to let the sun go down upon our wrath. When we do, the Bible says, we are giving place to the devil. And, if you’re feeding a fever, harboring a grudge, carrying bitterness in your heart, it’s going to cut off communication. And sometimes you’ll find old, old problems will come back and relate themselves to today’s discussion, and they really don’t have anything to do with today’s discussion, but they will ruin today’s discussion.

One man said, when my wife and I get in an argument, she always gets historical. He said, you mean hysterical. He said, no, I mean historical. She goes back and brings up everything I ever did. She’s got this thing; she just remembers all of this. Bitterness, bitterness—unresolved problems.

### **C. Self-Centeredness**

I’ll tell you a third area of communicational problems that we have, and it is self-centeredness—self-centeredness. Now remember, Christ is our example. Look, if you will, concerning Christ, in verse 24, “Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree.” The most selfless act that was ever done was the death of the Lord Jesus upon that cross—absolutely, totally selfless. “Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation.” And then, he says, likewise, ye wives; likewise, ye husbands.

Selfishness is one of the great problems in communication. Do you know what most of the arguments are in your home, and in my home, and any home? It’s ego against ego. There are no problems too big to solve, just people too small to solve them. But when we’re so interested in proving that we’re right, so interested in proving, exonerating self, which is really just rotten pride, that we don’t really attack the problem, we attack one another. Jesus—Jesus—was selfless.

And then, the Bible says, likewise, ye wives. So self-centeredness is a problem to good communication.

### **D. Lack of Interest and Distractions**

I’ll tell you, another problem of communication is the lack of interest and distraction.

Look, if you will, in chapter 2, verse 25. It speaks of Jesus. And it says, “For ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the shepherd and bishop of your souls.”

Now, what does that mean? It means that the Lord Jesus was so interested in expressing His love to us, having intimate fellowship with us, that when we, like sheep, went astray, when we were distracted, and went here and there, He went after us. And He went after us resolutely, and brought us back to himself.

Now, there are many things that pull you away, and even the wife, sometimes, must go after the husband, or the husband must go after the wife, because we tend to wander like sheep. But we need to be like Jesus who is the shepherd and the bishop.

You know one of the biggest distractions that causes us to drift apart in today’s world? It’s television—television. I mean, it’s with us; it’s ubiquitous, it’s on all the time. And that’s the reason that this generation will have more problems than any generation in communication, simply because of television, and now, the computer, the internet, the information super highway, and marriages are becoming roadkill on that super highway.

Somebody sent this letter to Ann Landers: In the house of Mr. and Mrs. Spouse, he and she would watch TV and never a word between them was spoken, until the day the set was broken. Then, how do you do, said he to she, I don’t believe we’ve met. Spouse is the name, what’s yours, he asked? Why, mine’s the same, said she to he. Do you suppose that we could be? But the set came suddenly right about, and they never did find out. Oh, here are people living in the same house, but they don’t communicate. They’re watching television till their eyes get big as coconuts and their brain the size of a pea, and they never really communicate.

### **E. Psychological Differences**

Now, there are other problems that keep us from communicating, and those are just psychological problems. You see, we’re psychologically different, beyond the male and female differences. Look in chapter 3, verses 7 and 8: “Likewise ye wives dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel, as being heirs together of the grace of life that your prayers be not hindered. Finally, be ye all of one mind.” That is, get on the same page. Now, very frankly, that is difficult. Did you know that Joyce and I are, psychologically, misfits. We are so opposite. We are psychologically different.

Brother Bob Sorrell gave all of our staff a psychological test to find out what type we are. And in the areas that I scored the highest, she scored the lowest. And in the areas where she scored the highest, I was off the chart, low. Exact opposites. Apart from the grace of God, we wouldn’t make it. But we have a wonderful marriage. We have a wonderful marriage. And there’s that tension there, and, as you know, that opposites

often attract, not only physically, but emotionally and psychologically. And, we have to understand that these differences, unless they're resolved, we have to be of one mind, we have to get on the same page. It takes negotiation; it takes talk; it takes understanding, one with the other.

## **F. Insecurity and Fear**

Now, let me tell you another reason for husbands and wives to have difficulty communicating, and it is insecurity. Here, remember when I talked to you about those five levels of communication, and I said the deepest level is the freedom level, where we are able really to lay it all out and not to stand behind a mask, not to wear camouflage? We don't want to do that. Why do we not want to do that? Why do we have this insecurity? Because we do not trust the other partner. Look, if you will, in chapter 3, verse 8: "Finally, be ye all of one mind..."—watch this now—"having compassion one to another. Love as brethren; be pitiful, be courteous."

You've got to have a lot of chapter 3, verse 8, before somebody else is going to open up, because, you see, most of us, when we're dating, we put our best foot forward, don't we? Hey, by the way, fellows, get there about 40 minutes early sometime when you come to pick her up, those of you who are dating, if you want to see what you're really getting. And you know there's a lot of false packaging. So, we put our best foot forward. Nothing wrong with that, but you know, when we get married, you can't just continually live that kind of an artificial courtship life.

But we're afraid, you know, if we really told her how we feel, if we really opened up and shared our weaknesses, if they see us as we really are, they might not like us. Now, think about that, because if they see us as we really are, and they don't like us, then where are we, because that's all we've got. That's all we've got. And so, it takes a tremendous amount of trust to be able to do this.

That's the reason that men don't like to pray with women. And every woman wants a husband who will pray with her, because she wants that emotional experience, that spiritual experience, of praying with her husband. She wants him to pour his heart out before God and before her. She wants to listen, and say amen, and enter into his life, because that's the way God made her. But he wants to keep the walls up, because God gave him a tough outer shell, and it's hard to translate that back over to marriage. And so, he's on the horns of a dilemma.

He says, you know, if I pray with God, I'm not ashamed with God; I can tell God exactly how I feel because I trust Him—I trust Him. I can get the roof off, but I don't know that I want to get the walls down. I don't want to just really pray the way I ought to pray. But, on the other hand, he says, if I don't pray with openness, I'm being a hypocrite. If I do pray with openness, I'm vulnerable. I'd just rather pray by myself. It's

hard for men to pray with women. That's just the way they're wired. Now, I know some men love to do it. I'm just talking in generalities right now.

But, sir, it is your responsibility, it is your duty, it is your joy, to learn to pray with your wife, and nothing will meet the deeper needs of her life more than for you to learn to pray with your wife. I've had to learn to do it. And, by nature, I did not want to pray with Joyce. I prayed, but when I pray with God, I just get the roof off. But when I have to pray with Joyce, in order to be sincere, I have to get the walls down. And I'm saying that, as a result of that, Peter says we have to be courteous, we have to be pitiful, we have to show love one to the other.

### **G. Busyness**

Now, one of the other great difficulties in communication, very frankly, in this day and this age, is busyness. We're so busy. Today, many of you are in homes where both the husband and the wife work. It's a part of our society today, both spouses are working, and we really have very little time to communicate. We just sort of pass each other in time to catch the news.

And, notice again in chapter 3, verses 10 and 11: "For he that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, his lips that they speak no guile..." Now, watch verse 11: "Let him eschew evil and do good, let him seek peace and ensure it." We're going to say more about that later on, but you're going to have to make time for it, because, if you don't, you're going to find out that children, business, television, the newspaper, hobbies—all of these things—are going to keep you from doing the main thing you ought to be doing in your home, and that is seeking peace, ensuing it.

## **III. The Practice of Communication**

Now, I want to make some suggestions in the few minutes I have left. I've talked to you about the power of communication; I've talked to you about problems in communication. Let's just take the Lord Jesus Christ as an example. We're to follow in His steps, and let's think a little bit about some practices in communication that will help us.

### **A. Husbands, Learn to Be More Sensitive**

Now, first of all, let me speak to you men who we need to learn to be more sensitive toward our wives. That's what he's saying in chapter 3, verse 7. He's saying that the wife is the weaker vessel. That, men, we need to wise up, and we need to be tender toward our wives. One man was talking about his wife, he said, I'm concerned about my wife. She goes about the house all day long, just talking to herself. His friend says, does she know she's doing it? Oh, no, he says, she thinks I'm listening. It might be a good idea for you to listen.

## **B. Get Alone with God and Deal with Self-Centeredness**

Secondly, husband and wife, get alone with God, and deal with your egos. The problem in your home, the problem in communication, in one word, is pride. Look again at chapter 3 and verse 8: “Finally, be all of one mind, having compassion one with another. Love as brethren; be pitiful, be courteous.” Don’t have a war where neither one of you wins. Have a compromise where both win. Most marriages need two funerals and a wedding ceremony. When we take ego off the throne, if Christ is on the throne of his life, and Christ is on the throne of her life, the Jesus in him is not going to fight the Jesus in her. And so, it’s a spiritual thing. Deal with this self-centeredness. Get your life in tune with the Lord Jesus.

I’ve often used this illustration. We have a piano here, and a piano there, both magnificent instruments. It’s virtually impossible to tune one of those pianos to the other—virtually impossible. But, if you take a tuning fork, and tune this piano to that tuning fork, tune the other piano to the same tuning fork, ipso facto, they’re in tune with one another. And, when my heart and life is in tune with Jesus Christ, and my wife’s heart and life is in tune with Jesus Christ, we must, as night follows day, be in tune with one another, when we take self off the throne, and enthrone the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **C. Overlook Your Partner’s Negativism and Problems**

Next, whether or not your wife or your husband is willing to cooperate, overlook their negativism; overlook their problems. Notice chapter 3, verses 9 and 10: “Not rendering evil for evil.” So she’s doing evil, so he’s doing evil. Don’t pay it back. No railing for railing. But contrariwise, blessing. If he throws fire, you throw water. Blessing for evil. “Knowing that thereunto are ye called that ye should inherit a blessing.” Somebody has to take the initiative, and stop being so concerned about yourself, who’s right or wrong. Begin to work on your marriage. The Bible, in the second chapter of 1 Peter, makes it plain that Christ suffers, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. And then, he says, likewise, ye wives; likewise, ye husbands. Finally, be ye all of one mind.

## **D. Change Your Partner By Changing Yourself**

Now, if you sense that your partner has a closed spirit, begin to work on it. Find a reason. Try to make it right. Look in verse 11: “Eschew evil and do good. Let him seek peace and ensue it.” Learn to be gentle with your partner. Maybe they’re wrong. Let me tell you the best way to change your partner is to change yourself. Why is that? Well, Peter makes it plain that a wife is not going to nag her husband into being good. But you know what he says there in the first several verses of this chapter? If she will change, she gives him something different to react to. Now, he cannot be the same, because he’s reacting to something else. Isn’t that wonderful? You see, the way she changes him is by changing her. She’s the one who seeks peace. It may be the husband, but, if

you want your partner to change, give them something different to react to—not rendering evil for evil, but contrariwise, blessing. You have to take the initiative. Somebody has to take the initiative.

### **E. Make Time for Communication**

Now, next, plan for it. Work on it. Verse 11 says you're to seek Him. You need to make time for communication. You say, well, Pastor Rogers, I'm so busy. Well, if you're that busy, you're too busy. If you're too busy to have a quiet time with God, you're too busy. And if you're too busy to have a quiet time with your mate, you're too busy. You're too busy. If you're too busy to have a quiet time with God, you're too busy. If you're too busy to have a quiet time with your mate, you're too busy. How do you have a quiet time with God? You make time. You're going to have to make time.

I'm going to say you probably need to get out of the house. About four times a week, you need to spend a half an hour together out of the house, in a restaurant, somewhere on a drive, on a picnic, doing something together. Have some fun. Stop working at your marriage, and start playing at it. Learn to laugh. Lighten up. Don't be so grim. Bring the courtship back. Men, you ought never to flirt with another woman; never stop flirting with your wife. Just keep the fun, the romance there. You have to work at it. You have to make time for it. But, if you will do it, I will promise you it will be worth it.

## **Conclusion**

"He who would love life and see good days," let him follow the example of Jesus. The closest thing to heaven, the dearest thing on earth, is a Christian home where a husband and wife have achieved intimacy. And one of the ways to do it is communication. I'm going to tell you, if you don't learn to communicate, sooner or later your home is going to come to a shambles—sooner or later. It's hard, it is not easy; but it is worth it. Calvary was excruciatingly painful. But the Bible says, Jesus, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross. Then, he says, now likewise, husbands and wives, as I suffered, the great emancipator, if need be, you suffer. And, as I reach out to you, the great communicator, you reach out to one another. Likewise, ye wives. Likewise, ye husbands. I want to say that God holds the man primarily responsible to be the initiator, and may God help us to do it.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Now, all that I've been saying today is in the context of being a Christian, knowing the Lord Jesus Christ. You remember I said that Jesus is both the power and the pattern? If you don't have Him, first of all, in your life, because you don't have the power to follow the example without Christ in your heart, would you like to be saved? By being saved, I mean to have every sin forgiven, to have judgment taken away from you—I mean,

God's judgment—that you'll not have to come into condemnation.

Would you like to have power and peace and purpose? Would you like to have something worth living for? Would you like to have the strength of God to be the kind of husband, wife, son, or daughter that you'd like to be? Would you like to know absolutely, beyond a shadow of any doubt, when you die, you're going to heaven. Would you? Then I want to invite you to receive Christ right now into your heart as your Lord and Savior. The Bible says, if you will believe on Him, he will save you. The word believe there means trust. It doesn't mean mere intellectual belief. It's a commitment of faith and trust.

Would you pray a prayer like this? Maybe you'd want to pray it right now; even as I repeat it, you might want to pray it. Dear God, I know that you love me, and I know that you want to save me. Jesus, you died to save me, and you promised to save me, if I would trust you. I do trust you. I believe you're the Son of God. I believe that you paid for my sins with your blood on the cross. I believe that God raised you from the dead. I believe. And now, I receive you, right now, by an act of faith and trust; I receive you now, this moment—right now, right now. I am receiving you into my heart as my Lord and Savior. I've turned from my sins. I give my life to you, and by your grace, and for your glory, I'll follow you all the days of my life. I trust you to save me. Begin now to make me the person you want me to be, and help me, Lord Jesus, never to be ashamed of you, because you died for me. Give me the grace and the strength, the obedience, to make it public, and not to be ashamed of you. In your name I pray. Amen.

Now, look up here. It would be wonderful if both husbands and wives have prayed that prayer—maybe in a home, maybe two of you here together, and you both prayed that prayer. Maybe one did, the wife or the husband prayed that prayer. Now, you're on praying ground—you can begin to pray for the other mate.

But if you prayed that prayer, here's what I'm going to ask you to do. When we sing in just a moment, I'm going to ask you to leave your seat and come forward. Coming forward is your way of giving outward expression as to what happened in your heart. Now, walking a church aisle doesn't save you. It's faith in Christ that saves, and His death on the cross that saves. But there's something about coming forward that helps settle it and seal it, that shames the devil, and gives glory to God. You see, the faith that does not lead to confession will not lead to heaven. Jesus said, if you're ashamed of me, I'm ashamed of you. You say, well, Pastor, there are so many people here today. Yes, there are; I'm glad. Jesus hung naked on a cross before a crowd bigger than this for you, and He's asking you to come today as a sign of your faith and your trust in Him. Well, Pastor, I've never done that. What would I do when I get down there? Well, standing at the head of each of these aisles and in that aisle way up in the balcony will be a minister, a man of God. Come to him, and tell him, I am trusting Christ, or, I'm

trusting Jesus. We'll take it from there. We'll want to give you some Scripture, answer any questions, and seal your decision in prayer and thanksgiving.

Now, don't look around to see what someone else is going to do. Maybe husband and wife might want to take hands and say, let's go together. Maybe you'll be with a friend, and you might want to put your hand on their hand, and give it a little squeeze, as if to say, if you want to go, I'll be happy to go with you. Maybe you're not married at all, but you want a Christian home, and you want to start by giving your heart to Jesus. †

# A Word for Wives and Help for Husbands

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: March 6, 1983**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 3:1–7**

*“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”*

1 PETER 3:7

## Outline

Introduction

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## Introduction

Now, I want you to take your Bible and open, if you will, please, to 1 Peter, the third chapter—1 Peter, the third chapter. We’re speaking from the book of 1 Peter under the general heading “Timeless Truths for Tough Times.” And today, we have “A Word for Wives and Help for Husbands.”

And, I want you to read with me the first seven verses of 1 Peter chapter 3:  
*“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word”—that is, the Word of God—“they...may without [a] word”—literally, that’s what it says—“without [a] word be won by the conversation of the wives”—now, the word *conversation* here is an old English word that means “more than what we say.” It literally*

means “by our behavior”—“*While they behold your chaste conversation*”—that is, “your pure behavior”—“*coupled with fear*”—the word *fear* does not mean that you’re quaking in your boots, but it’s another word that means “reverence”—“*Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting [of] hair*”—or, “plaiting the hair”—“*[or] of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, [ordained]*”—excuse me—“*adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.*” (1 Peter 3:1–7)

Now, I know that you noticed that verse had six verses for women, one for men. Now, lest I get in trouble, let me hasten to say that is not because women need the Word more than men. To the contrary, the reason that there are six verses for women is because the men were giving so much difficulty and the men were giving so much trouble. It is because the women have to live with cantankerous, obstreperous, can’t-get-along-with men that God takes six verses to tell the women how to deal with louts like some are. So, it’s not that the women need more, necessarily; it is that the men are harder to deal with than the women. And then, there’s this one verse for men. Now, the outline is very simple. The first six verses deal with the ladies—“A Word for Wives.” The seventh verse deals with men—“Help for Husbands.”

I was reading in the newspaper yesterday, and I read “Dear Abby.” And, the headline: “Still Married Fiancé has Pregnant Bride Worried.” “Dear Abby, I’ve lived with my fiancé for six months. We are planning to marry, and I’m expecting a baby in four months. We love each other very much, and everything would be ideal except that he is only legally separated from his wife. She has their two children and is living with her boyfriend. She has filed for divorce, but that’s where it stands. They had a written agreement that he would pay for the wedding and she would pay for the divorce. She says she doesn’t have the money. She gets welfare, child support, plus a lot of help from her boyfriend. I have a good job, but everything is so high these days it’s hard to make ends meet, let alone save anything. I’m not worried that they might have reconciliation because they both agree that their marriage was a joke from the start. Don’t tell me to leave him because he’s my whole world. Can I do anything to force her to get a divorce? Almost a Mrs.”

“Dear Almost, No, I hope you realize that your whole world is a man who went into marriage expecting it to fail, had two children in this marriage that he said was a joke

from the start, then started a second family with you while still married to somebody else. Since you seem to be the only one in this three-ring circus who's in a hurry for a divorce, it appears that the only way to get it is to pay for it yourself." She's going to pay for a whole lot more than that, but the mess she's about to get herself into is already in. And, isn't that ridiculous? I mean, isn't that absurd? But, the problem is that's so ridiculous and so absurd but it's hardly newsworthy any more. It's almost the norm. They talk about these things as, almost, as a matter of fact.

Friend, I want to tell you something: I do not envy the Playboy society. I pity them—I pity them—as they miss what God has so wonderfully given in the Word of God and what the Bible so gloriously teaches about this matter of marriage. Marriage is not a ninety-day option, a contract with a ninety-day option. It is for keeps. Hollywood has glamorized the idea of love at first sight, but, dear friend, the Bible teaches it's the kind of love that can keep on looking, and keep on loving, and keep on lasting as the home fires are kept burning.

## **I. A Word for Wives**

Now, in this first part of this chapter, Peter talks about how wives are to behave in tough times. And, some wives are having it tough because they're married to a man who doesn't know the Lord. And, what is a wife to do when she finds herself married to an unsaved husband?

### **A. She Is Not to Leave Her Husband**

Number one—and a little bit of this is by review: she's not to leave him. She's not to say, "Well, toodle-loo. You're not saved, and I am; and so, therefore, a saved person can't live with an unsaved person, and I'm moving out." I want you to know that's contrary to the Word of God, and I want you to look in 1 Corinthians 7, for just a moment, and verse 15. Now, just put your bookmark there in 1 Peter, and turn, if you will, to 1 Corinthians 7. Well, let's look not in verse 15 but verse 13: *"And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him."* (1 Corinthians 7:13) Now, if you're married to an unbelieving husband, even though the Bible says we're not to be *"unequally yoked together with unbelievers,"* (2 Corinthians 6:14) you're not to leave him. When the Bible says, *"Be...not unequally yoked together with unbelievers,"* (2 Corinthians 6:14) that means you're not to marry an unsaved person if you're a saved person. If you marry an unsaved person as a saved person, you're headed for trouble—the same kind of trouble that Peter is having to deal with now in this passage. You see, you're a child of God, and he's a child of the devil. So, you're going to have the devil for a father-in-law. Talk about in-law problems!

Now, if you marry, as a Christian, marry an unsaved person, you're just headed for all kinds of problems. But, what if you did it anyway? Or, what if you got saved after you

were married? Are you to leave this unsaved person? Absolutely not! You're not to leave him. The Bible goes on to say, *"For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now [they] are...holy."* (1 Corinthians 7:14) That is, God does recognize that as a marriage. Now, the word *sanctified* does not mean that they're saved. Nobody can be saved for somebody else. But, it does mean that God sees that marriage as a marriage that is set apart as a genuine marriage and the children are not born out of wedlock, though one is saved and the other is lost. God does recognize that marriage. But, the wife is to stay with that husband.

Now, the husband may refuse to stay with the wife when she gets saved so he says in verse 15: *"if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: [for] God hath called us to peace. For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?"* (1 Corinthians 7:15–16) That is, the power of God is to be so great in your life that the evil in him is not to overcome you, but the good in you is to overcome him—that you are to dwell with him in such a powerful way that you're going to be able to bring that man, bring that woman, to Jesus Christ.

#### **B. She Is Not to Lecture Her Husband**

So, if a wife has an unsaved husband, she is not to leave him, nor is she to lecture him. Now, the Bible says he will be won without a word, (1 Peter 3:1) not the Word. Nobody can be saved without the Word of God. *"[For we are] born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which [lives] and [abides] for ever."* (1 Peter 1:23) But, what he's saying is, here, he's going to be won by what you practice more than what you preach—by your words, not necessarily; but by your way of life, yes. And so, you are not to lecture him. Nobody was ever nagged into the kingdom of heaven. And, let me tell you this: whether you are working side by side with a person or anywhere else, you just keep on lecturing them, and keep on talking down to them, and keep on nagging them, and you're going to draw them away, not close, to Jesus. Jesus called us to be His witnesses, not His lawyers.

Now, she can witness, but she's not to lecture her husband. Now, don't try to be your husband's conscience. I'll tell you why: a man always fights his conscience. And, if you want your husband to fight you, you just try to be your husband's conscience. And, rather than bringing that husband to Jesus Christ, you're going to drive him further and further away from the Lord.

#### **C. She Is Not to Lord It Over Her Husband**

You're not to leave him. You're not to lecture him. You're not to lord it over him. You're not to say, "Well, I'm a Christian now. You're not a Christian. And so, I'm obeying the

Lord from now on. I'm not obeying you any more. I don't have to be in submission to you because I have a higher authority, which is Jesus." And, therefore, you look down your nose on him and at him, and you lord it over him. You're making a terrible and a tragic mistake, for the Bible says you're to be in subjection to him. (1 Peter 3:1) You're not to lord it over him.

#### **D. She Is to Love Her Husband to Jesus Christ**

You're not to leave him. You're not to lecture him. You're not to lord it over him. You are to love him to Jesus Christ. And, how are you to do it? Well, he tells us three things that should be in the heart and life of every woman, every Christian woman—not just one who has an unsaved husband, but every Christian woman.

##### **1. An Attitude of Submission**

First of all, there is to be an attitude of submission. Look again in chapter 3:1: *"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the [behavior] of the wives"* (1 Peter 3:1)—an attitude of submission. And, notice I said an "attitude of submission," because if you submit without the proper attitude, you really haven't submitted at all. You just say, "All right, I'll do it," you really haven't submitted. I mean, there has to be that attitude, that genuine attitude of submission.

You say, "But, wait a minute. Why should I submit to him?" Because Jesus says so. "Well," you say, "I'm not inferior to him." Of course, you're not. I told you last week, and I want to reiterate it, review, and recapitulate that you are, in the sight of God, just as worthy and as worthful as he is. The Bible says in Galatians 3:28: *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."* (Galatians 3:28) We are all of equal worth in the sight of God, but that does not take away the idea that God has a chain of command.

Now, learn this: that equality is not sameness. Let me give you another verse—1 Corinthians 11:3: *"But I would have you [to] know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God."* (1 Corinthians 11:3) Now, here's the divine hierarchy: here's God the Father, God the Son, the man, the woman. Now, you know that God the Son is not inferior to God the Father, for the Bible clearly says, *"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation."* (Philippians 2:5–7) And so, just as God the Father and God the Son are equal, the husband and the wife are equal. But, God the Son is subject to God the Father; the wife is subject to the husband. No superiority, no inferiority—that's just simply the way that God has ordained that it work. Last week, I told you anything with two heads is a freak and anything with no head is dead. And, there is to be a head in

the home, and the sovereign God has said that it is to be the husband. And so, there is to be this spirit of submission, an attitude of submission, and I hope that God will give you this attitude of submission.

But now, let me say that many of the women are worried, and they think, you know, “Brother Rogers, if I don’t lecture him, or if I don’t rebel against him, why, he’ll just get away with murder. I mean, he needs me to keep him straight.” Do you know what Ruth Graham said? Ruth Graham said, “It is your job to love your husband. It is God’s job to make him good”—“It is your job to love your husband. It is God’s job to make him good.” If you try to play the part of the Holy Spirit, if you try to play the part of the conscience, if you try to play the part of the Holy Spirit, you’re just not and you’re going to fail. If you try to be his conscience, he’s going to fight you. But, you’re to have a submissive spirit.

## 2. An Adornment of Serenity

Now, there’s to be an attitude of submission. Along with that, there’s to be an adornment of serenity. I want you to continue to read here in verse 2: *“While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting [of] the hair, and of wearing of gold, [and] of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man”—or, “the hidden person”—“of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”* (1 Peter 3:2–4) Now, Peter tells you how to be perpetually beautiful. Now, he’s telling you...he’s giving you a course on real beauty. And, if you’re wise, dear lady, you’re going to listen to what Peter says about how to be beautiful.

Now, let me say that, first of all, some people have misinterpreted and misapplied this text. They have used this text to teach that women ought not to be outwardly attractive, that they ought not to fix their hair, they ought not to wear jewelry, and so forth. Friend, that isn’t what it teaches. I’ll guarantee you it isn’t what it teaches. You know, well, they say, “Well, look at it: ‘not the plaiting of the hair’”—okay, not supposed to fix your hair according to your interpretation—“not the wearing of gold”—okay, you’re not to wear gold according to your interpretation—“not the putting on of clothes”—okay, not to wear clothes according to your interpretation. Right? Wrong. Just ‘cause you get saved you don’t go around naked, right? He’s not saying here that you ought not to fix your hair any more than he’s saying that you ought not to wear clothes. He’s just simply saying that is not to be the secret of your beauty, that is not to be the source of your winsomeness and your attractiveness to your husband.

Now, I have a beautiful proof text, happily, at this particular point to prove that he’s not against outward beauty, because he uses a beauty queen for an illustration of what he’s talking about. In verse 6, he talks about Sara, and look at what he says about Sara here in verse 6: *“Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well.”* (1 Peter 3:6) Now, who was Sara? Sara was a looker. Boy, I

want to tell you, she was one of the most beautiful women in all of the Bible. Say, “How beautiful was she?” While she was eighty, men were still trying to bait her and take her away from her husband. That’s right. I mean, one king tried to get her in his harem when she was eighty, and there wasn’t a drugstore anywhere. Max Factor hadn’t even been born. And, she’s eighty. She was an exquisitely beautiful woman, and God uses her here as an illustration.

So now, he’s not talking, therefore, about being outwardly beautiful, but what he’s saying is if you depend upon your outward beauty to keep your husband, you’re fighting a losing battle. Why? Lady, I hate to tell you this, but your parents are going to see to it that you don’t stay outwardly beautiful. You say, “My parents?” Yes, Mother Nature and Father Time. And, in spite of all that you can do, and all the massaging and all the creams and all the paints and everything else, there’s something happening. And, the wrinkles are coming, and the sags are sagging; and everything else is happening. And, you say, “Pastor, you’re ruining my day.” Well, I’m going to help you if you’ll pay attention. I’m going to tell you something: Peter tells you how to be perpetually beautiful. You see, no matter how beautiful you are, if that’s what keeps your husband, you’re painting yourself in a corner because there’s a new bevy of beauties coming on every year and your beauty is fading. You know that little saying—that beauty is only skin deep; ugly goes all the way to the bone. Beauty fades, but ugly holds its own. I mean, it just keeps on. So, so, I mean, if that’s what you’re depending on, well, you’re in trouble—real trouble, if that’s what you’re depending on.

Now, I’m not saying not to be beautiful. There’s a place for that. I’ve already made that clear. But, what he is saying is, “You need something that is not corruptible,” he’s saying. What is it that will not corrupt? What is it that is perpetually beautiful—as a matter of fact, increasingly beautiful? He talks of “*the ornament of a meek and [a] quiet spirit*” (1 Peter 3:4)—that inward serenity, that inward beauty that’s going to make you more beautiful. You see, ladies, when a person is beautiful on the inside, they tend to even be more beautiful on the outside.

Now, what does this word “meek and a quiet spirit” mean? It doesn’t mean that you’re to be mousy. That means you go around always just, you know, so calm, like you took a fistful of tranquilizers or something. That’s not what he’s talking about. It doesn’t mean that you’re to be Wanda Wallflower, just, you know, just kind of fading back in the woodwork, just going around “little old me”—quiet. That isn’t what he means. When the Bible says, “*a meek and [a] quiet spirit,*” (1 Peter 3:4) the word *quiet* means “serene.” Now, God may have given you a natural, vivacious, bubbly, or even a fiery temperament. Fine. God gave it to you. That’s where you’re going to be the most attractive. And, don’t try to subdue that. Don’t try to make yourself emotionally and psychologically something that you’re not, trying to be meek and quiet. What this word

means is that you have a teachable spirit and you've got peace on the inside. You're serene—serene.

And, by the way, you will never have that serenity if you have a rebellious spirit. If there is a rebellious spirit in you, you're going to be torn up on the inside all the time, and it's going to be coming out. It's going to be in your eyes. It's going to be around the corners of your mouth. You're going to find yourself where you can't smile, you can't be at peace, you can't be at ease around others. And, that natural beauty, that winsomeness, that thing that makes your husband want to be around you is going to disappear from you, and you're going to become inwardly ugly.

### **3. An Activity of Service**

Now, there's to be an attitude of submission. There is to be an adornment of serenity, and there's to be an activity of service. Now, notice in verse 6, the Bible says that Sara called Abraham "lord." (1 Peter 3:6) That doesn't mean "God"; it means "master." That means she had a...she served him. You say, "Am I to serve my husband?" Yes! The Bible says in the very beginning, *"[It's] not good that...man should be alone; [I'll] make...an help meet for him."* (Genesis 2:18) And, that word "help meet" means someone to help meet his needs, to serve him, to fill up that part of him that is missing.

You see, there is a wonderful analogy there—that God took woman from man's side, and a rib is missing. And, the idea is that he needs to get it back, that you are to complete your husband, that a part of him is to be missing without you, that he could never be what he ought to be without you. Have you ever heard a man say, concerning his wife, "She just completes me"? Well, that's exactly what I'm talking about here. Now, you're to be his completer, not his competitor. I mean, you're to complete him but not to finish him off, you see. You're to come by his side and help meet his needs: his physical needs, his sexual needs, his psychological needs, his professional needs. He is to be a stronger person because of you. There is to be this activity of service in your heart and in your life.

Now, are these things true about you? You know, sometimes women say, "Well, Brother Rogers, you know, my husband—he's just so much against God, and he's so much against the Church. He doesn't like me being a Christian. And, no matter how much I tell him about it—I come home and try to preach your sermons to him—but he's just not interested. And, I've made notes on the sermons, and I've bought books for him to read. I tell him how bad he's doing, but it just doesn't seem to make any difference: 'Boy, you should have heard the preacher today. Boy, he really preached to you today. Man, I wish you'd have been there. When are you going to start doing right? We need a Christian husband. Those kids need a Christian daddy. You just lay around the house on Sunday morning, and read that sports page, and watch that television, and drink that old beer. When are you going to do right? Make us so happy if you'll just do right.'" You

know what he's going to say to you? "Next Sunday, I don't think you'd better go down there and listen to your Brother Rogers. I'm sick of it." But, when he sees a wife—comes home, and she has an attitude of submission, and she has an adornment of serenity, and she has an activity of service, you know what he's going to say? He's going to say, "I don't know what they're teaching you down there at that church, but you'd better go down there and get some of it." He's not going to say, "You can't go." He's going to say, "Hey, don't you think it's about time for you to go? You almost missed it. Now, get on out there, and get some more of that—whatever it is they're teaching you down there." He's no fool. Listen, most of the women who are talking about their husbands will not let them go to church are not living this kind of life.

Now, there may be a man who is so mean that he rebels against this, but I want to tell you, even that man is going to rebel because he's under conviction. And, as a sign he's under conviction—his ungodly life, for the first time, has come in stark contrast with a godly life. And, what she lives is preaching a sermon to him that's putting him so under conviction that he's going to try to pull her down to make him feel better. So, he may say, "You can't go," or whatever, to watch your reaction. If you just keep on living for the Lord Jesus, you keep on showing the beauty of Jesus, and I'm telling you that is going to put such a tremendous pressure on him that Simon Peter says, after a while, he's going to come to you and he's going to ask you, "Where did you get that hope that's in you? What makes you different?" And then, you're going to be able to give him the gospel and help him to come to know Jesus Christ as his Lord and as his Savior.

## II. Help for Husbands

Now, let's just look in verse 7 now, and let's look at the husband. And, notice what the Bible says about the husbands: "*Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.*" (1 Peter 3:7) Now, here Peter tells us three things that wise husbands will give to their wives and, indeed, owe to their wives, Christian husbands, godly husbands.

### A. Consideration

Number one: consideration—consideration. "*Dwell with them according to knowledge.*" (1 Peter 3:7) Now, the word *knowledge* means "understanding." That is, you're to have knowledge of her. You're to understand her. You're to live understanding your wife. Now, most husbands do not understand their wives. They do not live with their wives according to knowledge, and, therefore, they are not considerate of their wives. "Well," you say, "how do I get knowledge?" Well, in order to get knowledge, you have to be available, and in order to be available, you have to give time. And, in order to give time, you must plan time and take time. In my schedule, this is perhaps the biggest point of

stress is to find that proper time to be with my family and especially to be with my wife.

But, how can I—how can I—dwell with, according to knowledge, with someone that I don't know? You see, men are conquest oriented, and a man likes to achieve. He likes to buy something, build something, do something, achieve something—even getting married. And, that's the reason before marriage, he dates according to knowledge—oh, he really does. I mean, he studies her. He knows just what will melt her butter. He knows just what will satisfy her and what will make her happy, and he tries to do it because there's a conquest there. He's trying to win her hand. After he does that, he says, "Well, that's over. Now, what's new?" I mean, why chase a streetcar after you've already caught it? So, he's just going on to a new conquest now. But, he gets a new car; he gets the owner's manual, and he studies that. A new lawnmower—he studies that. How come you don't dwell with your wife according to knowledge to understand what makes her tick?

Now, you have to learn, and in order to learn, you have to listen. And, you remember when Gary Smalley was here. If you came to hear Gary Smalley, he said, "Men and women think differently," and they really do. You remember that. He said, "The men think out of one side of their brain, and women think out of the other." Now, you know, some I've met don't use either half, but he said that basically men think out of one side and women out of the other. That one side—I think it's the right side that deals with the emotion and the left side with the logic, is that it? Yeah. Is that it, Tom? Is that right? Nod your head. Or, have I got it backwards? Oh, it doesn't make any difference. All right.

But, men and women think differently—they really do. Men tend to think more logically. That doesn't mean they're smarter. But, women think with their emotions. That's what we call a woman's intuition. And, therefore, while you are logically figuring it out, she's already arrived at the conclusion. She says, "I don't think we ought to do that." "Well, why not?" "Well, I just don't think we ought." "Well, wait a minute. It doesn't make any difference. Let me tell you." "Well, no, I just..." And, the aggravating thing is they're so often right. I mean, they just run a short circuit somehow—all these little intuitive things that are in their mind. They come, and they think with their emotions. And friend, you'd better listen with your heart, not with your ears, because if you don't listen with your heart, you're in a heap of trouble because you are trying to be logical while she's being emotional and, of course, vice versa. Women need to understand and give their husbands the opportunity to express themselves logically, as God has given that particular gift to husbands. And, thank God for the fact that He has given a husband as a protector in the home. But, what I'm trying to say is this: that the husband owes to the wife consideration. He needs to "*dwell with [her] according to knowledge.*" (1 Peter 3:7) There's a genuine difference between men and women psychologically.

## B. Courtesy

Now secondly, not only do you owe to your wife consideration; you also owe to her courtesy. Now, he says that we're to "*dwell with them according to knowledge*"—well, what does that mean?—"*giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel.*" (1 Peter 3:7) Now, that word *honor* is the same word that is translated, believe it or not, earlier in this book, as "precious" concerning "*the precious blood of Christ.*" (1 Peter 1:19) That is, your wife is to be precious to you. That's the kind of honor you're to give her—the honor that is akin to your reverence and your respect for the blood of Christ.

You are to give her honor, now, "*as unto the weaker vessel.*" (1 Peter 3:7) You say, "Well, she's weak." So are you. Notice it says, "weaker vessel." That's a comparative term. Now, if she's weak, or weaker than what? Weaker than you, which means you're weak, right? Men, you're weak. As a matter of fact, that's part of the problem in marriage: there are two weak people get married. But, you're weak, and she's weaker. That's what Peter is saying.

You know, Elton Trueblood said this—and I think it's really good: "A successful marriage is not one in which two people beautifully matched find each other and get along happily ever after because of this initial matching. It is instead a system by means of which persons who are sinful and contentious are so caught up in a dream bigger than themselves that they work throughout the years, in spite of repeated disappointments, to make the dream come true." That's well said—just a weak person and another weak person together giving their weakness to Jesus Christ. But, the husband is to honor the weaker vessel. He is to treat her as precious.

You know, the women libbers say, "We want to be equal with men." Well, why step down? God has put woman on a pedestal, and God has said that she is to be looked at, she's to be honored, she's to be treated with courtesy, with compassion, with chivalry. And, we men need to do this—to give this honor to our wives.

Now, have you done that? Have you really given her this honor? Have you protected her? How do you honor your wife? "Well," you say, "I brag on her." How do you brag on her? "Oh, honey, I just think you're beautiful." Well, that's all right. You tell her she's beautiful. But, you see, if that's what you brag on all the time is her physical beauty, do you realize what a threat that is to her? You say to her, "Well, darling, I just love you because you're so beautiful." Well, I mean, I've already told you, friend, that beauty is not going to last forever. And so, if you tell her, "Now, this is really why I love you—because you're beautiful"—I mean, what if she has a Supreme Court figure? No appeal—and you're just telling her, "Now, I love you because you're beautiful," she's going to say, "If that's all he says, he's lying," or, "If beauty is such an important thing to him, when somebody else comes along who's more beautiful, he's going to love her."

But, if you give her honor—I mean, if you respect her for her character... Now, you

remember that Peter puts a great emphasis upon character qualities—“*the ornament of a meek and [a] quiet spirit.*” (1 Peter 3:4) Why don't you praise her for that meek and quiet spirit? Why don't you give her honor for her faithfulness and her purity? Give her honor for the way that she manages the household. Tell her that you love her for her patience with the children, and these things, and you're going to understand that that is meeting a need that she has—that if you don't meet that need, you will have defrauded her. You are not giving her the honor that, indeed, she is worthy of and, indeed, that she craves. And so, you're to put her there on that pedestal, and you're to give her that honor that is hers. Now, she's to be that precious to you. A wife should ask herself this question: Do I love my husband enough to live for him? But, a husband should ask himself this question: Do I love my wife enough to die for her?

I told you a story a while back I want to repeat about a man who came to Dr. Ironside when he was pastor of Moody Church and he said to him, “I have a problem.” And, the pastor—the esteemed pastor of this church—said, “Well, what is it?” He said, “Well, it's a marriage problem.” “Well, what is it?” He said, “I'm afraid I love my wife too much.” He said, “Well, tell me about it.” He said, “Well, I can't get her off my mind.” He said, “Well, I hate to leave the house in the morning.” Said, “All day long when I'm at work I'm just working to get back to her.” Said, “I want to be by her side.” Said, “She just means everything to me. I love her. I'd just do anything for her. It just consumes me—the love that I have for her. I'm just afraid that I may be sinning I love her so much.” The pastor said, “Well, it's one of the rare times I've heard a problem like this.” And, he said, “I want to ask you a question.” He said, “Do you love her more than Christ loved the Church?” “Oh,” he said, “no, of course not.” He said, “Do you love her as much as Christ loved the Church?” He said, “Well, no.” He said, “Well, then, you'd better get with it. You'd better get busy, because, you see, the Bible says that a husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church.”

Now, let me tell you something, mister: the Bible never commands the husband to rule his wife. The Bible commands the wife to be in subjection to her husband, (1 Peter 3:1) but the Bible does not command the husband to rule his wife. He is to rule his wife, but it doesn't command him to rule his wife. Why? You see, you're not to use the Bible as a club to beat her over the head with and say, “Submit, submit, submit. The Bible says you're to submit.” No, no. You do not coerce her into submission. That is not submission if she's coerced. She hasn't submitted; she's only yielded. You see, submission must be willing. It must be voluntary. It must come out of the heart. And, it cannot be coerced, and, therefore, you're to love her into submission.

How does Christ love the Church? Does He coerce us to submit? If He did, there'd be a lot of changes in this auditorium this morning, wouldn't there? I mean, if Jesus Christ were to come in here and just to clean house, I mean, there are a lot of people

here in this auditorium that have rebellion against your Lord. And, there are things in your heart and in your life that ought not to be there. How is Jesus Christ seeking to change you? By loving you. By loving you. Why do we love Him? *“Because he first loved us.”* (1 John 4:19) And, the Bible commands the husband to love his wife—to love her. That’s our command: love your wife. Love her. Love her as Christ loved the Church. How did He love the Church? Sacrificially, savingly, sanctifyingly, steadfastly, supplying—that’s how He loves the Church. My assignment from God and your assignment from God is to make our wives radiantly beautiful Christians. We are to give them honor as unto the weaker vessel. (1 Peter 3:7) We owe them courtesy, and courtesy has well been described as “love in little things”—“little things”: giving honor, saying, “Thank you,” showing appreciation.

### C. Communion

All right, but not only consideration and not only courtesy, but communion. Look at it again: *“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel”*—and then he goes on to speak of our being heirs together of the grace of life—*“as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”* (1 Peter 3:7) The third thing is communion—communion—not just union, but communion.

Now, this word *dwell*, the first part of verse 7, is a unique word. It’s only found one time in the New Testament. And, it doesn’t mean just to live under the same roof, but it speaks of union and communion, living together as one—one flesh—sharing the most intimate part of our heart, praying together, serving the Lord together, having that spiritual union and communion. A marriage is not primarily a duet but a holy trio: a man, a woman, and Jesus Christ. Remember where Jesus said, *“Where two [are], there am I in the midst of them”*? (Matthew 18:20) And then, He said, *“If [any] two of you shall agree as touching any thing [then their prayers will be heard].”* (Matthew 18:19) The reason that husbands and wives are not having their prayers heard is because they are not dwelling together in communion. And, it is the husband’s chief responsibility to see to it that there is that spiritual communion. He is to be the pastor in the home. They are to pray together. Real prayer—godly prayer—would avoid a great deal of divorces and not a few marriages if people would learn how to pray.

And so, the Bible says we’re to *“[be] heirs together of the grace of life.”* (1 Peter 3:7) Don’t you like that phrase “the grace of life”? Do you know what that word, “the grace of life,” means? Do you know what grace is? It’s just that extra fullness. You see, in Christ we have life. But, what is the grace of life? It’s marriage. What he’s saying is that marriage is the grace of life. That’s what a husband and wife are heirs of—is marriage. And so, I believe here that the grace of life and marriage are synonymous. What he’s saying is that life is wonderful, but marriage is the grace of life. Marriage is the cherry on

top. Marriage is that extra grace. Your home ought to be the happiest place on earth, the dearest place on earth, the nearest place to heaven. And, even in these tough times, you can be enjoying the grace of life. You say, “Well, our home is just not that way.” Well, friend, if the bottom’s falling out, you better examine the foundation. Your home will never be what it ought to be until you turn from Ann Landers and “Dear Abby” to Saint Peter and Paul and Jesus and find out what He says about building a real home.

## **Conclusion**

Let’s pray. Now Father, we thank you for your Word, and we’re just so grateful, Lord, that there is an infallible Word that tells us how to build a Christian home. And Lord, I want to pray today for those who are not saved, that even today they will say, “yes” to Jesus Christ and be saved and that homes in this city will not be on the rocks but on the Solid Rock, on Jesus. Holy Spirit, convict of sin. Make Jesus real to us as we give the invitation. In His dear name.

# Seven Words That Can Build a Marriage

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: May 11, 2003**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 3:1–7**

## Outline

Introduction

I. Faith

II. Acceptance

III. Contentment

IV. Forgiveness

V. Communication

VI. Romance

VII. Prayer

Conclusion

## Introduction

Find, please, 1 Peter chapter 3. I have a wonderful message on the home this morning and I pray it will be a blessing to your heart.

Love and marriage is wonderful. Actually, it is a miracle. But the great miracle is not love at first sight. Friend, the great miracle is love after a long, long look. I told Joyce this morning, “Honey, I still love you after so many years.” Well, how do you keep the honey in the honeymoon? You don’t want to be like that man who enjoyed showing his video of his wedding backward so he could see himself walking out of the church a free man. You don’t want to be like that. How can you keep that excitement, that thrill, here.

Well, we’re going to be studying about Abraham and Sarah, and let’s look in the Scripture here, beginning in verse 1: “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation—that literally means the behavior—of the wives.” It includes what one would say, but it goes far beyond that in the King James English. Verse 2: “While they behold your chaste—that means your pure—behavior coupled—or joined—with fear; whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of the plaiting of the hair, the wearing of gold, or the putting on of apparel, but let it be the hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands,

even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord; whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace life, that your prayers be not hindered.”

We'll stop our reading right there. But this is a description of Sarah and Abraham, and it uses them as an example. Now, that's an encouragement to me because, friend, I want to tell you, Sarah and Abraham had a lot of obstacles. They were not a perfect couple. They had all kinds of pressures. For example, they had family pressures. They lived in a tent. Lady, how would you like to live in a tent, constantly moving? They had unfulfilled passions and desires and ambitions. They were looking for a city that had foundations, but in their married life they never found it. There was a very ugly part. There was a third person who came into their marriage, a woman named Hagar, and Abraham had a child by Hagar. That's an ugly thing, and I'm sure one of the marks upon Abraham's life that he certainly has to hang his head in shame about. They had difficulty with their children. They had a blended family and, not only that, but children themselves are just a difficulty. We might as well admit it. From the time a child is 12 to 18, he watches his parents age 20 years. They had these kids they had to deal with, and Abraham failed. There was a time when Abraham failed to protect Sarah, and he told a half-truth in order to save his own hide. He was kind of a scoundrel when he did that. And yet, he's known as a man of faith. But he certainly wasn't perfect and they went through all of the things that we all go through. They had fiery passions of youth when they fell in love. Then middle age—they say, you know, youth looks forward, old age looks backward, middle age just looks worried. They went through middle age, and they went through old age, what we call old age, the sunset years of life. And they went through all of that, but they made it, and so can you if you'll put into practice some of the things that we're going to teach about today. Now, the point I'm making is nobody has a perfect marriage because there are no perfect people, right? And you ought to be glad that you're not perfect and that your mate is not perfect. I mean, actually, friend, if your mate were perfect, he or she never would have married you. You think about it.

I was speaking over in North Carolina at the Billy Graham Conference Center over there which is absolutely a beautiful place called The Cove, and I was preaching on marriage and the home, and a lady in mature years got up, and she spoke to the younger women, and she said, “Now, I want you younger women to know this.” She said, “You may marry a man who is a knight with shining armor on a white horse,” but she said, “somebody still has to clean up after the horse.” And then, she said in parenthesis, “...and enjoy it.”

Well, how are we going to have the kind of a home that God wants us to have? May I give you seven simple words? Now, the outline today, all you have to do is just write

down seven words. But these seven words are going to come out of this passage of Scripture that we're looking at today. And if you will take these seven words and inculcate them, I believe I can promise to you a successful family.

## **I. Faith**

First word is faith—F-A-I-T-H. Now, look, if you will, in 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 5: “For after this manner in old time the holy women also—now, watch this phrase—who trusted in God.” I’m just going to stop reading right there. And then go down to verse 7: “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, as being heirs together of the grace of life.” Now, the grace of life means the power of God that comes into your life through faith. It’s very obvious that in spite of all of their faults and peccadilloes, Abraham and Sarah had an abiding faith in God. You know what the Bible says? The Bible says, “A threefold cord is not easily broken.” You take one strand, you may break it. Wrap it with another strand, it’s harder to break. But threefold cords are most difficult to break. What is the threefold cord that binds our homes together? The man, the woman, and God. A threefold cord is not easily broken.

I’ll give you a testimony. Our home is solidly built on Jesus Christ. Joyce knows that she’s not number one in my life. She’s not first in my life. She knows that God is first in my life. I know that God is first in her life. I don’t mind that because I know that she loves me with a stronger, deeper, purer love by putting God first than she could ever love me if she made me first. And so, it is God that makes us together, puts us together. In our dating life, we were growing up as high school sweethearts, we would conclude our dates in prayer. The first night of our honeymoon we kneeled beside the bed and gave our home to Jesus Christ. Every day, we pray together at breakfast and pray for all of our children and grandchildren and pray for various things that God wants us to have, but we pray for one another and bless one another. Our home is built on prayer. It began with prayer. It continues with prayer. Now, friend, listen. You’ll never have a successful home, in my humble but accurate opinion, apart from God. And you’ll never know God as you ought, without faith. Abraham and Sarah are listed there in Hebrews chapter 11 as champions of faith.

## **II. Acceptance**

Second word. Not only the word faith; here’s the second word: acceptance—acceptance. Look now in chapter 3 and verse 1: “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands that, if any obey not the word, they may without the word be won by the behavior of the wives.” That is, your husband’s not going to be perfect. He’s not always going to be living in accordance with the Word of God. Now, there comes a word

here, while we're in the neighborhood, "be in subjection to your own husbands." May I say, friend, that submission to your husband does not mean you're inferior. The devil's pulled a trick on people. The devil today has tried to obliterate the differences between the sexes. Under the guise of making men and women equal, he's tried to make them the same. Men and women are equal before God. "In Christ there's neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek." We're all one in the Lord Jesus Christ. But equality of worth is not the sameness of function. God has put headship in the home. God has made the husband be the head of the home, not the boss of the home. There's a difference between bossiness and headship. When the husband is the head of the home, that simply means he has a responsibility. It doesn't mean he has superiority, but he has a certain responsibility. You're never more like the devil when you have an unsubmitive spirit; you're never more like the Lord Jesus Christ when you have a submissive spirit. We accept one another. Headship for the husband does not mean that the husband has greater privileges. It means that he has greater responsibility. But we accept who we are. We accept our God-given roles. Sir, if you don't accept the headship that God has given you in the home, you are a slacker, a shirker, a failure as a husband. And, precious lady, if you don't accept God's plan for the home, you have a rebellious spirit. And, by the way, after the service, if you disagree with this passage of Scripture, please don't take it up with me. Read it back to the Lord, and say, "Now, Lord, here's one way where You really blew it. Here's one place where You made a mistake." Don't come to argue with me. I am not the author; I am just the Western Union boy delivering the message, okay?

Now, this doesn't mean there are fewer blessings. Actually, it means more blessings when we find God's plan for the home. But there is this matter of acceptance. We accept our roles. We accept one another. Neither of us is perfect, but we accept the other. Never marry a person in order to make them over. If you don't like what you're getting, don't get it. Don't marry. You marry in haste, you'll repent in leisure. But once you're married, you accept it.

### **III. Contentment**

Now, number three. The third word is the word contentment—the word contentment. Look, if you will now, in verses 3 and 4. Peter's talking about the way that women adorn themselves and dress, and he says, "Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of the plaiting of the hair, and of wearing of gold, and putting on of apparel, but let it be the hidden man—or hidden person—of the heart, in that which is not corruptible—underscore the phrase, that which is not corruptible—even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." And then, again, 1 Peter 3, verse 7: "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge,

giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life”—underscore that phrase, heirs together of the grace of life.

Now, as you study the life of Abraham and Sarah, you find that God had given them, in spite of all of their faults, a spirit of contentment. Now, Abraham was a very wealthy man, but he didn't flaunt his wealth, and he was able to use his wealth, not abuse his wealth. He did not always live a life of comfort and security because they had to move from place to place.

Now, let me say something to you kids who are just getting married. Learn the secret of contentment. Learn that you can get along without almost anything except without God and one another. If you have God, you have one another, you have something to wear and something to eat, that's all you need. The Bible says, "Having food and clothing—raiment—let us therewith be content." Now, if you have more, I'm happy for you. Ladies, if you're wearing gold today, I'm happy for you. If you have a fine dress today, I'm happy for you. Sir, if you have been successful in your business, I'm happy for you. The Bible says, "God takes pleasure in the prosperity of his servants." But listen to me carefully. A wise man once said, "To whom little is not enough, nothing is enough." Now, if you didn't hear that, you missed something real good. It's not original with me, but it is so true. "To whom little is not enough, nothing is enough." If you and wife, or you and husband, have God and one another, you have all you need to be content.

One man had an enormous fortune, and overnight he lost it. I mean, he was big shot. He was like one of these dot.com companies—it just cratered. He lost it all. They had to sell their big, fine home. They moved into a little apartment. They looked around at this small apartment. They'd been living in luxury. He slumped down in the chair and he said, "Well, here we are." She said, "No, here WE are." Don't you like that? Here WE are. We have one another, and we have God. Learn the secret of contentment.

Sometimes people read this passage of Scripture and they think that it teaches that women ought not to fix their hair and wear gold. Well, look at it. It said, "don't let your adorning be the braiding of the hair," and they say, "See there. You ought not to braid your hair." "And let not your adornment be the wearing of gold." "See there, women ought not to wear jewelry." "And let not your adornment be the putting on of apparel." "See there. Women ought not to wear clothes." Hey, ladies, He's not against you fixing yourself up. Sarah must have fixed herself up. I'm telling you one thing. After she was 80, men were still vying for her. She was a knockout. She was dynamite. She's a good-looking gal. But what He is saying is this: "whose adornment," don't let it be that outward adornment. Look, if that's what you're counting on, dear lady, you're fighting a losing battle, because you're getting older, and there's a new bevy of beauties coming on every day. Did you know that? I mean, use your noggin. Think about it. What Paul is

saying is this: that you learn to have the adornment of a meek and a quiet spirit, which is not corruptible. You can get more and more beautiful, and I say this is not preacher rhetoric. I know my wife, like her husband, is getting older, but that gal is gorgeous to me. She's beautiful to me. I know her character. I know the inward beauty, and I adore her because outward beauty can fade; inward beauty is real. You know, somebody said, "Beauty is skin-deep; ugly goes all the way to the bone; beauty fades, but ugly holds its own." Friend, listen to me. Learn the secret of real beauty, and that comes out of real contentment. You see, the real character is inward. And you know what inward serenity means? He says, "the ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit." That word meek, friend, it doesn't mean weak. The Roman army was described as meek. All meek means is under control. It's a woman not out of control, a meek spirit. Meekness is not weakness. Jesus was meek and mild. He wasn't weak. And it says, "a quiet spirit." Quiet—that doesn't mean mousy, it doesn't mean timid; it means serene, it means tranquil. It means a person who has inner beauty, inner character, a person who has learned contentment. Both husband and wife need to learn contentment. Be content. Now, don't be one these families whose marriage ceremony ought to say, till debt do us part.

#### **IV. Forgiveness**

Number four. Here's another key word. It's the word forgiveness—forgiveness. Look, if you will again, in chapter 3, verses 8 through 10: "Likewise be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous, not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrary-wise, blessing, knowing that ye are unto called that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life..."—do you love life? Listen—"he that will love life, and see good days"—do you want good days? Listen—"let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile." All married people must learn to forgive.

Now, the tornados have been sweeping through the southland. Devastating. Sometimes we read of earthquakes in Turkey here recently and see them destroy homes. But you know what Joyce and I saw the other day in our house? Out of the floor—a little hole about that big—there were coming these termites just pouring out, and they were going all the way across. They were singing the Hallelujah Chorus just going all the way across our floor. I mean, just coming out, coming out, coming out. And I thought, good night, that floor is so beautiful, and up coming the termites. Well, we called a man, and ripped up the wood and killed those critters. Now, if you're one of these animal-righters, I believe in killing termites, personally. Kill those critters. Let me tell you something. Friend, tornados are terrible; earthquakes are horrible; but termites destroy more homes than anything else. It's the termites that will get your home. It's that little spirit of bitterness, that unwillingness to forgive, that spirit to carry a grudge. Now,

notice what he says here in verse 9: “Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrary-wise, blessing.” Somebody does you evil. Bless them. Somebody rails. Bless them. I’ll give you a lesson. There are three levels of life. One is the hellish level, where you give back evil for good. Some people will do that. That’s the hellish level. The second level is the human level; that is good for good, and evil and evil. You do me good; I’ll do you good. You hurt me; I’ll hurt you. Frankly, that’s where most people live. That’s where a lot of families live. But what he is saying here is the heavenly level is good for evil. Sometimes the wife has to practice it, and sometimes the husband has to practice it. But you learn to forgive, you learn to bless, and don’t carry around a grudge, the burden of bitterness.

Do you ever get a splinter in your finger? Maybe it’s down there deep enough, and you see it, and you see that little dark spot, and you say, “Well, I could get that out, but I don’t know.” You could get a needle and pick it out and say, “Well, maybe it’ll work its way out,” and just leave it there. It seems to be all right. And then one morning you wake up and you’ve got this incredible pain and this thing is throbbing, it is festered, it is infected, because you didn’t get it out. The Bible says, “Don’t let the sun go down upon your wrath.” Don’t ever go to sleep, husband and wife, back to back, angry and pouting. Sometimes it’s hard to make up.

I bought Joyce one time a little toy bear, and if you push it, it yodels. I bought it in Switzerland. You push it and it yodels. And I’m not going to do it. I’m a good yodeler, but I don’t want to. You push it and it yodels. And it’s just a yodel. It doesn’t have real words in it. But I said to Joyce, “Listen to this yodel and see what it says to you.” “She said, “What does it say?” I said, “Listen to it.” It played three or four times. And what it says is, “you oughte oughte hold me.” “Is that what it says?” I said, “Now, listen to it: you oughte, oughte hold me.” She said, “Yeah, that’s what it says.” So it’s yodel bear. Now, we keep that bear in a drawer, and when Joyce and I sometime have one of those discussions—I know you never have them, but we do—and, you know, it’s kind of hard to make up a little bit, somebody will just walk in and push that little bear in the belly and he says, “You oughte, oughte hold me,” and we both melt and put our arms around each other. Learn to forgive. If you don’t have a yodel bear, you get something. You get something. Forgiveness is so important. Now, I must rush on.

## **V. Communication**

Here’s the next word. The fifth word is communication—communication. Look again, if you will, in chapter 3, verses 8 through 10: “Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous, not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrary-wise, blessing, for thereunto are ye called that ye should inherit a blessing.” Here’s the verse that deals with communication, “For he

that would love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile”

Now, Abraham and Sarah were so very different. So are Joyce and Adrian. So, therefore, you have to learn to communicate. Proverbs 18:21 says, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and they that love it, shall eat the fruit thereof.” Again, verse 10: “For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.”

Now, people want intimacy in marriage. The word intimacy, our English word comes from the Latin *intimus*, which means inmost. Men need to learn to communicate. The problem is primarily with the men. I asked Joyce, I said, “Joyce, what is the basic problem in marriage communication?” She didn’t hesitate. She said, “men”—“men.” Have you ever noticed, guys, that woman, whatever it is, they can say it in three letters—M-E-N—and that is true. We are the basic problem in communication. Learn to communicate. I have a lot of material there on that, but I’ve got to skip that, except to say this: Plan to communicate. Make time for communication. Every man and woman, for that matter, ought to plan four dates. Do you know what those dates ought to be? Number one: you ought to plan a date with God. You ought to have a quiet time with God every day. Number two: you ought to plan a date with your kids. Joyce and I try to spend time with our kids and our grandkids personally. And have a date with yourself, where you get alone, sit down and think and pray, and a quiet time, just meditating on what you want to do. And then have a date with your spouse. Go somewhere. Get out of the house, and avoid all emotional and sensitive subjects, and just love one another.

## **VI. Romance**

Now, here’s the sixth thing—and I’ve really got to hurry. Here’s the next word, and it is romance—romance. “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge.” Now, look at the word dwell. That word dwell literally means to live with. When people are not married and they share the same house, we say they are living together—they’re living together. And, by the way, you have no right to do that. You’re living in fornication and adultery. You say, “It’s not adultery. I’m not married to anybody else.” It’s adultery against the person you may be married to. It is certainly contrary to the laws of God. And if you’re living that way, you need to stop it. But the Bible says that husbands and wives, those who are married, are to dwell together, and the word literally means to share, or has the implication of sharing the same bed. And what it is talking about here is the romance that is in marriage. Never let the physical part of your marriage grow cold. Actually, the word here says, “giving honor to the wife.” Do you see that? The word giving honor comes from a root word which means precious. You see your wife as something precious. When you give honor to a person, what you’re saying

to that person is this: that I believe in you. Everybody needs somebody to whom they are number one. Now, I said, in our home Joyce is number two, but I'm talking about of all human relationships, she's number one. I am number one in her life, and she's number one in my life. And how do you give honor? Well, one way that you give honor is a sincere compliment. When I preach and somebody says to me, "Pastor, I was blessed by that," that's a blessing to me. And if you want to do it, that's fine. And if you don't want to do it, I feel sorry for you, but that's fine. But now listen. There are times when I preach a dog won't even wag his tail at me. But if Joyce will say, "That was good," that means something to me. A husband wants to be admired and a wife wants to be admired. And it literally means giving honor. And you need to honor the person that you're married to. And all of this is under the heading of romance, because it's all part of it. You give honor not only privately, but publicly, and you honor your wife. Never make any cheap jokes about your wife. They're not funny. Everybody needs about 10 hugs and 10 compliments a day—everybody does.

Joyce and I walk in the mornings. When the weather's nice, we walk outside; sometimes we're on a treadmill. But there's a place on our walk where there's a curve, about as far as from here to the back of this room. I call it the Compliment Curve. And the whole time we're walking that thing, we're giving one another compliments, just as many compliments as we can get by the time we're walking on that walk. We do it in the mornings, just giving our compliments. And then, at the end of that Compliment Curve is a telephone pole. I call it the Passion Pole. Right there, I give her a hug and a kiss, and she gives me a hug and a kiss. And then we go a little bit further there's a little sharp corner. That's the Critical Corner. We get around that as quick as we can. If you have anything bad to say, you'd better say it now because we're going around this corner and we're going to get that thing out. Friend, keep the romance there. Keep the joy there. Keep the excitement there. Don't ever let anybody tell you to grow up. On my way home, I'm grateful for a cell phone. I call her, and I say, "This is the love-mobile calling in." "I'll be home, baby, in five minutes. You sensitize your lips." Seriously. Keep the romance there. I have a crush on that girl.

## **VII. Prayer**

Last of all: prayer—prayer. That's the seventh word. Look at it again—1 Peter 3, verse 7: "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered." Learn to pray together. Pray it through. It's more than trite to say that the family that prays together stays together. "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman wakes but in vain; except the Lord build the house, the laborer labors in vain." Learn to pray together.

## Conclusion

Now, you say, “Pastor Rogers, that’s a very strange thing because you gave us seven words about having a successful home, but you never mentioned love—you never mentioned love.” Friend, all of these are facets of that one thing called love. They are all facets of love.

Now, God knows Abraham and Sarah were not perfect, and God really knows that Adrian and Joyce are not perfect. Joyce comes close, but I’m light years away. But I’ll tell you one thing. Were it not for God, we never would have made it. I know the arrogance in my own heart. I know my native inclination to selfishness and pride and obstinacy. But I’m so grateful for a Christian home.

Now, some are saying, “Pastor Rogers, I heard this message too late. My home’s in shambles. We’ve been divorced,” or, “you’re talking about a Christian home, and I’m not even married, and all the good guys or good gals seem to be taken. Maybe I’m destined to live a single life. And, really, what you’ve done to encourage some people and instruct others just made me sad today, because, frankly, that’s not the picture of my life. And I don’t see a future like you described. I wish I could have a home that way, but I don’t know that I can.” Let me say something to you. You’re not a second-class citizen. God loves you. God has a wonderful plan for your life. God has a plan for the single life as well as for the married life. That’s another sermon, but it’s a wonderful plan. I’ll tell you something else. If you have blown it and messed up, our God is a God of grace and forgiveness, and you never forget that. And God can mend a broken life if you give Him all the pieces. You say, “Well, I don’t have a family.” You can have a family. You can have a big family called Bellevue if you want it. What a wonderful family our church family is. There’s a way for all of us.

Lets bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. And if you know that you know the Lord Jesus Christ, would you begin to pray for those around you who may not know Him. And if you’re hungry for God, you want to know that you’re saved beyond the shadow of any doubt, would you pray and say, Dear God, I am a sinner and I’m sorry for my sin. I need You and I want You. Jesus, You died on that cross and shed Your blood to pay for my sin. Thank You for doing that. I open my heart, and by faith now, like a child, I receive You into my life as my Lord and Savior. Take control of my life, and begin now to make me the person You want me to be, and help me, Lord Jesus, never, ever to be ashamed of You. Jesus, I’ll make this public this morning. I will not be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen.

# The Divine Design

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 14, 1996

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 Peter 3:1–7

*“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives.”*

1 PETER 3:1

## Outline

Introduction

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II. God’s Design for the Husband

Conclusion

## Introduction

Well I hope that you can say that and mean it—I am redeemed. Would you be taking God’s Word and be finding 1 Peter chapter 3. We’re talking today about intimacy in marriage, “One Lord, One Love.” The title of the study today, “One Lord, One Love—The Divine Design.” What has God designed for the home?

I heard recently about a man who was at breakfast. He was behind the newspaper drinking his coffee paying absolutely no attention to his wife—none whatsoever. She said to him, You sitting there behind that paper, I bet you don’t even know what today is. He put the paper down: Of course I know what today is. Do you think I have forgotten? So, that day, in the middle of the day, she received a beautiful bouquet of roses. Later on during the day, she got a box of chocolates. Later on during the day, the man delivered to her door something very frilly for her to wear at night. And when he got home, the table was set, the beautiful linen tablecloth. There were candelabras on the table, fresh-cut flowers, a magnificent meal, and, after it was all over, she got up from her chair, and moved over, and took him by the hand, looked him in the eyes, and said, Sweetheart, I want to thank you for making this the most wonderful Groundhog’s Day I have ever known.

I think that we have some men today who need to wake up and to listen. First Peter chapter 3 and verse 1: “Likewise ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation...”—that literally means of the wives—“...while they behold your chaste behavior joined or

coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of the plaiting the hair, or the wearing of gold, or the putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”

Now, the marriage relationship is meant to be the most intimate of all human relationships. As a matter of fact, the word “intimate” comes from the Latin word *intimus* which means inmost. That is, where we share our most, or the inmost part of our nature with another person. Now, unfortunately in our day and age, intimacy has a sexual connotation. But it goes far beyond the sexual or the sensual. As a matter of fact, the problem with our society today is that we have many who are indulging in the sensual who know nothing about true intimacy. Young people talk about going all the way—that’s the one thing they are not doing. And we’re finding that homes today are unraveling and falling apart.

Several years ago, I read about a city that had a landfill—a city dump, if you will. And it got filled, and an enterprising entrepreneur bought it from the city fathers. He went out there and began to haul dirt on top of the garbage, and took a bulldozer, and spread it out, and tamped it down. And after he had covered it with dirt, he laid it out into a subdivision, built streets and curbs, and began to build homes, and it became a very attractively located and beautiful sight for homes. And young couples moved in, bought those homes, and it was a wonderful community. Little children were riding around on their tricycles. Everything was fine, until after a number of years. And then something started to happen. Walls in those houses began to sag, and roofs began to sway, and cracks and fissures came up, and the curbing would break, and the subsoil gave way, and after while, families moved out, and it was deserted. And the old-timers, they knew what had happened. They knew that this community was built on garbage. They knew that. And they knew that the problem was with the foundation.

Now, that’s what’s happened in America. We’re trying to build our homes, very frankly, on garbage. We don’t understand the truth of God’s Word. And one wise man said, when the when the bottom falls out, maybe you ought to examine the foundation. Now, what we’re going to do today is look at some foundational truths. Now, later on, we’re going to talk about communication. We’re going to talk about other things that deal with intimacy, but before we do that, I want to give you what I call the divine design.

What did God intend for the family?

And I'm glad that He uses as an illustration here Abraham and Sara. Now, you remember who Abraham was. He was a Patriarch, a father, a ruler in the Old Testament, and Sara was his beautiful wife. And God uses Abraham and Sara as an illustration. And I'm glad He does, and I'll tell you why: because, folks, they didn't have it easy. Now sometimes, we think of those folks who lived back in Bible times, they breathed a different air than we breathe, and they didn't face the kind of problems that we face. You say, Brother Adrian, you just don't know the kind of problems that my home faces.

Well, let me tell you some of the kinds of problems that Abraham and Sara faced. It's a wonder that they didn't end up in the divorce court. First of all, they were constantly on the move. They dwelt in tents, and he was moving from one place to another, and, very frankly, didn't take time to explain to his wife. They're moving from place to place.

Then, on top of that, there was a third person who came into their marriage, a woman named Hagar. And they had difficulty there because of this outside person, where Abraham did not keep himself to his wife alone. Infidelity came into this relationship. And that was a very serious blow against the family.

Then, on top of that, they had trouble with their children. They had a blended family. And they were trying to get them together. And they went through all of the things that you and I go through with our teenagers, whether or not our family is a blended family. Hey, folks, it's tough to raise teenagers, isn't it? Somebody said that a teenager between the ages of 13 and 19 watches his parents age twenty years. And that is true. I mean well, it's true metaphorically—the pressures that are upon people just getting kids up, and raising kids.

And then, on top of that, they had frustrated dreams. God had told him he was going to do this thing and that thing, and it didn't seem like it was coming to pass, and time was running out on them. And they got frustrated. And then, they lived to be centurions. I mean, lived up to a hundred years—Abraham over a hundred years. But they made it. They stuck it out. They went through the fiery passions of youth. They went through middle age. Middle age is tough. You know, when you're in middle age, you just everything seems to be caving in on you. Somebody said that youth looks forward, old age looks backward, and middle age just looks frustrated. And, they went through middle age. They went through the middle-age crisis. They went through the sunset years of life. They stuck it out, and God uses them as an example: even as Abraham and Sara.

So, what are the principles that Abraham and Sara sometimes had to learn in the hard way—but, what principles did they learn, and what principles can we learn today that will give us a foundation for our home?

## I. God's Design for the Wife

All right now, first of all, let's look at God's design for the wife. Verses 1 and 2:

“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste—or pure—conversation coupled—adjoined—with fear.”

Now, I want to say there's nothing more politically incorrect in the Bible than these two verses. I mean, the radical feminists today almost split their spleen to read these verses, that a woman is to be in subjection to her husband. This is totally, totally, politically incorrect for a woman to say, I am going to submit myself to my husband. And to make matters worse, some Christian women have difficulty with this, because it teaches that a wife is to submit herself to her husband, even if her husband is not obeying the Word of God.

Now, why is this? Well, very simply, God says there must be order in the home. And, for there to be order in the home rather than chaos, there must be some head. You've heard me say many times that anything without a head is dead, and anything with two heads is a freak. And that is true in any organization. It's true anywhere. It's true in the church. It's true in the home. And the husband is the head of the wife. The Bible makes it very clear and very plain.

Now, some women think automatically that this means that the Bible teaches that women are inferior. Perish the thought. The Bible does not teach that. Let me give you some verses to put together. The first is 1 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 3. Paul says, “But I would have you to know that the head of every man is Christ and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God.”

That's very interesting because we see from this verse that having one over us as our head does not mean that we are inferior. Let me ask you this question: Is God the Son inferior to God the Father? Of course not! Is God the Father the head of God the Son? Of course He is! That's what this Scripture teaches. There is a divine order: God the Father, God the Son, the man and the woman. But is a woman equal with a man? Of course she is!

Listen to this Scripture—Galatians 3 verse 28: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” That is, in Christ Jesus we're all one. It took as much of the blood of Jesus to save a woman as it does a man, and when they're saved, they're all part of the body of Christ. But the devil today is trying to obliterate the difference between the sexes.

And it is the devil's attempt to make men and women alike under the guise of making them equal. They are equal, but they are not alike. They are different, and God made us different, that God might make us one. Never forget that. The Bible is against

she-men and he-women. We're going to take one whole session about the difference between the sexes. We're going to have a good time that day. We talk about the difference between the sexes. The battle of the sexes really ought not to be a battle at all. As a matter of fact, God made us different that He might make us one.

Now, when a woman has this attitude of submission to her husband, it does not mean that she is inferior. One of the best illustrations for this is football. Now, ladies, I hope that you know just enough about football to understand this illustration. I think the men will understand the illustration.

Let's say that there is a quarterback—and I played quarterback—let's say there's a quarterback whose duty it is to call the signals. Now, let's say that the quarterback is not as good as his fullback. I played with a boy who made All-American; he was an All-American fullback. I didn't make All-American, all right, but I was quarterback. He was an All-American fullback, and we played on the same team together.

And, Ned, he was an incredible individual. But Ned didn't call the plays. Who calls the plays on a football team? The quarterback. Does that mean that the quarterback is a better player than the other players? No. It just simply means that somebody has to call the plays. Now, who says that the quarterback is going to call the plays? The coach—the coach. And the coach has a game plan. The coach says, this is the way it's going to be done, so the coach instructs the quarterback. The quarterback calls the plays, under the coach's direction, but the other players may be better than the quarterback himself.

Now, when a when a husband is the head of the home, that doesn't mean that he's superior to his wife. In some areas, she may be incredibly superior to him. She may be more competent than the husband. In our home, there are things that Joyce is far more competent in than I am. Joyce does all the bookwork, takes care of all the finances in our home. Very frankly, I'm glad she does. It would be a mess, if I did it. People talking about women having difficulty balancing the checkbook—I would be the one that had the difficulty doing that. But Joyce does what she does under my direction, with my permission, under my authority. Men, I want to tell you something. You can delegate. You can delegate all you want. You can delegate authority, but you cannot delegate responsibility. Now, what I mean is, you may give her an authority in this area, or you may give her authority in that area, but behind it all, you are responsible.

Now, if our books are not right, who is responsible—Joyce or me? Who is responsible—Joyce? No, I would be responsible. I'd be responsible if they're not right. Because I have given her that responsibility, but I have not taken that authority to do that, but I have not been able to denude myself of that responsibility. It is my responsibility.

Now, let's go back to the football team. Here's the football team, and the quarterback calls the play. Now, it may be the best play. It may not be the best play, but I'll

guarantee you a team will do better if they're all running the same play, don't you agree to that? They're all running the same play. Somebody has to call the play. Now, if the team wins the game, who gets the praise? All the players. But if the team loses, and the quarterback has called a bad play, who gets the blame? The quarterback.

Now, what I'm trying to say is that the husbands cannot get rid of that responsibility. And, when God gives you the responsibility of headship in the home, that is a responsibility that you can never give away though you may delegate authority. You may say, run this play, or you open up this thing here, you do this, and he does that, because the coach says he is to do it. There must be headship in the home.

Now, not only is there to be her submission, what I call her attitude of submission, but there is to be her adornment of serenity. Look, if you will, in verses 3 and 4: "Whose adorning..."—that is, whose beauty—"...let it not be that outward adorning of the plaiting of hair plaiting the hair, or wearing of gold, or putting on of apparel, but let it be the inner man, the hidden person of the heart. In that which is not corruptible"—underscore that phrase—"that which is not corruptible. Even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God a great price."

Now, here God tells a woman how to be beautiful—how to be beautiful. He talks about her attitude of submission, and then he talks about her adornment of serenity, that meek and that quiet spirit.

Now, he's not saying here that it's wrong for a woman to wear gold. He's not saying it's wrong for a woman to fix her hair. The New American Standard gives it this way, "And let not your adornment be merely external." I'm glad for that word "merely." Sometimes people take this verse, and they try to proof text that women ought not to wear jewelry, or that women ought not to braid their hair, and they say, Let's just read it. You see there—it says, "the braiding of hair." Women ought not to braid their hair. You see there. It says something about "wearing of gold." Women ought not to wear gold. And you see here, it says something about putting on clothes. Women ought not to put on clothes. No, I'm glad the word merely is there.

Again, Sara is the example here. Did you know one of the most beautiful women that ever lived was Sara? She must have been. At 80 years old, men were still fighting over her. Sara was a knock out. She was a beautiful woman, and yet she is the one who is used here as an illustration.

So, what he's saying is that you ought not to dress extremely. Because when you dress extremely, you take away from your character. You draw attention to other things, and away from your character. You ought to dress so as to enhance your character. That would be the same as putting on makeup. Some people say, is it a sin for a woman to wear makeup? I think it's a sin if some women don't. But if you've ever seen some of these women that just keep putting it on and putting it on and putting it on, you

know, and they're eyes look like a Jack-o-lantern with the candle blown out? The eyes are the mirror of the soul. And rather than being able to see that inward serenity and that beauty, it's all just somehow obliterated.

We think that people are attracted to the physical part of human beings. That is true to some degree. But some college students, a great number of them were given a test. What do you look for in a date? And the physical traits, the physical characteristics, were way down on the list. At the top were things like personality, and sincerity, and character.

Now, modesty—modesty—is a trait that says, I have self-confidence. But immodesty says, I am self-centered—self-centered. So, a woman is to have a serene beauty about her. She is to have an adornment of serenity. God calls it that ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, that which is not corruptible.

Now, let me tell you something, ladies: you ought to keep yourself attractive for your husband. But your greatest beauty is inward beauty. And if you don't realize that, you are fighting a losing battle. I'm going to tell you the truth, and you listen to me. My wife is more beautiful to me today than she was when I married her. I mean that with all of my heart. God is listening to what I'm saying. Because of the character of that woman. Because of the beauty of that woman. And that beauty is internal beauty as well as external, and she gets more beautiful day by day as she walks before the Lord.

But if you put all your eggs in the basket of physical beauty, I'm going to tell you what you catch him with is what you're going to have to keep him with. And before long, you know there's a new bevy of beauties being born every day. Did you know that? They say that beauty is skin deep—ugly goes all the way to the bone. Beauty fades, but ugly holds its own. Now, what I'm trying to say to you is this, folks: that God says she is to have an attitude of submission. She is to have an adornment of serenity. And no woman—listen carefully—no woman with a rebellious spirit can have an adornment of serenity. It's just absolutely impossible.

Now, here's a third thing. Not only her attitude of submission, not only her adornment of serenity, but her affirming speech—her affirmation of speech. Look in verse 6 of this same thing: "Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord, whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well and are not afraid with any amazement." Already he said in verse 1 that a wife is not to nag her husband, and now she talks about Sara who called Abraham Lord. Now, that doesn't mean lord like we use the word lord today. She didn't mean that you're my lord and master, and she groveled at his feet. But the word lord was a term of respect like we might use the word sir today.

But the point is that she spoke very respectfully of her husband. She was very wise in her use of speech, and God knows that a woman is to a man what a wind is to a fire. She can fan him up or blow him out by her speech, her words. Do you know what a man

wants from a woman? Ladies, let me tell you what a man wants from a woman. He wants her admiration. You say, well, that's what women want from men. Well, we'll get to that in a moment. But he wants her to admire him.

From the time I first started dating Joyce, I always wanted her to admire me. I used to get on my bicycle and ride backward down the street in front of her house so she would come out and see me doing those hi-jinxes. I don't know if I really enjoyed playing football or not. I mean, it hurt. I'd get tired. We'd always talk about the fun of the game. Really, it's not that much fun. The fun part is to hold the cheerleader's hand after the game, and let her look up at you and ask, are you hurt? You know, No! And that's the fun part. I have a picture, one of the best pictures that I have is a picture of Joyce. She was in her cheerleader outfit—and, by the way, her cheerleader outfit in those days didn't look like they do in these days, if you want to know. But underneath that picture of her are these words—it's one of my cherished possessions—she said, "I will always cheer you on!" That's meaningful to me. Words of affirmation, her affirming words. I wish I had more time for that, but let me go on, and the last thing is her accommodating service.

Look, if you will, in verses 5 and 6. It talks about Sara in verse 5 and verse 6, it said, she obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord. To obey literally means to pay close, close attention to his needs. And, a woman ought to ask herself what can I do to be a helpmeet to her husband, to meet his needs physically, emotionally, spiritually in every way.

## **II. God's Design for the Husband**

I must leave that, because I want to get to God's design for the man. Most sermons on the home, we start on the women, and we never get to the man—so let's go on to verse 7—God's design for the husband: "Likewise ye husbands." Now, I'm glad that's there. Now, ladies don't say I didn't say it. Don't say we never got to it. We're going to say more; God requires far more of the man than He does of the woman. Listen to it: "Likewise ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge; giving honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered."

Now, what this says is that men we are to wise up. We're to dwell with them according to knowledge. Very frankly, that's hard. You have to watch a man that says he understands women, because he'll lie about anything. It's hard.

This literally happened last Friday night. I was driving out here to this area, and I got behind a pick-up truck, and it had a bumper sticker, and I got up close to read the bumper sticker, and here's what the bumper sticker said on that pick-up truck—this literally happened last Friday night—it said, "The more I learn about women, the more I

love my truck.” The more I learn about women, the more I love my truck. I said, “Well, that’s a frustrated guy driving that truck.” I want to tell you something, folks: the more you learn about Jesus, the more you’ll love your wife. That’s what the bumper sticker ought to say, “The more I learn about Jesus, the more I love my wife.”

The Bible says that we are to dwell with them according to knowledge. Men are sometimes so stupid. You think that because you are the head of the home, you’re superior. I knew a man that subscribed to the theory of male superiority, until his wife canceled his subscription. What is a man to be? Well, first of all, he is to be the provider in the home. The man is to the provider in the home.

In Genesis 2 and verse 15, God said very clearly that it was the man’s job to dress and to keep the vineyard, the Garden of Eden. It is the man’s job to bring in the basic necessities to the home—food, clothing, transportation. Now, if the man does not assume that basic responsibility, there’s going to be a loss of respect.

We have many women today who are working outside the home who do not need to work outside the home, especially when there are little children at home, but they do that for fulfillment. We’re going to talk about that later on in this series. A lot of homes would be much happier if we learned to do with less. And I want to remind you what I said when we spoke on the Ten Commandments, what a Greek philosopher said when he said, “To whom little is not enough; nothing is enough.” If you can’t learn to get along on little, you’ll never be satisfied with much.

Now, when a husband is to provide—and by the way, my hat is off, and my heart is out, to women who have to work to provide the basic necessities. But if you do work, and you don’t have to provide the basic necessities, and you work outside the home, let what the man earns go for the basic necessities, and what you earn, let it be used for ministry, and the extras in the family, if necessary. And sometimes, we cannot have this ideal. Sometimes a woman has to work, and I know that—I know that. But I’m telling you that God’s divine design is for the man to be the provider in the home. He’s to be the provider.

Now, you are to provide for your wife, Sir, more than the food and the clothing, however—you are to meet her emotional needs. The Bible says you are to give her honor—that’s one of the things you are to give her. Let me just read very quickly the seven basic emotional needs of your wife.

Number one—she needs the stability and direction of a spiritual leader. If you’re not a spiritual leader, you’re not providing for your wife.

Number two—she needs to know that she and she alone is meeting the basic needs of your life that no other woman can meet. That is, she needs to know beyond the shadow of a doubt she is number one in your life, so far as people are concerned.

Number three—she needs to see and learn that you delight in her, that you cherish

her as a person; not as a sex object, but as a person.

Number four—she needs to know that you enjoy setting aside quality time for intimate conversation with her. She wants you to sit down, look her in the face, and give her intimate time.

Number five—she needs to know that it is the goal of your life to protect her in areas of her limitations. That is, you recognize that she is the weaker vessel.

Number six—she needs to know that you are aware of her presence—even when you're doing other things, that you don't ignore her.

Number seven—she needs to know that the goal of your life is to invest in her life, to help her to expand and fulfill her world.

You say, Pastor Rogers, I couldn't get all those things down. Well, come back at 11:00, I'll give it again, or else, get the tape. But what I'm trying to say is this: that a husband is to be a provider for his wife. But not only is he the provider—listen very carefully—he is the protector. Because what did God tell Adam to do? Not only to dress the Garden, but he was told to keep it. He was told to keep it. And that word keep means he is to guard it. The husband is to shield his family; he is to guard his family; he is to defend his family.

Now, I am not the man I used to be, but I'm going to tell you something. You can say bad things to me, and I'll try to return good for evil, and so forth, but if you insult my wife, or touch my wife, I'll put you on the ground if I can—real quick. There's something in me that says God wants me to defend that woman and defend my children. The husband—the husband—is to be the protector in the family.

Let me share something I read and I don't know a better way to do it than just to share it. This is comes from a book by James Dobson. Jim Dobson said, just imagine that somehow we could have some people from yesterday to transport themselves, say maybe from 1870, into our situation today, and see what is happening in the home and with men and women. And today's representative speaks first in this convocation, and he says this, "Our purpose, Gentlemen, will be to show you the features of our culture in the 1990's, which differ most radically from yours. In some instances, the picture will not be a pretty one. Ours is a very violent society, for example. In the United States alone, more than 90,000 women are brutally raped every year. One in three adult females living in certain cities will be ravaged during their lifetime."

Folks, that's one in three. Listen: "One in every five college women is raped on campus. Usually by someone they know. This is a disgrace in our time. What? they would reply in disbelief. That's worse than a wartime experience. What is being done to stop it? Very little, I'm afraid. Well, what punishment befalls those who are apprehended? Well, most offenders are never caught. Of those who are, many are never convicted. Only 16% will spend time in prison. What do you do with those who are

proven guilty? Do you shoot them or hang them? Oh no, some spend less than a year in jail, and then they're set free. Others may be incarcerated for as long as 15 years before being released. Released? What's to keep them from harming women again? Unfortunately, many do just that.

Well, why do so many men want to rape and kill women? There are many reasons. Some boys grow up very angry at women, but also we live in a provocative society. Are you familiar with the pornography that is available widely today? No, does it show women partially clothed? Far worse, I'm afraid. It depicts nude women being brutalized in every imaginable way. They are shown being violated with blunt instruments, hanging from trees, and being murdered with knives, guns, ropes etc. Every immodesty is depicted in color and bloody realism. I can't breathe. How could such things be? And you say this material is legal and widely discriminated? Yes, teenagers are the most frequent buyers of it. And, in some countries—Australia, for example—the same time of material focusing on children is legal. You don't mean that the public would tolerate such things? I'm afraid so. Australians don't seem offended by it, or by the knowledge that real children are abused by the pornographers.

A brisk child pornography business goes on in North America too, although it is technically illegal. It was largely ignored in the United States until 1983, but it still generates millions of dollars in sales under the counter. Why? Tell me why? Obviously it's not a high priority matter with our legislators and court system.

And most of these people are men? Yes, the overwhelming majority are men. They are determined to protect the civil rights of the pornographers. What about the civil rights of your women and children? What kind of men would permit such abuse? What has happened to manhood? We would give our lives to protect our loved ones. Yes, we've read about your commitment in our history books. Surprisingly, not everyone admires your approach to family life. Some refer to you as chauvinists. That means you're patronizing to women, that you really don't respect them. One advertisement tells women that they've come a long way since the oppression of your day.

Oh, really? But do your men really respect women? Is that true? Yes, but times have changed. The protective spirit toward family life is less intense today. For example, a female minor who is secretly pregnant out of wedlock can receive a legal abortion without parental knowledge. Let me sit down! You're telling me that a mother and father would not even be told when their child was violated in that way? That's right. In fact, abortion is not seen as a violation.

Even at 13 or 14 years of age, a girl can be transported legally by her teacher or counselor to an agency that terminates pregnancies, where the baby is drawn from her uterus by a suction device. Not only is parental permission not needed to perform this procedure; they aren't even informed that evening when the young lady comes home.

They will never know, unless she chooses to tell them. But, how can parents in that situation care for the girl's health? She's but a child! What if she develops complications from this procedure?' If problems develop, the parents may be the last to be told. I can't believe fathers would permit someone to assault their daughters in this way. If that happened in our day, someone would be shot over it. What is wrong with the men who accept such outrage.

Well, attitudes have changed. Many people today believe that the state is really responsible for it's children. Parents have a lesser role than in our, your day. There's a point of view with international adherence, for example, called the Children's Rights Movement. Our position is that boys and girls are entitled at any age to do anything, see anything, decide anything, that adults might choose. And, when I say anything, I mean just that. Anything? You mean that a child could decide to have sexual relations with an adult, and the parents could not intervene?' Yes, in Sweden today it is illegal for a parent to spank a child for disobedience. But it is legal for a father to have intercourse with his daughter or a homosexual experience with his son. That's sickening! Who would do such a terrible thing?

Not many perhaps, yet it illustrates how far the children's rights advocates have gone. According to that philosophy, the child is on equal footing with adults. Those who promote this movement want to see boys or girls given the right to vote, travel, choose their own faith, have a guaranteed income, and generally operate independently of their parents.

Surely, that notion hasn't caught on! Not universally, but Western society moves further in that direction every year. We think you modernists are a little crazy. Oh, by the way, you'd be interested to know that women are very active in the military today. Well yes, that was true in our time, too. They served as nurses in the great Civil War, and they rolled bandages, and performed other functions. No, that's not what I mean. Women today are full-fledged members of the Armed Forces. When a general mobilization is called, those who have volunteered are required to participate. They don't yet fight in combat, at least not technically, but they are near the battle zone and they actually do help prosecute the war.

Furthermore, many people feel it's only a matter of time before women will be obligated to serve just as men do in times of national crisis. It's all part of the equality thing. If women are truly equal to men in the eyes of the law, then they must be willing to fight and die like their male counterparts.

But, what if the women have babies? If they're in the military, they have to go. Babies are left behind. When both husbands and wives serve in the Armed Forces, their children are farmed out to relatives or to someone who will care for them. Do you mean a mother of a tiny baby is expected to fight and defend the country while any able-

bodied men stay at home? Yes, millions of male students and others who have not joined the military are exempt. It was the woman's choice to enlist; she must do her duty. Why, it's incomprehensible that a man would let a young mother do his fighting for him. But then, your people make no sense anyway. Who would have thought that little more than one century of progress would produce such foolish ideas? The folks back in our day will never believe what we've heard. We will pray for you. Thank you. Yep, you've come a long way, Baby."

Now, forgive me for reading all that, but I couldn't help it. Folks, that's sad. That's sad, but that's the day in which we live. I want to say that men are to protect their families. The husband is the provider, he is the protector, and the husband is the pastor of the home.

This verse goes on to say that husbands are to dwell with wives according to knowledge, that their prayers be not hindered. Whose prayers is He talking about? Well, he may be talking about the prayer of husband and wife together, but, beyond a shadow of any doubt, he's talking about the prayer of the man of God.

Do you know what my job, my assignment, from God is? My assignment from God is to love Joyce as Christ loved the Church. And how does Jesus love the church? The Bible says He loved it this way: that He gave Himself for it, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Do you know what spots are—that's defilement. I'm to keep my wife from defilement. Do you know what wrinkles are? Do you know what a wrinkle is? It's an inward scar. Do you know why women have such tension in their lives? Because their husbands are not loving them as the husband ought to love them.

Have you ever walked up to a woman and seen that tension on her face? Many times, the husband put it there. Many times, he has not removed those inward scars by his love. My chief assignment from God is to make Joyce a more radiantly, beautiful Christian. I have this God-given assignment. I am to be provider, protector and pastor in the home. Not because I'm a pastor. If I were a lawyer, or businessman, or whatever, it's still my assignment to be the pastor in the home. I'm to say, "As for me and my house, we'll serve the Lord."

## **Conclusion**

Now folks, this is just the design. This is not how to have intimacy. We're going to get to how to have intimacy in the next several messages. But what I'm trying to do today is just to lay down the divine design for you to see what God says that a wife is to be, what God says that a husband is to be.

Now, if you don't agree with what God says there in 1 Peter, don't come and talk to me about it; just tell God about it, okay? Just say, God, you're wrong about this. But

don't come to me about it. Now, if I've misinterpreted the Scripture, you come to me, and say, "You didn't say it just right. You didn't read it right. You didn't interpret it right, and here's where you can be more correct. But don't come to me and say, "This is what God says, but I don't agree with it," because I'm not going to change, and God's not going to change. You're the one who needs to change. And if you want to have a godly home, go back and read the directions. God has a plan.

Now, let me just wrap this up by saying this: you cannot have a Christian home without having Christians, anymore than you could have a cherry pie without cherries. And, if you want God in your home, then you've got to give your heart to God. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. No one stirring, and no one looking around. "Lord God, I pray today that many will give their hearts to Jesus and be saved. And I pray, dear God, that those of us who are saved will begin to read your Word, and to build our homes solidly on your Word. In the name of Jesus. Amen. †

# The Divine Design

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: April 14, 1996**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 3:1–7**

## Outline

Introduction

I. God's Design for the Wife

II. God's Design for the Husband

Conclusion

## Introduction

My prayer is that you are redeemed. Would you take God's Word and be finding please 1 Peter chapter 3. When you've found it, look up here. We're talking today on the subject, One Lord, One love—Building Intimate Marriages. Now the word *intimate* in our day has sort of a sensual, sexual connotation. But that's not what we're talking about primarily, when we're talking about building intimate marriages. The word intimate comes from a Latin word "intimus," which means inmost. That is, for the inmost part of me to relate to the inmost part of my wife. For your marriage to bring you to that place where the Bible describes it as being one flesh, or in the scripture that we're going to read in just a few moments as being heirs together of the grace of life. Or later on, we're going to read in the Scripture, being of one mind—that is, one Lord, one love and intimate marriage.

Now, whether your married or not, you need this message, because you're part of society, and society is not going to be any stronger than its homes, and the homes are not going to be any better than the intimacy that we build in these homes. So I pray that you'll listen, and that you will take notes, and the message today is going to be a foundational message for the other messages that will follow, the other three messages on building intimate marriages.

Now, this is a foundational message today. We're talking today about divine design—that is, what did God divinely design marriage to be. Because we're not going to be able to make it work until we build on the right foundation. Now, I heard of a subdivision that was built on an old landfill and it looked good for a while, but after a while the walls began to crack and to crumble and the roofs began to sag and the pavement gave way and people deserted that subdivision. And the reason they deserted that subdivision was that it was built on garbage. And most American homes today are, very frankly, built on garbage. And that's the reason that they're not

succeeding. When the bottom falls out, examine the foundation.

We're going to be dealing today with some foundational concepts. The Bible says, "If the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do?" So we're going to look at some very basic foundations, and men are the ones who need to listen the most, although ladies need to learn also. I heard of a woman who looked over to her husband. He was behind his newspaper drinking his coffee at breakfast paying absolutely no attention to her whatsoever. She said to him, I bet you don't even know what today is. He put his newspaper down, and said, of course I do. Do you think I could forget such a thing? That day, she received a dozen beautiful red roses delivered there to the doorstep. And in an hour or so, there came a box of chocolates beautifully wrapped. In about another hour, a gorgeous, frilly negligee, beautifully wrapped, delivered to the house. When he got home that evening, the table was set with a white tablecloth, fresh cut flowers on the table, a delicious meal, music was playing in the background. And, after dinner, she walked over, took him by the hand, and looked in his eyes, and said, sweetheart, I want to thank you for making this the most wonderful Groundhog's Day I have ever known. It's time some men woke up and smelled the coffee. To live with them, as we will see, in a moment, according to knowledge.

Well, let's just jump right into the Word of God here, and we're reading the first seven verses. Now, this is a foundational passage, so pay attention. "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, or of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel. But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sara obeyed Abraham calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered."

The grace of life— isn't that a beautiful phrase? I believe the grace of life speaks of a wonderful marriage. God calls it the grace of life. It is like the cherry on top of the ice cream sundae—the grace of life. And husbands and wives are to be heirs together of the grace of life. And so, God gives us these foundational principles that we're going to look at. God has a word for the wives, and then God has help for the husbands. It's right here in the Word of God, and we need to look at it. Now, like any good teacher, Peter gives an example, and the example he gives is Sara and Abraham. I'm glad he gave

that example, because sometimes we think those folks who lived back yonder in Bible times, they breathed different air, that somehow they had different blood in their veins, that they were different. They didn't face the problems that we face. But you talk about a couple that faced problems. Hey, folks, Sara and Abraham had some real problems. Number one, they were constantly on the move. He was a nomad. He dwelled in tents, moving from place to place to place. Number two, they had a problem with another woman. Abraham, at one time, was unfaithful to Sara and fathered a child by another woman. Her name was Hagar. They had to overcome this obstacle.

It was a bad thing that happened. And then, on top of that, they had, therefore, a blended family. And the children were having trouble with each other, and there was jealousy, and all of these problems that come along sometimes with these things—a very bad problem.

And then, whether or not you have a blended family, they had to raise teenagers. Folks, when you raise teenagers, you've got trouble. I mean, just somebody said that between the ages of 13 and 19, a teenager watches his parents age twenty years. Raising teenagers is difficult. And then, on top of that, Abraham, he failed Sara. He didn't protect her as he ought to. He told some half lies and so forth, and, really, he had a kind of a dark episode in his life. They had to go through all of this, but they succeeded till old age. They stuck it out; they made it. I'm going to tell you something, folks. Don't think that marriages make it and marriages don't make it because of circumstances. If you can learn certain Biblical principles, even in spite of faults and failures and disappointments, you can still make it. Abraham and Sara lived their lifetime married to one another. They had a lifetime love affair in spite of all these failures. As a matter of fact, God uses Sara and Abraham as an example in this passage.

Now, let's go back again, and let's look at God's Word to the wives, and see what God says. The very foundational principle for a wife is to be—remember, you're going to see what the very foundational principles for a husband are to be; and then, we are going to see what husbands and wives together are to be. Now, if some of you say, this is old stuff; I've heard this before, it may be, but we have a lot of new Christians in the church today, and they need to learn these things.

We are laying a foundation today. Next Sunday, we're going to be talking about the battle of the sexes, the differences between men and women. And, friend, there are some incredible differences that go beyond physiological differences. There are psychological and spiritual differences that are incredible, and they are God-created, and we're going to see that from the Word of God. We're going to affirm it in experience. And the title of the message next week is, "Thank God for the Difference." Men and women are different. God made us different that He might make us one. And we're going to be talking about that next week. Then, we're going to be talking about how to

communicate. One of the great problems in marriage is communication. But, today, we're laying down a foundation to learn what is God's role for the woman. What is God's role for the man? What is the divine design?

## **I. God's Design for the Wife**

Now, I'm going to read two verses to you, verses one and two, and your going to find out that there's not a more politically incorrect two verses in the Bible than these two. I mean, these two verses would cause the modern super-feminist to split a spleen, as they read these two verses—look at them: “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that if any obey not the word,”—that if anybody's husband is not a practicing believer—“they also may without the word”—and literally that may be translated, without a word—“be won by the conversation of the wise.” It doesn't mean that they're won without the Word of God. It means they're won without the wives nagging. They are not converted by nagging wives. Nobody's ever been converted to Christ thru nagging. “While they behold”—watch—“your chaste”—c-h-a-s-t-e, that means your pure—“conversation”—the word conversation is an old English word that means behavior—“coupled”—or joined—“with fear”—or reverence.

Now, here's the first divine design. There is to be in a woman an attitude of submission. Now, I say that is politically incorrect because when you hear the word submission, you think of inferiority. I want you to get this down big and plain and straight. Submission is not—now, listen to me—it is not inferiority. Submission, it's a military term. It means to rank under. You know, in the military, you have ranks, but a private is not inferior to a captain, and a captain is not inferior to a general, though they rank differently, and they have different prerogatives and different jobs. And a man and a woman are not one inferior to the other, or superior to another, but God has set in the home, order. Now, there must be order. And, in order, there must be headship. I've said many times from this pulpit, anything with no head is dead, and anything with two heads is a freak.

So, God says in His Word that the husband is the head of the wife. That doesn't mean he is superior to the wife. Let me give you the classic example of that. 1 Corinthians chapter eleven, verse four. Put it in your margin. And here's what God's Word says: “That I would have you to know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man and the head of Christ is God.” Now, what's he talking about here? He's not talking about superiority or inferiority. He is talking here about headship.

Now, you know your Biblical theology. You know that Jesus Christ, God the Son, is co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father. Don't you know that? If you don't know that, read Philippians two, and read John one. God the Father and God the Son are co-

equal, co-eternal. There is no hierarchy of value in the Trinity. Now, what He says here is the head of the man is Christ, that the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God. So, God the Father is God the Father, God the Son is God the Son; they're co-equal. But there is in the Trinity this hierarchical design. The head of Christ the Son is God the Father. The head of the woman is the man. That is, that does not mean that the woman is inferior at all, because another passage of Scripture in the book of Galatians chapter three and verse twenty-eight says that "in Christ there is neither male nor female, for ye are one in Christ Jesus." Now, the devil has obliterated the differences between the sexes, and the devil says if you have submission in the home, then the woman is inferior, and the woman is not inferior, so the woman ought not to be in subjection. That's a false syllogism, if I ever heard one. The devil, under the guise of making men and women equal, is trying to make them the same. They are equal, but they are not the same. And folks resist with all of your heart these he-women and she-men. That's not God's plan. God made them in the beginning male and female, and a woman is to have toward her husband a submissive spirit, an attitude of submission.

I think the great analogy that I like to use about this is the analogy of football. I played football; I was the quarterback. The quarterback calls the plays. Who says that the quarterback calls the plays? Well, the coach says the quarterback calls the plays. Who gets the game plan up? The coach gets the game plan up. The coach says to the quarterback, you call the plays. You call them. If it seems good to you, I'll send in some plays. Now, does that mean the quarterback was the best player on the team? I certainly wasn't. We had a boy on our team who was an incredible athlete. His name was Ned. He was about that much taller than I was, and the guy was so gifted, incredibly. He was a fullback, but he wasn't a quarterback. Ned did not call the plays. The quarterback calls the plays. Now, what I'm trying to say is this, folks. Listen to me. Somebody's gotta call the plays. Any team can't run two plays at one time. Agree? I mean, you could, but it wouldn't work. You've got to have somebody call the play. Now, does that mean that the quarterback is superior to the fullback? In my case, it was not. Does that mean that Adrian is superior to Joyce? I am not superior to Joyce. Joyce is superior to me in a lot of areas. For example. Joyce does all the bookwork in our house. Why? Because if I did it, it would be a mess. I'm telling you the truth. That's not false humility. She is gifted in that. Joyce is a straight-A student. I'm not going to tell you—I was on the Dean's List, but not the kind you're thinking about. Now, folks, listen. She had the ability to do that. I can assign to her authority, but I cannot let her assume responsibility. It's still my responsibility. If it's done right, I can thank her; but if it's done wrong, it's my responsibility. Do you understand that? Do you understand that? I can hand the ball off to a fullback, but it's still my responsibility, if I'm the quarterback, to call the play. It doesn't mean that I am superior. It just simply means that God has ordained

in a family that there be headship. And, you know, when a wife understands this, she says, hey, I've got a good thing. If the books are right, I get the praise; if they're wrong, he gets the blame. That's right. That's the way it ought to be. If a quarterback calls a good play, and you score a touchdown, the team gets cheered for. If it's a bad play, the quarterback gets blamed. Isn't that right?

You see, that's the way the husband has responsibility. And headship does not mean that he is little; it means responsibility assumed. But here in a home, the Bible says there has to be an attitude of submission. Now, Jesus Christ is the head of the church, but He has never made me one time do anything. And mister, don't get the idea because you're the head of the home you're supposed to make your wife do something. Has Jesus Christ ever made you do anything? Has He ever made you pray? Has He ever made you give? Has He ever made you witness? Has He ever made you sing? He's never made you do one thing. Yet who's the head of the church? Jesus Christ. It is not the husband's job to force his wife into submission. It is his job to lead her and to love her in such a way as he assumes responsibility. He leads by love. And by the way, let me say this to you, friend: that when you do this, your husband's going to be watching. I'm speaking to some ladies today who might have an unsaved husband. You want to get his attention for Christ? Do you want him to believe what Adrian is preaching? Do you want him to want to come to Bellevue Baptist Church? Let me tell you how to get him there. Don't nag him. The Bible says that he's going to be won without your words. Read verse one. The Bible says, as he beholds your pure behavior. You see, he's going to live with the sermon, he's going to eat with the sermon, he's going to go to bed with the sermon, and that sermon is your spirit of submission. He's going to say, there's something wonderful. That word behold means to pay rapt attention to. And it's going to make a bigger impact on him than anything else. Your sweet submissive spirit is going to be God's major tool to bring your husband to Jesus Christ. Now, I could give you story after story, if I had time, of ladies that I have known who've done just that. Do you know what Mrs. Billy Graham said? Mrs. Billy Graham said, it is your job to love your husband; it's God's job to make him good. It is your job to love your husband; it is God's job, God's responsibility, to make him good. So, first of all, what? There's to be an attitude of submission.

Now, secondly, right on the heels of that, there comes an adornment of serenity. Look in verses three and four—it's beautiful: "Whose adorning, let it not be the outward adorning of the plaiting of the hair, or the wearing of gold, or the putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man—or the hidden person—of the heart in that which is not corruptible"—underscore that—"that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."

Now, look up here, and let me tell you something. A woman is to be beautiful, but

she is to understand where her real beauty comes from. The real adornment is serenity. Now, some people take this verse and they misinterpret it. They say that women are not to fix their hair, or women are not to wear gold, or women are not to wear make-up. Now, folks, that's a faulty interpretation, and also a dangerous one. Some people say it's a sin for women to wear make-up. I think it's a sin for some not to wear make-up. That's not what He's saying. I mean, just look at it plainly. Someone says, all right, see there, it says here, whose adorning, let it not be the plaiting of the hair. See, you ought not fix your hair. The wearing of gold—so you ought not to wear gold. Or putting on of clothes—you ought not put on clothes. Now see, see what a stupid interpretation that is? Of course a woman ought to wear clothes. He's just saying that is not your adornment. Those things are corruptible. Those things change. Lady, if you put all your eggs in that basket, you're fighting a losing war. What is there that can get more and more beautiful every day? It is your spirit—that which is on the inside, the ornament of the meek and a quiet spirit.

I married a beautiful girl, but she is more beautiful to me today than she was when I married her. The years have come, and the years have gone on both of us, but she is more beautiful to me, because of her spirit, the inward radiance that is in that lady. Now, she is a beautiful lady anyway, but I'm talking about the inward beauty that is there. That is not corruptible; it is the ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit, and that will get a man's attention before outward beauty. As a matter of fact, a great number of college students were given this survey. One of the qualities you look for in someone you want to date—physical beauty was not number one. It was way down on the list. Such things as faithfulness, integrity, personality—those were the things that ranked high. And, you see, folks, people are not born beautiful. People are made beautiful. They make themselves beautiful. Now, I'm not saying that you ought to just take care of the inside, and forget the outside, and go around looking like an unmade bed. I'm not saying that at all, but what I am saying is this: that there is a beauty, an adornment of serenity, that makes a woman increasingly beautiful and attractive to her husband. He calls it the ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit.

The word meek is a very interesting word. I've told you before that it's a word that speaks of a horse that has been broken so he can be ridden. It doesn't mean it's crippled; it just means it's under control. It was spoken of the Roman army. The soldiers were called meek. You know why? Because they were under control. Now, that's what makes an army a great army—when the soldiers are disciplined and under control. Now, what He is saying is this: that a woman who has her life under control is a beautiful thing. She is meek, not weak. Meek. Not mousy. Meek. And then, it says a quiet spirit. That doesn't mean timid. It means quiet; it means serene. She has that inward strength, that inward beauty. Sara must have had that. When Sara was eighty

years old, men were still fighting over her. You think about it, and Walgreens wasn't anywhere around. I mean, folks, she was a beautiful woman. She had, according to the Bible, the ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit. So what is there? There's an attitude of submission; there's an adornment of serenity. And, by the way, you cannot have that adornment of serenity if you have a rebellious attitude. These verses come in order. And then, the third thing there is I want you to see not only that, but I want you to see her speech, her wonderful, affirming speech.

Look, if you will, in verse six: "Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well and are not afraid with any amazement." Now, what on earth does that mean? Do you think Joyce comes around when I come home and she says, hello, Lord Adrian? That would be a good idea, but she just doesn't do that. Now, what does that mean? As Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord? Well a part of the problem is, I'm using King James. You may have some other translation, but a part of the problem is the way we use the word lord and the way they used the word lord in that day are not the same. The word lord is very kin to our word sir—a term of respect. Now, what it meant is that she looked up to Abraham. She admired him. She spoke to him with reverence and respect. The Bible teaches that a woman is to reverence her husband. Now, that doesn't mean that she is to worship him; but she is to respect him, admire him.

Do you know what a man wants? Do you know what a man wants out of a woman? He doesn't want her to nag him. If you want to change a man, don't nag him. You will not change him by nagging him. You will irritate him; you will aggravate him. The Bible says it is better to dwell in the corner of a rooftop than to dwell in a wide house with a nagging woman, a brawling woman. The Bible says it's like a continual dropping on a rainy day—drip, drip. Listen. Nagging never gets anywhere. Do you know what men want? Men want praise; they want admiration. I want it. I've wanted it from the beginning from Joyce. I want Joyce to be proud of me. I would do things. High jinx, tricks, anything I could do to get her attention. I hate to tell you some of the crazy things I did. That's one of the reasons I think I played football. You know, all the guys talk about how much fun football is? Football isn't fun; it hurts. I mean, really. You're tired, you're mouth's full of cotton, you've got bruises all over, and you guys just say it's fun. They're not telling the truth. Touch football is fun, but I'm talking about tackle. That's not fun. You get hurt, and you have to go to all this practice. Do you know what makes football so great? After the game, the cheerleader comes up and takes you by the hand, and looks up, and says, are you hurt? And you say, no. That's what makes it fun. I mean, it's the admiration. People want to be admired. And I'll tell you the one they want to be admired most of is the wife, or the sweetheart. I have a picture of Joyce. I treasure that picture. It's a picture of her in her cheerleader outfit. By the way, they weren't then

like they are now. She was a cheerleader, and underneath that thing, she signed this: I will always cheer you on—and she has. While I preach a sermon, somebody may say, I like it, or don't like it—and every preacher likes to be told he's done a good job. But I'll tell you, the person that I want to hear from, first of all, most of all, is Joyce. I want her to admire me; I want her to affirm me. And if women would only say this, to be an attitude of submission, an adornment of serenity, an affirmation of speech—an affirmation of speech: encourage your man; stand by your man. That's just so fundamental. It's so plain. But ladies, he wants your admiration. You say, well, women want to be admired, too. I know it—I know it. We'll get to that in just a moment. This is a word for the wise.

## **II. God's Design for the Husband**

Let's talk about some help for the husband. What does God say about the husband? Well, look again in verse seven: "Likewise ye husbands"—do you see it? "Likewise ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life that your prayers be not hindered"—heirs together of the grace of life. Now, husbands, you're supposed to dwell with them according to knowledge. Now, let me tell you something. I'm going to tell you something. That's hard—that's hard. You show me a man who says he understands women, and I'll show you a man who'll lie about almost anything. Well, actually, there are two ways to understand a woman. It's just too bad no one knows what they are. "Dwell with them according to knowledge." We were coming here to the church last Friday—last Friday it was. Joyce and I were in the car coming up Interstate 40, and we got behind a truck, and Joyce said, look at that bumper sticker. Do you know what the bumper sticker said? On this pickup truck, this guy, you know he's a Mid-Southerner in his pickup truck. It said, The more I learn about women, the more I love my truck. The more I learn about women, the more I love my truck. We saw that this past Friday night. Maybe your here today. God brought you here. Listen. Say, I want to tell you, the more you learn about Jesus, the more you'll love your wife. And what we're doing here is learning how to dwell with them according to knowledge. Many men think they're superior to women. One man subscribed to the theory of male superiority. His wife canceled his subscription—and she'll cancel yours too.

What is the job, what is the duty, of the husband? Well, he says, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel. Now, right away, you have some ideas of what your job is to be. The first thing that a husband is to do is to be the provider in the home. You know, if you go back to Genesis chapter two, you find out that God created man, and then, God said for man, he had two things he was to do with the garden. Number one, he was to dress it; number two, he was to keep it. Right? He was to dress it—that is, he was to prune it—to cultivate it, and then,

he was to keep it. Now, let's take that first part. He is to dress the garden. That is, the husband is to be the provider. God gave Adam a different physiological body. God gave him biceps and broad shoulders. And God gave the woman her breast and her hips and so forth, because she is made to bear babies and to nurture babies. He is made to dig and to chop and to carry and to work. And the Bible says that he is to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. He is to be the provider, and one of the great things that is doing great damage to the American home is that no longer do we think of the man as the principle breadwinner in the home. And that will do great mayhem, great damage to the family. Now, I want to put this caveat out here, and I want to say it clearly and plainly—and listen carefully: I am not putting down a woman who must work to provide for her home. As a matter of fact, I elevate her; I take my hat off; I stand back; I give her praise; I give her prayer; and, if she has to do it to put bread on the table, and clothes on the backs of these children, and a roof over their head, God bless you, ma'am. But I'm saying many women—and I've said this before—make an extremely poor choice when they choose to work, only to have more things, and sacrifice that time they could have at home, and especially with their babies. Now, you listen to me, folks. Number one, it's a bad economic thing. If we have time, I'm going to show you just economically, that's almost a fraud anyway. You're not making that much as you think you're making when you get to the bottom line, but, beyond that, even if it were paying off with material things, you're not buying happiness. A great Greek philosopher said, "Unto whom little is not enough, nothing is enough." If you think that getting more things is going to make you happy, you're wrong. Those things are the very things that can destroy your home. The husband is to be the provider, if at all possible—but listen to me, sir. You are not only supposed to provide for her physical needs. Here's where most of us mess up. We think if we provide a nice house, a car, clothes, and all of that, we've done our job. Do you know where most of us are failing? And that is to provide for our wives' spiritual and emotional needs. I want to give you seven needs that every woman has. Now, you'll probably not be able to copy these down because I'm running out of time, so I'm going to go through them real fast. Maybe you can get the tape. But, number one, she needs for you to be the spiritual leader in the home. That will give her stability like nothing else. Men, did you hear that? You need to be the spiritual leader. Number two, she needs to know that she is number one in your life among all other human beings, beyond the shadow of any doubt. Number three, she needs to know that you delight in her and cherish her as a person. Number four, she needs to know that you have taken the assignment to protect her and watch over her in her areas of limitation. Number five, she needs to see you setting aside quality time for intimate time with her. Number six, she wants to know that you are aware of her presence, even when you're doing other things. Number seven, she wants to see you investing in her life, so as to fulfill the

things of her world. Now, you are to provide those things for your wife. I must hurry. Not only are you, sir, the provider; you are the protector.

Now, go back again to Genesis chapter two, verse fifteen. Adam was told not only told to dress the garden; he was told to keep it. And the word keep means to guard, to protect it against intruders. You see, Peter mentions this. He says you are to give honor to the wife as unto the weaker vessel. Now, she may be weaker, but she is not inferior. Silk is not inferior to canvas. It is weaker, but not inferior. But a wife is physically weaker than a man. And the husband is to treasure her and to give her honor and to protect her. And she was created to be protected.

A horrible, terrible thing has happened in today's society. We have advocated the leadership and the protection of men over the women. Do you know what my job is from the Lord Jesus? It is to present Joyce to myself a beautiful creature, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. That's what the Bible says Christ did with the church. He loved it that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. What is a spot? That's a defilement. I'm not to let anything defile her. What is a wrinkle? That's an inward scar. I'm not to let anything happen to her spirit that would put any inward scar on her character. My job, my chief assignment from God, is that I'm to make Joyce a more radiantly beautiful Christian. That is my assignment from God. I am to protect her. And, you know, I'm not as physically strong as I was when I was twenty, but I'll tell you one thing. However strong I am, if you mess with my wife, you're going to find out how much strength I have left. I'll tell you. I'll put you on the ground in a skinny minute, if I can, if you touch her.

God says that a man is to be the provider, he is to be the protector, and then he is to be the pastor. The Bible goes on to say in this verse that he does this that that his prayer is not hindered. Now, whose prayer is he talking about? The prayer of the husband or the wife? Or, the husband and the wife? Well, I think he's talking primarily about the prayers of the husband. Sir, do you wonder why your prayers may not be answered? It might be your relationship with your wife. You've not dwelt with her according to knowledge. You're not giving her the honor that is due to her. You are to love her as Christ loved the church.

One man came to see Dr. Harry Ironside at Moody Church in Chicago, and Dr. Ironside said, what is your problem? He said, well, sir, my problem is, I think I love my wife too much. Dr. Ironside said, well, that's the first time I ever heard a man say that. Tell me why you think you love her. So, he said, I think I just adore her. He said, all day long at work, he said, I think about her. He said, I can't wait to get home and get her in my arms, and said, I'd just do anything for her. I just wonder if it's wrong, just I love her too much. Dr. Ironside is a very wise pastor. He said, well, I want to ask you a question. He said, do you love your wife more than Christ loved the church? Well, he said, no, I

don't think so. He said, well, get with it—get with it. You're to love your wife as Christ loved the church. You can't love her too much. Well, you say, should I love her before I love the Lord? Of course not! But if you love the Lord as you ought, you'll love her more than you could any other way. And, you see, you are her provider. You are her protector, and you are to be her pastor, her spiritual head of the home. You're to say, sir, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

## Conclusion

Now, you say, Brother Rogers, that's the kind of home I want—and I believe you do. I think there's something innate in all of us that wants that kind of home, but listen. How are you going to have that kind of home? How are you going to be the provider, the protector, and the pastor in your home? How is the wife going to have that spirit of submission? How is she going to have that that adornment of serenity? How's she going to have that encouraging speech? How's she going to have that? Folks, the only way possible—listen—is to have Jesus in your heart and in your home. You couldn't have a Christian home without Christians anymore than you could have a cherry pie without cherries. You've got to have Christ in your heart. Before you try to work any of this out, before you try to put any of this into practice, you need to give your heart and your home to Jesus Christ.

In just a few moments, we're going to sing an invitational hymn, and I'm hoping that husbands and wives will just join hands and say, let's go down there and give our hearts to Jesus, and our home to Jesus. And you just come forward today, giving your heart to Jesus, and letting Him save you. Maybe you're already saved, and you say, we already know the Lord. There are some wonderful couples here today who are already saved. You're not yet members of Bellevue Baptist Church. You say, you know, I just want to be a part of a church that puts an emphases on the family, and I believe that our home can be more of what it ought to be, if we'll honor God and His church, and get in the church where they can teach us and lead us and discipline us. Husband and wife, you ought to come down if you're already saved, and say, I want to place my membership here and be a part of this Bellevue family of friends. Maybe you're a single person, and maybe you don't have any family. Well, let me tell you something wonderful. When you get saved, you get a great big family. You're part of the family of God. And then, when you come into a church, the members of that church become your brothers and sisters. Maybe you need to come today as a single person and give your heart to Jesus, say, I want to be saved. Or, maybe as a single person already saved, you say, I just want this to be my big family, my church home; I want to place my membership here. So, when we stand and sing in a moment, some will be coming forward, and you'll be saying this: I want to give my heart to Jesus. Others will be coming saying, I want to place my

membership here in this church. I'm going to ask, please, that nobody leave during the invitation unless it is an emergency. I'm going to ask us to be in a spirit of prayer. If you want to come forward with a friend, you may do so. Up in the balcony, if you need to make a decision, there'll be someone there in that hallway or in that aisle to receive you there. There'll be someone here at the head of these aisles to receive you as you come forward.

# Are You Fit to Be Tied?

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 22, 1990

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 Peter 3:1–8

*“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;”*

1 PETER 3:1

## Outline

Introduction

I. Wives

- A. Submission
- B. Speech
- C. Serenity
- D. Service

II. Husbands

- A. Awareness
- B. Acceptance
- C. Adjustment
- D. Appreciation

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God’s Word and open please to 1 Peter chapter 3. And, in a moment we’re going to begin reading in verse 1. Now, here is the question. Whether you’re married or whether you’re not, are fit to be tied? Or, to put it another way, are you worthy to call yourself a husband or a wife? Well, we want to think about it because you see with marriage the problem is not in the instruction, it’s in the personnel. And so, we’re going to ask ourselves today from the Word of God, are we really fit to be married? There is so much garbage today. It’s the only word I can think of to use to describe what is coming to us, from every direction, about what marriage is like and what the relationship between man and woman ought to be.

Some years ago, there was an America town that had just outside the town, a garbage dump. And, when that landfill became full a developer bought it. He had an idea to make some money, and so he hauled in dirt, and covered the landfill, covered the garbage dump with dirt, packed it down, tamped it down, and then began to lie out a subdivision. He put beautiful streets and curbs and planted trees, and nobody could tell

it had ever been a garbage dump. And, then he began to build houses, lovely houses. And, families moved in, and it was a happy beautiful community. But, after a number of years, the subsoil began to give way, curbs began to crack, corners on house began to sag, roofs began to bow in, and walls began to have fishers in them. And, after a while the people moved out, and that community was abandoned and forlorn.

The old timers who had lived there for a long time simply shook their heads because they knew what had happened. Those homes had been built on garbage. Now, we wonder why so many American homes are meeting the same fate. Why they seem to be crumbling. My dear friend, when the bottom falls out. Maybe we'd better examine the foundation.

Now, what I have before us today is a foundational passage of Scripture on the home. To tell us how a home ought to be built. Now, it's a story really about Abraham and Sarah. Now, notice what it says in 1 Peter 3 verse 1–8: *“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered. Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.”*

What a wonderful passage this is and I'm so glad that the illustration that is used is Sarah and Abraham. And, I'll tell you why. If ever a couple had an excuse for getting a divorce, it would've been Sarah and Abraham. Now folks, Sarah and Abraham were not a perfect couple. There was an affair. The Hagar affair, and Abraham had a child born by somebody that was not his wife.

They had problems with their children. You read the story of the problems that they had between the children. They had some king size problems. Also, they were a family that was disrupted, constantly on the move. Abraham never really did settle down, just lived in a tent. That could cause all kinds of psychological problems. Abraham was careless with the truth and not thoughtful of his wife. He told those half-truths, and a half-truth is really a whole lie. Abraham was guilty of that.

And, then they'd gone through all the stages of age. They'd met one another

obviously as young people and had fallen love. And, then they went from that time that we call from youth to middle age, and they survived middle age, which may be the hardest to survive. You know, they say that young youth looks forward, and old age looks backward, and middle age just looks worried. They went through that. And, then they survived old age. I mean they lived for many years, and they survived that. They went from the romantic to the rheumatic. And, they survived it all.

But, I'm telling you listen, they had problems, but they made it. They made it. Right onto the very end they made it because they learned some principles. And, basic to their principles was this, commitment. You listen to me dear friend. People who get divorced and people who don't get divorced generally have the same kinds of problems. Did you hear that? The difference is not in the problems that they have, but the difference is in their commitment. Now, if you don't hear anything I say I want you to hear this. It is not love that holds your marriage together. It is your marriage that holds your love together. It is commitment, commitment. It is a life that is built on certain basic biblical principles.

## **I. Wives**

And so, 1 Peter 3 tells us first of all, a word for the wives and then it gives some help for the husband. A word for the wives and help for the husbands. Now, basically Peter tells us that those attitudes, and those attributes that make a Christian wife, a godly wife, the kind of a wife that she ought to be.

### **A. Submission**

Now, first of all he speaks of her submission. Look in verses 1 and 2, in the same manner ye wives be in subjection. That means in submission to your own husbands. Well, let's just stop right there. She is to be in submission to her own husband. You say, "That's wonderful if he is a good and godly husband." But, now wait a minute, be in submission to your own husbands. That is any husband, obey not the word that husband may also, without the Word be won by the behavior. That's what the word "conversation" means, by the behavior of the wife. And so, a godly woman is to be in submission to her husband.

Now, in the day of women's liberation we're told that we're not to submit to anybody or anything. But, may I tell you that submission is a fact of life, and not a bad fact, but a wonderful fact. You see, submission is necessary for leadership, and leadership is necessary for success in life. You see, without submission there can be no order in the home. And, without order in the home, we could not function. As I've said many times from this pulpit, anything without a head is dead, and anything with two heads is a freak. So, God has given headship in the home. Now, it is God that says that the husband is the head of the home. There's nothing is that doesn't make the wife inferior, if it doesn't

make the husband superior.

So many times we get the idea that we're in submission to someone or something that we're inferior to that which we are in submission. But, nothing is further from the truth. 1 Corinthians 11 and verse 3 is a key verse right here. And, it says this, the apostle Paul says this and I want you to listen to it. *"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ."* Now, Christ is over every man's head. That is, he is the authority of every man. And, the head of the woman is the man. And, the head of Christ is God. So here's God's order of authority. Up here's God the Father, then God the Son, then the man, and then the woman.

Well, you say, "The woman is under the man, therefore the woman is inferior to the man." God the Son is under God the Father. Is God the Son inferior to God the Father? Of course not.

If you anything about Christian theology, you know we worship one God who revealed Himself in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And, all three are equal, and all three are one in essence. It's not a matter of equality. Everybody knows that a woman is equal with a man in God's sight. And, a man is equal with a woman. Put this verse down, Galatians 3 verse 28: *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."* Don't you love that? My dear friend, with God there's no respect of persons, there no respect of race, no respect of face, it's all grace. We are one in the sight of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, wait a moment. Does that do away with the idea of submission? Not at all. Do you know what the devil wants to do? The devil wants to take the fact that we are one and equal, and therefore try to make us the same. Men and women are equal, but men and women are not the same. Now, here's a point I want you to listen carefully to. It is the devil's modern day attempt to make men and women alike, under the guise of making them equal. God made us equal, but God did not make us the same. God made us equal but he did not make us the same, he made us different, that he might make us one. You see if it were not for the difference, we could not have the oneness. It is Joyce's difference that drew me to her. And, I hope it was my difference that drew her to me. I mean, I wouldn't want to hug my hairy cheek up against another man's hairy cheek. I just as soon hug a barrel of pickles.

But, what I'm trying to say, my dear friend, is that God made us different that he might make us one. Do you see what I'm talking about? Men and women are equal. They are not the same, and say, "Thank God, amen!" The Bible is against she men and he women. The Bible says, *"But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female"* (Mark 10:6). And so, when a woman is in submission to her husband, she's not inferior to her husband any more that God the Son is inferior to God the

Father. Now, when a woman does accept this kind of an attitude, something wonderful happens, it gets her husband's attention. Notice, if you will, in chapter 3 verse 1. The Bible says there, an unsaved husband can be won by the submissive behavior of the wives.

That's what's inferred here, while they behold your chaste conduct. Look at the word "behold." That means they're going to look at it. It means, it's going to get their attention, like nothing else that you can do. Ruth Graham, the wife of evangelist Billy Graham, said something that I think that is significant right here. She said, "It is the woman's job to love her husband, it is God's job to make him good." It is the woman's job to love her husband, it is God's job to make him good. Submission is not inferiority. As a matter of fact it is superiority. You are never more like the Lord Jesus than when you are in submission. You're never more like the devil than when you are in rebellion. I guess for you men, let me give an illustration.

Let's suppose here's a football team and let's suppose there is an all-American football player running back on that team. Now, let's suppose that running back is a bonus baby. That is, all he has to do is to step into the pros and he is a multi-millionaire just over night. He is just incredibly gifted as an athlete. Now, let's suppose on that same team, there's a quarterback. And, that quarterback is a good athlete, he's good enough to make the team, but he's not nearly in the class with this all-American running back. And, after college that quarterback, will get a job in the world of business. The all-American running back, he's going to the pros. Which one is the most gifted, which one the most talented? The running back. But, who calls the plays? The quarterback. Does that mean that running back is inferior to the quarterback? Not at all just on every team somebody has to call the plays. That's all there is, and the coach says that the quarterback's going to call the plays. God says that the husband is the head and that's all there is to it. That's all. Doesn't mean he's superior at all to the wife. They're just simply, in order for a team to run a play, somebody has to call it. If that quarter back is smart he'll get in a huddle and he'll consult with everybody, and he'll consult with the coach, and the rest of the team. But, finally there comes a time when somebody has to call the play.

## **B. Speech**

And so, what you see here, of this wife, the first thing is her submission. The second thing I want you to notice is her speech. Her speech. Now, notice what he says in verse 3, in the manner ye wives be in subjection to your own husbands. If any obey not the word, they may without the word. Not the Word of God literally, a word, literally without nagging. Be won by the behavior of the wives. Now, no man was ever nagged into being a Christian, in my estimation. If it happened, it's very rare.

As a matter of fact, the Bible has a lot to say about nagging wives. Proverbs 19:13,

the Bible says: *“A foolish son is the calamity of his father: and the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping.”* Drip, drip, drip... Like rain or water or a leaking facet. Proverbs 21:9 says: *“It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house.”* Let me read that again, it is better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house.

Now, this doesn't mean that a woman cannot witness to her husband. This does not mean that a woman cannot state her case. This doesn't mean that a woman cannot make her desires and her points known. She ought to do her best to influence her husband, but she is not to nag him. Now, the Bible says that he is to behold her chaste behavior, you see that? Chaste, that that's the Greek word *hagnen*, which means “pure” or “unadulterated.” A wife is to be so clean and so pure that if she has an unsaved husband—that the way she lives—her lifestyle will say ten thousand times more than her words would say to him. He lives with a sermon, he eats with a sermon, and he sleeps with a sermon. She's just around him with her beautiful, radiant lifestyle. And ladies, how are you going to do this? Boy because, you are being bombarded with all kinds of impure things.

You see, you can't have that chaste and pure life style unless you think chaste and pure thoughts. And so, let me tell you something, both men and women think about impure thoughts. Never in the world have we been living in a day when there have been so many impure thoughts and impure impulses coming into our mind. What do you do when you get an impure thought? Well, you say, “I just dismiss it.” Well, just don't dismiss it. Recycle it. What do you mean by that? I mean this.

Impure thoughts. Get the idea of being in a swimming pool playing with a ball full of air. And, you push it under the water. And, you leave it alone, what happens? It comes to the surface, doesn't it? You push it under, it comes back. That's what you do with impure thoughts. If you simply try to dismiss them or submerge them, you can't do that. You know what you need to do? The next time an impure thought comes into your heart and into your mind, don't dismiss it recycle it. Take the Word of God and let the air out of that thing. What I mean by that is, think it over in the light of God's Word. When you have an impure thought, you say to yourself what does God say about that? Look at it again in the light of God's Word and, my dear friend, that lets the air out of that thing. Then it doesn't resurface. It stays on the bottom, not simply because you have tried to dismiss it. You've dealt with it.

### **C. Serenity**

But, here's a wife, who's to have a pure behavior. Chaste and pure thoughts. All right now, think not only about her, think not only about her submission and speech, but think for a moment about her serenity. Look if you will in verses 3 and 4. He goes onto say, who's adorning, that is who's beauty, let it not be that outward adorning of the braiding

of the hair, or the wearing of gold, or the putting on of apparel, but let it be the hidden man of the heart. The word “man” is supplied by the translator literally, let it be that hidden of the heart, and that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. Now, here God tells a woman how to be beautiful, and what God is saying is the thing that makes a woman beautiful is her serenity. Her serenity is that ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit.

Now, some people take this passage of Scripture and say that because of this passage of Scripture women ought not to go to the beauty shop, and women ought not to wear jewelry. But, you have to read this very carefully. As a matter of fact the New America Standard gives it this way. Let not your adornment be merely external. Boy, I’m really glad for the word “merely.” Because you see, I mean here’s somebody says, “All right, see there it says that women ought not to braid their hair, see there? See there it says that women ought not to wear gold, see there? See there, it says that women ought not to wear clothes?” Oh, No.

He’s not saying that it’s wrong to fix your hair, or it’s wrong to wear gold, any more than it is to wear clothes. But, what he’s saying is that it’s not merely your adornment. What he is saying, my dear lady, if you want to be a ministry to your husband is have a beauty that is deeper than that. Now, Sarah is the example here. And, friend I want to tell you that Sarah was a knock out. Sarah was a beautiful woman. When she was eighty years old, men were still fighting over her, and contending over her. But, what he is saying is don’t have such garish outfits on. Don’t do such an over kill in your adornment so that it hides that inner beauty that God has put into you.

For example, the eyes are a mirror of the soul. Have you seen what some women do to their eyes? I mean they put on so much eye makeup and mascara that they look like a jack-o-lantern with the lantern blown out. I mean, you can’t see. Oh boy people looking around at other people’s eyes right now. You can’t see that inner person, that beauty. Now, what Peter is saying here is that if you put the emphasis just on the outward the extreme, you’re fighting a losing battle because the outward things are corruptible. But, the inward beauty can get more and beautiful every day. By the way, that’s what people are looking for.

Did you know they took a survey of college students, and they said to these college students, a large survey, what do you look for in a person that you want to date? And, you know the thing that looks, physical appearance ranked almost at the bottom of the list. The college students said, “I look for things like personality, sincerity, and character.”

All of these things took precedence over physical appearance. Do you know the person who overly dresses lacks in self-confidence? But the person who just simply uses dress to enhance those beautiful inner qualities is a person who knows who they

are. You see he talks of the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. Do you see that? The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.

Now, don't get the idea ladies that meekness is weakness. The word "meek" here was used to describe soldiers in the Roman army, who were under the command of headquarters. They certainly weren't weak. The word "meek" is used to describe a wild stallion of the desert, who'd been taken and taught to wear a bridle and a harness. Certainly that stallion is not meek. Actually it means strength. It takes more strength to for a woman to be truly meek, that almost anything else that I know. In a meek and a quiet spirit that doesn't mean she's to be mousy. The word "quiet" here doesn't mean that she is a wallflower. The word "quiet" means here that she is a woman who is tranquil, serene. She has an inner beauty. She knows who she is. She has strength and control. There is a serenity about her that shows the presence of Jesus in her.

#### **D. Service**

So, it comes out in her speech. And so, and in her submission. So, what's Peter talking about? First of all, her submission, then he talks about her speech, and then he talks about her serenity. Then he talks about her service. Look, if you will, in verses 5 and 6, after this manner, in old time, the women also who trusted in God adorned themselves, being in subjection under their own husbands. Now, watch this, even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord, whose daughters you are. Now, Lord, doesn't mean that she worshiped him, in Bible times that was just simply a term of respect. She had a respect for her husband. She showed her husband respect, and as a result she got respect back. Notice what it said, she obeyed him. To "obey" literally means to meet the needs of one.

Now, Sarah saw herself as one that had been given to Abraham to meet his needs emotionally, spiritually, physically, and in every way and that was her service. You see that Bible says that a wife is to a husband a helpmeet. That is a fitting helper. She is to complete him. She's not to finish him off. I mean, she is to complete him. She is to be to him what a bow is to a violin. Well, now that's what God says that a wife, who's fit to be tied, is like. And, Sarah is the example.

## **II. Husbands**

Now, let's move onto the husband very quickly. Not only a word for the wives, but help for the husbands. What is a husband to be like?

#### **A. Awareness**

Well, in verse 7, the first thing I want you to notice is his awareness, in like manner ye husbands dwell with them according to what? K-n-o-w-l-e-d-g-e. Now, what the husband needs is knowledge. The problem with most husbands is that they're

overloaded with ignorance. Really, they're overloaded with ignorance. Dwell with them according to knowledge. Now, the reason that husbands don't have knowledge is that they're just not aware. Now, my friend, if you care, you'll be aware. If you care, you'll be aware and the reason we're not aware number one is the blight of business, and number two is the lack of listening.

The reason we don't listen is that we think we already know it all. And, anything we're going to hear is going to be a rerun. Now, let me tell you something men. You had better learn one thing about women. Women not only think with their heads, they think with their hearts. And, not only do they talk logically, they talk emotionally. Now, don't listen to what they say, but listen to what they mean. It's hard. Now, it's hard. You've got to listen with your heart, as well as your head. I want to ask you a question. Are you aware? Do you know the three deepest needs of your wife? Could you write them down? Just simply say, "My wife. These are the three deepest needs of my wife." You see, do you know what awareness? It is loving your wife with your eyes and with your ears. Do you do that? "Oh!" You say, "She knows." I know! Love her with your eyes and with your ears. And, one of the keys for awareness is to pray for a person. Pray for your wife. You cannot honestly intercede for her without the concern for her welfare.

## **B. Acceptance**

All right, first of all, awareness then after that awareness is acceptance. Acceptance. Look in verse 7, the Bible says again, like wise ye husbands, dwell with them. That is, settle down, accept, and dwell in them. You know, when you got married you felt that you and that girl had so much in common. That's what drew you together, all the things you had in common. But, what you may not have known, dear friend, is it wasn't what you had in common that drew you together alone. It's also the differences.

It is a psychological fact that opposites attract, and they've done surveys of psychological and emotional differences, and did you know that seventy percent of those who are married are opposite, not only sexually, but psychologically, and emotionally opposite. Joyce and I took a psychology test and I am telling you, we are absolutely extreme opposites. I mean extreme.

She knocks it off the top on one end, and I on the other. I mean it's incredible. And, I thought when we got married, how much we had in common. Just think those of you who are married, and see how many opposites that there are here. One of you is an early riser. The other sleeps late. One of you is a talker and the other is a silent type. One of you is a spender and the other is a nickel-nurser. One of you is organized, and the other's disorganized. One of you is romantic, and the other, brother you're a dud. Others... One of you is punctual and the other one is always late. One of you is impulsive, the other one can't make a decision, it takes you thirty minutes to order from the menu. You can't you can't just sit down and order a meal.

It's incredible, isn't it? Don't you think that God has a sense of humor? How God gets us together. Now, my dear friend, who is right and who is wrong? In most of these cases neither one is right or wrong, they're just different. But, you see as a husband, the Bible says, you dwell with her and she is to dwell with you. Do you know that this lack of acceptance puts your marriage on a conditional basis? Where you say, well I will love you with, if, or I will love you because.

### **C. Adjustment**

No, no. Acceptance is unconditional love, now watch it! Awareness, acceptance, just accept, number three adjustment. In order to accept you have to adjust. Now, this same verse says the husband is to give honor to the wife, as unto the weaker vessel. Now, who therefore should do the most adjusting. The strong should adjust to the weak. The strong should adjust to the weak. Because the strong can adjust to the weak, the weak cannot adjust to the strong. That's logical. And so, there must be adjustment. A husband has to give honor to the wife, as unto the weaker vessel. Now, "What do you mean weaker vessel, Pastor?" Well. I don't know that they're weaker physically, they out live us. Financially, they control most of the money. But, yet the Bible calls them the weaker vessel. You know I think that the weaker vessel, is the stronger vessel, because the weakness of the stronger vessel for the weaker vessel. Don't you? But they are the weaker vessel. Not the inferior vessel. The weaker vessel. Which is inferior?

That beautiful vase in your home, or the steel pot in the kitchen? The steel pot is inferior, the vase is weaker. What is weaker, silk or blue denim? The blue denim is stronger, the silk is more delicate. That's what he's saying. That's what he's saying, that God has given a woman a more delicate nature. And, therefore it is the husband's duty and privilege to adjust. Well, you say, "Why did I marry this woman?" I'll tell you why, God's sandpaper. That's right. To mold you and make you what you ought to be.

Now, don't try to change your mate, whether you're married to a man or a woman. You know most of us have the idea, "Well, I'll change him after I marry him. Darling, I have enrolled you in a personal improvement course." No don't do that! You just accept. By the way, we all got some things that need to be changed. I've got some or he has some things that need to be changed. Do you want me to tell you how to change your mate? Let me tell you about the only way that you really can change your mate. Interested? By changing yourself. Now, you think about it. About the only way, really, practically that you can change your mate is by changing yourself. You say, "How will that change her?" Well, I'll tell you how I change her. If you change you, then you have given her something to react to.

You see, she cannot react to you in the same old way because you're not the same old person. And, the way to change her is to change you, and to give her something different and better to react to. But, in the mean while you need to adjust to her. You

see, mature love says, “I love you, therefore I will change.” Selfish loves says, “In order for me to love you, you have got to change.”

#### **D. Appreciation**

All right now, fourthly, not only awareness, acceptance, adjust meant, but appreciation. Look in verse even, and look in verse 7 says, giving honor unto the wife. Now, this word literally has its root meaning, to show good manners to the wife. And, it speaks of her preciousness to appreciate. Let’s look at our English word “appreciate.” Do you know what the word “appreciate” means? To add to value. right? You have a piece of property. It’s appreciating, what it is doing. It’s going up in value. What is the opposite of that? Depreciation means it’s going down in value. Now, do you want a wife that’s going up in value? Or, do you want a wife that’s going down in value? You see, my dear friend, it is a good investment for you to appreciate your wife. When you show her honor, when you give her appreciation, and she just goes up, because she gets a healthy self-image. And, when she gets a healthy self-image, she has that ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit.

Now, my dear friend, we live in a world, your wife lives in a world, your husband lives in a world, where everything around wants to tear us down. Everybody’s trying to get to the top. And, in order for them to get to the top, they’re trying to pull us down. They’re trying to pull us down, so they can get to the top. Everything around us is just pulling at us, and pulling us down. Husbands and wives need somebody to lift them up. Do you know what everybody needs? Everybody needs appreciation. Everybody desires it. If you say you don’t want it, I think you’re lying. After I preach I like for you to say, “I appreciated the sermon.” But, I tell you there is one person I want to hear say that more than anybody else and it’s Joyce. It’s Joyce. I mean, if Joyce likes it, I feel all right. I don’t care whether Lewis likes it or not if Joyce likes it. And, I just kind of follow her around until she says, “You did okay.”

#### **Conclusion**

Listen, dear friend, that’s so important. Giving honor. How much more important it is therefore for a husband to give honor. For that husband to say to his wife, “I am your fan, and you are number one with me.” Everybody needs somebody to tell them they are number one. Praise your wife. I’ll tell you something else. Learn to praise her publicly, around your friends, and her friends. Now, folks this is what it is. This what God’s Word says that makes us fit to be tied. You know, it’s been said that after a few years of marriage a man can look right at his wife without seeing her. And, a wife can look or see right through her husband, without looking at him. How true that is. Well, let’s wrap it up. Look at the last verse here. The Bible says, in like manner, verse 7, ye husbands dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife as unto

the weaker vessel. Now, watch it, here it is, as being heirs together of the grace of life. The grace of life. It's as if he's saying, "That's the cherry on top." A happy, holy home. Heads are bowed.

# Seven Secrets of Lasting Love

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** September 2, 2001

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 Peter 3:1–10

*“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”*

1 PETER 3:7

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Fortify Faith
- II. Remember Roles
- III. Cultivate Contentment
- IV. Banish Bitterness
- V. Continue Communication
- VI. Refresh Romance
- VII. Practice Prayer

Conclusion

## Introduction

Be finding in the Word of God 1 Peter chapter 3. We're talking about this: Seven Secrets of Lasting Love. I told Joyce the other day as we were getting dressed, I said, You know, the great miracle is not love at first sight; it's love after a long, long look, and that you can continue to love. And I've had a good look, and I love her with all of my heart, so let me just tell you some ways to keep the honey in the honeymoon. Don't be like the guy who enjoyed running the movies of his wedding backward so he could see himself walking out of the church a free man. I want to tell you how to keep that love alive; as I've said, how to keep the love boat afloat.

Now, we're going to learn some foundational truths and principles, and they're found here in 1 Peter chapter 3, and I'm going to begin reading in verse 1: “Likewise, you wives, be in subjection to your own husbands, that if any obey not the word, they may also without the word be won by the conversation”—and that literally means the lifestyle—“of the wives while they behold your chaste or pure lifestyle, coupled with fear, whose anointing, let it not be that outward adorning of the plaiting of the hair, or the wearing of gold, or the putting on of apparel, but let it be the hidden man of the heart,

that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner, in the old time, the holy women who also trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands. Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well and are not afraid with any amazement. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel and as being heirs together of the grace of life that your prayers be not hindered.”

Now, let me just say that God not only gives the instructions here, but like a good teacher, Peter also gives an example, and the example is Abraham and Sarah—Abraham, the patriarch in the Old Testament, the brightest star in the Hebrew heaven; and his wife Sarah. And he speaks of them as an example of how to keep love alive. Now, you might think that Joyce and Adrian have never had any problems. We’ve had plenty of problems, and as you look in the Bible, you’re going to find out that Abraham and Sarah had plenty of problems.

Number one: they have family pressures, they were on the move, they were nomads, and they lived in a tent, and they’d lived in a beautiful home like many of us. They went from pillar to post; they had dreams that were basically unfulfilled. Abraham looked for a city whose builder and maker is God. He’s found it now, but not found it then. As a matter of fact, they had a very, very serious matter in their home, the Hagar affair, where Abraham did a terrible thing and produced a son by a woman that was not his true wife. They had problems with their children: their children didn’t turn out all that well—well, ultimately they did, but it was a rough ride and they knew what many of us know. As you know, from the time a child is the age of 12 to 19 his parents will age twenty years. Did you know that? They had teenagers, just like we have teenagers.

And Abraham, on one occasion, failed to be as gallant as he should’ve been; he didn’t protect Sarah as he should’ve. He told a half-truth to protect himself, and a half-truth turned out to be a whole lie.

And then, of course, they had the problems of increasing age. I asked Joyce, Will you love me when I’m old and wrinkled? She said, Of course I do. Just they made it right on through increasing age; they made it through the fiery passions of youth; they made it through middle age. They say, you know, youth looks forward, old age looks backward, and middle age looks worried. They made it through all of that, and they stayed together; Abraham and Sarah stayed together. How did they do it?

Well, we’re going to learn some secrets here of lasting love. And it’s not that Mr. Perfect married Miss Perfect. Neither Joyce nor Adrian is perfect. As a matter of fact, you better be glad that your mate is not perfect. Why? If your mate were perfect, they never would’ve married you. That’s true. Thank God that all of us married imperfect

people; we live in an imperfect society, and we have to deal with these things, but we can make it wonderful.

When Joyce and I were at a marriage conference, I was preaching at the Billy Graham Conference Center called the Cove. It's a beautiful place, and I was preaching on the home, and later on we had questions and answers, and a little lady got up. She said one of the wisest things I've ever heard. She said, Now, ladies, I want you to remember, you may marry a shining knight on a white horse, but somebody's got to clean up after the horse. I thought now that's a wise lady. And she said, And enjoy doing it. So, if you may have married a shining knight, but I'll tell you, he's riding a horse that's going to leave some mess around.

How do you do that? How do you stay together? Well, I want to give you seven principles. Are you ready for these? They're going to come right out of the Word of God.

## **I. Fortify Faith**

Principle number one: fortify faith—fortify faith. Now, look at this scripture: “For after this manner, in the old time, the holy women who trusted in God adorned themselves.” The only phrase I want to get out of that is, the holy women who trusted in God. We'll get to the rest of that later on. But then, 1 Peter chapter 3 and verse 7 says also, “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel,”—now, listen to this—“being heirs together of the grace of God.” Women trusting God. Abraham, we know, was the father of the faithful. You cannot—you cannot—in my estimation, have the kind of a home you ought to have, without trusting in the Lord. The Bible says, “a threefold cord is not easily broken.” What is that threefold cord? A man, a woman, and God himself.

I want to tell you something about Joyce. I love her with all of my heart, but Joyce knows that she's not first in my life. She knows that; she knows that God is first in my life. She doesn't mind being second. She's first of all human beings, but she's second in my life, and she knows that I can love her more by putting her second than I ever could by putting her first. And I know that I'm not first in Joyce's life. I know that I'm second. I don't mind that, because she loves me with a love that she could not love me with, had she not fortified her faith in the Lord.

Now, in verse 7, the Bible speaks of us being heirs together of the grace of life. Now, what are heirs together? That's joint heirs. That means share and share alike. There's no male superiority and female inferiority when it comes to trusting in God. Let me give you a good verse to put in your margin—Galatians chapter 3 verse 28—and Paul said, “There's neither Jew nor Greek, neither is there bond nor free, neither is there male or female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” That spiritual oneness that Joyce and I have is the oneness in Christ Jesus. Now, I'm a male, and she's a female, but we are one in

the Lord Jesus Christ. I could say, without stutter, stammer, or apology, the secret of our home is God himself.

Joyce and I prayed on our dates, we prayed before our marriage, we prayed at our wedding. The first night of our honeymoon, we got on our knees together and gave our hearts, our lives, our home, anew and afresh to God. Joyce and I make it a habit to pray every day, and to pray about our problems, to pray about our opportunities, pray about our ministry, pray for our families, to pray for you, to pray for this church. Why? Because the very first thing that you must do, friend, is to fortify faith.

## II. Remember Roles

Number two—number two. Not only fortify faith, but remember roles—remember roles. God has a role for the man, and God has a role for the women. Now, what I'm about to say is politically incorrect, and, if that offends you, what I'm about to say, you come up and apologize to me after the service, and I'll forgive you. But, I want you to know I'm not creating the roles; God did.

What is the role of the wife? Well, look in 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 1: "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands." By the way, that Greek word, *idios*, means special husband, your individual husband, your idiot husband. "Likewise, you wives be in subjection to your own husbands." And then, 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 7: "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel."

Now, I've said that husbands and wives are spiritually equal, but they are not the same. God made us different, that He might make us one, and we need to learn that. You know, it's the devil's guise to attempt to make men and women alike under the guise of making them equal. They are equal, but they are not alike. God's made the husband with a harder exterior, and He made his wife gentle and fragile, so He calls her the weaker vessel, not the inferior vessel. As I've told you, steel is stronger than porcelain; you can drive a spike with a sledgehammer, but you can't drink tea out of it. You can drink tea out of a porcelain teacup. Silver is more fragile and beautiful than denim, and that doesn't mean that denim, because it's stronger, is intrinsically worth more. No, there are roles. God has given the husband the headship in the home, and we need to understand this.

Now, the woman, for example, is to be in submission to her own husband. That's not inferiority. Joyce knows that's not inferiority. As a matter of fact, she doesn't even want to be equal with me. She says she's not coming down for anything. Submission is one equal voluntarily placing himself under another equal that God may thereby, be glorified. We're never more like the devil when we're in rebellion; never more like the Lord Jesus Christ when we have a submissive spirit. God made us different that He might make us

one.

What we need to understand is this is voluntary submissiveness. The husband is the head of the home, but he's not the boss of the home. Jesus is the head of this church. Jesus has never one time ever made me or you do one blessed thing. Jesus leads by servant love. Most women don't mind being in subjection to a man who loves her enough to die for her and shows her, by the way, that he lives for her. Headship for the husband doesn't mean privilege; it means responsibility, just like the shepherd is responsible for the sheep, and the parent is responsible for the child. The husband has a responsibility before God.

Marriage is not a contract; marriage is a covenant, where two people mutually enter together. When you enter marriage as a contract, you begin to look for ways that you might break the contract. When you look at marriage as a contract, you think about your rights. When you look at marriage as a covenant, you think about your responsibilities. So, remember your roles.

### **III. Cultivate Contentment**

All right, number three: Cultivate contentment. Look in verse 7 again of this passage of Scripture: "Likewise, you husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge,"—listen to this—"giving honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel,"—now, watch this—"as being heirs together of the grace of life." Isn't that beautiful—the grace of life? As I looked at that video presentation—and thank you for sharing that with us; it's boring sometimes to watch home movies, but thank you for sharing that—I had to think one more time of God's grace, God's goodness. Thank God for that.

Now, Abraham and Sarah were blessed financially. As a matter of fact, Abraham was very wealthy, and some godly people are very wealthy, but Abraham and Sarah did not put their wealth first. They were willing to leave comfort of home and house and friends and family, to live in a tent, to do whatever God wanted them to do. And young people, I want you to learn this. You want to have a happy marriage, learn that you can do without anything except one another and God, and just the basic necessities of life, food, and clothing. That's all you need in order to keep you happy.

Now, sometimes a part of this verse is misinterpreted, so let's just go back up to chapter 3, verse 3. It speaks of the women, it says, whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of the plaiting of the hair, or the wearing of gold and putting on of apparel." Some people use that to say that women ought not to fix their hair, and they ought not to wear jewelry. They say it's right there in the Bible—see there? See: "whose adorning, let it not be the plaiting of the hair." You ought not to plait your hair. See there? "Wearing of gold"—you ought not to wear gold. See there? "Putting on apparel"—you ought not to wear clothes. I mean, don't check your brain at the door.

What he's saying is this: that is not the secret of your beauty.

Let me tell you about sister Sarah here in this passage of Scripture. Friend, when she was 80 years old, men were still vying for her; she was a beauty, and Walgreen's wasn't in sight. She was a beauty. What made her beautiful? The ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit. Now, Joyce was a beautiful girl when I married her. I can remember looking over there when I was in the sixth grade—serious; church history—looking over at her a few desks up to my right, thinking, That's the prettiest thing I've ever seen. But she is beautiful to me today, more beautiful because of the ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

Now, you're not going to keep your love alive if you don't take care of your personal grooming. You ought to do that. But the real enhancement is the inner person, the beauty. The word meek here doesn't mean weak or mousy. If you knew Joyce, she's not that. It means a person has themselves under God's control. The word meek was used of soldiers in the Roman army. They were not weak and mousy; they were under control. And a quiet spirit doesn't mean that a person doesn't say things. It speaks of serenity; it speaks of contentment. You have to learn contentment.

Now, Joyce and I decided to get married after the first year in college, because we'd been dating for so long, and we got married, working our way through school. I went to school seven years after we got married, planned our family while we were going to school, paying our way through school, working our way through school. And we did a lot of things, but one thing we did, we did a lot of doing without, but we were happy. I went to college on a football scholarship, and I wanted to get married, so I left football scholarship and was called to pastor a little church, First Baptist Church of Fellsmere, Florida, a wonderful church, a little church, a handful of people. They paid us the enormous salary of 25 dollars a week and we had to drive a 300-mile round trip at our own expense to pick up that 25 dollars a week. After I'd been there a little while, they said, You know, we got more preacher than we expected, and so we want to raise you five dollars a week: 30 dollars a week. Joyce and I talked about it, and we said, Oh, no, we couldn't possibly take five dollars more, so we were still tithing that 25, but then we just took that extra five dollars, and split it in half, and gave the other two dollars and a half back to the church each Sunday, because we thought we were being overpaid. Maybe we were, but we just lived that way.

I remember when we went on our honeymoon, sweetheart, you know how much money—kids, listen; I want to tell you kids something. You think you have to fly to Tahiti or something, we had fifty bucks—that's it—for our honeymoon, and we had one of the best honeymoons anybody ever had. God has blessed us with so many nice things today, but we didn't have them when we started out. Didn't make much difference to us. I bought Joyce a little engagement ring. We were in college; we went to Duvall Jewelry

in Deland, Florida. We didn't buy it then with a credit card; we didn't have a credit card. I went in there and gave that man a few bucks. He showed me a ring. He said, Now, son, this ring, he said, now, the stone's got a flaw, but you have to look hard to see it. Joyce was with me; she said, That's what I want. You know how much I paid for it? One hundred bucks—one hundred bucks. I didn't have a hundred bucks. Went in week after week, bought her a ring.

Now, listen. I want to tell you something. We know what it is to abase, we know what it is to abound, but I can tell you we were just as happy then as we are today. Learn contentment. The Bible says that, in whatever state we are in, we're to be content. And a wise man once said, To whom little is not enough, nothing is enough. And you kids, if you're not careful, your marriage is going to be, till debt do us part. Learn to be content.

#### **IV. Banish Bitterness**

Now, here's the fourth thing: Banish bitterness—banish bitterness. This passage goes on now in verses 8 through 10: “Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous, not rendering evil for evil nor railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing, knowing that ye are there unto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.” And friend, I have inherited one. “For he that will love life”—listen to this—“and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips that they speak no guile.” Don't be bitter. Better be the better half, not the bitter half. Homes are going to have a lot of attacks. Ours has; yours will.

Three kinds of attacks. I told Joyce, I think I'm going to preach a sermon entitled, Earthquakes, Woodpeckers, and Termites, because those are what come against a home. Earthquakes come. We've known some earthquakes, I mean some things that shook us to the very foundation—earthquakes. Then there are woodpeckers, always beating on your home. You know the woodpeckers. Friend, it's easier to deal with the earthquakes and the woodpeckers than it is the termites. You get the termites in the foundation, and they just silently eat away; those little things, that bitterness that comes.

Abraham and Sarah—I want to tell you, we've known problems, but look again—1 Peter 3:9: “Not rendering evil for evil or railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing.” There are three levels of life. One level is the devilish level, where you return evil for good. The devil does that. The next level is the human level, where you return good for good, and evil for evil; that's what the average person does. A child of God, if he would love life and see good days, will return good for evil.

And the second chapter of this wonderful book, 2 Peter, tells about the Lord Jesus Christ, and if you have your Bibles there, 2 Peter 2, verses 21 through 23. Peter is setting this up for marriage, and he says, “For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps who

did no sin,”—now, listen to this—“neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” Learn that there are no problems too big to solve, just people too small to solve them, if we would just banish bitterness and attack the problem rather than one another.

And it may be a small thing. Did you ever get a splinter in your finger, and maybe you say, Well, you know, I could get a needle or something and take that out, but it'd be a little painful; I'll just leave it there, and you leave it there. And, about three nights later, you wake up with a throbbing pain, and you look, and your finger's about twice the size that it ought to be, fiery red; it's infected. It's those little things that bring that infection into your life.

Banish bitterness. Don't go to bed back-to-back. Don't go to bed angry. The Bible says, “Don't let the sun go down upon your wrath.” Joyce and I have tried to practice that. Sometimes we've stayed up for three nights in a row. Just banish bitterness. Don't be getting back one to another.

## **V. Continue Communication**

Now, number five: continue communication. Look again at 1 Peter 3, verses 8 through 10: “Finally be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous, not rendering evil for evil nor railing for railing but contrariwise blessing, knowing that there unto are you called, that ye should inherit a blessing, for he that loveth life and shall see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips that they speak no guile.” That, *in toto*, speaks of communication.

Abraham and Sarah were very different. You read the Bible: you can find that out. I want to tell you, Joyce and Adrian are very different. We did a profile, a psychological profile. Would you believe the very areas that I was the highest in, she's the lowest in. The very areas that I am the lowest in, she's the highest. And, when they put that on the thing, it made an X like that, just, we absolutely, psychologically, emotionally, in many ways opposites. And, apart from the grace of God, we wouldn't stay together, but it is the grace of God that has allowed us to communicate.

Now, the fact that opposites attract is God's joke, because what attracts us before marriage drives us crazy after marriage. We're just opposites, but that's the way that she has character qualities and emotional strengths that I need, and vice versa. That's the reason that God put us together. Psychologists tell us that, when the people come in for counseling, 80 percent of it really deals with communication: learning to communicate. Proverbs 18, verse 21—put it in your margin; listen to this: “Life and death are in the power of the tongue, and they that love it”—that is, love life—“shall eat the fruit thereof.” And, again, 1 Peter 3, verse 10: “For he that will love life and see good

days, let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips that they speak no guile.”

Communication is so important. It's what we call intimacy. It the secret of lasting love. And it's husbands, by and large, that are the communication problem. Look in the magazines the women read: Seven Ways to be More Intimate with Your Husband. Look at the magazines the men read: Seven Ways to Get Better Gas Mileage, or How to Remodel Your Garage. I asked Joyce; I said, Joyce, what is the basic communication problem in marriages? She didn't blink an eye; she said, Men—men! And I suppose that many times we men are out to lunch, we don't dwell with them according to knowledge; we're like that guy said to his wife, Now, before the football season starts, is there anything you'd like to say? I can identify with that. So we have to learn to communicate and share, and I'm going to be bringing a message in this series on celebrating the family, on communication.

But I want to say to men and women, I really believe that a happy marriage is learning to have a good date life, and there are four kinds of dates that everybody needs to make. Number one: you need to have a regular date with God. Do you have a place where you get alone with God, have a quiet time with God? If not, you're not going to be able to communicate and fellowship. Have a date with God. Number two: have a date with your kids. If you have kids, take them out by themselves apart from the other. Give them your utmost attention. Number three: you need to have a date with yourself. All of us need time where we can just get alone, do the things that we need to do, have a little space, something that's fulfilling. But have a date with your spouse, and a regular time is more important than lots of time—the time when the two of you are together. Continuous communication.

## **VI. Refresh Romance**

Now, number six—and we're kind of getting to the landing pad—but number six: refresh romance. Keep the love light burning. Look again in 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 7: “Likewise you husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge.” Now, the word dwell with them is a word translated in some of the translations that you have, live together with them. Now, when we talk about people living together, what we really mean in today's society is that they're sharing the same bed, and that is the idea right here in the Greek language also, that we are together physically; we are dwelling together, living together. It speaks of sexual mutuality, speaks of the physical side of marriage, and that is so important, that you express that love physically, not just simply in coming together as husband and wife, but all through your life, keep that romance going.

Keep the hugs going. I asked Joyce the other day, I said, How many times a day do you think we hug? I believe, counting big ones and little ones, probably a minimum of fifteen times a day we'll hug, just always reaching out, always touching, always hugging.

As a matter of fact, I was hugging Joyce real big one time in the kitchen, and our maid came in. She looked. We didn't know she was around. She said, That's nice, and walked out. It is nice. You need to keep the romance there.

Many times on my way home, I'll take a cell phone, which is a wonderful invention, and dial the number. Joyce will answer, and I'll say, This is the Love Mobile. The Love Mobile is on its way home. I can hardly wait to get there; sensitize your lips. Well, that gives her something to look forward to as I am coming home. We just keep that courtship going.

Many guys want the courtship to end. Never let it end. Never cease flirting with your wife, and never flirt with any other woman—never. Not the waitress, don't call her sweetheart—oh, she's not your sweetheart. You've got one sweetheart. Don't call her darling—she's not your darling. You have one darling. You keep her number one, and I want to tell you, and I'm not ashamed to say it, I have a crush on that girl; I mean, I do; and she loves me.

And keep the romance going, and learn, this verse also says, "giving honor." Do you see that? Giving honor. The Bible says that, in verse 7: "Likewise you husbands dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor." Guys, open the car doors for her. Get out and walk around. I might as well; Joyce is going to sit there till I do anyway. I mean, I'd be halfway to the building, look back, she's still sitting in the car waiting. Go back and open the car door and show her—that word giving honor literally speaks of courtesy—courtesy.

And compliment one another constantly. Joyce and I will walk in the mornings. That's a good place for communication. We try to walk two or three miles a day, but in our walk in our neighborhood there's a curve in the road, and we call that the compliment curve. From the time we get on that curve till we end, we do nothing but compliment one another about anything, big or small. Learn to give honor. You say, you don't want to be complimented—I'm going to tell you you're not telling the truth. We do need to keep the romance in the marriage.

## **VII. Practice Prayer**

Last of all—and I must close—practice prayer. I say this last, not because it's least, but because it's most important. Look again at 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 7: "Likewise ye husbands dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel,"—now, watch this—"and as being heirs of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered." That means that husbands and wives should pray together, and we try to do this. We've tried to do this from the time we've gotten married, and we pray for our children, our grandchildren, every day by name, and lift them up to the Lord, because we know the Bible says, "Except the Lord keep a city, the watchmen waketh

but in vain; except the Lord build a house, the builder builds but in vain.” And I look back upon the life that God has given us, and I would be a sheer fool, an unmitigated egotist, if I tried to take praise for what God has done. God answers prayer. Practice prayer.

Men—most men—don’t want to pray with women, because we have a hard outer shell, but guys, humble yourselves, get down with your wife, and practice prayer; let her hear you pray, let her hear you pouring out your heart before God. It will give her great confidence and great comfort.

## Conclusion

Right here from the Word of God—1 Peter chapter 3—are seven principles. I hope that you’ll just take your notes and go home and go over these. Let’s bow our heads together in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, your home may be in shambles right now. That means you need God all the more. Your love may be getting cold; maybe you need a fresh start. You may not have a home; you may be widowed or divorced, and you have a home, but you’re living by yourself, and maybe you’re lonely. I want to tell you, God meets all of those needs. Maybe your home’s been broken; God heals the broken-hearted. You know, whoever you are, wherever you are, there’s always a fresh start with God. That’s what’s so wonderful.

I told you last week that God wants everybody to have three homes—a family home, a church home, and a heavenly home—and Jesus is the key to all three of those. If you’d invite Him in, and say, Lord Jesus, come into my own heart, take control of my life; start with me—start with me, Lord—to bless our home. If you’re not certain that you’re saved and going to heaven, you can be certain. You can know that you’re saved. Being saved is not just being a nicer person, not just keeping rules; it’s receiving a gift. Jesus died for you, paid for your sin with His blood. The Bible says, “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God—the gift of God—is eternal life.” Would you like to receive that gift?

Why don’t you pray a prayer like this from your heart, silently but sincerely: Dear God, I know that you love me. I know that you want to save me. Jesus, you died to save me, and you promised to save me, if I would trust you. I do trust you, Jesus. Right now, with all of my heart, come into my life. Invite Him in. Come into my life. Come in, Lord Jesus. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me, Jesus. Ask Him. Did you ask Him?

Just thank Him. Pray this way. Thank you for doing it. I don’t look for a feeling. I stand on your Word. You’re now my Lord and Savior, and I will live my life for you, and I will not be ashamed of you. Give me the courage, Lord, to make it public. Help me, Lord, never to be ashamed of you. In your name I pray. Amen. ƒ

# Total Togetherness

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** February 14, 1988

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 Peter 3:7–9

*“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”*

1 PETER 3:7

## Outline

Introduction

I. Thoughtfulness

II. Thankfulness

III. Trustfulness

IV. Tenderness

Conclusion

## Introduction

We’re talking today about husbands and wives and the relationship of husbands and wives. And the title of the message is: “Total Togetherness.” That is, how to achieve intimacy in marriage. You’re going to find out that the scripture is addressed today primarily to the husband because I believe it is the wives who desire intimacy more than the man. And we men sometimes are so—pardon me fellas—stupid we don’t understand the needs of a wife and, really, our own deepest needs. God’s plan for marriage is that man and women become one—that means totally intimacy. It is not merely talking about physical union but it is talking about intellectual, psychological, emotional, as well as, physical dwelling together as husband and wife—total togetherness.

Alright, let’s see what God’s word has to say about how to achieve that unity in marriage. I begin reading here in 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 7, “Likewise, ye husbands,”—now he’s already spoken to the wives and then he begins to speak to the husbands and he says, “Likewise, ye husbands dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered. Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye

should inherit a blessing.” Now go back to verse 7 and look at that word “dwell”—“Husbands dwell with them.” The word “dwell” in the Greek language literally means, “To house together, to live together in the same house.” It comes from two Greek words which mean “house” and “with” or “to live with in the same house.” —that is, intimacy. It literally means letting somebody else into your life.

Now this matter of intimacy, as I have said, is more than physical. It involves the total person. It primarily involves this matter of communication. Husbands and wives, as we’ve already said, have such a difficulty communicating. One woman went to her lawyer and said, “My husband wants to divorce me.” The lawyer said, “Does he have any grounds?” “Oh,” she said, “He has about twenty acres.” “Oh no,” he said, “I don’t mean that.” He said, “Does he have a grudge?” She said, “A what?” He said, “A grudge.” She said, “No, but he has a car port.” He said, “Say what is your problem anyway?” “Oh,” she said, “He says we can’t communicate.” —I can understand why.

Communication, dear friend, is right at the center of this thing called “intimacy.” And there are all kinds of communication. We need to communicate emotionally, to tell the other person how we feel. We need to communicate intellectually, to tell the other person how we think. We need to communicate socially, to tell the other person what we like to do. We need to communicate physically. As a matter of fact, in marriage when husband and wife come together physically the Bible uses this terminology: That thus and such a person “knew” his wife. Isn’t that strange, to talk about the physical act of marriage as “knowing” someone? But sex is a form of communication that says, “I love you.” It’s a way of saying, “I love you” that cannot be put into words. It is total intimacy.

## **I. Thoughtfulness**

Now dear friend, marriage comes to its fullest, its happiest, and its most wonderful state when we achieve total, total togetherness, total intimacy in marriage. I see in our passage before us four things, four steps, to total intimacy, total togetherness in marriage. And the very first of these is what I want to call: Thoughtfulness. Now the Bible says here, “Husbands dwell with your wives according to knowledge.” That is, dwell with your wives thoughtfully according to knowledge. Actually we could translate it this way: Live together in the same house with good sense. Literally, live together “sunoiko,” dwell in the same house with good sense according to knowledge. So many husbands are so stupid.

One man watched a football game on Friday night, watched two football games on Saturday, and two on Sunday. His wife said to him, “I think you love football more than you love me.” He said, “Yes, but you’re ahead of basketball.” That’s living dangerously sir. “According to knowledge”—learn something about your wife. What does it mean to live with a car according to knowledge? You get a new automobile, what do you do?

You read the manual. You see what kind of oil it takes, what kind of fuel it takes, what the air pressure in the tires is going to be, you watch the gauges and the gauges indicate the needs of that car. I was driving my automobile and a gauge came on that said, "Check your oil pressure." I immediately went into a service station and said, "Would you check the oil pressure?" Because the gauge says this car has a need and if I want that car to serve me, I have to pay attention to the needs of that car. And God's Word is the manual and our wife is constantly sending signals. But many of us don't read the manual and we pay no attention to the signals. We pay more attention to our automobiles—many of the men do—than they do to their own wives. They do not live with their wife according to knowledge.

Now gentleman I want you to learn that a woman is different from a man other than merely physically different. She is psychologically and emotionally different and God made her different on purpose. She is designed differently by her manufacturer. God made her different from you. And if you try to make her just like you, or you think that you're going to give to her exactly what you would like to have, you're going to make a big mistake. Friends, she is different. She's equal to you but different. And we need to learn that equality is not sameness. God made her different and if you don't learn to adjust to that, you're headed for big trouble.

I heard of some ships that were out on maneuver and maneuvering at night and word came to the captain. They said, "Captain ahead of us there's a large mass." And he said, "Well send them a message." They said, "What should we tell them?" He said, "You tell them to alter their course ten degrees to the north." And they sent out the message, "Alter your course ten degrees to the north." The message came back and said, "You alter your course ten degrees to the south." The captain said, "Send this message: I am the captain I say alter your course ten degrees to the north." The message came back saying, "I'm a seaman first class you alter your course ten degrees to the south." The captain was angry, he said, "Tell them that I'm in a battleship, to alter their course ten degrees to the north." The message came back and said, "I am a lighthouse. You ought to alter your course ten degrees to the south."

Now friend listen, the man that doesn't learn to adjust is heading for a collision in his marriage. I mean there are some things you couldn't change your wife these ways if she wanted you to. She couldn't change if she wanted to. This is the way that God has made her. I want to tell you, she's different.

I want to mention four or five ways that a woman is different than a man. If you're going to live with your wife according to knowledge, you're going to have to learn these ways. That she is different and she's different by design. For example, God has designed the man to be the leader or the initiator and God has designed the woman to be the responder. Over and over again the Bible says the husband is to be the head of

the wife. That is, the head is what initiates; the head is what gives leadership. The man is designed to lead. The woman is designed to respond. And therefore the man is to be the initiator.

Take the analogy again of Christ and the church. We love Him because He first loved us. God is the one through the Lord Jesus who has initiated that love. And correspondingly, God has made the male to be the initiator and God has made the woman to be the responder. Now this doesn't mean, of course, that the man is the boss in the home but it does mean that he's to lead. And most women have a sense of insecurity when the husband does not lead. Mister, are you leading in your home? Are you leading? If you're not leading, you're failing. And what we so many times call "a bossy wife" is really just a failing husband. God made the man to be the initiator; He made the woman to be the responder.

Second difference: Not only should men and women realize that they're different and the fact that the man is to be the initiator and the woman is to be the responder, but men and women think different. Men tend to think logically. Women tend to think emotionally. Now wait just a moment ladies, I'm not saying that the man's way of thinking is better, it is different. I'm certainly not saying that the man is smarter than the woman, but they come at problems differently. And a woman, many times, will lead with her emotions. She will tell you how she feels about a situation. And the husband will say, "Now wait a minute, stop. What are you saying? Line it out to me, one, two, three, and four." When he says that, she will begin to criticize him and say that, "he is harsh, that he is uncaring, that he is insensitive, he is unfeeling, and he is logically cold." He will accuse her of being, if he's not careful, unreasonable, and illogical. And if he gets mad enough, he'll call her stupid, which she is not; she just comes at the problem differently. Now fellas you need to understand that about the female psyche. Joyce tells me, "Adrian don't listen to what I say, listen for what I mean." That's frustrating guys, it really is, but you have to do that.

Now men want objective solutions to a problem. But a woman, when she's faced with a problem, she'll think about the people within that problem and begin to care for them. It's not to say that men are not emotional and women are not logical. I'm talking about, however, a basic instinct in the nature of human nature. Let me tell you again the difference between men and women: Men tend to be "do-ers" and women tend to be "be-ers." Now what I mean by that is that men are more goal-oriented in life. Men see goals and they move, they reach out, they drive for goals. There's sort of a conquest mentality in men. That has to be that way because God's design is that the man be the breadwinner. He is designed for that. God said to Adam, "Of the sweat of your face you are going to earn your living." He has to have goals. He has to be driven by goals.

But the woman has to have that mating instinct and that homing instinct and that

maternal instinct, so God has given to her by nature this instinct to “be.” She’s more interested in being a mother, being a wife; she’s more interested in relationships than he is. He is interested in immediate results. She’s interested in long-term relationships. And that can cause problems because a man who is goal oriented, when he reaches one goal he wants to go to another one, even in marriage. He courts his wife. He does everything he can do to get her to marry him and once she marries him that’s done, that’s achieved. He says, “Why chase a streetcar after you’ve caught it?” And so he just leaves that and he goes on to other goals, but it becomes her whole life. And while she’s pouring more and more of her life into him, he may be pouring less of his life into her after the courtship than he did before the courtship. It’s very strange. So we need to understand these psychological differences. I’m going to tell you something else. Men tend to be inward thinkers; women tend to be outward talkers. Now it doesn’t mean again that women don’t think and men can’t talk. I certainly am not talking about who is the more intelligent, but men don’t like to talk as much as women do. Men just think and you have this idea here of the silent male and the talking woman.

Now fellas we need to open up and communicate and talk some more and girls, don’t talk so much. What we need is more talking thinkers and thinking talkers. And we need to see that both of these natures have their weaknesses and both of them have their strengths. Now a man, because he’s goal oriented, looks for success but a woman, because she is relationship oriented, she looks for security. Therefore think about it, a man sees his job as an extension of himself. I mean a man can hardly separate himself from his job. If he’s failing in his job he has a great sense of lack of self-worth. And if he’s achieving in his job, he sees himself, because he’s goal oriented, as being fulfilled and worth something. But the woman sees her home as an extension of herself and, therefore, if the man pays no attention to the home, the woman is going to feel that the man is really rejecting her. Guys when we fail to fix the little things around the house—the leaking faucets—when we fail to do those things that she’s been asking to have done over and over again, it’s not the leaking faucet, it’s not the door that won’t close good that really bothers her, it’s the way that you have said to her, “I really don’t care about your life and the things that pertain to you.” You see for a woman when her house is cluttered her life is cluttered. When there are problems at home she has problems at home. But the man sees the home simply as a tool sometimes, a place to park, and a launching pad for him to go out and do these other things.

Now we need to understand that while men are success oriented and women are security oriented, nothing wrong with either one, God put both together because we need both. Now a husband needs to learn more about his wife than he learns about his automobile. “Dwell with them”—number one—thoughtfully, okay? “According to knowledge,” it literally means, “live together with good sense.”

## II. Thankfulness

Number two: Dwell with her, not only thoughtfully, but dwell with her thankfully.

Thankfulness is the second key to total togetherness. Look at the scripture, “Likewise ye husbands dwell with them according to knowledge giving honour unto the wife.” Do you see that? Do you know what it means to give her honor? It really means to express appreciation to your mate. That’s it. To give honor means to set something aside as having great value. Somehow you have to get across to your wife that you value her, that she is of worth to you, that she is important to you, that she is God’s priceless gift, and, therefore, you are going to grant to her the respect due to her and position in her life and you must give this honor. If you don’t give it to her, a great place in her life is going to be void.

Now, how do you give your wife honor? Well, there are several ways that you can give her honor. Number one, you can look her right in the face, right in the eyes, and tell her how much you value her, how much you appreciate her. And when you do, when you tell her how much you value her and how much you appreciate her, include those physical qualities: her attractiveness, her beauty, her charm, her grace. But go beyond those things. If that’s all that you deal with, she’ll be threatened by it. Because, you see, up there in the first part of this chapter, the Bible tells women to have the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God a great price. And that meek and quiet spirit is not corruptible. What God is saying is that the outward beauty is fading and failing, as it does in all of us, and that outward frame is failing. But when you praise your wife and when you honor you wife, say, “Darling thank you for tenderness. Sweetheart, thank you for your wisdom in dealing with the children. Darling I appreciate your industry in taking care of the bookwork in our house. Or, darling I saw you the other day in thus and such a time, I was overwhelmed at your patience.” And thank her and praise her and give her honor for those character traits.

Let the children know that you honor her. Let your children hear you praise their mother. It’s one of the finest things that you can possibly do. “Her children praise her and her husband also rises up and gives her honor,” Proverbs 31 says. And you’re to do that in front of your children. Praise your wife before her friends. Never, never cut your wife down in public, never in front of her friends, it’s humiliating and it’s degrading. If you have a fault to pick with her, certainly you can do it at home in a loving confrontation. Give her honor. Write her a note. Let her know how much you value her, how much you appreciate her.

How would you like to go out and hire somebody to do what you wife does, if she is a homemaker? Do you think that you would just find a person off-handedly who could do these things: to be a meal planner, a nurse, a counselor, a comforter, a policeman and a judge to settle disputes between the kids, a wardrobe consultant, a budget and

financial planner, a teacher, a tutor, a cheerleader, a spiritual advisor, a nursery worker, a seamstress, a cook, a maid, a gardener, an administrator, interior decorator, chauffeur, and a historian and all of these things that she is? A confidant, a companion, a lover, an advisor, an encourager, a partner, a comforter, she's all of these things. Happy is the man who learns how to express thanksgiving. Nothing will do more to intimacy in a marriage than for you to recognize those character traits and achievements in your wife and give honor to her.

### **III. Trustfulness**

Now let me mention the third thing that she needs, and she needs it so much. Not only does she need this thankfulness, but she needs trustfulness. She needs to know that you trust her. You recognize her for her worth, you give her honor, and therefore you trust her. Listen to the logic, "Likewise ye husbands dwell with them according to knowledge,"—alright that's thoughtfulness—"giving honor unto the wife,"—that's thankfulness—"as unto the weaker vessel and as being heirs together of the grace of life." Underscore this phrase, "heirs together of the grace of life." Do you know what that means? That means that there is equality in your lives. That you both, as husband and wife, have an equal inheritance—are you listening—you have an equal inheritance before Almighty God. In Christ there's neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, bond or free, you're all one in the Lord Jesus Christ. And she needs to know, dear friend, that you have that trustfulness of her, that you trust her. And the way that you show her that you trust her is that you're transparent with her, absolutely truthful, that communication is constant. And she can feel, in such an attitude of trust, that if there's a fault in your life that she can confront you with that fault without fear of your retaliation or fear of your anger. She needs to know that you value her opinion so much that you will consult her before you make any major decision. And let me tell you, let me show you the mark that you have this trustfulness. Do you know what it is, the one mark that you trust your wife? It is that you pray with her.

The Bible says, "You're to dwell together as heirs of the grace of life that your prayers be not hindered." There's nothing that will put intimacy into the marriage, there's nothing that will show trustfulness more than when husband and wife trust each other so much that they're so transparent that they can pray together. Mister when you pray with your wife, do you know what you're saying to her? You're saying to her, "I recognize that you're a spiritual creature. I recognize your great value before God. I recognize that you and I are equals before God. I recognize that my job and my concern is your spiritual welfare. I value you before God. And I so trust you that I'm able to be transparent before God." —because you cannot pray without total transparency—"I value you so much that I'm willing to pray with you."

Do you know why so many husbands find it hard to pray with their wives? Because, dear friend, they are not willing to be intimate. They don't know how to open up. They don't know how just to lay themselves before God. And we'll get off before God and we'll tell God things we wouldn't want our wife to know, why? We don't trust her. It's not that she's not trustworthy, but we just simply do not recognize that we are heirs together of the grace of life. Friend to open the day and close the day with pray as husband and wife is a binding together, a bonding together, that God wants. How sweet it is, as two become one flesh they enter into that intimacy of prayer.

Now listen folks, Peter knew what he was talking about because he was inspired by the Holy Spirit. He says, "You dwell with them according to knowledge"—that is thoughtfulness—"Live together with good sense." And then he says, "Give her honor"—that is thankfulness. And then he says, "You are heirs together of the grace of life that your prayers be not hindered"—that is trustfulness, as we pray one with another and pray one for another.

#### **IV. Tenderness**

Then let me give you the last in these ingredients that will make a marriage a super glue marriage. And that, my dear friend, is what I want to call: Tenderness. Now notice he says here in verse 7, that you are "to give honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel." Now are women weaker than men? Well, they out live us. They control most of the wealth; they really do, in the world. It's an amazing thing. Why are they called "the weaker vessel?" I think that the reason that a woman is called a weaker vessel is in the very word here itself. It actually has the idea of being a "more fragile fabric." Doesn't mean it's worth less, means it's worth more. Your wife is of a very fragile fabric. Doesn't mean she's inferior when the Bible says, "You're to give her honor as unto the weaker vessel." She's a very delicate creature. She needs to be handled with tenderness. And friend if you'll put thoughtfulness and thankfulness and trustfulness and tenderness together, you're going to have that total togetherness. You're going to have that intimacy that's going to make the physical act of marriage all the more beautiful. But you'll never achieve real intimacy without these other things.

Now, he goes on to tell us how to be tender. He enlarges the subject to include the entire church, but he certainly includes husband and wife when he says here, "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing." You know our tongues get us in trouble so much in a marriage, don't they? "Evil for evil, railing for railing." I'm reminded of Winston Churchill and Lady Astor. Now they weren't married, you can be grateful for that. One time Winston Churchill so infuriated Lady Astor she said, "If I were your wife, I'd put arsenic in your tea." He said, "Madame I can assure you if you were

my wife, I would gladly drink it."

On another occasion, Lady Astor found Winston Churchill and he'd been drinking. She said, "Aha you're drunk." He said, "That's right and you're ugly, but tomorrow I'll be sober." That's railing for railing. That happens in homes, doesn't it? We're glad that Churchill and Lady Astor weren't married; it would have been Lady Disaster. What we need to do is to take God's plan here for this tenderness. Look at it here, he gives us a very wonderful plan, he says here first of all, "compassion." Do you know what the compassion means? Here's where tenderness comes from. Our English word compassion means "to feel with". Can you put yourself in your wife's place and feel with her, to suffer, to say, "I understand and I care." And then he says, "Love as brethren." You say, "Well she's not my brother." That isn't what it means. It means that not only is your wife to be your sweetheart, she is to be your friend. This is friendship love.

Somebody wrote these words, "Somebody asked me to tell the time our friendship stopped and our love began. O my darling that is the secret, our friendship never stopped." And when you fall in love you don't fall out of friendship. For "Love as brethren, be pitiful." That means, I hurt when you hurt, I love you my darling as I love my own body. "Be courteous" that's where tenderness comes from. Do you know what courtesy is? It is simply love in the little things. The kind of courtesy you had for your wife when you opened the door when you took her out on a date, when you stood by her chair and would seat her, when you would rise when she would come into a room, when you just walked past and touched her shoulder and smiled at her.

## **Conclusion**

Dear friend listen, God's word is so practical—so practical. Gentleman, I want to challenge you, in the name of Jesus, to do these four things, to put these ingredients in your marriage. And I want you to begin on thoughtfulness, thankfulness, trustfulness, and tenderness, and you see if God doesn't do something great in your marriage. And you will dwell together as one flesh and your home will become a little colony of Heaven.

# Five Ways to Be a Successful Husband

*By Adrian Rogers*

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**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 3:7–10**

**Sponsored by: Sponsor**

*“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”*

1 PETER 3:7

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## Introduction

Turn to First Peter chapter 3, and in one verse, in one verse I'm going to talk to our dads and husbands and tell you how to be a successful husband. What a power-packed verse of Scripture we have for today. First Peter chapter 3 verse 7: “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them,” that is, with your wives, “according to knowledge, giving

honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered.”

Now folks, marriages may be made in heaven, but survival takes place here on earth, Amen? And sometimes survival is tough. What we have here is a survival kit for marriages, and I want to tell you it speaks primarily to the husbands.

I’ve been pastoring a long time, and I have yet to see a home where the husband was right and the wife and children did not follow – if the husband from the beginning was a man of God who said, “As for me and my house, we’ll serve the Lord.” There may be some; I’ve just never seen it. I’ve seen homes where the children and wife love the Lord and the husband didn’t, but I’ve yet to see a home where the husband began as the spiritual leader, from the beginning, from the honeymoon, to say, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord,” whose wife and children did not follow him.

Today I want to give you five ways to be a successful husband, and that’s the title of our message. Five ways to be a successful husband. And by the way, that’s the finest thing you can do for your children, just be a successful husband. Children today need more than anything else a role model. They’re not getting it in the schools. They’re not getting it on television. They’re not getting it from their peers. They’re not getting it from literature. They need to get it from you. So let’s think about that on this Fathers’ Day.

## **I. Learn to Practice Intimacy with Her**

Number one, if you’re to love your wife, learn to practice intimacy with her. Learn to practice intimacy with her. Now look here in verse 7 again. And it says, “Likewise ye husbands, dwell with them. Do you see the word dwell? Dwell with them. That’s the Greek word *synoikeyo*. And what it literally means is to make a home with them, to dwell, to live together. Now, the reason I use the word intimacy is, this word dwell doesn’t simply mean to stay under the same roof. That’s too obvious. The word dwell speaks of intimacy.

Do you remember when God sent the Holy Spirit into the world? He said, I will send you another comforter that he may dwell with you forever. The same word. The same word. That he may dwell with you. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the most intimate of all relationships.

Do you know what the human heart craves for more than anything else? And God made us this way. We crave for intimacy. I mean, a person has a built-in craving for total togetherness. And God has provided this in marriage where a man and a woman become one flesh.

We speak of intimacy. The Latin word *intimus* means the inward part, or it means the inmost part.

### **A. Physical Intimacy**

And so, when a husband and wife are intimate, it goes far beyond physical intimacy. Now, that's a part of it. Thank God for the physical intimacy. But people can be physically intimate without having true intimacy. True intimacy is a part of the total being, that dwelling together, that *synoikeo*, that making a house together. How wonderful it is.

### **B. Verbal Intimacy**

And the finest thing any man could do for his teenage son or daughter is to love their mother. It involves verbal togetherness, where husbands and wives learn how to talk together. They open up and they just simply talk and they share their secrets. They share their hopes. They share their dreams. They share their failures. They just talk. That's verbal intimacy. If you have that in your home, thank God for it. A lot of people don't have it.

### **C. Emotional Intimacy**

But it goes beyond that. There is an emotional intimacy where you just let down the walls and you're not afraid to weep in each other's arms. You're not afraid to say to the other person, I'm afraid, or I'm so happy, or I'm just blue, or I just want to be here and hold your hand. That's that emotional intimacy that we all need and we all desire.

### **D. Intellectual Intimacy**

And then there's intellectual intimacy where you have your ideas that you share, your ideas and your thoughts and maybe your creativity. Maybe you can talk politics, you can talk theology, and you can float out a new idea. You just need somebody to be intellectually intimate with. As iron sharpeneth iron, we sharpen each other's intellect with that kind of intimacy.

### **E. Social Intimacy**

And then there's a social intimacy that all couples ought to have when they dwell together. They have the same friends. They enjoy the same kind of recreation. They like the same kind of parties, and all of that. And together they play as well as pray together. That's what I call social intimacy.

### **F. Spiritual Intimacy**

But, dear friends, all of these pale into insignificance in comparison to what I want to talk about – spiritual intimacy. In this same passage of Scripture Peter talks about praying together. He says that they're to dwell together as heirs of the grace of life that their prayers to God be not hindered. I suppose there's no deeper intimacy than praying together.

In my counseling, I find that so many women say to me, There's one thing my

husband will not do that I wish he would do. Do you know what it is? I wish he'd pray with me. I wish my husband would pray with me. And I dare say that many men, even preachers of the Gospel and deacons, fail to pray with their wives. Oh, we give thanks at the table. Or we may mumble a prayer just before we go to sleep at night. But I'm talking about genuine prayer with their wives, when they dwell together in that deepest intimacy and they learn how to pray together.

Why don't men like to pray with their wives? Very frankly, there's something in me that by nature doesn't want pray with Joyce. I mean, it's just in me. I am a private person. And when you pray with a person, I mean really pray, what do you have to do? You've got to get the walls down, right? When you pray, when you pray privately, you get the roof off. But when you pray corporately, you get the walls down, and that's hard.

When you pray with somebody what you're saying to that person is, Look, I recognize you as a spiritually important person. I recognize the gifts of God in your heart. I am interested in your spirituality. I'm interested in your spiritual growth. I have time for you. You are a part of my spiritual life. God is not just my God and your God. God is our God. That's spiritual intimacy, when we pray together. It says to the wife, my husband is serious about being the spiritual leader in our home.

Let me tell you how Joyce and I pray together. In the morning, I wake up and greet the Lord and have a brief quiet time with him and Joyce has her quiet time and then we have breakfast together. After breakfast we just shove back the dishes and we have a devotion from some devotional book. We use a lot of different devotional books, sometimes Oswald Chambers or Our Daily Bread, sometimes we'll read from the Proverbs and discuss a Proverb or whatever. Then we have a little prayer list of missionaries that we pray for the spiritual leaders in our church that we pray for. Then we pray for our family and pray especially for a child or children who have special needs.

And Joyce will say, Adrian, what is your day today? What things are on your heart? What things concern you? What are you faced with that I may pray for? And I'll ask her the same thing. Joyce, what things are you facing today that that you really want me to pray about? And I'll pray for her, and she'll pray for me. It doesn't take long. It's a wonderful way to start a day. And then at the close of the day, we just simply kneel and pray and commit the day to our Lord and thank God for that.

Women desire, greatly desire, and women deserve a husband that will pray with them. The Bible says, you are to dwell together as heirs of the grace of life that your prayers to God be not hindered. So while there's that verbal togetherness and while there's that emotional togetherness, and while there's that social togetherness, and while there's that intellectual togetherness, there needs to be that spiritual togetherness, so then there can be that physical intimacy.

Dwell with them. Dwell with them. That's the very first rule for being a good husband – learn how to be intimate. And that means that we're going to have to sacrifice a little bit of our selfhood, or at least our self-protection, and let down those barriers, and let our wives have a part in our life. Do you know what intimacy is? It is letting somebody else into your life. It is letting somebody else into your life. Now, the very first thing then, practice intimacy with her.

## **II. Be Understanding with Her**

Number two. Be understanding of her. That's the second rule. Be understanding with her. Look again at verse 7. "Likewise ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge," according to knowledge. Most husbands are not good husbands because they're not understanding husbands. And the reason they're not understanding husbands is they've never really taken time to gain knowledge about their wives and they're too proud to learn and to say, I don't know.

Now when they get a new automobile, they drive the automobile according to knowledge. It comes with a manual and they read the manual and they say, Well now, what kind of gasoline will this automobile use? And how often do I rotate the tires? And what is the air pressure in the tires? And what kind of oil will it use? And all of that. And then they're constantly watching the gauges and so forth to see to it that they're responding to the needs of an automobile.

Hey folks, there are some gauges that you can read and respond to when it comes to the needs of your wife. If you're intelligent, if you will dwell with her according to knowledge. You see, men and women are different and God made us different. And vive la difference!

God made us different. Thank God for the difference. God made us different that he might make us one and the differences between men and women are not something that is bad, but something that is good. It's not a disadvantage; it is a design and a part of God's wonderful plan.

Jack Taylor, who's preached from this pulpit, has said this about the differences. He said, and I quote, "Men and women are equal, but not identical. We always have been and always will be equal. Yet never have we been and never will we be identical. Yet, irony of all ironies, do you realize that millions of people are working themselves to death, to attain an equality that they already have. And millions of others are fighting over the fact that they are different and will never be anything but different."

Now friend, just accept the fact that you're equal and accept the fact that you're different. Don't try to make yourself equal. You already are. Don't try to change the differences. You never will change the differences. Your wife couldn't change her basic nature if she tried. And God wouldn't want her to, and you wouldn't either, if you really

understood the differences.

Now what are the differences between a woman and a man? Well, the physical differences are obvious. But what are the psychological and spiritual and emotional differences? The Bible says you're to dwell with them according to knowledge. Well, when God created man and woman, he built a maleness into man, and he built a femaleness into a woman. The male is the initiator and the female is the responder. That's the way God made man and woman.

**A. God made the man to be the initiator and God made the woman to be the responder.**

God made the man to be the initiator and God made the woman to be the responder. That is, God gave the male leadership traits and God gave the female responding traits. God designed the man to initiate, and it's very obvious that the husband is to the wife what Christ is to the Church. And the Bible says we love Jesus why? Because he first loved us.

Now, we just simply respond to the initiation that God has taken. You see, a woman in her heart deeply, deeply desires and needs a man to lead in her life and in the home. Now, the feminists call this chauvinism, but dear friend, godly leadership is not chauvinism. It is something that God has given to meet the basic needs of a woman. And if a woman rebels against this leadership, or if a man advocates his God-given role, and the woman causes the man to cower or to follow, I'll tell you what will happen to her – she will soon become angry and frustrated, and she will think less of him and less of herself at the same time. A woman wants a man to lead because she is a responder and she has a nurturing instinct, and that gives her security.

**B. Men tend to express themselves logically, and women tend to express themselves emotionally.**

I'll tell you another difference between men and women. Men tend to express themselves logically, and women tend to express themselves emotionally. Now, I did not say that men are not emotional, and I did not say that women are not logical. I said that men tend to express themselves logically. Women tend to express themselves emotionally.

Now, the reason that men tend to express themselves logically is the role that God has given men – the bread-winner, the protector, the provider – he's out there in that kind of a world, and that's the way the world works. But what is the role that God has given the woman? To bring life into the world, to be a homemaker, and that means that she is to be a nurturer. To her, the emotion, the feeling is so very important. Now, it doesn't mean that a woman can't be logical or a man can't be emotional, but you're going to find out that a man leads by logic and a woman leads with her emotions. And when she does this, her plea is to her husband, Understand how I feel, and you put it

together for me.

Now, sometimes this can be real frustrating. I can give you personal experiences in talking to Joyce. Joyce will respond to me emotionally, and I'll say, but well, wait a minute, now, wait a minute. Da da da da da da da da. She says, No, mwahhhh. I said, No, da da da da da da da. No, mwahhhh. It's so frustrating. And I'll try maybe to make her to think the way I want her to think. And when I try to make her think that way, she'll say, Adrian, don't be harsh. I'll say, I'm not harsh! And then the man will accuse the woman of being illogical or being unreasonable. When will we learn, fellows? Don't listen for what they say. Listen for what they mean. Listen with your heart.

And thank God that he made her that way, because you need her – you need that love and you need that sensitivity, and you need that warmth, and you need that feeling, and God made her that way. God made you the way he made you. There's nothing wrong with the way he made you, and nothing wrong with the way he made her. But the Bible says, you dwell with her according to knowledge.

### **C. Men tend to be doers. Women tend to be be-ers.**

I'll tell you what else, dear friend. Men tend to be doers. Women tend to be be-ers. Now a man has to earn the bread, he protects the family, he's the provider, he's the leader, and a man's greatest fulfillment is in his work, getting his work done. But a woman finds her fulfillment not primarily in her work, but in her children, in her home, in her relationships. And while the man wants immediate results, the woman wants long-term relationships.

So many times we men, goal-oriented men, after we get married, it's like, Well, we've achieved that. Now, what's next? We want to move on to some other goal, maybe building a house, or building a job, or building a business, or succeeding here or there. But for the woman, her chief goal is relationships, and so she wants to give more and more of her time to him. And he may be giving unwisely less and less of his time to her.

### **D. A man tends to be a thinker, and a woman tends to be a talker.**

You see, listen, another thing. A man tends to be a thinker, and a woman tends to be a talker. You guys who are laughing, I didn't say women can't think. They do think. But sometimes they talk without thinking. There's nothing wrong with that. I mean, they just want to talk. It doesn't have to make sense.

One man said, my wife just goes around the house all day just talking to herself. The other said, well, does she say anything reasonable? He said, I don't know. She thinks I'm listening to her.

Friends, listen. Men need to learn to talk as they think, not be silent husbands; women need to learn to think as they talk, and not just rattle on. We need more talking thinkers and more thinking talkers in our homes. So men, understand that your wife has

a great need, a great desire to verbalize. It comes with her relational nature.

#### **E. Men look for success. A woman looks for security.**

Also, men look for success. A woman looks for security. That's so important. Sometimes your drive for success will threaten her feeling of security. You see, a man sees his work as an extension of himself. A woman sees her home as an extension of herself. So she's more interested in your being interested in the home sometimes than your being a success. Do you know what will mean more to Joyce sometimes than my bringing her a present? It would be for me to fix a leaking faucet, or at least to try to fix a leaky faucet.

Now, sometimes I'll say, Hey, I'm worth more than that. Some little old piddling job. I'll pay to have it done. Or worse, I don't pay to have it done or it doesn't get done. I just leave it there. But when I fix something with my hand, it says, Hey, he cares about what's important to me. He cares about our home. He cares about our nest. It is important to me that he not just simply pay to have it done, or neglect it, but that this little thing is fixed. Because this is her world, if the home is cluttered, her life is cluttered. If the home is broken, there's something in her life that's not right.

And we need to understand this, that while a man looks for success, a woman looks for security. Is that bad in a woman? Mister, you'd better thank God it's there. Your home would fly apart without her. God made her that way. God created her that way. She has a nurturing instinct. She has an emotional nature, a sensitive nature. You couldn't make her like you if you wanted to, and if you did you'd ruin her.

### **III. Give Her Honor**

Now I'm saying if you want to be a successful husband, number one, you live intimately with her, you dwell with her. Number two, you learn under God to understand her. Number three, you give to your wife honor. Give her honor.

"Likewise ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife." Honor her. Honor her. She needs, she deserves, and she desires that honor. Gary Smalley and John Trent have written a book called *The Gift of Honor*, and in going through that book I found this paragraph:

Honor is a decision we make to place a high value, worth, and importance on another person, viewing him or her as a priceless gift, and granting that person a position in our lives worthy of great respect. And love involves putting that decision into action.

Would you like to hear that again? Listen to that. Honor is a decision we make. Notice, a decision we make. Mister, it's time this morning you made that decision. A decision we make to place a high value, worth, and importance on another person, viewing him or her as a priceless gift, and granting that person a position in our lives

worthy of great respect. And love involves putting decision into action.

Honor your wife. Oh, she needs to be honored by you. If she's not honored by you, and she is honored by others, you've got the making of divorce. You've got the making of an illicit affair. Do you know most marriages are not wrecked by blow-out but a slow leak? A slow leak, where we fail to honor the wife.

Now I've talked a lot about working wives, and you know my position on that. I believe that mothers ought to be home with their babies. I believe that. Now, there are times when they cannot be, and I understand that. They must work to put bread on the table, clothes on the back, and a roof over their head. That's tragic, but that's true today in today's world. They must.

Oh, but dear friend, many women are working outside the home not for the money, but for the honor, for the recognition that they get. Somebody says to them, Hey, you're important. I respect you. You have gifts and you have abilities. Men need to learn to honor their wives and give them the paycheck of appreciation. Put them up on a pedestal. Keep them on a pedestal. Joyce says she doesn't want to be equal with me. She's not coming down for anything. Keep them up there.

Praise them in front of the children. Praise her in front of your friends. Look her in the eye, I mean, right in the eye, and tell her how precious she is to you, and how important she is to you. Praise her not merely for physical traits. Those, yes indeed, but beyond that. Thank her for her character. Thank her for her patience with the children. Thank her for the way that she handles the family budget. Thank her for her purity. Thank her, praise her for her godliness. Thank God for her wisdom. And find those character traits that she can continue to be beautiful.

You know, the Bible tells women over there in 1 Peter, the same chapter we're in, verse 31, "whose adorning, let it be that inward person of the heart, and that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit." What does that mean? It means, dear friend, that you can make her more beautiful every day. Just by that inward trait, that inward character, that inward beauty, that which is not corruptible. Learn to give her honor.

Have you ever thought about what she does? She's a meal planner, she's a nurse, she's a counselor, she's a policeman. Around our house, she had to be policeman, judge, and executioner. Clothier, budget and financial planner, teacher, cheerleader, career woman, spiritual advisor, nursery worker, seamstress, cook, maid, linguistics expert. She has to understand how to decipher the dialect of a 2-year-old. She's a gardener, administrator, schedule planner, interior decorator, chauffeur, environmentalist, and historian.

To me she's a confidant, a companion, a lover, an advisor, an encourager, a partner, a comforter, a hostess, an entertainer. In our neighborhood, a volunteer, a friend, a

counselor. In our church, choir member, children's teacher, counselor, worker, soul-winner. Praise her. Honor her. Give her honor. It's a good way to make your marriage last, mister.

Here's what one woman said that she would like her husband to understand:

My dear husband, thank you for choosing me to share your life with you. Thank you for your honesty and transparency. I know it can be painful at times. Deep down inside I really know that you love me, but I'm a woman and I need tangible reminders of your love. There is very little in this life of greater value to me than your love. I need it. I need you. Could I ask you a favor? I love to receive letters from you. But I don't want ever to ask for them. It takes all the fun out of receiving it if it is my idea. But would you write me a letter? I need to know how you appreciate me. What I have done to show that I respect you, how I have been an encouragement to you, that you appreciate the little things I do every week for you. I need to know of your unconditional acceptance, just as I am. Is it there? I need to know. I need to know how I am a partner with you, why you enjoy me, what you like about me, how I have changed for good, or ways that you've seen me grow. I forget sometimes that you want to lead me, and that you want to do what is best for me. I need to know that you want to meet my needs and that your love will persevere. You can write it any way you would like. But please tell me. I love you. Your wife. P.S., I'm not perfect either, but I'm glad we're in this thing together. When's the last time you wrote her a love letter like that? To give her honor. Honor your wife.

#### **IV. Learn to Share Freely with Her**

Rule number four in this wonderful verse, learn to share freely with her. Learn to share freely with her. The Bible says that we are to dwell together "as heirs of the grace of life." Look, as heirs together of the grace of life. Being heirs together. Do you know what heirs together means? If you open a will and it says you're heirs together, what does that mean? It means share and share alike. Share and share alike. It's not yours and mine. It is ours.

And a husband needs to understand that all that they have, they have together. And therefore he is to relate to her completely and fully, in every area. In his business life, in his home life, in his family life, in his outside interests, in his calendar. It's an open book. He doesn't have an area of his life that's off bounds to her.

Did you know that there are women living in this nation that don't know how much money's in the checking account, don't know how much is in the savings account? They don't understand what their husband's schedule is, what he does, what he plans, what he invests in. He says, You take care of that and I'll take care of this.

Friend, that's contrary to the Bible. You are to be heirs together of the grace of life. Yes, you're to be the leader. Yes, you're the leader. But you're not little lord ha ha.

You're not the boss. You're not the dictator. You are to be the loving leader to your wife. And so, there's every area that is to be shared, shared. It is a great sign of affirmation, and equality, and trustfulness when we do this together. Learn how to share. Discuss things with her. Evaluate her advice. And then act on it. There needs to be that free sharing.

## **V. Deal Gently with Her**

I want to mention the last thing, before our time gets away, of these five rules, five marks, five ways to be a successful husband. And the last is so very important, one that I have to keep reminding myself of. And that is to deal gently with her. Deal gently with her.

Now, look again in verse 7. "Likewise ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel." Now I don't understand why they're called the weaker vessel sometimes. They outlive us. They control most of the money. They generally get us to do what they want us to do. I think the strength of the weaker vessel is the weakness of the stronger vessel for the weaker vessel. I don't think I can say that again, but I believe it's true.

When the Bible uses the word weaker vessel, it has the idea of being more fragile, more delicate, and therefore more valuable. Just like silk is more delicate than denim. It doesn't mean that it's less valuable. It really means it's more valuable. Intrinsicly, carefully crafted.

Emotionally and physically, they're weaker. Certainly not spiritually or intellectually, they're not weaker. But we're to we're to take care of them. When you deal with something that is fragile, you deal with it tenderly. We men are so clumsy sometimes and so rude and we fail to be courteous as we ought to be. We are insensitive and harsh and faultfinding. I know your wife is not perfect. You're not perfect either, mister. Love is blind, but marriage is an eye-opener, isn't it?

We need to learn to be tender, and he tells us how to be tender. Listen. "Finally, be ye all of one mind." Look in verse 8. "Be all of one mind." That is, come together. Having compassion, the word compassion means to suffer with, one of another. Love as brethren.

Are you to love your wife as a brother? Yes. What does that mean? That means friendship love, friendship love. She's not just a wife. You are brother and sister in Christ. This speaks of friendship love.

One of the most beautiful little lines that I have read is this. Someone asked me to tell the time that our friendship stopped and our love began. Oh darling, that's the secret. Our friendship never stopped.

Love as brethren. Be pitiful. That's a part of that tenderness. To be pitiful means I

hurt when you hurt. You're my flesh. I want to nurture you and cherish you.

And then finally he says, be courteous. Do you know what courtesy is? Courtesy is love in little things. Oh, that's what she needs. In the little things. When you rise when she enters the room. When you walk past the chair just touch her on the shoulder. When in the restaurant, you seat her. When you open a car door for her. When you're courteous to the most precious person on earth to you. She is the weaker vessel, the more delicate, the more fragile.

## **Conclusion**

Gentlemen, if you'll practice these five things, if you'll just take 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 7 and memorize that verse, you will do something for your wife and for your children that will be of eternal value. And you will find out that in being good to your wife, you have been immensely good to yourself.

Let's pray. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. No one stirring please, no one moving about. Father God, burn this message into our hearts. Seal it to us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

# Five Ways to Be a Successful Husband

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: June 18, 2000**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 3:7–10**

*“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”*

1 PETER 3:7

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Practice Intimacy
- II. Be Understanding
- III. Give Honor
- IV. Share Freely
- V. Deal Gently

Conclusion

## Introduction

You take God’s Word and find 1 Peter chapter 3, and when you’ve found it, look up here, and in a moment I’m going to direct you to a few verses. But, since today is Father’s Day, I want to speak to the dads and help you to be a good dad, because I believe, as dad goes, so goes the home. And I sincerely believe that the problem in most homes is not with the woman, but probably with a drop-out dad who is failing to be what he ought to be. Now, there are a lot of problems in the home today. Marriages are made in heaven, but, friend, the problems and the battle is worked out here on this earth. And so, I want to give you some practical ways, dads, that you can be a good husband, because, as I said to the congregation a while back, that the best thing any father can do for his children is to love their mother. So, gentlemen, I want to give you five ways to be a successful husband, this morning. And these will be taken right from the Word of God.

Look, if you will, here in 1 Peter chapter 3 and verse 7: “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them—they, of course, refers to the wives—according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace

of life, that your prayers be not hindered. Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous. Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing, knowing that ye are thereunto called that ye should inherit a blessing.”

Now, what are these five ways that are found in this passage of Scripture that will help you to be a successful husband? Five things that you should do for, and with, your wife.

## I. Practice Intimacy

Number one: You need to practice togetherness or practice intimacy with her—practice intimacy with her. The deep need of a woman’s heart is to be intimate with her husband. The deepest craving of a woman is total togetherness with her husband. And, really, this is what marriage is all about, that we should be one flesh. Now, what do we mean by intimacy, anyway? When we talk about intimacy today, most people put a sexual overtone on that, but that’s not what the word intimate literally means. It’s a Latin word, *intimus*, which means inmost. It is opening up and sharing, becoming one flesh. Now, notice our Scripture. It says, “husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge.” That means, actually, *sunoikeyo* is the word. *Sun* means with; *oikeyo* is house. It’s the same word that is used when Jesus talked about the Holy Spirit coming into the world, and Jesus said, “He will dwell with you.” Now, folks, if you’re saved, you know something about intimacy with the Holy Spirit, amen? He dwells with us. Our body is an earthly temple, a house, and Jesus and I both dwell in this same house through the Holy Spirit. That is *sunoikeyo*. It is dwelling together. Now, sir, you and your wife are to dwell together in the same house with this kind of intimacy. Now, it may include physical intimacy, but it is far deeper than that. You can have physical relationships without having intimacy. And you can have intimacy without the physical relationship. Now, this intimacy is like a diamond; it has many facets to it. And this is what a woman’s heart desires and what a man’s heart should desire, that we dwell together—that *sunoikeyo*—in the same house.

Now, it is a verbal intimacy. You silent types, you need to listen. You need to learn how to share your secrets, your hopes, your plans, your dreams. There, intimacy includes our verbal communication. But not only does it include that; it includes our emotion. When we are intimate, we share not only our words, we share our emotions; that is, laughing together, crying together. We share our fears, our heartaches, our joys. There is that intimacy where we have that emotional oneness.

And then, not only that, but it involves intellectual intimacy where we share our dreams, our ideas, books, politics, theology, all of these things. We’re free to talk to another individual about the thoughts of our hearts and our lives. And then, there’s

social intimacy, where we enjoy the same games, the same parties, the same friends, the same kind of recreation. And then, of course, there is that spiritual intimacy. A woman wants a man who will pray with her and share the things of God with her. And we'll talk a little bit more about that later on. And then, all of this is climaxed by that physical intimacy where two become one flesh physically.

And so, the rest of the message is going to tell you how to achieve that intimacy, but, first of all, the very first thing I want you understand is that you need to practice with your wife that intimacy, that total togetherness. She desires that, she deserves that, she needs that, and she wants that. And you, as her husband, if you would be a successful husband, you'd better learn to give it; and, guys, it does not come naturally. It's not the male trait naturally. Look at the magazines, women's magazines—"How to Achieve Intimacy, in Your Home." Men's magazines—"How to Get Better Gas Mileage," "How to Remodel Your Garage." I'm telling you, we're just not wired that way normally, naturally. But, if you would be a successful husband, the Bible says, "husbands, dwell with them"—that is, to share that *intimus*, that intimacy, that inmost life.

## II. Be Understanding

Now, number two: Not only should you practice intimacy with her, but, number two, you should be understanding of her. Now, look at the Scripture again. It says, "dwell with them"—what's the next phrase?—"according to knowledge." Now, most men are knuckleheads when it comes to marriage. Actually, if you were to give it a literal translation, it says, live together with good sense—live together with good sense: "dwell together with knowledge."

Now, that's easy for a man to understand, if we put it in another idiom. What does it mean to own an automobile with knowledge? Well, you get out your automobile manual. Who was it—somebody said in our pulpit a while back, "The most unread book in the world is the automobile manual." The only time you pull it out is when? When you're in trouble. Where's that thing? It's in the glove compartment somewhere. And you get it out to see why the thing won't go. But probably it would still be going, if you had read it first and done what you were supposed to do. Now, in the automobile manual, the owners' manual, it tells you what kind of fuel to use, what kind of oil to use, or how much air pressure to keep in the tires, and so forth, and you keep an eye on the gauges, and you read those gauges to get that feedback. When you look at the gauges on the dashboard of your automobile, what you're doing is becoming sensitive to your car's needs. Now, guys, you need to understand that there are some gauges, if you'll just read them, to dwell with her according to knowledge.

One thing that men need to learn, and need to learn well, is that men and women are different. They are absolutely different. Now, we've had a lot in the paper lately

about the differences between men and women. Let me say with all of the firmness and straightforwardness that I can, without any stutter, stammer, apology, equivocation, men and women are equal. Men and women are equal. Let me say also, they are not identical. God made them different. We have been, and we always will be, equal, yet we never have been, and never will be, identical. The irony of ironies is this: that many people are working themselves to death to try to attain an equality that they already have, and they're fighting over the fact that they're different, and will never be anything other than different. And we're headed for deep trouble if we don't understand the equality and the differences that God made when God made us, in the beginning, male and female. And God said, "That is, that's good." And the devil, ever since then, has been trying to blur the distinction between the sexes. It has nothing to do with equality. We have the sameness of worth but difference of function. And men need to understand that wives are different and make some adjustments.

There's an old story. You've probably heard it. The ships were out for maneuvers, and the man said, "Captain, there is a huge, hulking form in front of us in the fog in the darkness." The captain said, "Send them a radio message and tell them to alter their course 10 degrees to the north." They got a radio message back, said, "You alter your course 10 degrees to the south." The captain said, "Send them another message, and tell them this is a battleship, alter their course 10 degrees to the north." The message came back, "You alter your course 10 degrees to the south." He said, "Send them a message. I'm the captain. Alter your course 10 degrees to the north." The message came back, said, "I'm a seaman third class. Alter your course 10 degrees to the south." The captain said, "Send them a reminder one more time. This is a battleship." The message came back, "This is a lighthouse."

Guys, I want to tell you something, there are some—F-A-C-T-S—facts, and we'd better learn to adjust to them, when we dwell with a wife according to knowledge. You know, a man may think he understands a woman, because he thinks she is like he is. Guys, you will never change her basic nature. Women are different physically. Women are different emotionally. Women are differently physiologically. And this is not a disadvantage. God made us this way, because it's a part of God's wonderful plan.

Now, what are some of the differences? If you would dwell with a woman according to knowledge, what are some of the things that you need to learn, mister? Some lighthouse truths.

Number one: God designed the man to be the initiator and the woman to be the responder. Now, this is built into our spiritual nature. We love God because He first loved us. Jesus is the bridegroom of the church. God the Father is the Heavenly Father. The man is supposed to be the initiator. The woman desires, by her nature, to have a man who will lead her and her home. It gives her a sense of security. Now, if a woman

has a weak man who will not lead, and she has to assume the leadership, and her husband follows and cowers along, she will become angry and frustrated. She will think less of him, and she will think less of herself. Sir, you are to lead, because God, by nature, made you to be a leader and made you to be an initiator. By nature, He made her to be a responder.

I'll tell you something else about men and women. Men tend to think in straight lines logically; women think emotionally—spider-web thinking. Now, listen carefully, because I don't want any angry women after this. It doesn't mean that a man can't be emotional, and it certainly doesn't mean that a woman cannot be logical, but they come at things differently. A woman will make, sometimes, an emotional response that the husband may not understand, because she leads with her emotions, and her plea is for her husband to take it and put it all together. Now, if he misreads that need in her life, he can seem harsh and he can begin to scold her for being unreasonable or illogical, or even worse, stupid. And, if he does that, he's headed for trouble. Now, at the same time, she's going to accuse him of being hard, unfeeling, logical, cold, and insensitive. Joyce has said to me many times, "Don't listen to what I say; listen to what I mean." So you have to be an interpreter.

You know, sometimes when women have problems and they come tell the husband about it, what's the first thing the husband wants to do? Fix it—fix it. I may have told you this before, but Joyce called me from Knoxville. She said, "Adrian." I said, "What?" She said, "I missed my plane." I said, "Well, is there another plane?" She said, "No, I missed my plane." I said, "Ah." She said, "They shut the door. They wouldn't let me on." I said, "Well, what airline are you on?" She said, "Adrian, I missed my plane." I said, "Would you check and go to..." She said, "I missed my plane." I wanted to fix it; she wanted me to say, "Honey, I'm so sorry you missed your plane." See, I'm telling other people, and I myself am so stupid, so dumb. They want you to understand, and to feel, and to share, and to care. Men tend to think logically and women emotionally. Men tend to be doers. Women tend to be be-ers. Men are goal-oriented, reaching out, driving on. A man's greatest fulfillment is doing his work. A woman, if she's living according to her God-given nature, her greatest fulfillment is in her home, her children, her relationships. A man is more interested in immediate results. She is more interested in long-term relationships. Now, these are generalities, and you could pick with any of these and say, "Oh, I know a difference." I'm talking now about generalities. So many times a man will pursue a woman to get her to marry him because that is an object of achievement, and once he's done that, once he gets married, well, then he goes to other pursuits—his job, or whatever. But she, because she wants this, this being, she wants more and more of an intimate relationship, and if we're not careful the marriage will draw apart. The man tends to be a silent thinker; the woman tends to be a talker. Have you noticed that?

Now, wait a minute. That's not to say that the thinker can't talk and the talker is not thinking. But how many people know the problem of the silent man and the talkative woman? Say amen. You know what I'm saying is true. The silent man, the talkative woman. Now, both men and women need to work on this, and—ladies, listen to me now; and, gentlemen, listen to me—we need more talking thinkers and we also need some more thinking talkers. Men tend to be silent; women tend to talk. Now, God made us this way, generally, but we can take it to extremes. A man tends to look for success, but a woman tends to look for security. The man seems to see his work as an extension of himself. The woman sees her home as the extension of herself. And so, guys, if you don't show any concern for the things of the house, if you don't, if you allow the house and everything to become cluttered, the yard, there's no sense of order there, that's frustrating to a woman. Do you know what will please Joyce a lot—how I can please her? Is to fix something in the house. Not to have somebody else fix it, for the big guy to fix it—for me to fix it. To get a screwdriver, you know, or something like that, and just fix some little thing. What is that? That is saying he cares about our home; he cares about the things that I care about. When the house is cluttered, she feels cluttered. She is sensitive when something is wrong at the house.

Now, I'm still learning these things, but I am learning. And I think, by the time I'm 90, I will have this mastered. But, listen. What we need to do, sirs, is to dwell with them according to knowledge. We need to be understanding of our wives.

### **III. Give Honor**

Now, here's the third thing I want to say, if you would be a successful husband. Give honor to her—give honor to her. Look again at the Scripture: "Husbands, dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honor..." Do you see that? Dwell with them according to knowledge. Understand there is a difference between men and women. And then, give her honor. This literally means to mark her off as having great value. Now, intimacy and togetherness are built on valuing and expressing appreciation for your mate.

Gary Smalley and John Trent have said in their book, "The Gift of Honor," this: "Honor is a decision we make to place a high value worth and importance on another person, viewing him or her as a priceless gift, and granting that person a position in our lives worthy of great respect. And love involves putting our decision into action." Mister, do you really honor your wife?

One husband and wife had lived for a long time, and they had a very wonderful home. And somebody asked the man, "What is the secret?" He said, "Well, for one thing, when I got married, my father-in-law to be, before the wedding, gave me a beautiful watch. And on the face of that watch was engraved these words: Say

Something Nice to Sally. Every time I look at the watch I'm reminded that I need to say something nice to Sally."

Now, what about working women? Why do women work? Well, some women work because they have to, it's necessary for the home—and, if that is necessary, my hat is off to you. And one of the markers, I believe, one of the measuring sticks, is this: Does your work, lady, add to the home, or does it take from the home? That's very, very interesting. You need to consider that. But, why are so many women in the workplace when they don't need to be? Because, at least in the workplace, they can get honor. Many times, the home suffers because she can get a paycheck, and says, this is what you're worth. What kind of an emotional paycheck, mister, are you giving to your wife? Do you honor your wife? Have you ever thought about what your wife does? Let's see what she does for the family. Here's what. Dennis and Barbara Rainey have given us a list of things the wife is. She is a meal planner, she's a nurse, she's a counselor and comforter, she's a policeman and judge; that is, she settles internal disputes with the children. She's a clothier, wardrobe consultant, she's a budget and financial planner, she's a teacher and a tutor, she's a cheerleader, she's a spiritual advisor, she's a nursery worker, she's a seamstress, she's a cook, she's a maid, she's a linguistics expert, she specializes in the dialect of two-year-olds, she's a resident Emily Post, she's a gardener, she's an administrator, schedule planner, interior decorator, chauffeur, environmentalist, maintaining proper home environment, a family historian, and a preserver of family history. To her husband, she's a confidant, companion, lover, advisor, encourager, partner, comforter, hostess, and entertainer. For the community, she's a neighbor, a gracious entertainer, a volunteer, a counselor, a friend. She's a church nurse. She does all of these things. Who gives her the honor that she is due to help build her self-esteem?

Let me tell you how you can honor your wife. Number one: Put her on a pedestal. I have my wife on a pedestal, not because it's physiologically smart; I just adore that woman, and I put her on a pedestal. Number two: Let the children know how much you love and honor her. Number three: Praise her in front of her friends. Number four: Look into her eyes, face to face, heart to heart, and verbalize your praise to her. Next, when you praise her, praise her not only for her physical charm, but praise her for her character traits that make her the wonderful person that she is. Give her honor.

#### **IV. Share Freely**

All right. Next, share freely with her. Now, listen to what this Scripture says. It says here that we are giving honor unto the wife, as to the weaker vessel, "as being heirs together." Do you see that? Do you see that in verse 7—"being heirs together of the grace of life"? Husbands and wives need to understand that they have an equal

inheritance as the children of God. In Jesus, there's neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, bond or free. We are one in the Lord Jesus Christ. And your wife needs to be treated as a full partner. We are heirs together of the grace of life. She needs to know that in your marriage it is share and share alike.

Now, what is the mark of this sharing fully? Do you know what it is? More than anything else, it is prayer. Look at it again in this verse 7—and, guys, don't miss this now: "as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered." A woman wants a man to pray with her, and I'm convinced this is where most of us fail. We men fail more than anything else in failing to pray with our wives. Now, why do we fail to pray with our wives? It's because it's the way we're built. We're built with kind of a hard outer shell. And that's God-given. What was Adam's job? Adam's job was to keep the garden and tend the garden. Now, think about it. To keep the garden—that means he's to protect the garden. And Eve never would have gotten into trouble if Adam had been doing what he ought to do, because he had dominion over the serpent. His job was to keep the garden. And his job was to tend the garden. That is, the husband, therefore, is to be what? He is the provider and the protector. That is the God-given assignment for the man. He is the provider, and he is the protector. So, God has given him that exterior where he could be the protector, because he's got to be tough. And a provider, he's got to have that strength. God gives him the muscles and the physical frame to hoe and to chop and to bring in whatever is necessary. He is to keep the garden, and he is to tend the garden.

Now, with that as an exterior, what is the nature of the woman? Well, she is to nurture. She is the mother of all living. She's Eve. She is taken out of the man, and so, that is the nature that God gives to a woman.

Well, why does a woman desire to pray with her husband? Well, it means so much to her. It means that it's an affirmation of her. It speaks of equality. It speaks of trust. Why do we men find it so difficult to pray with our wives? Because we've got that shell around us. Most men will get out in the woods and pray to God. They don't mind praying to God. They don't mind getting the roof off; they just don't want to get the walls down. They just don't want to share with somebody else. It's too—it's too something. Men just don't like to do that, and it is hard for the men sometimes.

Now, when you pray with someone, you cannot pray with someone without total intimacy and transparency. If you do, if you try to pray without total intimacy and transparency, you'll feel like a hypocrite, or your prayers will be just a little, you know, a little memorized—verbalized phrases.

But why does a woman want a man to pray with her? Well, number one: it says my husband recognizes me as a spiritual entity. Number two: my husband acknowledges my spiritual worth. Number three: my husband has a genuine interest in my spiritual

growth. Number four: my husband has time for me. Number five: I am a part of my husband's spiritual life. We don't have a his and a her relationship; but we have an ours relationship. Next, my husband desires to have spiritual leadership in our home. Next, my husband is tending to his duties as the spiritual leader. What a relief, what a release, it gives to a woman when the man will pray with her. It is very hard for men to do it, and many of you men, some of you deacons, some teachers, some pastors will not pray with their wives, other than just simply a little prayer, thanking God for the food in the morning, or perhaps a little goodnight prayer at night. But if you would be a successful husband, learn to pray with your wife. I want to confess it's been one of the most difficult things for me in my earlier years to want to pray with Joyce. I loved her, I love her today, and we do pray together regularly and faithfully, but there's something in the male nature that does not want to do that, by nature. So, I want to encourage you to do this, to share fully with her.

## **V. Deal Gently**

Now, just by way of review, before I come to the last point, what have we said? What have we said? What are five ways that you can be a successful husband? Number one: live intimately with her. Number two: be understanding of her. Number three: give honor to her. Number four: share freely with her. And here's the final thing. Number five: deal gently with her—deal gently with her. Look at this Scripture again, if you will, and see what it says: "Likewise ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel..." Do you see that? The weaker vessel. Now, don't think that means the inferior vessel. When she's weaker, that doesn't mean that she is inferior to you. What is weaker—a porcelain teacup or a sledgehammer? Well, a sledgehammer is stronger, but it doesn't mean it's of more value. As a matter of fact, a porcelain teacup is more fragile; it's of more value. You say, "But you can't drive spikes with a teacup." No, but you can't drink tea from a sledgehammer. God made us different, that He might make us one. God made the woman, not of blue denim; He made her of fine silk. And the silk may be weaker than the blue denim. She is the silk. You're the sledgehammer. She is the tea and cup, and what you need to do is to learn this tenderness. Deal gently with her. Now, how do you do that? Well, he goes on to say how to do this. Notice, he says, first of all, be of compassion. Look, as he continues in this passage, "finally brethren, be of one mind, having compassion." That is, you are tender with her when you feel with her. The word compassion literally means with feeling. Look at her, and say, "I understand and I care." And then, he says, "love as brethren." Now, the word that's translated here brethren doesn't mean like, just friends, between a couple of guys or a couple of gals, but it's the word not for agape love. We've already talked about that. But this is a word for friendship love. Let your wife be your

pal. Let your wife be your friend. Your best friend ought to be your wife. I'll tell you one thing: it's a whole lot cheaper. You can buy the same kind of sporting equipment and go on the same vacations.

Somebody wrote these words—I copied them down: “Someone asked me to tell the time our friendship stopped and our love began. Oh, my darling, that is the secret. Our friendship never stopped.”

So, how do you have this gentleness, compassion, love, as brethren? Be pitiful, he goes on to say. What does that mean? It means, I hurt when you hurt; I love you as I love my own body. And then, it says, “be courteous.” Oh, if there's anything that's needed in the modern home today, it is courtesy. Why are we more courteous to those who are outside the family than we are those who are inside the family? What is courtesy? Courtesy is just love in little things. These are the things that make for tender action, for tender emotions. Love is more than a noun. Love is a verb. It means to do things.

All right, I'm going to sum it up. Here you are, guys. You want to teach that teenage boy a lesson? You want, on Dad's Day, to do something good for your kids? You make this little list now. Don't forget these things. I'm going to give them to you. If you haven't written them down, I'll give you one more chance. Here it is. All right. Live intimately with her. Be understanding of her. Give honor to her. Share fully with her. And deal gently with her. The Scripture—1 Peter 3, beginning in verse 7.

## Conclusion

Now, let me just wrap this up by saying, the most wonderful thing on earth is a Christian home. I wouldn't take anything for our Christian home, for our children, our grandchildren, the joy that we have, the fun that we have, the love that we have, and the future that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. The nearest thing to heaven, the closest thing to paradise that we have today, is our homes. Thank God for a Christian home.

Now, do you want a Christian home? Listen carefully. We can't have a Christian home without Christians anymore than you could have a cherry pie without cherries. If you want a Christian home, then give your heart to Jesus Christ. And, dads, if you've never given your heart to Christ, for your sake, for your wife's sake, for your kids' sake, give your heart to Jesus. Let Him save you today.

I'm so grateful that, as a teenage boy, Jesus Christ came into my heart and in my life. Joyce knows that she's not number one in my life. She knows she's number two. She knows that Jesus is number one. And she knows that I love her a whole lot more making Jesus Christ number one than I could ever love her by making her number one. And I want to ask you to do that today. If you've never done it, I want to ask you to say, Lord Jesus, right now, with all of my heart, forever, I open my heart. I receive you into

my life as my Lord and Savior. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me, Lord Jesus, and begin now to make me the person You ought to be. Maybe you're here today, and you're a teen or a young person, your home is not a Christian home. Maybe your mom and dad don't know Jesus. Why don't you come and give your heart to Jesus and then begin to pray for Mom and Dad? Maybe today you have children that you're concerned about, and you wonder what the future is going to be for your kids in this crazy world. Well, I'm going to tell you one thing. I'd hate to be a dad or a granddaddy in today's world that was not on praying ground, that did not know how to pray. Give your heart to Jesus. Trust Him. Receive Him. I promise you today, on the authority of the Word of God, if you will open your heart, and give your heart to Jesus, He will come into you; He'll work a miracle on the inside. You're not going to sprout wings and get a halo. You'll have to grow. But it will begin when you give your heart to Jesus.

Now, we're going to sing an invitational hymn. And the ministers of our church are going to be standing here at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front. And a minister will be up there under the banner that says REDEEMER on that side, and the one that says MESSIAH on this side, for those of you in the balcony. And, today, if you will give your heart to Jesus Christ, today, if you want to step from darkness from light, from death to life, from condemnation to salvation, here's what I'm going to ask you to do. When we begin to sing, don't look around to see what anyone else is going to do. Just as soon as we begin to sing, you just make your way down one of these aisles. The minister will be standing here, and you just say to him, "I'm trusting Jesus—I am trusting Jesus." Well, what will happen? First of all, we'll rejoice. Secondly, we'll give you some Scripture to stand on. Thirdly, we'll answer any questions we can answer. And then, we'll seal it in prayer, and you can go home a child of God, as saved as the apostle Paul. Heaven will be yours. Jesus will give you a new life. I promise you He will. Millions know it to be true. He'll change you.

Others of you, not only do you need a family home; you need a church home. And, by the way, one of the secrets of having a good family home is having a good church home. And, if you need a church home, I want to invite you to be one of the first ones down this aisle. And I want you to say, if you're already saved and need a church home, I want you to say, "I want to place my membership here." They'll tell you how you may become a member of Bellevue Baptist Church. And we'll love to have you. Don't look around to see what anyone else is going to do. Respectfully, I'm going to ask that no one leave during the invitation, or really till the final amen, which will be just a short time. Be in prayer. Let's stand together. You step out and come. On the first stanza, you come.

# A Christian Worldview

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: September 15, 1996**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 3:8–15**

*“For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.”*

1 PETER 3:10

## Outline

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- I. The Principle of Lordship
- II. The Principle of Learning
- III. The Principle of Lowliness
- IV. The Principle of Lifestyle
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Conclusion

## Introduction

Tonight we begin a series, a serious series—they’re all serious, I guess, but you’ll think perhaps this is more serious before it’s over—on a Christian worldview. And, by the way, would you be opening please to 1 Peter the third chapter, and let me just set the stage for it, and then we’re going to look at it. Now, you have a worldview, whether you realize it or not. As you think about mankind—mankind’s origin, mankind’s purpose, and mankind’s destiny—now, whether you’ve thought it out, whether you’ve formulated it, whether you’ve carefully studied it, or whether you’ve never thought about it at all, yet everybody here tonight has some kind of a worldview. You have some idea about your origin, you have some idea about your purpose, and you have some idea about your destiny. Now, if you’re a Bible-believing evangelical Christian, I think your worldview is fairly settled on all three of those purposes, but you’re going to find out that we live in a world that does not hold the same worldview, and I’m going to show you tonight, that it is not enough for you to have a worldview and be aware of it, but you also must know what others are believing, and you have to know something of the currents that are moving us in the tide of history and how we are to react to that.

Now, primarily there are four basic worldviews that the Western world reacts to. Number one is the one that we hold of biblical Christianity. Another worldview that’s very real—and don’t think that it is dead by any means; it’s very well and alive in the

United States—is Marxism—Marxism, Leninism, formerly called communism. Another worldview that is very, very real in America, that we'll face it in more ways than we realize, is humanism, secular humanism. And then, an emerging worldview is New Ageism. Now you say, "Pastor, what does all this have to do with me? Well, very much, because, you live in America, that is anti-Christian. We sing, "God bless America. We say, "In God we trust." But our young people who are going off to college, and even in the grade schools, the elementary schools, junior high schools, the middle schools, the high schools, are facing a worldview that most of us in this auditorium do not hold. And the problem is this: that many of our young people are not intellectually grounded to face that worldview. The truth of the matter is that many of the parents are not intellectually grounded and prepared, either, but they have their worldview, their biblical Christianity, pretty well settled. These young people, with their plastic mentalities and their lack of experience, are facing overwhelming odds. Now, that's compounded by the fact that many times the parents themselves do not know what the young people are being taught in school. They just assume that all is well, and many times through our tax money and through other methods, we are paying secular humanists and others to systematically seduce our children to a worldview that we do not hold.

Now, in America, at least 192 million people claim to be Christian. There are about 7.3 million humanists in America, but yet almost all public education is taught from a humanist point of view, and the reason the humanists have been able to do this is that they have said that education is to be value-neutral when it comes to religion and the philosophies that we hold, that we are to be neutral. Well, there are some things you can't really be neutral about. It's like saying we want to be neutral about food. We're neither going to be for food or against food, so, therefore, no one will eat. You see what that does? It's like saying, well, we want to be neutral about religion. We're neither for religion nor against religion, which ends up being anti-religion, and so we're caught in a trap.

Now, I want to say that your worldview touches all of life. Don't get the idea that we can just niche out Christianity. We can come here and huddle together in our stained-glass prisons called churches, and that the rest of the world can have its worldview, but that does not affect us, nor should we affect it. The truth of the matter is that if you are a Bible-believing Christian, your worldview will affect all of the rest of life as you know it, and the worldview of others is militantly coming against you. And so we're going to be looking on these Sunday nights at a worldview in many areas. In theology and philosophy, what is the worldview, the worldviews, that others are facing? What is our worldview? In the matter of ethics, we're facing this from Dr. Kevorkian, Dr. Death. And all of the others, the kind of sex education, the idea—marriage, divorce, abortion—all of these are subjects that we're grappling with today, and there are worldviews on ethics

that you and I may or may not hold. In the area of biology, the origin of life, what is our worldview? What is the worldview of these people out there who cannot find life in the womb but find life on Mars? And in psychology, what is the worldview? What is the biblical worldview about the study of the soul in psychology? What is being taught in secular psychology, in New Age psychology, in Marxism, and in sociology? The way we live together, the way we interact, the way society comes together—what is the biblical worldview? What are these other worldviews that impinge upon it? In the area of law, what is law? Where does law come from? Is law something that is fluid, or is there natural law, God-given law, fixed laws, that come from Almighty God? In the area of politics and government, what is the biblical worldview, and what are the worldviews that we face here in the Western world? And in economics, what is the biblical worldview of the right to property, the whole property, who owns property, and all of this.

Now, we probably are just kind of fuzzy about all of those things, and we just say, “Well, we know what we believe as Christians.” And we think that we can afford to let all the rest of this just simply go by or pay no attention to it. But believe me, your children, your grandchildren, are fighting a battle that you may not be fighting, and many of us are unaware of things that we ought to be aware of.

Now, this is more or less of an introductory message tonight just to set the stage, but turn to 1 Peter chapter 3, and begin reading with me in verse 10. Now, Peter is talking to those of us who are Christians and he says, “For he that will love life, and see good days...” Now, we all want to do that, don’t we? We love life. I hope you love life. Bobby Lewis asked me when I came up on the stage tonight, he said, “Pastor, how you doing?” I said, “I’m happy, and rising higher.” And I really am. I love life! And I love being here tonight. I’m glad to be in the house of God. I’m glad I’m saved. I’d rather be saved than lost, wouldn’t you? Amen.

“He who would love life, and see good days...”—and God wants us to see good days—“let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile. Let him eschew evil...”—that means shun evil—“...and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye.” And let me just pause there to say there’s a difference between suffering and being harmed, according to this verse. The Bible never says we’ll not suffer; the Bible says we can’t be harmed. You need to understand this. There’s a big difference there. “And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be ye troubled. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that

is in you with meekness and fear: having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation—that literally means your good behavior, your good lifestyle—in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.”

Now again, I want to say that this is not going to be the kind of preaching that I normally do. It'll be a little bit more like it tonight, but in the evenings to come you may think that you're a little bit more in a classroom, and I hope that will not bore you, and I hope you'll not just check out on me. I hope you'll come and stay and look at these things with me. But I want to say this to you, that we are living in a post-Christian society, and therefore, as Christians, as twice-born people, we are living in hostile territory, and whether you recognize it or not, there are signs all around us to say that Christians are under attack today. We're talked about as the religious right or the radical right. How often do you hear a news commentator talk about the religious left or the radical left? We're called fundamentalists. How many times do you hear those on the other side of the religious spectrum called “liberals”? We're called zealots. We're called other things. We're called, nuts. We are, but we're fastened to a good bolt—the Lord Jesus. The problem is that so many of these things have happened to us while we have been asleep! And while we have slept, the enemy has done his work.

Now there are two dangers that face us when we face this kind of a situation, and when living in hostile territory. Number one is that we can just kind retreat. We can hunker down with a live-and-let-live attitude and wait for the rapture. But the truth of the matter is that retreat is not even possible. Why? Because there is no place to run and hide in today's society. You can't just retreat.

I serve on the board with Dr. James Dobson, Focus on the Family. I want to quote Dr. James Dobson—quote. He talks about what is going to happen if we do not stand up and speak out and learn and articulate what we believe. Quote: “We will not be permitted to exercise our beliefs in private. The church will not be allowed to protect its precepts. Our children, our Christian enclaves, will be invalid.” That is, we can't come in here and hide behind these walls. “Your home, in fact, will be the next battleground as Hillary Rodham Clinton cranks her children's rights agenda into action. We will either speak up or submit in silence. Why not use our voices now while the memory of the Judeo-Christian ethic still lingers like rare perfume within the popular culture?” And then, James Dobson challenges us by asking several questions. He says this: “At what point will we be willing to defend what we believe? Will parents object if their children are routinely indoctrinated in homosexual ideology, or occultism in the public schools? Will we object if the state tells pastors what they can or can't say from the pulpit? Did you know that in Sweden an evangelical pastor who preached a sermon on Sodom and Gomorrah was convicted of quote verbal violence against homosexuals and sentenced

to a four-week prison term for preaching against homosexuality—in Sweden? Will we object if the state assumes—quote—ownership of our children and tells us how to rear them or else lose custody? Will we turn them over to a village in order that the village might raise the child? Will we object if every church has to hire a homosexual or satisfy a quota obligation?”

And then he goes on to speak about a pastor in Germany in the days of Hitler and the rise of Nazism. He says, “Niemöller was a pastor when Hitler was coming into power. Under orders by Hitler, Niemöller was imprisoned and later placed in solitary confinement. He was freed after the war, and whenever he concluded a speech, he ended with these words that have now become famous: “First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak out for anyone.” When are we going to speak out? There comes a time when God’s people say, “We dare not be silent.”

Do you remember what Mordecai said to Queen Esther in Esther chapter 4 and verse 14? “For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” I want to say to the people of this church and every mother’s child who names the name of Jesus, “Who knows but what you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” We cannot be silent. We cannot choose to remain silent on these issues under the guise that all God has called us to do is to preach the Gospel. There’s a great danger, of course. The other danger is that we will substitute something for the Gospel, and that is also a great danger. We cannot substitute sacramentalism, rationalism, education, psychology, or some political strategy for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And, as long as God gives me breath, I will be a preacher of the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Having said that, however, that we as Christians must become active, we must become activists, we must take a firm and a loving stand, and we must come to the aid of all of our brothers and sisters, regardless of their denomination, their vocation, their economic or racial barriers that divide us. We’ve got to come together as believers in Christ. We’ve got to have a Christian worldview, and we’ve got to learn how to articulate our worldview.

Now, I want to say this: that Christians have faced bad times and difficult times before, and the scripture that I just read to you speaks of one of those times. That was a time when—if you think we have it bad today, you should’ve been a Christian when the Roman Empire held sway. Christians, to the Roman Empire, were perceived as enemies. As I told you this morning, the Christian said, “Jesus is Lord.” It was the

doctrine of the Roman Empire that Caesar was also a god; not only emperor, but God. And for a Christian to say, “We have a King; He’s gone away, and He’s coming back,” was high treason against the Roman Empire. And, that’s one of the reasons that Jesus was crucified—because they said, “He claimed to be the King of the Jews.”

Now, what happened to these early Christians in the scripture that Peter is talking about? What were they accused of? Well, they were accused of subversion, insurrection, because they would not proclaim Caesar as Lord. They were also looked upon as an economic threat, because they came out against idolatry and other things that were a source of great income to those around them, just as you and I might stand against prostitution and gambling and the liquor business and those things. We’re perceived as an economic threat. There are people in this city who think that we are keeping the city from prospering because they would like to bring, for example, casino gambling into this city, and turn Mud Island, and the Pyramid, into a center for casino gambling. And they think, “If we could just get rid of these blue-nosed Baptists, that perhaps, we could pull it off.” And the early Christians were perceived as an economic threat, and also the lifestyles of the early Christians were so radically different that it made the others look bad, in comparison, as their lifestyles rebuked the immorality of that day.

Now, the scripture in 1 Peter is more or less of a handbook for survival, and we’re not going to be dealing so much with these worldviews tonight as we are our lifestyle, as we get ready to study what a Christian worldview ought to be, and a Christian lifestyle ought to be, at the same time. Now, the key verse that I want us to look at primarily is verse 15. Peter is talking to these people in duress, and this is what Peter says to them. He says to them, in verse 15, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”

## **I. The Principle of Lordship**

Now, the very first thing we are to deal with is the principle of lordship. He says, “Sanctify Christ as Lord.” That is literally what it says. The King James says, “Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts,” but it literally is, “Sanctify Christ as Lord.” Now, you have to make up your mind that nothing—nothing—will stand in the way of obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you enthroned Him as Lord? Or have you come down the aisle of some church and gotten baptized because you want fire insurance and you don’t want to go to hell? If Christ is Lord, we dare not be intimidated. He must be Lord. Everything else must get in line behind the lordship of Jesus Christ. Let me say that again: Everything in your life must line up behind—never ahead of—the lordship of Jesus Christ.

## **II. The Principle of Learning**

Now, here's the second principle—not only the principle of lordship, but there is the principle of learning. That's the reason I'm talking in these succeeding Sunday nights on the Christian worldview. Look in verse 15 again: "Be always ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you." Now, the people of this world—unbelievers and people who have other worldviews—have some very good questions. The problem is, many of us are not ready to answer those questions. Now, there are some excellent questions, but there are also some wonderful, wonderful answers. Now, when the Bible says, "Be ready to give an answer," this is the word we get the word apologetics from. An apologist is not somebody says, "Oh, I'm so sorry that I'm a Christian. Please forgive me." This is a person who gives a reasonable response when people ask him legitimate questions. This is a person who is ready to give an answer, an apologetic response, to those questions that come.

Now, the Washington Post not so very long ago described you and me. Do you know how it described us? As poor, uneducated, and easy to command. They have no respect for our intellectual status—how we stand, what we know, what we believe. And so, there's the principle of lordship. We sanctify Christ as Lord. There's the principle of learning. We have got to be aware. We've got to understand and have a Christian worldview.

## **III. The Principle of Lowliness**

Now, the third principle is the principle of lowliness. Look, if you will, in verse 15 again: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be always ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you of the hope that is in you—now watch this—with meekness and fear." The only thing that seems to match our ignorance is our arrogance, and you put ignorance and arrogance together and you've got a problem. But may I tell you that the modern church is saturated with both ignorance and arrogance? The Bible teaches that you and I are to have a lifestyle of meekness. Meekness is not weakness. Jesus said, "I am meek and lowly." He was not weak. He's the One who spent forty days and nights fasting in the wilderness. Jesus was the One who took a whip and drove the moneychangers out of the temple. But Jesus said, "I am meek and lowly of heart." Meekness is not weakness. It means strength channeled, strength under control. And the word fear does not mean that we quake at the enemy. It's not talking about being afraid of the devil. The Bible says, "In nothing be terrified by your adversaries." The word fear here means reverence—the fear of God! And what is the fear of God but love on its knees? And those who love God the best fear Him the most.

Now, I want to say this: that America is not going to be won by arguments—we're not called upon to out-argue the devil—not by the ballot box, and not by organization.

It's going to take a lifestyle of godly people who know the truth and walk humbly before their God. Do you know how people perceive of us? Do you know what they think about us? They call us hate-mongers. They call us narrow. They call us bigoted. They call us insensitive. And the problem with many of us is that we react to that with angry rhetoric, and it escalates on both sides. But here, just put this verse in your margin, James chapter 1, verses 19 and following: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." And then, here's the key—now watch it: "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Have you ever seen some of these Christians in some of these demonstrations? I mean their face red, their fist in the air; they're shouting, and screaming, and calling names. Do you think that's going to win anything for our side? It will not! The Bible says we are to have meekness and fear. We are to be slow to speak, quick to hear. The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

Now, Jesus, of course, had righteous anger toward religious hypocrites, but I want you to study the life of Jesus, and see how Jesus treated those who were down and out, and those who lived in spiritual blindness and darkness. See the love of Jesus Christ toward the adulterers, toward the prostitutes, toward the tax collectors, toward those who were taken captive by Satan. His heart went out. He knew the depravity of their heart. Do you know the problem with many of us? We think that somehow if we get organized enough we can teach billy goats not to butt. Hey, folks, they are sinners. And, come up close, and I'll tell you what a sinner does: he sins. I mean, that's his nature. That's his nature. And they're not going to be out-argued. What they have to see in us is a superior lifestyle, and what I hope that will come out of this study is that we will come out with a full head and a loving heart, and we will learn to speak the truth in love. Jesus did not lash back in anger. You're in 1 Peter. Just turn over to chapter 2 and look in verse 23 of this same chapter. It speaks of Jesus, "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." You know what Jesus did when people came against Him? He took His case to the Supreme Court; I said, the Supreme Court—the Supreme Court! He committed himself to Him who judges righteously! Isn't it wonderful that we can carry our case all the way to the Supreme Court? I'm not talking about those nine folks in black robes. I'm talking about Almighty God.

Now, Nero burned Rome, so history tells us, and I believe it is true. He fancied himself as being an urban renewal expert, and there were some slums and things where the poor people lived, and he wanted to remodel the city. So, according to tradition and history, he had the city torched and set on fire, and then, the thing backfired on him, and the people were rising up, and they were angry and hostile, and his advisors said, "Well, you've got to find a scapegoat. You've got to find someone to

blame. There's a new sect of people called Christians. Blame them! I mean, after all, they're talking about a God of fire, and setting the world on fire, and Holy Ghost fire, and all of this." And so, it was open season on Christians, and the people retaliated on these Christians. Some of the people had hot oil poured over them. Some of them had melted tar poured over them. And then they were tied to stakes and lighted on fire, like human candles, and they were burned at the stake. But they suffered righteously as Peter says we're to suffer. And it was their ability to suffer—listen to me—it was their ability to suffer that brought the Roman Empire crashing down.

A Chinese student facing the iron boot of Chinese communism, when they came against these students, said this, and it's a wonderful statement. Listen to it: "Lies written in ink cannot obscure truth written in blood." That's the way the early Christians overcame, and, you see, we have to be careful. I have to be careful. Did you know, have you ever noticed I have an argumentative attitude? Don't answer that, but I do. I mean, I am argumentative by nature. I have to watch it. You have to be careful as a Christian that you do not win the argument and lose the audience. Now, look at what he says here. He's talking to us. "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer—that's the argument—to every one that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." Strength under control, and a reverence for Almighty God. So true humility, real humility, will often disarm those that we come against. And we must all admit that even the best of us have not yet sprouted wings and gotten a halo. We're all still part of the human race.

I like the prayer that Nehemiah prayed—and I think more of us ought to pray that prayer—when Nehemiah was living in a day very much like ours. Nehemiah was a righteous man, but listen to this—Nehemiah chapter 1 and verse 6. He's praying to God, and he says, "Let thine ear be now attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned." Now, Nehemiah was a man of God, but it's time for the church to be on her knees and her face before God, not telling God about the wickedness of all of those other people only, but saying, "Dear God, have mercy on us," for the Bible says judgment must begin in the house of God. Do you agree with that?

#### **IV. The Principle of Lifestyle**

Now, there's the principle, then, of lowliness. And then, here's the principle—it's the principle of lifestyle. Notice again in verse 15: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the—now watch this—the hope that is in you." Do you know what the word hope means? The

word hope doesn't mean maybe, perhaps; it's not sort of a sanctified wish. The word hope means rock-ribbed assurance based on the Word of God. That's the reason the Second Coming of Jesus is called "the blessed hope." Not the blessed maybe; the blessed hope. And you see, why were these early Christians able to live as they lived? Because they had a hope that was in them that was so real, so vibrant, so incontrovertible, that they stood out! And the pagans would come to them and say, "What makes you tick? I can't understand you—the way you live! You have a different lifestyle. What has transformed you? What has made you different?"

Look in chapter 2 and verse 12 of this same chapter. The Bible says we're to be having our conversation "honest among the Gentiles"—that means our behavior among the pagans—"that whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." The day of visitation means, literally, the day of observation, inspection, when they look at you. I mean, they'll badmouth us, they'll talk about us, they will criticize us, they will call us all manner of things; but we have got to outlive them. We've got to out-love them. We've got to out-pray them. We've got to out-preach them. We've got to out-give them. We've got to out-sacrifice the pagans. Why? Because of a rock-ribbed assurance we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. And they will look at us, and they will say, "They are different! Tell me about the hope that is in you."

May I ask you a question? Don't answer it out loud. But has anybody ever asked you to explain your life? Has anybody ever come to you and said, "Hey! I don't understand you. You are different. Would you tell me about it?" I want to submit to you, if we're living under the lordship of Christ, if we're living as the apostle Peter says we ought to be living, people will be coming to us, and asking us for an explanation of our lifestyle, and we will be able to testify of the Lord Jesus Christ. Classic example of that: Paul and Silas were in prison for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They were in the innermost prison. Acts 16 tells about it. They had been beaten. They were put down in that prison in the bottom, with the sewage, the vermin, the rats, the roaches. Their backs are lacerated. Their hands and their feet are in manacles. It's midnight, and the Bible says, at midnight, they're praying and singing praise to God. The jailer—he'd often heard cursing, but not praising; he'd often heard moaning, but not singing—he could not understand it. He brought a light and came in after God sent an earthquake into that jail, and he asked this question of them: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Why? He saw the difference in Paul and Silas. I hope that people can see a difference in my lifestyle. I hope that people who know me can say, "He is different." I hope people that know you can say, "He has a hope! She has a hope! This person stands out like a gardenia in this desert of mediocrity and filth."

You know what Nietzsche said? Nietzsche was an atheist. As a matter of fact,

Nietzsche was one of those that Hitler fed on. Nietzsche said—he flung this challenge into the face of the church—he said, “If you want me to believe in your Redeemer, you’re going to have to look and act a little more redeemed.” What an insult to the church of God! And so, there’s the principle of lifestyle.

## **V. The Principle of Love**

Here’s the last principle, and then we’ll come to a close. There must be the principle of love—of love. Now, we’ve been primarily in verse 15, but I want us to back up and see how this starts, in verse 8: “Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another. Love as brethren. Be pitiful. Be courteous.” And then go to chapter 4, verses 8 and 9: “And, above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging.” If we’re against abortion—and we are—then we have to ask ourselves, “What are we doing to help? How are we helping young, pregnant women?” Sometimes our attitude just simply pushes them into the arms of the abortionist. We believe in the permanency of marriage—and we do—but what kind of a church are we to those who have experienced the trauma of divorce and broken homes—some of them by their own choosing and some of them not by their choosing. I’m telling you, if we don’t have a church with open arms to people who’ve had broken marriages, we don’t have the right for the property we exist on. These people are hurting! They don’t need to be pushed further down. They need to be loved. We ought to be against the pollution of pornography—and we are—yet do we have programs and helps for those who are driven by this compulsion? We ought to be opposed to the homosexual agenda and the homosexual lifestyle—and we’re going to say something about that—but do we have open hearts and open arms to those of the homosexual community, that we might tell them about Jesus, and Jesus can radically, dramatically, eternally transform people? But we have to be very careful that we do not show such hostility, such antipathy, such negativism, that they would never come to us to learn about the Lord Jesus. We live in a society that is hurting, and we’ve got to bind the wounds up with salve and not with salt. They need the love of Jesus Christ, and people need to know about this church—not only what we’re against, but what we’re for. The world is looking for some answers. We need a Christian worldview that’s backed up by a Christian lifestyle. I’m telling you, folks, we’re in serious trouble.

William J. Bennett, former Secretary of Education, has given some statistics. He’s told us in the last thirty years in America violent crime has increased 560 percent. I said, 560 percent. Illegitimate births, 400 percent. The divorce rate has quadrupled. Children living in single parent homes has increased threefold. Teen suicide has increased 200 percent. The SAT scores have dropped 80 points. And people are wanting to know, “Is

there an answer?” And I’m here to tell you tonight that there is an answer, and I leave you with this last thought. Don’t get the idea that the church will not survive. The church of the Lord Jesus will survive. Jesus said, “Upon this rock I’ll build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

## Conclusion

In the Cultural Revolution in China, the Communists took over. One of the first things they did in the Cultural Revolution was to burn all Western books. Schools and universities were closed. Churches were turned into warehouses, and even crosses that were found on Christian graves were chiseled off. Pastors were either killed or put in prison. Everyone was forced to bow down to a picture of Mao Tse Tung every day. Those who would not bow down, their legs were broken below the knees. This was to be a massive revolution, and the church was to be put out of business. At the same time, the Communists began in China with intense brainwashing, and the lack of compliance brought severe penalties, and everybody said, “The church in China will die.” They were stripped of all political power, forbidden to share their faith personally or privately. And during that period of time when the Cultural Revolution came to China, when it began, there were one half million Christians. Today, it is estimated that there are between fifty and one hundred million Christians in China. Why? Because, friend, those people who suffer for their faith are enriched by that suffering, and the church under the severest persecution has multiplied more rapidly than the church that boasts of its freedom. I’ll tell you what really happened. The persecution wiped out the theological liberalism, and only the true Christians remained. That’s what happened.

Now, we as individual Christians need to be like the Chinese, and witness wherever God has placed us. We are personal representatives of the Lord Jesus, and the church of Jesus can continue to grow even when it is perceived by the government as the enemy. So I’m calling you, folks, to a Christian worldview that’s backed up by a Christian lifestyle. Our job is not ultimately to save America. Our first responsibility is not to preserve our freedoms, as important as they are. Our prime responsibility is to stand up for Christ and witness to this world of His grace and His power, to say it and mean it: “Jesus is Lord.” Do you believe He is? Let’s pray together.

Father, thank You for Your Word. And, Lord God, I pray, as we study together a Christian worldview, that You’ll help us to be prepared to go from this place, and, stand up, stand up for Jesus, as soldiers of the cross.

And now, while heads are bowed, and eyes are closed, if you’ve never yet given your heart to Jesus, you’ve never been twice-born, if you do not know for certain if you died right now you’d go to heaven, you can get it settled right now where you are. Jesus will save you right there in that seat, once and for all, now and forever, if you’ll trust Him.

The Bible says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” It goes beyond intellectual belief. The word believe, in the Bible, means to trust—to trust. Trust Jesus, and He’ll save you. Would you pray this prayer: “Lord Jesus, I need You. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me. Thank You that You paid for my sin with Your blood on the cross. I believe You’re the Son of God. I believe God raised You from the dead, and I receive You now by faith like a child. Save me, Lord Jesus, and begin now to make me the person You want me to be. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

# Good Days in Tough Times

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: March 20, 1983**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 3:8–15**

*“For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.”*

1 PETER 3:10

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## Introduction

Now, I want you to take your Bibles and turn to 1 Peter 3, a message that will fit right in with the music God has given us. And, that’s the way it ought to be. I want to be talking to you today on this subject: “Good Days in Tough Times.” Now, you know, all of the book of 1 Peter... We’ve been preaching in all of the book of 1 Peter; we’ve been preaching on the general theme “Timeless Truth for Tough Times.” And today, we’re going to talk to you about how to see good days in tough times.

First Peter 3, and I want us to begin our reading in verse 8 because that's where we left off the last time we were together—1 Peter 3:8: *“Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days”*—and, by the way, that's where we get our title “Good Days in Tough Times”—*“he that [would] love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be [ye] troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”* (1 Peter 3:8–15) And, we're going to stop reading right at that particular verse.

Now, the key is verse 10; look at it: *“he [who would] love life, and see good days.”* (1 Peter 3:10) Now actually, this is a quotation from Psalm 34, and Psalm 34 was written by King David. And, King David lived in tough times. Now, you think you have it tough? King David really had it tough. But, King David learned how to love life, and he learned how to see good days; and he saw good days in tough times. And, Peter is quoting him here in 1 Peter.

Now, the interesting thing is that David had a son whose name was Solomon, and Solomon did not live primarily in tough times. Solomon lived in easy times, but Solomon saw bad days in good times. As a matter of fact, Solomon said in the book of Ecclesiastes 2:17: *“I hated life”*—*“I hated life.”* (Ecclesiastes 2:17) Now, here he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, and he hated life. Here was David, a little shepherd boy, who came up the hard way, and he says, “I love life.” I wonder sometimes if we don't give our children too much. Somebody says, “The first generation generates. The second generation speculates. The third generation dissipates, and it's gone.” Here was Solomon, who had it all and said, *“I [hate] life.”* (Ecclesiastes 2:17) Here was David, who at first had nothing and said, “I've learned how to love life.” I mean, in tough times, he loved life. But, there are a lot of people today who are like Solomon. I mean, they just hate life. Gloom, despair, pessimism—it's just all around.

Ernest Hemingway was a brilliant man, a novelist. Do you know what he said? Ernest Hemingway said, talking of the human race, he said, “We're like a colony of ants on one end of a burning log”—pessimism. Do you know what Huxley said? Brilliant philosopher. Old Huxley said—talking about us, the human race—he said, “We're like a

cancer on the globe”—human beings. And, old Jacob, when he came to die, said, “My days have been few and full of pain and full of sorrow and full of evil.” (Genesis 47:9) People are so pessimistic.

I was interested to note that some people were trying to justify our big beer bust out here called the St. Patrick’s Day Parade and public drunkenness. One person said, “Well, you know, there’s so much disappointment and so much sorrow. People have to have a little fun, a little excitement, one day in the year.” Friend, why not have it three hundred and sixty-five days a year? It doesn’t come out of a mouth of a bottle, either. Why not know real joy? You see, Jesus said—Jesus said, “[I’ve] come that [you] might have life, and...have it...abundantly.” (John 10:10) Jesus didn’t come that we escape life, and Jesus did not come that we endure life. Jesus came that we might enjoy life. “[I’ve] come that [you] might have life, and...have it...abundantly.” (John 10:10) That’s what He said in John 10:10.

Now Peter, picking up on that theme, and Peter, quoting David from Psalm 34, tells us how to love life and see good days even in dark days, even in bad times, tough times—how to love life and see good days. And, he mentions three things. Well, he mentions more than that, but I’m going to zero in on three things, if you would turn these dark days into good days. If you would know good days in tough times, there are three things you must do. Number one: You must cherish your friends. Number two: You must confront your foes. And, number three: You must communicate your faith. And so, you have to be related to your friends, your foes, and your faith. Now, let’s see if Peter doesn’t say that.

## I. You Must Cherish Your Friends

For example, look, if you will, in verse 8, where our scripture begins. And, by the way, verse 8 is a good verse on the care and the cultivation of friends. Listen, listen. Let’s just look up here before we get to verse 8. Let me tell you this. Let me just wet your appetite a little bit. If you’re going through tough times, there’s nothing that will mean more to you than a good friend. “*A brother is born for adversity.*” (Proverbs 17:17) And, how we need friends to stand with us! You say, “But, I don’t have any friends.” Then, you’re telling on yourself—you’re telling on yourself. You say, “It’s not my fault.” Yes, it is. Do you know what the Bible says? The Bible says that if “*a man [would have] friends [he] must shew himself friendly.*” (Proverbs 18:24) That’s Proverbs 18:24: “[*He who would have] friends must shew himself friendly.*” (Proverbs 18:24) That is, it’s just an Old Testament illustration of the New Testament truth in Galatians 6:7, that whatever we sow, we’re going to reap. (Galatians 6:7)

Now, the reason that many people don’t have friends is they’ve never learned how to be a friend. As a matter of fact, if you quit trying to have friends and start trying to be a

friend, you'd have friends. "[For he who would have] friends must shew himself friendly." (Proverbs 18:24) And, verse 8 is a great verse. I want you just to check up on yourself right now because there are five qualities here in verse 8 that, if you exercise these five qualities in your life, you will not only be a friend, but because you've been a friend, you will have friends, and you will learn how to cherish your friends, and your friends will help you to turn tough times into good days. Now, let me tell you what those five ingredients are.

### A. Harmony

Number one is harmony. He says, "*Be...of one mind.*" (1 Peter 3:8) That is, you're to live in harmony with your friends. Now, that doesn't mean that you're to live in unison, but harmony. That is, we don't all have to sing the same note. When the choir sang up here just a few moments ago, they didn't necessarily sing in unison, but they did sing in harmony. They sang the same song. Now, how do we sing in harmony? How do we hit the same note? Well, there has to be a commonality. You see, in order for you to have a real friend, there has to be a true commonality, and that true commonality is in the Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot be of one mind unless you're of one heart and one soul—one in the Lord Jesus. Therefore, as you seek your friends, seek your friends among the children of God because two can't "*walk together...except they be agreed.*" (Amos 3:3) The Bible says we're not to be "*unequally yoked together with unbelievers.*" (2 Corinthians 6:14) And so, what Peter is telling us here is that we need to be of one mind. There needs to be harmony.

### B. Sympathy

But, not only does there need to be harmony; there needs to be sympathy. Notice the next verse, or the next part of that verse—verse 8: he says, "*Having compassion...*" (1 Peter 3:8) Now, that word *compassion* is a makeup of two words: *com*, meaning "with"; and *passion*, which means "to feel." If you want to be a friend, learn how to feel with your friend. Learn how to hurt when he hurts. We have a little chorus around here we sing called "The Family of God," and it says, "When one has a heartache, we all shed a tear." (Williams J. and Gloria Gaither) That's what Paul was talking about in 1 Corinthians 12:26: he says, "*And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.*" (1 Corinthians 12:26) That is, in your body, when one part of your body hurts, you hurt all over. You don't say, "My finger has a pain." You say, "I have a pain in my finger," right? That's what he's saying. And, when one member rejoices, we all rejoice. And so, would you like a friend? Would you like to be a friend? Do you know what real sympathy is? Do you know how to hurt when they hurt? Do you know how to suffer when they suffer? To have compassion? The world is waiting for people who will do this.

### C. Fraternity

But, not only do we need this harmony and not only do we need this sympathy, but also fraternity. Look in verse 8, also: he says, “Having brotherly love,” or, “*love as brethren*”—not just love, but “*love as brethren*.” (1 Peter 3:8) Now, there is a difference. You see, we’re to love all people. We’re to love the lost. But, there’s a special kinship we have with our friends in Christ. We’re to “*love as brethren*.” (1 Peter 3:8) This is the word here; this word *love* is the Greek word that we get our word *Philadelphia* from. Philadelphia is the city of what? Brotherly love—*phileo*, which means “to love your brother in the Lord.” And actually, the root of this word means “from the same womb.” That is, you’re to have love because you came out of the same womb.

Now, those of you who have brothers and sisters, do you ever fight with your brothers and sisters? Nod your head. Go ahead. Don’t look so pious. But, somebody jump on that brother, somebody jump on that sister, and they might as well have jumped on you, right? Because, you see, they may not be perfect, but they’re my brother; they’re my sister. And, this is what we’re to have in the church.

Now, you know, people—all kinds of people—join all kinds of fraternities. They get in college; they’ve got to be a member of a fraternity. And, he’s my fraternity brother. Or, they join, you know, the Lodge, the Moose, the Meese, the Mesa, of what... They’re going to join something, see. And, when you get to be a member of the Lodge, then you get to wear a special suit, you know, and special hat, and you get a special ring and a special handshake. And boy, we’re brothers. Listen, let me tell you something: there is no brotherhood like the brotherhood in Jesus because there’s a difference in all these other relationships. Every other relationship is superficial. In Christ, we’re out of the same womb—out of the same womb. We are brothers—brothers in Christ. I tell you, God’s people at their worst are better than the devil’s crowd at their best. I tell you, dear friend, the joy—the fellowship—that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ... Now, you need to be a brother. “[*There’s*] a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” (Proverbs 18:24) That’s Jesus. But, we ought to stick as close as a brother. God forbid that we should ever forget the brotherhood that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

### D. Pity

And so, look, you want to be a friend? All right, check up. First of all, is there that harmony? Secondly, is there that sympathy? Thirdly, is there that fraternity? And fourthly, there is to be pity. Now, look there. He says, “*Be pitiful*” in verse 8. (1 Peter 3:8) This is another interesting word. It’s the word we get our word *spleen* from. You ever heard of a person venting his spleen? You know what your spleen is? That’s a part of your viscera, and this word *pity* roots in that word. You say, “Why?” Well, because ancient people had the idea that you feel with your emotions—excuse me, your emotions and your feelings come out of your viscera. You say, “That’s stupid.” Oh,

yeah? Why do you say to your girlfriend, “I love you with all my heart”? Or, why do you say, if you are disgusted by a person, “That person makes me sick to my stomach”? Or, why do you say when a person has courage, “He’s got guts”? Oh, we do the same thing, don’t we? And, the truth of the matter is that our emotions do seem to well up from here. And, what he’s saying is this: that if you would be a real friend, you’re going to have to learn to feel deeply, to feel deeply—not a surface relationship, but a deep feeling that comes from down here that causes genuine pity, that causes us to put ourselves in the place of that other person.

### **E. Humility**

Now, the last thing that he mentions here, of these five characteristics, is humility. Now, I know, if you have a King James Version, it may say, “courtesy”: “*be courteous.*” (1 Peter 3:8) But actually, a better translation is “humility,” although there’s not a lot of difference between the two, because what is courtesy but humility that puts the other person first? You see, that is genuine courtesy—is really thinking about the other person.

Now, if you’re constantly thinking about yourself and trying to say, “How can I get this person to do something for me?” Did you know even some people who want to win friends and influence people—you know why they want to win friends and influence people? Because they want friends and they want to be influential. But, dear friend, if you would start trying to make somebody else successful, if you would start trying to make somebody else influential, that’s what a friend is. A friend is a person who doesn’t seek himself and his own rights, but he puts others first. Do you know why we don’t like egotists? They talk about themselves so much we can’t talk about ourselves. Isn’t that right? That’s what egotism is, and that’s why people don’t like egotists.

Now, just, now, listen. You say, “I don’t have any friends, Brother Rogers.” All right, why don’t you take these five words and put them on your mirror and start looking at them every morning? And, start asking yourself, “Am I the kind of a person who can live in harmony? Am I the kind of a person who can live in sympathy? Am I the kind of a person who can live in fraternity, can live in pity and live in humility?” And, you’re going to have friends. You’re going to make friends, and these friends are going to be a great blessing to you.

## **II. You Must Encounter Your Foes**

Now secondly, not only must we enjoy our friends, but secondly, we must encounter our foes if we would... You see, not everybody’s going to love us. In these tough times, you’d better stick with your friends because you’re going to have a heap of enemies. That’s the way it ought to be. I mean, this vile world is no friend of grace. When you’re really living for the Lord Jesus Christ and you mention Jesus, you ought to duck or

pucker because they're going to kiss you or take a swing at you. I mean, the very fact that we have friends means that we're going to have enemies. We are a fraternity—a brotherhood—in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, he goes on now to mention in verses 8, 9, and 10—excuse me, 9, 10, and 11—the evil that we have to face. So, look at it in verse 9: *“Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that [would] love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.”* (1 Peter 3:9–11) And, in each of these verses... In 9, he mentions evil. (1 Peter 3:9) In 10, he mentions evil. (1 Peter 3:10) In 11, he mentions evil. (1 Peter 3:11) Now, what are we to do not only with our friends but with our foes?

#### **A. You Are Not to Return Evil**

Number one: We are not to return evil. Look at it, if you will, in verse 9: *“Not rendering evil for evil.”* (1 Peter 3:9) Now, you see, there are three levels of living. The first level is to return evil for good. That is satanic. That's what the devil did. The next level of living is to return evil for evil. That is human. But, the third level of living is to return good for evil. That is divine. The first is unnatural. The second is natural. The third is supernatural. Now, what we're to do is to return good for evil. We are not to return evil for evil. Do not return evil. You say, “But, I'm going to get even.” Don't do that, friend, because that's exactly what you'll do. You see, down here on this plain is the evil person. Up here is the saint of God. And, the saint of God says, “I am going to get even,” and that's what he does. He brings himself down, and now he is even. But, he's no longer where he was; he's down here with that evil person. What a mistake to try to get even!

Now, sometimes our minds tell us we ought to do it. I heard of a man who got a phone call at three o'clock am in the morning—three am. And, his irate neighbor said, “I want you to know that your barking dog is keeping me awake.” The man thanked him and hung up the phone. The next morning at three o'clock am he returned the call to the man who called him at three o'clock am in the morning and said, “Good morning. I want you to know I don't have a dog,” and he hung up. Now, there's something in us all that wants to do that. I heard of a lady—went to the doctor, and the doctor examined her and got a serious look on his face. And, she said, “What's wrong, doctor?” And, the doctor said, “I hate to tell you this, but you have rabies.” Well, she got out a notebook and started to make a list. He said, “What are you doing—making your will?” She said, “No, I'm making a list of people I'm going to bite.” Now, that's the human nature in us.

## B. You Are Not to Repeat Evil

But, the Bible says we are not to return evil for evil. (1 Peter 3:9) Number one: Do not repay evil. Number two: Do not repeat evil. Look, if you will, in verse 10: *“For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.”* (1 Peter 3:10) Now, if you want to make a good day out of today, watch your tongue. You want to make a bad day out of today? Just let it loose.

You say, “Brother Rogers, I don’t know why I have so much trouble.” Well, may I give you a proverb that may tell you why you have so much trouble? Proverbs 21:23—and it would be a good one to put in your margin. Listen to it: *“Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.”* (Proverbs 21:23) Amen? *“Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles.”* (Proverbs 21:23) Now, Peter said if you love life and see good days, just set a watch upon your mouth. Be careful what you speak.

Another good verse is Psalms 141:3: *“Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.”* (Psalms 141:3) A tongue can turn good days into bad ones. You can go home today, and your wife can have a lovely meal, and mother can just have everything right, and someone at the table can spout off and ruin the whole day, right? You know it is true. Many things are opened by mistake but none as frequently as the mouth. We need to set a watch before our lips.

## C. You Are Not to Respect Evil

Now, what is Peter saying? He says, “You want to see good days? You want to love life? Do not repay evil, and do not repeat evil.” And then, thirdly, he says, “Do not respect evil.” Look, if you will, in the next verse—verse 11: *“Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.”* (1 Peter 3:11) That is, this word *eschew* means “to turn from”—just to be afraid of it. You ought to treat sin as you would diphtheria, or smallpox, or some other contagious disease. You don’t dabble in sin. It means “to turn from.” If you would know good days, just keep your life separate and clean and pure from sin.

But, you say, “Now, wait a minute, pastor. In all honesty, I mean, if I have these enemies, and if I don’t repay them, and if I don’t even repeat it, and I don’t even speak to them and all I do is just turn from it, my goodness, they’re going to get by with it.” They are not going to get by with it. Friend, look in verse 12: *“For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.”* (1 Peter 3:12) Now, what’s God saying? You don’t have to repay them; God will repay them. God is watching over you. God sees it all.

Now, the example is back here in chapter 2:21. Look in chapter 2:21: *“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that [we] should follow in his steps: Who did no sin”—*that is, He turned from evil—

*“neither was guile found in his mouth”—He did not repeat evil—“Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not”—He did not repay evil. But now, what did He do?—“but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” (1 Peter 2:21–23) He just said, “Father, you take care of it.” See: “I am not going to respect it, but I’m not going to repeat it and I’m not going to repay it. I just commit myself to you.” Don’t try to get even with your enemies. Why? God says, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.” (Romans 12:19)*

Now, when the offering is taken this morning, you wouldn’t reach in the offering plate and take something out, would you? My goodness, you didn’t even nod your head. Keep your eye on this congregation, will you, Tommy? Now look, folks, let me tell you a secret: see, I preach ’til I think you get the message. Now, we may be here ’til four, so, you know, you preach back to me, okay? Now look, you wouldn’t take something out of the offering plate, would you? Go like this: “Noooooo.” All right, that’s much better. Okay, now listen, you say, “Why not?” Well, because, you see, that belongs to God. You say, “I wouldn’t steal from God. If I’m going to steal from anybody, I wouldn’t steal from God.” All right. *“Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.” (Romans 12:19)* When you try to take vengeance, you’re stealing from God. Let me tell you, God’s going to do a better job than you do. *“The eyes of the LORD are [over] the righteous, and...[his] face...is against them that do evil.” (Psalms 34:15–16)* And so, if you would see good days in tough times, number one, you must cherish your friends. Number two: You must confront your foes, but you do it with love and you just repay evil with good.

### **III. You Must Communicate Your Faith**

Now, number three: You must communicate your faith—you must communicate your faith. Now, let’s continue to read now. We left off in verse 12. Look in verse 13: *“And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” (1 Peter 3:13–15)* Now, here he’s talking about the communication of our faith.

#### **A. The Demonstration of Your Faith**

And, in order for our faith to be communicated, first of all, we must demonstrate our faith.

##### **1. A Full Faith**

Now, I believe that’s what verse 13 is talking about—the demonstration of our faith. He says, *“And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?” (1*

Peter 3:13) Now, look at that word *followers*; it's a very interesting word. That word is the word that we get our word *zealot* from—*zelotes*. You remember reading in the Bible about a man, one of the disciples, named Simon the Zealot? He was a rightwing patriot for his nation, and he would fight for his country; and so, they called him “the zealot.” Well, now, the Bible uses this same word to say that we are to be that zealous of good. We are to be ardent, passionate followers of that which is good. We're not to have a take-it-or-leave-it attitude toward that which is good. We are to get a bulldog grip upon that which is good. We are to be zealous for good. Are you on fire to be good, regardless of what people call you—you know, goody-goody two-shoes or whatever they call you? Do you have a passionate love for good? You see, we're to have a full faith, not a halfhearted faith. We are to be passionate followers of that which is good.

## 2. A Fearless Faith

But, not only a full faith; we're to have a fearless faith. Look at it again; look at it. He says in verse 13: “*And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?*”—you say, “Oh boy, I love that verse. Nobody can harm me.” Okay, let's keep reading—“*But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye*”—“Now, wait a minute, Brother Rogers. The Bible seems to contradict itself. One verse says, ‘Who's going to harm us?’ and the next verse talks about our suffering.” Yes, that's true. What he's saying, friend, is that suffering is not going to harm you. They may hurt you, but they can't harm you. As a matter of fact, the suffering is going to make you happy. That's exactly what it says. Look at it—“*and if [you] suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye*”—the word literally means “blessed are ye”—“*and be not afraid of their terror, neither be [ye] troubled.*” (1 Peter 3:13–14) You are to have a fearless faith. Do not be afraid. Rather, if you suffer for Christ, be happy.

Now, come up close. I want to ask you a question: How many people in this congregation and how many who are listening to me by means of radio and television have truly suffered for your faith—really? I mean suffered because you knew and loved the Lord Jesus. I'm not talking about the fact that you've suffered. I mean, unsaved people suffer in the hospital and other places. How many of you have suffering that you would not have had except that you know the Lord Jesus Christ? I've not suffered a lot for Christ, but I want to tell you something: those times that I have suffered and I knew it was for Jesus have been some of the happiest times of my entire life. I cannot tell you the indescribable joy that comes into my heart and my life—not that I seek it, and we shouldn't seek it. But, “*if [we] suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye.*” (1 Peter 3:14) And, I want to tell you that Jesus Christ will never be more near and never more real than when we take a stand for the Lord Jesus Christ—whatever it is—and we receive abuse because we stand for Jesus Christ. “Don't be afraid of them,” Peter says. Peter knew what it was to suffer, and he was going to suffer some more. But, he said,

“Don’t be afraid.” (1 Peter 3:14)

### 3. A Firm Faith

Now, I want to tell you, as we demonstrate our faith, it must be a full faith: we must be zealous about it. And, it must be a fearless faith, and it must be a firm faith, because the next verse says—verse 15: *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.”* (1 Peter 3:15) Do you know what that means? Set aside Christ as Lord in your heart. Have you done that? Now, if you’ve not done that, you’re going to get blown around in tough times. But, you see, when Christ is Lord—I mean, when you have set Him aside as Lord. That’s what the word *sanctify* means: “to set aside for a particular purpose”—when you’ve said, “Lord Jesus, I’m not just having you as my Savior so I have some fire insurance to keep me out of hell, but Christ is Lord,” and I don’t care how tough the times are, you’re going to have good days. Now, you know, I hear people say, “Well, I hear this thing called ‘Christian joy.’ I don’t have joy.” Well, you show me somebody who’s let go of the world with both hands and taken Jesus Christ with both hands, made Him Lord. It doesn’t matter what happens—Christ is Lord. They have a firm faith, and it cannot be shaken. So, that’s the demonstration of your faith.

#### B. The Defense of Your Faith

Now, after you’ve demonstrated your faith, next comes the defense of your faith. Look again in verse 15. Boy, here’s something really interesting. I don’t want you to miss this. *“But sanctify the Lord God in your [heart]: and be ready always to give an answer”*—just underscore that phrase, “an answer”—*“to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.”* (1 Peter 3:15) Now, this answer refers to what we call in theology “apologetics.” What is apologetics? It is a defense of the faith. In the seminary, you study apologetics—that is, how to give a reasonable answer. And, our word *apologetics* comes from this Greek phrase: “an apology”—not saying, “I’m sorry that I believe in Jesus,” but what it means is a verbal defense of your faith, like a lawyer would give before a judge. You remember, the apostle Paul said, “I am set for the defense of the faith.” (Philippians 1:17) Now, can you defend your faith? You see, it is not enough for us to demonstrate our faith, but we must also defend our faith.

#### 1. You Must Be Ready

Now, as we defend our faith, two things are necessary. Number one: We be ready, because what does verse 15 say? It says, *“Be ready.”* (1 Peter 3:15) Are you ready? I mean, if someone were to challenge your faith today, would you be ready? Some of you don’t even understand what you believe.

A man asked a woman, “What do you believe?” She said, “I believe what my church believes.” “Well, what does your church believe?” “Oh, it believes what I believe.” “Well, what do you and your church believe?” “Oh, we believe alike.”

How many of you really understand the faith? You say, “Well, Brother Rogers, I’ve only been a Christian twenty years.” Shame on some of us. Peter says, “[You] be ready”—“be ready.” (1 Peter 3:15) Suppose you were, going home, there’s an automobile accident, and somebody is wounded and dying and they’re pumping their life’s blood out on the asphalt. And, that person looks up to you and says, “Are you a Christian?” “Yes, I am. I’m a member of Bellevue Baptist Church.” “Well, I’m dying. Can you tell me how to be saved?” “Listen, mister, stay right here. Don’t die. I’m going to go get Brother Rogers. He can tell you.” The Bible says, “Be ready, be ready, be ready.” (1 Peter 3:15) Are you ready?

You see, listen, when a person starts to live this kind of a life—when they start to return good for evil, when they control their tongue, when they have set aside Christ as Lord, when they are living in victory with their friends—do you know what’s going to happen? Somebody’s going to come to you and ask you, “What makes you different?” Now, it is good and proper that we go from house to house and door to door to share the gospel. But, I want to ask you, when is the last time anybody ever asked you about your faith? What makes you different, hmm? Somebody said, “If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?” What is there that makes you different? Has somebody come to you recently and said, “Tell me the difference in your life?” They ought to if we’re living this way. Peter said, “You get this way, and they’re going to come to you; and they’re going to ask you, ‘Tell me about that hope.’” So, number one: You be ready.

## **2. You Must Be Reasonable**

Number two: You be reasonable. Look at it. He says, “Give an answer”—“give a reason”—“for the hope that’s in you” (1 Peter 3:15)—a reason. Could you give a reasonable answer? I mean, would you be able to tell them what makes your life different? You ought to be able to. And, if you don’t know how—if you don’t know how to win a soul to Jesus Christ, if you have not mastered the elements of the gospel, if you do not know the plan of salvation by memory—I want to give you a challenge, I want to give you a charge, I want to give you an admonishment. If you’re a member of this church, you’re not right with God if you do not prepare yourself to give an answer when God opens up a soul winning opportunity to you. The Bible says, “Be ready.” (1 Peter 3:15) There is to be, dear friend, a demonstration of your faith (verses 13–14), but there’s also to be a defense of your faith. Be ready to give an answer, a defense. That’s what it means.

## **C. The Declaration of Your Faith**

But, thirdly and finally, not only a demonstration of your faith, not only a defense of your faith, but a declaration of your faith. Now, the last part of verse 15 says that you are to

do it “*with meekness and fear.*” (1 Peter 3:15) Now, what does that mean? It means that even though you have a head full of knowledge, even though you can give a reasonable defense of your faith, you have to be careful. The Bible is a wonderful sword, but it’s a poor club. You don’t go beating people over the head with the truth. Nobody is ever argued into the kingdom of heaven. And, as you present the Lord Jesus Christ, there must be in your heart and in your life the beauty of Christ—that meekness, that gentleness. You see, not only must you have readiness and reasonableness, but you must have respect as you give the gospel. There must be this meekness, this gentleness. That’s what the word *meekness* means—gentleness, a teachable spirit. And, when you learn how to share Jesus Christ that way, friend, I want to tell you that God is going to make you a fruitful soul winner.

Years ago, I read a story of a man who was an ardent follower of that which was good. This man had enthroned Christ in his heart as Lord, and he had a burden for unsaved people. There was a man in this particular community that he was witnessing to, and we never would have paired these two up if we’d been sending them out soul winning. We never would have sent this man to that particular man because the man who was the soul winner was not a well-educated man. He was not a man of letters, not a man of great, super intelligence. But, the man that he had a burden for was. The man for whom he was burdened had a brilliant mind and an excellent education. And, this soul winner went to see him, and the man, with his wit and with his argumentative spirit, would turn everything that the soul winner said around, and mix him up, and confuse him, and so forth—seemed to get great joy out of it. The soul winner, on this particular occasion, had such a broken heart for this man that he said, “Sir, I don’t want to argue the Bible with you. I’ve tried to tell you the truth. I don’t want to argue with you. I just came to tell you that I love you and I want to see you saved.” And, a tear just kind of welled up in the corner of his eye. He said, “I’ll not bother you any more. I’ll just pray for you.” And, the soul winner, with that meek spirit, left and went home. He told his wife—said, “Honey, I don’t want any supper tonight. I’ve got such a broken heart I just want to go to my bedroom and pray.” And, there he went back to the bedroom and prayed.

After a while, there was a knock on the door, and the man to whom he had witnessed was there standing and said, “May I speak to Mr. So-and-so?” His wife said, “I don’t think he wants to see anybody.” And, the man said, “I believe he would like to see me. Would you ask him to come?” So, the man came out of the bedroom, and he said, “I don’t want to argue with you any more. I don’t want to continue the discussion any more.” And, the man said, “But listen, I want you to tell me how to be saved.” He said, “Don’t jest with me.” He said, “I’m not jesting. I want you to tell me how to be a Christian.” “Well,” he said, “I will, and gladly, but I don’t understand it. Everything I said to you you just turned it around and you twisted it. You answered every argument I

could give.” And, this brilliant man looked at this humble soul winner and said, “No, you’re wrong. There was one argument you had I could not answer.” He said, “What was it? I don’t remember.” He said, “It was when you laid a hand on my shoulder, and looked into my eyes, and a tear welled up in your eye, and you said that you loved me and wanted to see me saved.” And, he said, “I could not possibly imagine what would make a man like you love a man like me who’s treated you the way I treated you. And, I thought what you have must be real, and I need it, too.” And, he was saved.

Now friend, there is an argument that is a powerful argument, and it is a meek spirit. That’s what Peter’s been saying. That’s the way he’s saying that a wife is going to win her unsaved husband to Christ. That’s the way he’s saying that we’re going to convince this world, as we do not return evil for evil; but as we, in love, love this generation; as we live a separated, godly life. And, they come to us, and they ask us a reason. And, we’re going to be able to tell them, “It is Jesus that enables me to see good days in tough times, and you can know Him, too.”

## **Conclusion**

Let’s bow our heads in prayer—every head bowed, every eye closed. Father in heaven, how I thank you and how we thank you and praise you, Lord, for your goodness to the children of men—that you sent Jesus Christ to die for us. And Lord, I just want to pray today that many in this place will trust in Christ and be saved. Lord God, Lord God, help me now as I give the invitation. Lord, give me wisdom to make it plain for Christ’s sake.

# The Awesome Power of the Spoken Word

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: March 20, 1983**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 3:10**

*“For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.”*

1 PETER 3:10

## Outline

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Conclusion

## Introduction

Now, I want you to take your Bibles and turn again to 1 Peter, the third chapter, and I want us to look at verse 10. I mentioned this verse in the message this morning as we're talking on the general theme of "Timeless Truth for Tough Times." And, we told you how important it is that we control our words because our words can turn good days into bad ones and our words can turn bad days into good ones. Peter makes it clear and plain, for Peter says, *“For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.”* (1 Peter 3:10) I want to speak tonight on "The Awesome Power of the Spoken Word"—"The Awesome Power of the Spoken Word." It is so awesome, so powerful, that Peter says it is the way—the right use of the tongue—to love life and to see good days.

Much in the Bible is said about the use and the abuse of the tongue. Two of the Ten Commandments deal with the use of the tongue. One: *“Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain.”* (Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 5:11) Two: *“Thou shalt not bear false witness.”* (Exodus 20:26) And, many of the other commandments have insidiously in them the use of the tongue. For example, we are to give honor and glory to God and no other gods. That means we’re to praise Him with our tongue. We’re to honor our parents. That means, of course, we’re to praise them with our tongues and so forth. God has... In the book of Proverbs: *“six things doth the LORD hate; yea, seven are an abomination unto him.”* (Proverbs 6:16) And, out of that list of seven things that God has chosen that He hates, two of them deal with the use and the abuse of the tongue. So, how important the tongue is! I believe the most dangerous animal known to man lives in a den behind the teeth called the tongue.

Now, in these days of the modern charismatic movement, we hear a lot about speaking in tongues. And, some people say if you speak in tongues, that’s a sign that you’re spiritual. The more I’ve thought about it, I’ve about decided that the real sign of spirituality is not to speak in other tongues but to control the one that you have. If a person is really spiritual, you’re going to see by the use of his tongue his spirituality. So, we’re going to think, as we think of the awesome power of the spoken word, we’re going to think, first of all, of that power negatively and what it can do negatively. And then, we’re going to think of that power positively and what it can do positively.

## **I. The Abuses of the Tongue**

Now, the Bible mentions a number of the sins of the tongue. And, I’m not going to take a long time to do it tonight, but I want to remind you again of the abuse of the tongue.

### **A. Lying**

For example, the sin of lying is a sin that the Bible squarely and emphatically forbids. The Bible says in Exodus 20:7: *“Thou shalt not bear false witness”*—excuse me, that says, *“Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain”* (Exodus 20:7), but Exodus 20 does say—*“Thou shalt not bear false witness.”* (Exodus 20:16) We are not to tell a lie.

*“Six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination [to] him”*—turn to that passage in Proverbs chapter 6, if you will, for just a moment, and let’s look at it—*“These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look”*—now, underscore the next one—*“a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood. An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies”*—now, isn’t that interesting? I haven’t even finished the list yet, and already he’s mentioned lying twice—*“and he that soweth discord among brethren.”* (Proverbs 6:16–19) In verse 16, he mentions lying, and in verse 19, he

mentions lying.

Jesus, when He was speaking to the Pharisees, who were liars, said to the Pharisees, “[*You*] are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth...[and] when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” (John 8:44) That’s John 8:44. Jesus said of the devil that the devil was a liar and the devil is the father of all lies; therefore, you are acting like your father, the devil, if you lie. You’re a chip off the old block. You’re perhaps never more like the devil than when you’re lying or when you are in rebellion.

Now, we live in a day when a man’s word seems to mean nothing, whether it’s a peace treaty between nations, whether it’s a marriage vow. How can a couple stand here at the marriage altar and say, “I, John, take thee, Mary, to be my lawfully wedded wife; to have and to hold from this day forward in sickness, as in health and poverty, as in wealth; to love, to honor, to cherish until death do us part, so help me God,” and then go into the divorce court? How can they do that? How can they do that? That’s a lie. That’s a lie when they say that. We live in a day and an age when a man’s word means nothing in a business contract, and it just seems that we are given to lying.

And, even parents lie to their children. Some of you parents are going to be teaching your children there’s something called an “Easter Bunny” pretty soon. Some of you already talking—there’s something called “Santa Claus.” “Oh,” you say, “that’s just a little white lie.” I don’t care what color—if it’s Technicolor—it’s a lie. But, you say, “But, it’s a harmless lie.” Well, now maybe you think so, but you see, dear friend, how are they going to know later on when you tell them about Jesus that that’s not another one of your little stories like Santa Claus or like the Easter Bunny? How are they going to know the difference? Now, if you want to play a Santa Claus game, that’s all right. If you want to play the Easter Bunny game, that’s all right. Let them know you’re playing a game. But, you’d better be careful. Some parents teach their children to lie. Some parents even teach their children to lie for them. The telephone will ring, and they’ll say, “Answer the telephone, and tell them mommy’s not here. Go to the door, and tell them mommy’s not here.” So, a little child goes to the door and says, “Mommy says she’s not here.” And, we teach them to lie for us, and then we turn around and whip them for lying to us. And, sometimes we lie to them to get them to do what we want them to do. I heard of a mother who told her little boy, “Now son, if you ever tell another lie, let me tell you what’s going to happen to you: there’s a little green man that lives on the moon, and he’s going to catch you and make you pick up sticks the rest of your life if you ever tell another lie.” How strange it is—how strange it is—that we wonder why children are raised in a generation where their word means nothing. Now, the Bible says, “*Thou shalt not bear false witness.*” (Exodus 20:16)

## B. Cursing

Another abuse of the tongue is this matter of cursing, taking God's name in vain. And, there's the verse that I gave you to begin with, Exodus 20:7: *"Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain."* (Exodus 20:7) You say, "Well, Brother Rogers, I do that, but that's not a big sin." Oh, no? Oh, no? I wouldn't be surprised but what in the heart and mind of God it just may be the chiefest of sins—to take the name of God in vain. "All I do is cuss a little," you say. Well, perhaps you ought to say, "All I do is kill a few people. All I do is commit a little adultery," for the same Ten Commandments deals with all of these things.

Now listen, you know what the angels are doing in glory right now? The angels are around the throne of God, saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts." Do you know what men are doing down here on earth? They're taking the name of Jehovah God, mixing it in the muck and mire and slime of the sewer, taking that name upon their lips in some vile oath. You say, "But Brother Rogers, I don't mean anything by it." You see, dear friend, that's the crime of it—that you could take such a holy name and that God would be meaningless to you that you don't mean anything by it. That, perhaps, is worse than meaning something by it—that God is just a name to you, that you can take His name in vain. I want to tell you that when a man takes God's name in vain, it shows two things.

### 1. It Shows a Wicked Heart

Number one: It shows a wicked heart. You know, the Bible says, *"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."* (Matthew 12:34) And, if you hear a man with a profane mouth, it means he has a profane heart.

### 2. It Shows an Empty Head

But, not only does it show a wicked heart; it shows an empty head. Someone has well said that "profanity is the attempt of a feeble mind to express itself forcibly." I like that. But, you see, listen, what about that feeble mind? It must be a feeble mind because what does a man get when he curses? I mean, if a man commits adultery, at least he gets the physical pleasure. If a man steals, at least he gets what he steals. What does a person get when he takes God's name in vain? Nothing but the judgment of God. I mean, it's like a fish biting a hook with no bait. He doesn't even get a shrimp. All he gets is the judgment of Almighty God. *"Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for [God] will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."* (Exodus 20:7)

## C. Criticism

I want to mention another abuse of the tongue, and this is criticism. And, there are many of you who would not think of lying and there are many of you who would not think of taking God's name in vain who are past masters at the art of unchristian criticism. I want

you to look in James 4:11 and see what James, who is a very wise and astute man, had to say about criticism. James says, *“Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.”* (James 4:11) Who made you a judge over me that you can criticize me? Who made me a judge over you that I can criticize you? How foolish we are to go around criticizing one another! I don’t know of anything that perhaps shows a wicked heart any more than this matter of judging, this matter of criticizing. In the first place, when we criticize one another, we’re often wrong because we don’t know enough to criticize someone else. We’re not good enough, and we don’t know enough to speak evil one of another.

This matter of criticizing one another is clearly forbidden in the Bible. Look, if you will, in Romans 14 now, for just a moment, and verses 4 and 10: *“Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.”* (Romans 14:4) And then, look, if you will, in verse 10: *“But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.”* (Romans 14:10) How foolish we are when we criticize our brothers in Christ!

And, let me tell you something: we need to be doubly, doubly, doubly careful that we never criticize an anointed preacher of God. Now, I’m not saying that because somebody’s criticizing me. I’m sure there are people who criticize me, but at the moment, I can’t think of anyone. So, this is just coming straight out of the Word of God. I’m not saying what I’m saying defensively, and I’m not saying it just primarily on my behalf. But, I am saying that you had better be careful that you never idly criticize any servant of Christ. Now, here’s a command that we often do not see in the Word of God, or if we do see it, we don’t seem to pay much attention to it. First Timothy 5:19: *“Against an elder receive not an accusation, but [in the presence of] two or three witnesses.”* (1 Timothy 5:19) Do you know what that means? Do you know what an elder is? He is the anointed leader of the church. *Pastors* and *elders*—that word is used interchangeably in the Bible.

Now, suppose somebody comes up to you and wants to criticize a minister, one of our staff or the staff of any church—a man of God, called of God, set apart of God, anointed of God, and he begins to criticize that preacher to you. Do you know what you ought to say? “Hold it right there. Mister, you’re talking about serious business. You are bringing an accusation against a man of God. Now, if what you have to say is true, we’re going to get two or three witnesses because you’re going to have to document everything you say. And, if it needs to be said, I’m going to let you say it. But, if you’ve said it and it is not true, I’ve got one or two witnesses right here. You’re going to be in a lot of trouble.” *“Against an elder receive not an accusation, but [in the presence of] two*

*or three witnesses.*” (1 Timothy 5:19) Be extremely careful that you do not listen to criticism about a man of God. Why is it? I’ll tell you why: the minister’s character is the greatest thing he has going for him, apart from just the plan, strength, and power of God. Now, if you ever undermine my character or any minister’s character by unjust criticism, then you make it very difficult for the person who listens to me to believe the gospel that I preach. And, therefore, you may be engendering that man to hell; you may be leading that man to hell. Oh, how careful we need to be! This is the reason the Bible says in Psalms 105:15: *“Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.”* (Psalms 105:15) You’re playing with lightning—whether I criticize another minister, whether you criticize me, or whether you criticize another minister.

Now, I’m not saying that ministers are beyond criticism. There are some ministers who need to be criticized. As a matter of fact, there are some of them who need to be brought into an ecclesiastical court and kicked out of the pulpit. But listen, if there is a charge and that charge is serious, don’t you glibly and lightly let it pass. Get two or three witnesses, and do the business that needs to be done. But, do not go around with idle gossip, either spreading it or listening to it. Unjust criticism is forbidden, and God will judge it.

I want to show you something over here in Numbers 16. Just turn to Numbers 16 for just a moment, and let me show you an interesting episode in the Old Testament. Now, in Numbers 16, Moses and Aaron were God’s anointed prophets, and there was a man named Korah who took it upon himself to criticize Moses and Aaron. Now, this man, Korah, did not like strong pastoral leadership; and so, here’s what happened, beginning in verse 3: *“And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy”—*that is, “We don’t like this strong leadership. We’re just as good as you are.” Now, how holy were they? Well, they were holy enough to dance around a golden calf. That’s how holy they were. But, they said—*“[You] take too much upon you, seeing [that] all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?”*—they did not like the idea of a God-called, God-anointed prophet and leader—*“And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face”*—now, Moses was not an arrogant leader that he was accused of being. As a matter of fact, there was not any man more meek than Moses. Moses, the Bible says, was the meekest man that ever lived. (Numbers 12:3) Here’s an illustration of it: Moses, when he heard this criticism, went and carried it to the Lord. He fell upon his face. What he did is, he told God on them, and notice what happened—*“And he spake unto Korah and unto...his [people], saying, Even to morrow the LORD will shew who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him.”* (Numbers 16:3–5)

I'm not going to read the rest of the story, but I want you to skip on down, if you will, in just a moment, to verses 31 and following of this same chapter, and let's see what happened: *"And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under [him]: And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men [and all] that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. [And] they, and all that [appertaineth] to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation."* (Numbers 16:31–33) Now, in this Old Testament episode, these gainsayers—these who criticized unjustly the man of God, these who touched and harmed God's anointed—the Bible says that the earth opened up and swallowed them up alive. God doesn't do that every time, but God did it this time to give a shining and a stunning example as to how He feels about the unjust criticism of God's man.

When a man is a critical person, it shows often that the person himself has a wicked heart. Beware of the person who finds fault with everybody and everything. I have preached now for quite a while, and I have observed this: that a critical spirit is not found in the heart and lives of the servants of God. And,, I want you to tell me anybody that you know that is a godly, a sweet, a powerful soul-winning Christian who has a critical nature. You don't know one—not one! Oh, I know plenty who will stand against sin. I know plenty who will preach the Bible and will not give an inch. But, I do not know one carping, griping, critical person who has the anointing of God, the power of God, upon his life. And listen, how careful we ought to be not to criticize because we ourselves have so many faults! You see, Galatians 6:1 says this: *"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such [a] one"*—and notice what it says now—*"in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest [you] also be tempted."* (Galatians 6:1) Now, what he's saying is that if somebody has fallen, if somebody has done wrong, don't criticize him; help him. Don't, when he falls, put your heel on his head and push him down further into the mud; lift him up. And, Paul says, *"[You consider yourself], lest [you] also be tempted."* (Galatians 6:1) It's the same thing that Jesus said when they wanted to stone that woman taken in adultery. Jesus said, "Let him that is without sin cast the first stone." (John 8:7) How careful we ought to be! How ashamed we ought to be to criticize other people when we have so many faults in our own hearts and in our own lives!

It ill behooves me to criticize anybody because I know what a miserable mess I am—I mean, the guy who is standing here right now. I'd be ashamed. I'd literally be ashamed if you knew all the weaknesses and faults in my life. I pray God you'll never find out. I love God. I'm not a hypocrite. But, God knows I have faults, and I hate them and I'm working on them. I'm kind of like Peter Lord. I can't get too upset when anybody says anything about me. I just say, "Thank God they don't know any more." How

ashamed we ought to be to criticize others when we ourselves... And, we know it if we'd be honest; we know it—how weak we are. *“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such [a] one in [a] spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”* (Galatians 6:1)

I don't suppose there's a sin that hurts the work of Christ more than unjust criticism. You cannot build the work of God by tearing down respect for those who operate it. Someone wrote these words, and I think they're good:

*I stood on the streets of a busy town  
watching men tear a building down.  
With heave, ho, and a lusty yell,  
They swung a beam, and a sidewall fell.  
I asked the foreman of the crew,  
“Are these men as skilled as those you'd hire if you wanted to build?”  
“Oh, no,” said he, “no, indeed.”  
Unskilled labor is all I need.  
I can tear down as much in a day or two  
As it would take skilled men a year to do.”*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

It doesn't take much size to criticize, to pull things down. Anybody can do that. It takes strength to build.

You say, “Is there never a time when I should criticize or find fault?” Yes, there is a time. I've already mentioned that. I'm talking about unjust, unchristian criticism. There is a godly criticism. What's the difference? Godly criticism, first of all, comes with the right motive. It is to help, not to hurt. Number two: It is to the right person. If you have somebody to criticize, the Bible says you go see that person alone and tell him his fault between you and him alone. And, you do it in the right time; you do it in the right place. Make certain that you have the right facts, and make certain that you have the right spirit—that you're filled with the Spirit of Christ, the spirit of love.

#### D. **Gossip**

And, right closely akin to this matter of criticism is the matter of gossip. Now, gossip and criticism are not exactly the same, but they're very close. Again, I want to remind you that James says in James 4:11: *“Speak not evil one of another, brethren.”* (James 4:11) You know, I really have just about lost heart preaching against gossip to gossipers because it never does any good, or hardly ever, and I'll tell you why: because gossiping is a form of insanity. I mean, really, have you ever listened to gossip? A gossip says—before he starts to gossip, he says, “Now, you know me; I don't gossip,” and then he does it. Now, when a person says, “I don't do something,” then they do it, they must be

insane. I mean, it's a form of insanity. They never ever really hear the message coming to them, and even the gossips who are here tonight think I'm preaching to somebody else but not to them. That's right. But, gossip is clearly forbidden. You say, "Well, I don't really originate; I just pass it on." That's just like counterfeit money: "I don't print it; I just spend it." You know what the Bible says about the person who passes it on? Proverbs 26:20: "*Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.*" (Proverbs 26:20) See, you become a part of the whole thing.

You know, it's a strange thing to me—I can point out people in almost any congregation where I've served who know all the gossip. I mean, there are just certain individuals, brother, if anything's happening, they know it. Now, how do they find it out? I mean, what is this propensity for knowing everything that some people have? Well, you say, "I just can't help it. Everybody tells me everything." Do you know why? They recognize that you have garbage cans for ears. That's why they tell you everything. You see, they recognize the kind of a person you are. It is a dubious distinction that people want to tell you gossip. How much harm is done? The lives of people that are criticized and gossip about a ruined, and young Christians are caused to stumble, and the Church receives a bad name.

## **II. The Awesome Power of the Spoken Word**

Now, I'm going to leave that. And, let's turn this coin over a minute, and let's think about the awesome power in a positive sense of the spoken word. Just as words have the ability to cut and to harm and to wreck and to ruin, what tremendous power there is in the spoken word! Oh, the awesome power of the spoken word!

### **A. God Created the Universe with a Word**

You see, God created the entire universe with a word. The Bible says in Hebrews 11:3 that "*the worlds were framed by the word of God.*" (Hebrews 11:3) God said, "*Let there be light: and there was light.*" (Genesis 1:3) God said, "Let there be this," and there was this. And, God said, "Let there be that," and there was that. And, God spoke, and it was so. And, the world came into being by the word of God. But, not only that, but the Bible says that the world He created He sustains by His word. For the Bible says, "*[He upholds] all things by the word of his power.*" (Hebrews 1:3)

### **B. God Controls the World with a Word**

God created the world with a word, and God controls the world with a word. I think Jesus illustrated this when He was here on earth. Turn to Mark 11. Let me show you something very interesting now. Mark 11—turn to it, and let's begin reading in verse 12. One of the most remarkable episodes in the life of Christ is right here: "*And on the morrow, when they were come [to] Bethany, he was hungry*"—speaking of Christ—"And

*seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it*—and just underscore the little word *it*. He didn't say it to God. He didn't say it to anybody else. He said to the fig tree. Now, what kind of a man goes around talking to trees?—*“And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.”* (Mark 11:12–14) Now, this is something very interesting. They said, “Look, there He is. He's talking to a tree over there,” and His disciples heard it.

Now, what happened as a result of that? I want you to go on down to verse 20: *“And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away”*—now, notice the application that Jesus makes—*“And Jesus answering [said] unto them, Have faith in God”*—now, this literally means “have the God kind of faith.” The King James says, “Have faith in God,” but it literally means “have the faith of God” or “have the same kind of faith that God has; operate like God operates; have faith like God has”—*“For”*—now, notice verse 23—*“For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith”*—now, just underscore that—*“those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have”*—notice—*“whatsoever he saith.”* (Mark 11:20–23) It gets worse. Now, He's not only talking to trees; He's talking to mountains: *“whosoever shall say [to] this mountain, Be...removed, and be...cast into the sea...he [will] have [what] he [says].”* (Mark 11:23) Now, don't pass lightly over that. Jesus spoke to a tree. And, Jesus said you can speak to mountains, and Jesus said you're going to have what you say: “Whatsoever you say...” (Mark 11:23) If you have the faith like God has, if you have God's kind of faith, you can go around speaking to mountains and removing them; you can go around speaking to trees and placing a curse upon them—whatever it is that you say. You see, God controls the world by His words. The world was framed by the word of God. And Jesus, acting like His Father, controlled the world around Him by His words.

### **C. We are Justified by Our Words**

How important are our words? Did you know that we are justified by our words, and, conversely, we are condemned by our words? You're in Mark. Just turn left to Matthew for a moment, and look in Matthew 12:36: *“But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment”* (Matthew 12:36)—not some idle words; every idle word. Now, the word *idle* means “nonproductive.” He's not talking here about the fact that the only thing you can do is be preaching the gospel. He's not saying here that you can't tell a joke. He's not saying

here that you can't talk about fishing or baseball or anything like that. If those things relax, refresh, restore, they're not idle; they are productive. But, any word that is a nonproductive word—anything that destroys, anything that pulls down, anything that hurts, anything that harms, anything that is unseeingly, anything that is nonproductive—it is an idle word, and one day you'll answer for it, every one. Boy, I tell you, we'd do a whole lot less talking if we thought about that, wouldn't we?

This is what Jesus said: *“every idle word that men...speak...shall [they] give account thereof in the day of judgment”*—now, let's continue to read here for just a moment, for he goes on and explains it in verse 37—*“For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”* (Matthew 12:36–37) Now, it is not without significance that we're calling this message “The Awesome Power of the Spoken Word.” *“By thy [word you're going to] be justified...by [your word you're going to] be condemned.”* (Matthew 12:37)

Well, how does that work? What do you mean by that? Well, let me show you another passage. Turn to Romans 10 here for a moment. Let me explain what I'm talking about, show you how you're justified by your words. Romans 10—now, let's look in verses 8–9: *“But what saith it? The word is nigh thee even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach”*—now, watch—*“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. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”* (Romans 10:8–10) With your words you are justified, or with your words you're condemned. This is the reason that we put a great emphasis upon a public profession of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, suppose I preached tonight and give the invitation, which I will, and someone comes forward, and they go into the counseling room, and the counselor shares the way of salvation with that person and leads that person in a prayer to receive Christ, and that person prays, “Lord Jesus, come into my heart, forgive my sin, and save me.” And then, suppose the counselor, in order to check that person out, turns to him and says, “Now, you've prayed and asked Christ to come into your heart and save you. Are you saved?” And, suppose that person says, “No, I don't think I am. I don't see how just saying that can change my life.” Well, I want to ask you a question: Is he saved? No, he's not saved. Why? He says he's not. But now, let's suppose another person goes back there tonight, and that person prays and says, “Lord Jesus, come into my heart, forgive my sins, and save me.” And, the counselor says to him, “Are you saved?” He says, “Yes, I'm saved.” Well, is he saved? Yes, he is. Why? Because he says he is.

Now listen, *when you say “amen” to what God says, God says “amen” to what you say.* Now, get it: when you say “amen” to what God says, then God says “amen” to what

you say. When you believe in your heart enough to confess with your mouth, you'll be saved. *"With the heart man [believes] unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."* (Romans 10:10) *"The word is nigh [you], [it's] even in [your] mouth...[it] is, the word of faith, which we preach."* (Romans 10:8) But, you must say, "Yes, yes. It is true!" Boldly, spiritually, audaciously, you say, "Yes." And, when you say it, God says "amen" to it. When you say "amen" to what God says, God says "amen" to what you say. When you ratify what God has said, God ratifies what you have said. *"By [your] words [you are] justified...by [your] words [you are] condemned."* (Matthew 12:37)

#### **D. Words Have the Power to Bless**

Oh, if we could only understand the importance of the word! The word, you see, has the power to bless. That's what Peter was saying in our text already. Let's go back to that. My, we've gone a long way from it. This is what you call a "topical sermon," preacher boys. All right, now look, the Bible says here in 1 Peter 3:9: *"Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing."* (1 Peter 3:9) Now, what he is saying is this: that you are to use your mouth, you are to use your tongue, to bless other people with.

Did you know that you can bless people with your words? Did you know that your words have a tremendous power to bless? Turn to James, the third chapter here, for just a moment. Let me show you something else here. Look, if you will, in verse 8: *"But the tongue can no man tame"*—you say, "Well, why are you preaching about it then?" Well, God can tame it. What he's saying is you're utterly helpless apart from Him—*"the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison"*—but now, notice the awesome power of the tongue—*"Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. [And] out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not...to be."* (James 3:8–10) Now, what he's saying is this: that we can bless with our tongues or we can curse with our tongues. Did you know that God has given you the power and the authority as a believer priest to bless people? Have you ever thought about blessing people? Most of us never have.

You better be very careful how you speak to little children. Jesus took little children up in His arms, and what did He do? Blessed them—blessed them. Did you know that you can bless or curse your children by your words? Do you remember in the Old Testament where the patriarchs would bring in their children before them before they would die, even their grown sons, and what would they do? They would lay their hands upon them and bless them. Speak a word of blessing. I love what some of our young people are doing now in their wedding ceremonies: they're having other people to come and speak a blessing at their wedding. It's a beautiful thing because it's not just words,

not just pious thoughts.

Friend, there is spiritual power. That's what James is saying. Listen, with our tongues we can bless. I mean, I can come, and I say to you, "In the name of Jesus, I bless you. I bring good upon your head. I speak good of you. I speak a benediction upon you." Do you know what the word *benediction* means? It means "to speak well." *Benedict*—"to speak well."

If we could only understand! There are parents that are cursing their children: "Charles, you're never going to amount to anything. Charles, I don't know what's wrong with you. Why is it you do so poorly in school? Look at you. Stand up straight. Can't you do anything right? Oh, this child of mine." You're cursing him. You're putting a curse on him. In the name of Jesus, don't do it—don't do it. Bless, encourage. Oh, if we could only understand that—that the devil takes those negative confessions that we use and he burns them into the hearts and lives of little ones. If we could only be like the ancients in the Bible and learn how to bless our own dear children and those round about us with our words. Words can bless, or words can curse.

Let me show you an interesting scripture. Turn to Hebrews 3:1. You're in James; just turn left one book. "*Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Jesus Christ.*" (Hebrews 3:1) Now, the marginal reading for the word *profession* is the word *confession*: "*consider the [High Priest] and [Apostle] of our [confession].*" (Hebrews 3:1) Now, Christ is our High Priest. What does a priest do? A priest brings to God what you bring to him, right? In the Old Testament, when a priest would offer sacrifices, where did he get them? If I'm a priest, and I'm to be Tommy's priest, and I'm an Old Testament priest, and Tommy wants me to offer a lamb for him, he's got to bring me that lamb. The only thing I have to offer for Tommy is what Tommy brings to me. Now, in the New Testament sense, who is my High Priest? Jesus. What is Jesus going to offer to the Father? What I bring to Him. He is the High Priest of my confession. That is, what I confess is what He has to offer to the Father. He has nothing else to offer to the Father except what I profess and what I confess. Now, therefore, that makes the scripture very clear and very plain to us.

I want you to turn to Matthew 10 for just a moment. Turn to it—Matthew 10. Oh, you needed this. It's like a Bible drill tonight, isn't it? Now, look in verse 32: "*Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven*"—doesn't that make sense? He's the High Priest. What does Jesus have to offer to the Father? The only thing Jesus Christ has to offer to the Father is what you offer to Jesus. You confess Jesus before men; Jesus will confess you before the Father. But oh, continue to read—"*But whosoever shall deny me before me, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.*" (Matthew 10:32–33) Christ is the High Priest, presenting to the Father what we say. If we confess victory to Jesus and we say,

“Jesus, in you I am victorious,” Jesus says to the Father, “Father, I’m offering victory on his behalf.” If we offer to Jesus praise, then Jesus offers to the Father praise. As a matter of fact, the Bible says in Hebrews 13:15: *“By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise...continually, that is, the fruit of our lips.”* (Hebrews 13:15) The only sacrifices that our High Priest can offer are what we give to Him. And, what is the sacrifice that we give to Him? The fruit of our lips. Friend, what you say is what you’re going to have.

Oh, the awesome power of the spoken word! No wonder Peter says, “If you love life, if you would see good days, be careful what you say.” “Every idle word will give account.” (Matthew 12:36) “But, whatsoever you say,” Jesus said, “you’ll have.” (Mark 11:23)

## **Conclusion**

Let’s bow in prayer. Father, we just thank you for your Word tonight. Lord, I know that it’s spoken to my own heart tonight. And Lord, I don’t want to speak negative words. Lord, I want to speak those things that will bless and edify, things that are truthful. God, forgive us all for the unjust criticism, the gossip, the lying, the negativism, the cursing that we’ve done. And Lord, help us now to begin to offer to Jesus, our Apostle and High Priest, a positive confession, that He might offer it to you, our God. And Lord, we do offer that now—that positive confession—as your children, that we’re supposed to offer. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

# Communication in Marriage

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: June 19, 2005**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 3:10–11**

*“For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:”*

1 PETER 3:10

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Communication Road Levels
    - A. The Frivolous Level
    - B. The Factual Level
    - C. The Fellowship Level
    - D. The Feeling Level
    - E. The Freedom Level
  - II. Communication Road Potholes
    - A. Difference Between the Sexes
    - B. Difference in Temperaments
    - C. Fear and Insecurity
    - D. Self-centeredness
    - E. Unresolved Hurts
    - F. Distractions of Life
    - G. Overcrowded Schedule
  - III. Communication Road Repair
- Conclusion

## Introduction

Thank you, Jim, and orchestra, and all of who've had a part in this wonderful, wonderful song service today. We love you and thank God for these musicians. We are so blessed with music here at Bellevue. When I have been home some Sundays and have watched the program on television, I stand in awe and have such gratefulness for this music. And then the Word of God that has been faithfully proclaimed in this interim period. By the way, would you be finding in the Word of God 1 Peter chapter 3, and then just kind of hold it open there for a while, and let me take a few words, personal words, before we start. First of all, I want to thank you for your prayers for me. And I know you're praying for me. And we receive so many cards, so many expressions of love, and I want to thank you for that. The question comes, how do you feel? Now, I'm not exaggerating

when I tell you I feel super—and that’s the truth. I’d have to have a doctor tell me I’m sick. That is the truth. And I know that I’ve got some problems that need to be solved, and we’re praying and trusting the Lord, and I expect that you’re going to have me around here for many, many years. So I just want you to know that. And I don’t mean to be cavalier or flippant about it, but we know that we’re in God’s hands and our God is a mighty God. I’m so grateful to have my family: my children who live here in the city and my grandchildren, and then our son, David, and his wife, Kelly, and Jonathan and Stephen Paul, all the way from Spain. And they’re sitting here on the front row. And I want to tell each of you on this Father’s Day how much I love you and appreciate you. Then one other thing before we get into the message this morning. I will be leaving this afternoon to go to Nashville for the Southern Baptist Convention, and I will be preaching tomorrow night at the closing message of the Pastor’s Conference. It is a strategic and important time, and so I want you to pray that God will give me a special anointing because it is an opportunity that I want to be a good steward over. I’ll be speaking to the ministers and to the pastors on the subject, “The Making of a Man of God.” And I would appreciate your prayers.

Now, in 1 Peter chapter 3, I want to share with you a passage of Scripture, beginning in verse 10: “For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew—that means “hate”—evil, and do good; let him seek peace and ensure it.” That means to “chase after.” I want to talk to you today about communication in marriage. It’s Father’s Day, so I thought I’d speak on the home, and, without specificity, speak both to husband and wife because the best thing that a husband can do is to love his wife; that is, as a dad, to love his wife. And the best thing that husbands and wives can do is to communicate together and to show the love of Jesus Christ in the home. First Peter chapter 3 is written to husbands and wives, and it has much to say about communication. Now, friend, I want to tell you, marriages are made in heaven, but survival takes place on earth. And we have to work at our marriages. There are no easy marriages. We have to pay the price. But I can tell you, beyond a shadow of any doubt or peradventure, it is worth the price.

## **I. Communication Road Levels**

Now, I want us to think of communication as a highway—a highway—a road to romance or a road to ruin. But communication is a highway. I want to give you three points this morning. I want you to think, first of all, of communication as a one-way road to married happiness. Again, I’ve already read to you 1 Peter chapter 3, verses 10 through 11: “He that will love life—do you?—and will see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.” Now, what he’s talking about here is

communication. “Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensure it.” You see, communication is like a highway, and words are like vehicles. Words transport thoughts. Words carry feeling. And so, this communication is a way to joy and happiness and victory or ruin in our marriage. Now, the deepest craving that I have, and you have, and any individual has, if you will analyze it, is intimacy with God and with at least one other person—someone who will know us and love us; someone who will understand our deepest thoughts; someone that we can truly say—truly say—that we are one with.

#### **A. The Frivolous Level**

Now, let’s talk about communication. There are five levels of communication. First of all, there’s what I want to call the frivolous level. That is, you hear people talking, and they just talk about sports, they talk about weather. You see them on the street. “How are you doing?” “Fine.” “Hot day.” “Yes, it is,”—whatever. And that’s just frivolity. Nothing wrong with that, but we do that so often. You know, if you’ll listen, a lot of people are overheard saying nothing.

#### **B. The Factual Level**

Now, that’s the frivolous level. Now, we go a little deeper and we come to what I would call the factual level. We talk about facts, and what happened, and what the government is doing, or what the price of gasoline is, but we just kind of report those facts like we’re a newscaster, giving the evening news. “Just the facts, ma’am,” like Jack Webb on *Dragnet*.

#### **C. The Fellowship Level**

And then, the next is the fellowship level. You know, we get beyond the frivolous and the factual. We get to the fellowship level. And in the fellowship level we begin to talk about ideas. We begin to talk about judgments, and so forth. And when you do that, you risk a little bit, because your ideas may be controverted, and somebody may not agree with your judgments, and you may tend to withdraw then, and drop out because you’re kind of fragile.

#### **D. The Feeling Level**

But then you move to another level, and that is the feeling level. Now, not only do you talk about facts and judgments, but you open up. You share your heart. You let other people know how you feel: your joys and your sorrows. And that’s about as far as most of us really get, and that is the feeling level.

#### **E. The Freedom Level**

But there’s one more level. And that’s what I want husbands and wives to aim for. And I truly, honestly believe, and I give this testimony to the glory of God, it is the level that

Joyce and I have attained to, and it has taken years to do that. But it is the freedom level—the freedom level—where you are completely free. You can open your heart. You can tell your dreams, your fears, your ideas, your joys, your failures, and you're not afraid of rejection. You see, the reason we don't want to get to this level is we're afraid if people really, really knew us—I mean, really knew us—they wouldn't respect us. And so we kind of wear camouflage, or we have a mask, and we never really feel that we can totally, completely open up to someone else.

Well, communication in marriage is that last level, the freedom level. Now, if you don't have that freedom level in your marriage, if you're not able to share with complete honesty, total honesty, you're going to find yourself drifting apart. I heard about a couple that got a waterbed and had to get rid of it because they were drifting apart! It's going to happen.

Now, Jesus, in chapter 2, is the model. Jesus not only is the great Redeemer; He's the great communicator. And He is the model. And, if you would go back to chapter 2 and look in verse 22, it speaks of Jesus, and it says, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." And it talks about the Lord Jesus Christ and His communication, how pure His speech was. And then, He goes on in chapter 3 to talk to husbands and wives. Chapter 3, verse 1, says, "Likewise, ye wives..." Chapter 3, verse 7, says, "Likewise, you husbands..." Now, notice, in chapter 2 it talks about Jesus and His example with His speech. And then it just simply says, "Now, wives, you do the same! Husbands, you do the same!"

Now, the Lord Jesus had much to say about communication. Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." In the country, they say, "What's down in the well comes up in the bucket." If you want to know what's in your heart, or anybody's heart, listen to their words. If they're harsh words, they've got an angry heart. If they're negative words, they have a negative heart. If they're over-active words, they have a restless heart. If they're boastful words, they have an insecure heart. Filthy words—we hear so much of that—an impure heart. Critical words—a bitter heart. Encouraging words—a happy heart. Gentle words—a loving heart. Truthful words—an honest heart. Jesus, our example in communication, said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."

Now, let's move on. Not only what Jesus said, but think about what the wisest man who ever lived said. What was his name? Anybody know? Solomon. Now, I'm talking about someone other than the Lord Jesus Christ. And I looked at some of the proverbs of Solomon. Solomon said in Proverbs 10, verse 19: "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise." You know, many things open by mistake, but none as frequently as the mouth. Solomon also said, "A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger."

The apostle James had a lot to say about words also. And you might want to turn this time, if you would, to James chapter 3. Just put your bookmark, keep it there in 1 Peter chapter 3, and just fast-forward over to James chapter 3, and I want you to see what James had to say about the tongue. For example, James says that it is the tongue that gives direction. Your tongue will direct your marriage. Listen to this verse—James chapter 3, verse 2: “For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses’ mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about the whole body. And behold also the ships, which though they be great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm—boys and girls, that means a rudder—whithersoever the governor listeth.” Now, notice what he’s saying here. You can take a 2,000-pound stallion and put a little 110-pound girl on top of that stallion, and because that stallion has a bit in his mouth, she can direct where that horse will go. Or you take a mighty ship driven with fierce winds through rough waves, and the captain of that ship with the rudder can steer that ship.

Now, what James is saying is this: Just as the horse is controlled by the bit, just as the ship is controlled by the rudder, your words are going to give direction to your home. Now, if you don’t like the way your marriage is headed, I want to tell you, you’d better watch your words. Your words can bring your ship into a safe harbor, or they can put it upon the rocks.

Now, not only does James say the tongue brings direction, but he also says the tongue may bring destruction. Look in verse 6: “And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.” Now, if you have a torch tongue, you can burn down your marriage. You know, fire is a wonderful servant, but it’s a poor master. And words can warm a heart or burn down a home. The tongue, James says—listen—brings direction.

The tongue may bring destruction. The tongue may bring defilement. Look, if you will, in verses 7 and 8: “For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: but the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.” You can poison—poison—your marriage with your tongue.

Now, notice what Jesus has said, what Solomon has said, what James has said. Do you want to poison your marriage? When I was studying this, I thought of something that I’ve always thought was very humorous. Sir Winston Churchill and Lady Astor were not married, but they were friends. But they would often bicker with one another. One day, Lady Astor got so exasperated with Winston Churchill, she said, “If I were your wife, I would put arsenic in your tea.” He said, “Madam, if you were my wife, I would

gladly drink it.”

Now, a lot of marriages are that way, and they are defiled. Now, don't put your marriage on the rocks. Don't burn down your home. Don't poison your love. What I'm trying to say is this: that communication is a road, and words travel that road.

## **II. Communication Road Potholes**

Now, let's move to the second thing. The road, the communication road, has some roadblocks and some potholes. Now, I want to mention these, and I want you this morning, if you will, to make a little list. Now, don't get out a piece of paper, because your neighbor's going to be looking. And don't even count on your fingers, because they'll watch you do that. But I want you to see how many of these things are true in your marriage and in your life, how many of these potholes are there, how many of these barriers and blockades are on the communication road in your marriage.

### **A. Difference Between the Sexes**

Now, number one, and this is one that all of us have to deal with, and that is the difference between the sexes. Now, one of the great reasons that we have difficulty communicating as husband and wife is because we're male and female. Notice in 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 1: “Likewise, ye wives...” And then, in chapter 3, verse 7: “Likewise, ye husbands...” There's male and female. God made us male and female. And you're going to understand that God made us different that He might make us one. Men and women and boys and girls are wired differently. Now, you may not realize that before you get married, but your prize package will become a surprise package. Once you get married, you're going to find out there is an intrinsic difference. I asked Joyce, when I was preparing a message on communication, I said, “Joyce, what is the biggest communication problem in marriage?” She never batted an eyelash. She never hesitated. She gave one word. She said, “Men!”—“Men!” And, you know, she's probably right. Men and women are wired differently.

Gary Smalley—we love Gary Smalley. Gary Smalley reports that medical research has shown that something happens in the brain of little boys and girls, when a little boy is in about the 18th to 25th week of gestation. There is a chemical bath that sweeps over his brain made up of certain male hormones, and so forth. Now, his brain is divided into two halves or hemispheres: left and right, two sides of the brain. And there is a fibrous tissue between these two called the corpus callosum. And, it is a connection between the two halves of the brain. But when this chemical bath comes to the little boy, it tends to shrink the corpus callosum and to cause the right side of his brain to recede slightly. That is, the left brain in the little boy, therefore, becomes the dominant brain. Now, what is the left side of the brain? It's the side of the brain that deals with logic. It's the side of the brain that deals with the analytical, the factual, and also the aggressive.

That's the reason that men love to argue, and that's the reason that men want to think sequentially. Not as girls do—spider-web thinking. They want to think sequentially. That's what makes a man on a vacation want to conquer 500 miles a day. That's the reason they don't want to stop at a rest stop. And if he's eating in the restaurant, he's looking up and seeing all those other cars passing, getting ahead of him. That's just the way he is. I mean, he is goal-oriented. And for his entertainment, what does he want to watch? He doesn't want to watch romance; he wants to watch football. He doesn't want to see a hospital program where people are made well; he wants to see a football game where they get hurt. Why is this? God wired him that way. What was Adam's job? To dress the garden and to keep it. To dress the garden—that's provision. To keep it—that's protection. God made Adam where he would work hard. God made Adam with muscles, and an exterior, and a hard shell, because he had to protect the home. And that's just the way God made the man. Men and women are different.

And, lady, your husband would have to have a brain transplant to be like you. We just see things differently. A boy and a girl were sitting on the front porch, on the old swing there on the front porch. There was a beautiful yellow moon in the sky. The fleecy clouds were scudding by. Off in the valley was the little church with the yellow lights streaming out of the windows. The doors were open. And, Brother Jim, they were having choir practice. And the strains of that music were wafting their way through the valley up to where the boy and girl were sitting there on the swing. It was a beautiful night. Under the porch, the crickets were chirping. And she was listening to the choir; he was listening to the crickets, but neither knew what the other was really listening to. She said, "Is that not beautiful?" He said, "It really is. They tell me they make that noise by rubbing their hind legs together."

That's the difference between the male and the female. Now, little girls are more global. Little girls have the ability to access both hemispheres at the same time. Now, the right hemisphere is the one that is poetic. It is emotional. It is sympathetic. And so, it's not to say little girls are not logical, but little girls think emotionally and logically at the same time. And, therefore, the little girls also are more verbal than men. Did you know that they have put cameras on little children in the hospital; I mean, newborns, and the little girls are moving their lips more than the little boys? I'm not an exaggerating. Little girls are just different. They are more verbal.

Gary Smalley has reported that at the Harvard preschool program they did an experiment. They wired the playground and listened to the noises that these little children were making. Most of the noises that the little girls were making were words. Now, they were talking to one another, and this won't surprise you: they were often talking to themselves. But they were talking, just talking, talking. Little boys, a great majority of their sounds were not words at all, just noises. "Zoooooommm."

“Yaaaaaaah” “A-a-a-a-a-a” “A-a-a-a-a-a-a.” They were just making noises.

Joyce and I were in Houston a few days ago, and we went to the zoo. And it was a hot day, and we found a shady place. There was a bench. I said, “I’m going to stretch out on this bench for a while.” I lied down on the bench and closed my eyes. And a little boy came up, and he said, “Yaaaaaaah!” And his friend said, “Is he dead?” That’s just little boys for you. You see, women love to communicate. Lady, you ought not to be surprised when your husband just grunts. Speech pathologists tell us that 9 out of 10 problems in speech pathology are with boys, not with girls. How many girls do you know that stutter? Almost always—not always, but almost always—it is the boy that stutters. And so we just begin with a kind of a handicap, and that is the difference between male and female when we communicate.

### **B. Difference in Temperaments**

But now here’s the second difference. And you can check the first one off because we all have that one, okay? I asked you to keep score. Give yourself a negative 1. All right now, there’s another difference, and that is the temperamental difference. Verse 7 says that husbands are to dwell with their wives according to knowledge. And you need to understand that your wife has a different background, a different temperament, than you have. And we all have different temperaments. That is a part of our upbringing, a part of the things that we have learned, a part of our nature. And we’re opposites, and opposites attract. That’s the reason that you and your wife, most likely, got together. Surely there were likenesses. But it’s the opposites that attract. I was attracted to Joyce because she was always neat and clean, she’s always on time, always had her homework done. None of those things are true about me. And I saw a girl that had it all together. We have differences. Our families, our backgrounds, are different. But I want to tell you, incompatibility is grounds for a great marriage. God makes us different that He might make us one. But we do have temperamental differences. I’ll tell you, I married a beautiful cheerleader; she married a dumb football player. And now I’m married to a complicated woman, and she’s married to the Pastor Emeritus of a huge church. We’re different.

### **C. Fear and Insecurity**

There’s another thing that is a communication barrier and a pothole, and that is fear and insecurity. Remember when I talked to you about the different levels of communication? Well, friend, listen. The reason that sometimes we don’t communicate is we are afraid to open our hearts up. Look in verse 8: “Finally, be of one mind, having compassion one of another.” Now, we hold back. And the reason we hold back is that we want the other person to think that we’re really better than we are. And we’re afraid if that other person really found out what we are like, who we really are, that they might not love and accept

us. And, after all, all I have is what I have. And so, I just have to wear that camouflage.

By the way, sirs, this is why so many men find it hard to pray with their wives. A lot of men who pray still find it difficult to pray with their wives. Why? Because if it is an honest prayer, you have to be transparent. And to be transparent with God, you have to be transparent with the person who is listening to you and praying with you. Men don't mind getting the roof off; they just don't like to get the walls down. Because, again, God made man with that hard exterior, and man is, by nature, not as trusting as a woman. You know, women are so trusting.

We were in the airport a while back, and the announcement came on: "Watch all unattended bags, da-ta-ta-ta-ta." And, I was reading. Joyce came up to me and she said, "Adrian, what should I do?" I said, "What?" She said, "The nicest young man left this bag here and asked me if I would watch it." I said, "What!" She said, "He's been gone a long time. What do you think I ought to do?" I didn't really tell her what I thought she ought to do. I said, "Joyce." She said, "But he was so nice looking." Women are more trusting. Men don't like to trust. They're not as trusting. Now, they can be taken in by a con artist, but that's not because it's not trusting; it's just because they're not too smart. But, what I'm trying to say is this: the fear and insecurity keep us from communication. That may be with you.

#### **D. Self-centeredness**

Number four: self-centeredness. Look in 1 Peter 3, verse 8: "Finally, be ye of one mind" Now, if you're self-centered, ego is going to cause a lack of communication. We, by nature, want to be king or queen in our own little lives, and so, we're so full of ego. That's the reason why we have so many arguments. Most of the arguments in the home are ego against ego. We're not trying to solve a problem; we're trying to win an argument. There are no problems too big to solve, if you'll attack the problem rather than one another.

#### **E. Unresolved Hurts**

Another number, number five, is unresolved hurts. Notice again in verse 8: "Love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous." If you've hurt your wife, or she's hurt you, and you don't resolve that, that hurt turns to bitterness. And if you'll examine, you'll see that your partner has a closed spirit. And they may be living day after day after day, but there's no open communication because there's been a hurt there. You let the sun go down upon your wrath.

I was reading of a giant pine tree in Colorado. This pine tree was only half grown when the Pilgrims landed on the shore of America. This pine tree, that had endured snows and summer heat and avalanches and earthquakes, it had been struck 14 times by lightning, as they examined it. This tree, that looked almost indestructible, was finally

killed. Do you know what it was killed by? A little beetle—a little beetle that you could put between your thumb and your finger and pulverize that beetle. That beetle in marriage is an unresolved hurt.

#### **F. Distractions of Life**

Then, number six: the distractions of life. We stay so busy that we fail to work at our marriage. Verse 11 says that we're to seek peace, and we're to ensure it. Don't let anything distract you from having a happy home of communication. You have to work at it.

#### **G. Overcrowded Schedule**

Number seven: an overcrowded schedule. I mean, we're so busy today. And in most homes now both spouses work. We're going here and there. And sometimes the church contributes to it. We've got to get here to soccer practice. We've got to get there to choir practice. We have the youth tour. We have this thing and that thing, and the men's meeting. We are just so busy that we don't have time to communicate. We get wrapped up in hobbies and jobs.

One of my favorite stories is about a man whose wife sent him away to work that day and said, "Now, honey, don't forget. When you come back, don't come back to this place. We have moved." She said, "We're going to move today. The movers are coming." He said, "Listen. Do you think I'm stupid? You don't have to tell me that. I know we're moving." But that afternoon, out of rote habit, he went right back to the same place. And there he saw some paper in the yard, the doors open, the house vacant. "Oh," he said, "Oh, no. She was right. I forgot, and now I don't know where we've moved to." So he saw a little boy there on a bicycle. He said, "Son, do you know the folks who used to live in this house?" He said, "Yes, sir." He said, "They've moved, haven't they?" He said, "Yes, sir." He said, "Son, do you know where they have moved to?" He said, "Oh, Daddy. Mama said you would forget!" It's too busy, too busy—an overcrowded schedule.

### **III. Communication Road Repair**

Now, do any of these fit you? I pray that you will be wise enough to look at these things. Now, I've got to bring this to a conclusion. But let's talk a little about some road repair. It's time to do some road repair. Husbands and wives, learn to be more sensitive. Look in verse 8: "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous." Try to understand your mate. Is it really your wife that you're upset with, or what happened at work? Is she acting toward you in the afternoon because of the way you acted toward her in the morning? You know, understand the deepest needs of an individual.

A little paperboy sometimes is smarter than a man or a woman. A little paperboy gets a new house on his route, and there's a dog that he doesn't know, and that dog comes out yapping, snarling. If the little boy is smart, he doesn't throw a rock at that dog. What he does is very gently gets off his bike and says, "Come here, boy; come here." And the dog doesn't know whether to come or not. Finally, the little boy moves up and gets close enough to the dog, begins to rub him a little bit and scratch him behind the ear. The dog begins to wag his tail. And, after a while, when the boy comes, the dog runs out to greet him. Now, why was that dog barking and snapping and growling? Because he's afraid! What did the dog really want? Affection! You see, we need to understand the partner that we're married to. We need to be sensitive.

Number two: deal with self-centeredness. Ask God to forgive you for your ego. What most marriages need is two funerals and a wedding, where people die to self.

Number three: resolve hurts. If there's something you have done wrong, ask forgiveness. Confess it. And ask to be received back. Resolve hurts.

Next, create a spirit of oneness. Find things that you can do together. That's one of the reasons Joyce and I enjoy leading trips to the Holy Land and other places. These are things that we can do together. We have this commonality.

Number five: keep dating. Look again in verse 10: "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: but seek peace." I mean, be pro-active about your marriage. Never let anybody tell you to act your age. Go back and act like you did when you were teenagers. Plan some regular dates out of the house. Treat your wife like you were courting her. I tell men, young preachers, never flirt with another woman, and never cease to flirt with your own wife.

Number six: learn to laugh. Verse 10 speaks of loving life and seeing good days. A merry heart does good like a medicine. Your home ought to ring with laughter, not be burned out with dry rot. Let your guard down. Lighten up. See life as full of humor. Rather than working at your marriage, maybe you ought to play at your marriage. And don't feel guilty about having a good time.

And, number seven: pray together—pray together. Listen to verse 7: "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, as being heirs together of the grace of life." Pray together, that your prayers be not hindered. One of the great joys of my life, and I had to learn how to do this, is to pray with Joyce. Because I told you, by nature, I don't want to pray with a woman.

Nothing personal to Joyce, I'm just a private person. I don't like to get out of my shell. But Joyce and I through the years have developed the habit of praying together, as we did this morning, as we did last night, as we pray for the things that concern us.

We pray for you children every day, for you grandchildren. We lift you to the Lord. We pray for this wonderful church. We prayed this morning for the staff of this church. We prayed for our nation this morning, because on Sundays we pray for America, and we pray for our state, we pray for our senators and for our mayors. And we pray for preacher friends and people who are preaching the gospel, because on Sundays we pray for America. On Mondays, we pray for Central America. On Tuesday, we pray for South America. On Wednesdays, we pray for Africa. On Thursday, we pray for Europe. On Friday, we pray for the Near East, and on Saturdays, the Far East. And then, we pray for one another. I cannot tell you how blessed I am to hear Joyce pray for me, to lift me to the Lord. And I pray for her, and I bless her.

## Conclusion

I want to challenge you—I want to challenge you—in the name of Jesus, to say, “I will work at communication. I’ll do some roadwork. I will fill up some potholes. I’ll get some boulders out of the way.” Marriage with God, marriage anointed by the Holy Spirit, is the sweetest thing on earth, the nearest and dearest and closest thing to heaven. It’s really the only part of the Garden of Eden that we have left. Work at your marriage. Determine that you will communicate one with the other.

Bow your heads in prayer. Our Lord wants us to have three homes. We ought to have a family home, a church home, and a heavenly home. Jesus Christ is the key to all three. And I want to guide you in a prayer this morning, if you’ve never really asked Christ to come into your heart. Or maybe you’ve asked Him, but you’ve never really gotten it settled by faith. I want to ask you to pray a prayer like this—just pray out of your heart. Dear God, I’m a sinner. I’m lost. I need to be saved. I want to be saved. Jesus, I need You. Thank You for shedding Your blood for me. Oh, Lord Jesus, I open my heart. I receive You now as my Lord and Master. Come into my heart; come in right now. Save me, Lord Jesus. And, Lord Jesus, give me the courage to make this public. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Now, we’re going to sing an invitational hymn. The ministers of our church will be standing at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front to receive those of you who’ll be coming forward from the ground floor. Those of you who’ll be coming forward from the balcony, there’ll be a minister waiting to welcome you under the banner that says Redeemer and on this side under the banner that says Messiah. You just go in that direction. “Pastor, why do you want me to come forward?” Because the Bible says, “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.” Because Jesus said, “If you’re ashamed of me, I’ll be ashamed of you.” Jesus said, “If you’ll confess me before men, I’ll confess you before my Father.” So, when we sing, if you really are not ashamed of Jesus and want to acknowledge Him as your Lord and Savior, as most of the people

here today have already done, I want you to come. Others of you need a church home. I'll tell you, if I were not a member of Bellevue, and knowing what I know now, I'd join in a heartbeat, if I needed a church home. I want to ask you to come and say, "I want to place my membership here." Or maybe you've never had believer's baptism. You would come this morning and say, "I want to make an appointment for my baptism." Respectfully, I'm going to ask that no one leave during the invitation. We'll all be in a spirit of prayer. Let's stand together. You step out and come.

# Communication in Marriage

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: June 19, 2005**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 3:10–11**

*“For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:”*

1 PETER 3:10

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## Introduction

Thank you, Jim. Thank you, orchestra, and all of our musicians. I don't know whether you realize just how blessed we are here at Bellevue with the music that God has given to us. Some Sundays I have watched our program at home, and I see the ideography. I hear the choirs. I see the radiance of your faces. And I say, "Oh, thank You, Lord; thank You for what You're doing at Bellevue." And I want to tell you that it is a real joy for me to be here this morning. Let me take just a few personal words. People want to know, first of all, how are you doing? How are you feeling? Well, without, exaggeration, I feel great. Honestly, I feel great. I'd have to have a doctor tell me I'm sick. But, I know that I have a malady in me that needs to be cured, and I'm praying for that and believing God for that, that you'll have me around for many, many more years. And we're working out

a plan of treatment that we will undergo. And I rest in your prayers. I know that thousands are praying, and for that I am most grateful. Joyce and I are at perfect peace, and praising the Lord, and, actually, very, very optimistic about the future in God's hands. Thank you, in the name of Jesus, for your prayers and your support. And I could not begin to answer all of the letters and the cards. Just because I don't answer, don't stop sending them. I read them. And when I read them, I pray for those who sent them. So if you want me to pray for you, send me a card. And, I am serious when I say that I love you with all of my heart.

One other word: this afternoon I will be leaving, going to Nashville for the Southern Baptist Convention. And I will be the closing speaker at the Pastors Conference. I'll be bringing a message on "The Making of a Man of God." And that message will be this Monday evening, so about that time would you pray, "Lord, bless the Pastor Emeritus and anoint him to preach the Word of God." It is a great opportunity, and I want to be a good steward of that opportunity.

Now, I want to talk to you today about communication in marriage. You know, today is Father's Day, and we think of the home. And I think of children and fathers. The best thing that a father can do is to love his wife and communicate with her before the children. So that's the reason I have chosen this passage. And what I'm going to do is to take a verse out of 1 Peter chapter 3. Would you turn to 1 Peter chapter 3. And 1 Peter chapter 3 talks to us about communication. As a matter of fact, 1 Peter chapter 3 is about husbands and wives. Verse 1 says, "Likewise, ye wives..." Verse 7 says, "Likewise, ye husbands..." No ifs and ands and buts about it, it's about husbands and wives. And it is also about communication. Look now in verses 10 and 11: "For he that will love life, and will see good days..."—now, isn't that what you want: good days? Don't you want a life rather than mere existence?—"For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile. Let him eschew evil—that means turns from it—and do good; let him seek peace, and ensure it." That means to follow after it.

Now, marriages are made in heaven, but survival takes place here on earth. And one of the keys to survival is the ability to communicate. Communication is like a highway. It's like a road, and words are like vehicles that travel on that road. Words carry ideas. Words transport feeling. And so we're going to be talking about the communication highway today. And if you can learn to communicate as husbands and wives, I'll tell you, you have taken a quantum leap forward and have built a foundation for a wonderful marriage. Now, first of all, I want you to notice what I'm going to say about communication, that it is a one-way road to married happiness—a one-way road to married happiness. That is, if it's done in the right way, if you will "refrain your tongue from evil and your lips that they speak no guile." I'll tell you the deepest craving of my

heart and your heart is for intimacy, for someone that we can love, someone that loves us, someone that we can be totally open with and intimate with.

## **I. Communication Road Levels**

Now, in marriage that is the goal. One flesh means more than sexual union. It means oneness of spirit, oneness of soul, oneness of physical bodies. One flesh—that it the ultimate intimacy. Now, there are about five levels—about five levels—where people communicate.

### **A. The Frivolous Level**

The first level is what we call the frivolous level. You hear this all the time. “It’s hot, isn’t it?” “How are you doing?” “Well, it was great ballgame last night”—whatever. It’s just frivolity. Many times we don’t even remember what we’re saying to the other one. “How you doing?” “Fine, thank you.” And we might be feeling bad, but we say good, and so forth. So, that’s just frivolity. Many people are often overheard saying nothing. Now, that’s the frivolous level.

### **B. The Factual Level**

Now, the next level is the factual level, where we don’t just talk about frivolous things. We may talk about facts. We may talk about Iraq. We may talk about gasoline prices. We may talk about any kind of a factual thing, but we never get our feelings into it. There’s no emotion there. It’s just a factual level, very much like the man who is delivering the news on television. He’s just giving the facts, like Jack Webb in *Dragnet*: “Just the facts, ma’am.”

### **C. The Fellowship Level**

And then, we move on to another level, which is the fellowship level. We get to talking about ideas, not just facts. We get to talking about philosophies. We get to talking about things that we feel about and think about. And if those ideas are challenged, many times we’ll close up because we don’t want to risk getting into an argument or being controverted.

### **D. The Feeling Level**

But then you move on past the frivolous level, and the factual level, and the fellowship level. You get to the next level, which is about as far as most of us ever get, and that is the feeling level, where we actually open up and tell people how we feel. “I’m hurting today.” “I had a great victory today.” “Let me tell you what is going on in my heart and in my life. I’ll tell you my joys and my victories and my failures and my aspirations, my dreams.” This is the feeling level. And we often don’t want to get into this level because it’s kind of like undressing yourself in front of someone. You have to be open to get to this level.

## E. The Freedom Level

But the highest level, and the level that most people never really get to, is the freedom level, where we are totally, completely open with another individual. There are no secrets. We say exactly how we feel and why we feel that way. And when we're hurt, we share it. When we're happy, we share it. When we're ashamed, we share it. When we fail, we share it. We are totally, completely free. Now, I daresay that most of the marriages in this building have not yet reached the freedom level. One of the reasons that we don't ever get to the freedom level is because we're really afraid to expose ourselves completely. We're really afraid if the person that we're married to really, really, really knew us, they would lose respect for us, so we have to keep up a little camouflage. We have to wear a mask a little bit. And we never really open up totally and completely to true intimacy. But when we find that true intimacy, we find the deepest level of communication in marriage.

Now, the Lord Jesus is the example here in communication. As a matter of fact, we're in the third chapter of 1 Peter, but 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 22, speaks of Jesus. He's not only the great emancipator; He's the great communicator. And 1 Peter 2:22 speaks of Jesus, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." It speaks of the way that Jesus communicated. That's in chapter 2. Now, in chapter 3, He says—verse 1—"Likewise, ye wives..." In other words, wives, be like Jesus in communication. And then, He goes on down in chapter 3, verse 7: "Likewise, ye husbands..." Husbands, be like Jesus.

Now, why was Jesus the great communicator? Because Jesus knew communication. Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." Your words reveal what's in your heart. They say in the country, "What's down in the well comes up in the bucket." Harsh words—an angry heart; negative words—a negative heart; over-active words—a restless heart; boastful words—an insecure heart; filthy words—an impure heart; critical words—a bitter heart; encouraging words—a happy heart; gentle words—a loving heart; truthful words—an honest heart. You want to know what any individual is really? Listen to their words. Again, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."

Now, sometimes our words are so bitter and so vindictive, and it's no wonder that we have difficulty in marriage. Winston Churchill and Lady Astor were not married. They were really kind of friendly enemies, and they loved to jibe one another. One time, Lady Astor got so exasperated with Winston Churchill, she said, "If you were my husband, I would put arsenic in your tea." Winston Churchill said, "Madam, if I were your husband, I would gladly drink it."

Now, that's not the kind of a marriage we want. You see, listen. Communication is a highway that carries our words.

## **II. Communication Road Potholes**

Now, here's the second thing I want you to see. I want you to see that the devil has put some roadblocks and potholes on this communication highway. There are some obstacles. And I'm going to check off seven of them right now, and I want you to keep a list. Now, don't write it on your bulletin because the person next to you will be looking to see what kind of a grade you made. And you might, if you can do your fingers this way and count, you can do that, but your neighbor may be so snoopy that he or she will watch that. But you just keep score in your mind, and see how many of these potholes, see how many of these boulders, are on your communication highway.

### **A. Difference Between the Sexes**

Now, the first one we almost all have—we all do have, not almost—and that is the difference between the sexes. So you can check off number one. There is a difference between the sexes. Now, in chapter 3, verse 1, he speaks of wives. In chapter 3, verse 7, he speaks of husbands. And you're going to find out that men and women are wired differently. Now, you may not understand this before you get married. Your prize package becomes a surprise package, after you get married.

I asked Joyce, I said, "Joyce, what is the main communication problem in marriage?" She didn't bat an eyelash. She didn't stutter or stammer. She said it in one word: "Men!" That's the problem in marriage.

Well, why is that? Because men and women are wired differently. And this is a physiological, as well as a psychological fact. A little boy in his mother's womb gets a chemical bath to his brain from about the 18th to the 25th week. There are certain male hormones and chemicals that wash over his brain. Now, the human brain has two halves. We call them hemispheres. And they are connected together by a fibrous tissue called the corpus callosum. And this tissue that goes between these two sides of the brain conducts thoughts back and forth between each side of the brain. Now, one side, the left side, that is the factual side that deals with ideas, rationality, arguments, logic, and also is more aggressive. And the right side of the brain is that which is more sympathetic, that deals with emotions, fears, tears, is more poetic, and so forth. And so we all access both sides of our brain. But when the little boy's brain gets this chemical bath that I was talking about, the corpus callosum that connects these two hemispheres contracts a little and the right side of the brain recedes a little because little boys are more left-brained.

Now, women have the left brain. Don't ever get the idea that women are not logical. They have the left brain, but they access both sides at the same time. So they can be both emotional and logical at the same time. Men are not necessarily emotional and logical at the same time. Men want to think in sequence. Men want to think in ideas and

argumentation. Now, a woman will think that way, but she'll think emotionally at the same time. And that's frustrating to a man. We call that women's intuition. And there's nothing wrong with that. As a matter of fact, it's a gift of God. But men don't have that capability and proclivity. And this is a scientific fact. As a matter of fact, I saw in USA Today an article that I clipped out that actually showed the different sides of the brain in the male and the female as they would light up by a special photographic imaging, and you could see the left side of the brain working, with men solving logical problems, and so forth. But with women, you would see both sides light up. There's just simply a difference.

As a matter of fact, Harvard University in their pre-school program, actually did this scientifically. They went out on the playground, and they wired the playground for sound so that they could see what the little girls were saying and doing, and the little boys. Now, the little girls were talking far more than the little boys. And, as a matter of fact, they were using words that expressed ideas. And, if they were not talking to one another, little girls were talking to themselves. That figures, doesn't it? And then, the little boys would use words, but only 68% were words; the rest were noises. "Yaaaaaaah" "Braaaaaaaa"—whatever. They were just making noises and no words. Woman, you ought not to be surprised when your husband just grunts. Boys are that way. As a matter of fact, they put cameras on little newborns in the nursery at the hospital, and the little girls' lips were moving far more than the little boys' lips. Women are wont to talk.

You see, men report, women share; and there is a difference, but that difference is there by divine design. Why? Because God made the man as the protector and the provider. He's the protector. He was to keep the garden. He is the provider. He is to dress the garden. And so, God gave him a harder exterior, a shell. He's not as emotional, because there are times in his work and in his protection that he can't afford to be emotional. And it's just wired into him. That's the reason for entertainment the man does not want to watch romance stories. He'd rather watch football. He doesn't want to watch hospital stories where people are made well; he wants to watch football where people get hurt, because he's just an aggressive individual. God made him that way. He is the provider and the protector.

Little girls are different. Eve means nurturer or life-giver. And girls are made to nurture. They're made to be soft, to be the heartbeat of the home. You can see the difference in little boys and little girls if you go past a junior high school and see the way they carry their books. Boys will carry their books down like this. Little girls will carry the books like this. They're just hugging their books. You give a little boy a doll, he'll make a hammer out of it. That is the way that they are wired.

I was in Houston, went to the zoo the other day with Joyce. And it was kind of a hot

day. I found a shady place. I said, “Joyce, I’m going to stretch out on this bench for a while.” We’d been there most of the day. And I closed my eyes, and a little boy came up to me, and he said, “Yaaaaaaa!” And another boy who was with him said, “Is he dead?” Boys and girls are just different.

A young man and his girlfriend were sitting on the front porch of the old family home on the swing. And down in the valley was the country church. They were having choir practice. A big yellow moon was out, soft clouds were scudding through the sky, and it was just one of those perfect moments. And the music of the choir was drifting up across the valley. Underneath the porch, the crickets were chirping. And he was listening to the crickets; she was listening to the choir. She said, “That’s really beautiful, isn’t it?” He said, “Yes, it sure is.” He said, “They tell me they make that noise by rubbing their hind legs together.”

Boys and girls are different. And as I say that, when you get married, you’re going to find out that there is a difference, and this difference has to be overcome in marriage. Men just have more difficulty expressing themselves. Speech pathologists tell us that 9 out of 10 of those who come for speech help are men, are boys, not women. You think about it. How many women do you know who stutter? Now, some women may stutter, but, predominately, it is the male that stutters. And so, lady, first of all, for him to think as you want him to think, he’d have to have a brain transplant.

### **B. Difference in Temperaments**

Now, I spent a lot of time there on this first difference because it’s a major one. Now, number two: Not only is there the difference between male and female, but there are temperamental differences. We come from different backgrounds. We may be sanguine. We may be melancholy. We may be phlegmatic. We may be choleric in our temperament. I am more of a choleric; Joyce is more of a melancholy. That doesn’t mean she’s a sad sack, but she thinks and feels deeply. We come from different family backgrounds. In my family background, there was always some sort of a joke going on, some sort of foolishness going on, some sort of a quick comeback that was going on. I’ve picked that up primarily from my mother. Joyce’s family didn’t do that. And we are different. And when we take these psychological tests, the things I’m high in, she’s low in; the things I’m low in, she’s high in. And, friend, incompatibility is grounds for a great marriage. It is the incompatibility that God must laugh at when He puts us together, because opposites attract, and we do have temperamental differences.

### **C. Fear and Insecurity**

A third thing, a third pothole, is fear and insecurity. I’ve already mentioned this. We are afraid to open up to the other person. We hold back. We feel if they really knew us, they might reject us. And, after all, I’m all that I have. And so, this is one reason—I’m going

to get to this later—that men find it so hard to pray with women, and especially with their wives. Because you can mumble little prayers that are a little chivalrous that don't mean much, but when you really pray, when you talk to God, you have to talk to God with an honest heart. God knows our hearts. And so, when you pray, there can be no pretense, not if it's genuine prayer. Well, in order to that, if you're praying with someone else, you have to pray honestly, and there can be no mask, there can be no camouflage. Well then, that makes you vulnerable. Now, men don't mind getting the roof off; they just don't like to get walls down. So a man may pray, and he may pray fervently, but he doesn't like to pray with his wife. And, men, you need to make a decision, to pray with your wife. There's a wonderful bonding that comes. But if you're fearful and insecure, you'll not do it.

#### **D. Self-centeredness**

Now, number four—are you keeping score on yourself? Number four is another boulder on the communications super highway, or another pothole, whichever you wish: is self-centeredness. Now, 1 Peter 3:8 says, “Finally, be ye all of one mind,” but many of us are just selfish and self-centered. We're not of one mind. We don't have compassion to one another. We don't love as brethren. We're all wrapped up in ourselves. And self-centeredness kills communication. Most of us want to be the king or queen in our own little life.

Let's say that his name is James and her name is Mary, and King James marries Queen Mary. And James is on the throne of his life, and Mary's on the throne of her life. Before long, there's going to be a war between those two kingdoms. It may be a silent war, just pouting, or it may be a hot war, throwing a frying pan. Then, after a while, there comes along something that's tragic called a divorce. Why? Because a house divided cannot stand. But if Queen Mary steps off the throne of her life and enthrones Jesus, and King James steps off the throne of his life and enthrones Jesus, there's one king on both thrones. Ego—ego—is a communication killer. Most marriages need two funerals and one wedding, where both husband and wife die to themselves and give themselves one to another.

#### **E. Unresolved Hurts**

Now, number five: unresolved hurts. Notice again verse 8: “Finally, be of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.” Sometimes you hurt your partner. You're not even aware of the fact that you've hurt your partner, but you've hurt her. You come home, and she's cold and diffident. Her spirit is closed. Probably what you said this morning, and that you just said, and you never got it right, never made it right. Sometimes husbands and wives have hurts that go on until they turn to bitterness. That's the reason the Bible says in Ephesians 4:26:

“Don’t let the sun go down upon your wrath.”

I was reading about a tree, a pine tree, out in Colorado on the mountainside. This pine tree was very famous because people would come see it. It was only half grown when the Pilgrims landed in America. It had been struck by lightning fourteen times. This pine tree had survived avalanches. It had survived earthquakes, winter cold and summer heat, and on and on and on this wonderful pine tree went until one day it died. Do you know what killed it? A little beetle—a little beetle that you could put in your fingertips and crush; a pine beetle killed this tree.

Marriages have been destroyed by something that small that is not made right. Is there anything, any way that you sinned against your wife, any way that you’ve sinned against your husband, that you have not gone to that wife or husband and confessed it and pled for forgiveness? Don’t let the sun go down upon your wrath.

#### **F. Distractions of Life**

Number six: the distractions of life. We are so busy. Now, we have cell phones today. We have computers today. We have super speed, everything today. But about all we have added is sound and noise. And we still don’t know where we’re going. We have more labor-saving devices and less time than ever. And we are so easily distracted from life. And your marriage has to become a priority. You see, your marriage is not just something that you exist in; it’s something that you work toward. And there are so many things that will pull away from you.

#### **G. Over-crowded Schedule**

Now, next, and very close to the distractions, is an over-crowded schedule. You know, in verse 10 he talks about loving life and seeing good days. Are you really loving life? Are you really seeing good days, or do you exist to live while you live to exist, drawing your breath and drawing your salary? You get so busy that you don’t just back up and say, “Now, wait just a minute. Soon this is all going to be over. What is it all about? A lot of things that men call success is not success at all.

I heard of a man who was a so-called successful businessman getting ready to go to work, and his wife said, “Now, darling, when you come home tonight, don’t come back to this address. Remember, the movers are coming and we’re moving to our new house.” He said, “Don’t you think I could remember something that simple? You don’t have to remind me of that.” But, sure enough, this very busy man came home that evening to the old address. The door was swinging open, there was some paper in the yard, the curtains, everything, gone from the windows. He said, “Oh, no. She told me I would forget.” And he said, “I don’t even know where we’ve moved.” And a little boy out there on a bicycle—he said, “Son, do you know the folks that used to live in this house?” He said, “Yes, sir.” He said, “Son, do you know where they moved to?” He said, “Oh,

daddy. Mama said you would forget.” So busy. Now, that man might have been called successful, but he was a failure. But that’s only humorous, but there are some other things that are so close that they’re sad.

### **III. Communication Road Repair**

Now, let me just wrap this up by saying, thirdly, it’s time for us to do some road repair. It’s time for us to remove some boulders. It’s time for us to fill in some potholes. Let me give you some things now—six of them—very quickly. Number one: learn to be more sensitive, both husband and wife. Again, verse 8: “be of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.” Learn to be sensitive. What is really bothering your wife? Have you ever really tried to understand her?

A paperboy gets a new house on his route, and there a dog that comes out snarling and growling. Well, he can pick up a stick and throw it at the dog if he wants. But if he’s smart, he gets down off the bike and he says, “Come here, boy. Come on. Come on. Come on.” And the dog sees that the boy is not a threat. Finally, the boy gets his hand on that dog’s head and scratches him behind the ear and pats him. From there on, the dog will just run out to greet him with his tail wagging. What was wrong with the dog? Why was the dog snarling? Why was he growling and barking? Because he’s afraid. He felt threatened. And the little boy sees that the dog is not really all that mean.

You know, you wonder sometimes, why does your wife snarl and growl? Understand what is wrong. What she really wants is some love. What she really wants is some understanding from you. Learn to be sensitive. Deal with self-centeredness. Ask God to forgive your ego. Ask the Lord Jesus to break you. Resolve hurts. If you’ve hurt your wife or hurt your husband, confess it and say, “Please, in the name of Jesus, forgive me.” Create a spirit of oneness. Find things that you and your wife can do together as a team. That’s one of the reasons that Joyce and I have enjoyed through the years leading trips to the Holy Land because we do that as a team and it draws us together. Keep on dating. I tell young preachers never flirt with another woman; never cease to flirt with your own wife. Have special times where you go out. Make dates, just like you were courting. Treat her like you’re trying to win her, even though you’ve already won her over. And don’t let people tell you to grow up and act your age. Refuse to do that.

Learn to laugh. Marriage is so full of funny things. Your home ought to ring with laughter. Let your guard down. Laugh at yourself. Don’t let dry rot and boredom ruin your home. Don’t get burned out. Lighten up. People say you work at your marriage. Well, that’s true, but play at it too.

And then, last of all, pray together. In this scripture in verse 7 he talks about prayers. And he’s saying that when husbands and wives come together like this that their prayers are not hindered. And in verse 12 he says, “The eyes of the Lord are over the

righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers.” Women want so much for a husband to pray with them. Do you know what it says? My husband recognizes me as a spiritual partner. My husband has an interest in my spiritual life. I’m a part of his spiritual life. And that gives her such a great confidence.

Now, sir, you’re going to have to make a decision. You’re going to have to make a decision to pray with your wife. As I close, I want you to say to yourself, “I will.” Now, listen. Here’s what I want you to say. Number one: I will make a firm decision for better communication. Now, if you don’t do that, all we’ve had this morning is an exercise in futility. Will you say, “I will make—husband, wife—I will make a firm decision for better communication”? Number two: I will do everything in my power to make my marriage work—I will do everything in my power to make my marriage work. Number three: I will not give up and say, “Nothing can be done.” If you’ve done that, you’ve just signed a death warrant for your marriage. Number four: I will change my own behavior with new attitudes and new skills. Do you know the way to change your partner? Change yourself. How is that? Well, you see, when I change, then she has to react to something different, and, therefore, she is changed, because she has something different to react to. Change your own behavior.

Number five: I will accept my mate’s strengths and weaknesses. I’m so grateful that Joyce has accepted my strengths and my weaknesses.

Number six: I will pay the price. There is no cheap way, no lazy way, to have a great marriage. The Bible over there in the second chapter of 1 Peter speaks of Jesus, our example, “who his own self bore our sins in His own body upon the cross.”

## **Conclusion**

Now, folks, listen to me. We need more than we realize to have communication in marriage. And it all begins with Jesus. The second chapter of 1 Peter is about Jesus who died for us, who set the example. And then, it says in the third chapter, “Likewise, you wives...”—verse 1. Verse 7: “Likewise, ye husbands...” Now, you see, Jesus—Jesus—is the center of it all. That’s not rhetoric. That is rock-ribbed truth. You can’t have a Christian without Jesus any more than you could have a cherry pie without cherries. He is the one who is both our example and our strength. God intends that we all have three homes: a family home, a church home, and a heavenly home—and Jesus is the key to all three.

Bow your heads in prayer. Father God, I pray today that You would help us that we might determine to learn to communicate as husbands and wives, to give our precious children an environment to grow again where, Lord, there will be genuine love, genuine trust, true intimacy.

Now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you’ve never given your heart

to Jesus Christ, or perhaps you've prayed, but you still don't have the assurance that you're saved, let me guide you in a prayer. And in this prayer right now you can pray and ask Christ to come into your heart. I invite you to pray this way: Dear God, I need You. I want You. I need to be saved. Thank You, Jesus, that You shed Your blood for me on the cross. Thank You that You paid my sin debt with Your blood. I now open my heart. I receive You by faith as my Lord and Savior. I give myself to You. I make You my Lord, my God, my Savior. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be. And help me never to be ashamed of You. Give me the courage to make it public. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Now, look up here. "Pastor Rogers, if I prayed that prayer with you with morning, did Jesus save me? Well, it all depends. Were you sincere? Well, you say, "Well, I think I was sincere. How can I know?" May I tell you the best way you can know: Are you willing to make it public? The Bible says, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." Jesus said, "If you'll confess Me before men, I will confess you before My Father in heaven." Jesus said, "If you deny Me before men, I'll deny you before the Father." That's the reason we close these services with a public invitation: to give you an opportunity to openly and publicly and gladly let it be known that you love the Lord Jesus Christ. So we're going to ask you to come forward. Your coming forward will be your way of saying yes to Jesus Christ publicly.

Now, standing at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front will be a minister to welcome those of you who'll be coming from the ground floor. Those of you who are in the balcony, there'll be a minister waiting to receive you under that banner that says Redeemer or this one that says Messiah there in the corner of the balcony. You just move toward that. "Pastor Rogers, what would I say when I go down there?" Just say, "I'm trusting Jesus." "What will happen?" Well, we'll rejoice. We'll give you some Scripture to stand on. We'll answer any questions we can answer. And we'll seal it in prayer. It'll be a wonderful thing. Most of the people in this building are praying for you and have already done what I'm asking you to do today. So don't be embarrassed about coming. Friend, they will be filled with joy when they see you say yes to Jesus Christ. Others of you need a church home. I can tell you, if I were not a member of Bellevue and lived here, I'd join in a heartbeat. I love this church. God is doing something wonderful here, and you need to be a part of it. So if you need a church home, and you know you're saved, you need to come, and say, "I want to place my membership here." We'll tell you how you may become a member. Or, if you need believer's baptism, like this precious family that was baptized this morning, you set out and come, and say, "Look, I'm saved, but I haven't been baptized properly, and I want to make an appointment for my baptism." Or, if there's any other decision, you need somebody just to pray for you, you come this morning. Respectfully, I'm going to ask

that no one leave during the invitation, but be in a spirit of prayer. And, as soon as we stand, if you've said yes to Jesus in your heart, let it be known openly and publicly. Let's stand together. You step out and come right now. Say yes to Christ.

# Is There Hope for America?

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: February 2, 1994**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 3:10–15**

**Sponsored by: Sponsor**

*“For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.”*

1 PETER 3:10

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Principle of Lordship
- II. The Principle of Learning
- III. The Principle of Lowliness
- IV. The Principle of Lifestyle
- V. The Principle of Love

Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you to take God’s Word and look here in 1 Peter chapter 3 and verse 10. I guess if I had a title for this, I have not put any title on my notes, it would just be, “Is There Hope for America?” I’ve just come back from Washington. I wanted to be up there to be near my money.

Is there hope for America? Look in verse 10: “For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile. Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensure it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are you: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be ye troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.”

In America, we’re living in a post-Christian era. The America that I knew as a young boy, those days that are portrayed in the television program or were portrayed, “Happy

Days,” those happy days are gone. We’re living in hostile territory. And those of you who used to be considered just good, old-fashioned, decent Christians, because you believe the Bible, are now labeled religious nuts, the religious right, fundamentalists, zealots, whackos, and they try to take someone like David Koresh and lump us in with him and them. And, you know, I am a nut, but I’m fastened to a good bolt. His name is Jesus. And, ah, we need to stay fastened that way. But something terrible has happened in America. And I’m not going to give you a litany of all of that. For further information, consult any newspaper. But I want to say that in the light of that there are two dangers. Danger number one is that we just may, as Christians, retreat and sort of get a live-and-let-live attitude. Maybe just begin to sing, “Hold the Fort.” And we get in our stained-glass fortresses and huddle with one another and say, ‘Well, there’s no hope for America and there’s no hope for the world, so let’s just see if we can hold out till Jesus gets here.’ And so we just, more or less, retreat. But the problem is we can’t even do that even if we wanted to because there’s no place to hide.

James Dobson, that I greatly respect, and I believe you do, has pointed this out in one of his newsletters. I want to read it. He said, “We will not be permitted to exercise our beliefs in private. The church will not be allowed to protect its precepts. Our Christian enclaves will be invaded. Your home, in fact, will become the next battleground as Hillary Rodham Clinton cranks her childrens’ rights agenda into action. We will either speak up or submit in silence. Why not use our voices now while the memory of the Judeo-Christian ethic still lingers like rare perfume within the popular culture.”

And then James Dobson went on to challenge us by asking several questions. Here are the questions: At what point will we be willing to defend what we believe? Will parents object if their children are routinely indoctrinated in homosexual ideology or occultism in the public schools? Will we object if the state tells pastors what they can or can’t say from the pulpit? In Sweden, an evangelical pastor who preached a sermon on Sodom and Gomorrah was convicted of verbal violence against homosexuals and sentenced to a four-week prison term. Will we object if the state assumes ownership of our children and tells us how to rear them or else lose custody? Will we object if every church has to hire a homosexual to satisfy a quota obligation?” What he is saying is that we will not even be able to retreat and hold the fort unless something changes.

Pastor NyMueller was a pastor in Germany when Hitler was coming into power. And, ah, under orders from Hitler, Pastor NyMueller, because of his preaching, was arrested. He was placed in solitary confinement. Other pastors were killed. He survived. After the way, he was freed, and he began to speak. And he gave a speech, and he always ended the speech with these words: “First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out because I was not a Socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I

did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak out for me.”

Now we can't have the luxury of just being quiet. We cannot even have the luxury of saying live and let live because, friend, they will not let us live. Mordecai told Queen Esther this in Esther 4, verse 14: “For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this.”

Now we, as Christians, therefore, cannot remain silent under the guise that God has simply called us to preach the gospel. But on the other hand, there's another danger and that is the danger that we will substitute somehow a political agenda for the preaching of the gospel.

Now the devil has always wanted to substitute something for the gospel of the grace of God. In some churches, it's sacramentalism where the church just dispenses the sacraments and people feel, ipso facto, they're going to heaven. In other places, it's rationalism that substitutes thus saith the mind of man for thus saith the Word of God. In other places, it's education, getting idea that man's problem is primarily ignorance rather than sin, and that becomes a substitute. One of the newest things coming to the modern church today is physiology as a substitute for the gospel. I believe in physiology like I believe in education and like I believe in a rational mind, but none of these is the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And with many churches today a political strategy has become the substitute for the gospel of Christ. As long as I'm the pastor here, it will not! Yet, yet there is a sense in which we are salt and light and we do not have the option to be uninvolved. Every Christian, every member of this church must be an activist to stand up and to say, “Enough is enough is enough!” All of us must.

And not only must we speak up, but we must come to the aid of our brothers and sisters In Christ, those who name the name of Jesus, regardless of their denomination, regardless of their vocation, regardless of their economic status and regardless of their race. We, as brothers and sisters in Christ, need to lock arms, blend hearts, lift our prayers together.

Now the times that we're facing are new for us, but they're not new in Christian history. As a matter of fact, this book that I read to you from, the book of 1 Peter, is a handbook for survival in days like our days, because the Christians were being put upon very much like Christians today are being put upon and will be put upon. The Christians of that day were accused, first of all, of being subversives because they would not bow the knee to Caesar. They would not confess that Caesar was lord. Secondly, they were perceived as being an economic threat because they were dead set against idolatry,

and idolatry was more than religion; it was big business. And, also, the Christians were put upon because of their lifestyle. They said in that day, as we say in this day, that adultery is wrong, fornication is wrong, homosexuality is wrong, and other things are wrong, and that ran against the grain of the powers that be.

Now I want to give you, therefore, some principles. You say, “Pastor, you say that I’m to be involved. How? What should I do? How can I help my neighbors? How can we live? How, as a church, are we to exist here in Memphis, Tennessee? What shall I do in the schools? What shall I do in the clubs? What shall I do at business? What shall I do in City Hall? What are the principles of God’s Word? Well, I have read them to you, and we’re going to look at them. And I want to give you five or six, depending on the time that we have, and we’ll let them all begin with the letter L so they’ll be easier for you to remember.

## **I. The Principle of Lordship**

The very first principle is the principle of lordship. Look, if you will, in verse 15: “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts...” Sanctify Christ as Lord. Nothing, nothing, nothing must stay in the way of your obedience to Jesus Christ. Have you enthroned Him as Lord? If not, I pity you because you’re going to be the most miserable of all people. You’re going to be caught in the crossfire. Many don’t have enough courage to serve the devil or enough grace to serve God, and they have not sanctified (that means set aside) the Lord in your heart. Set aside God as Lord. Sanctify the Lord God in your heart. That means set Him aside, place Him, enthrone Him as Lord. Too many church members today come forward in services like this to unite with the church and be baptized, but all they’re looking for is fire insurance. They have no intent of making Jesus Christ Lord. Now, when Jesus Christ is Lord, it helps you not to be intimidated. Anything else and everything else must get in line behind the lordship of Christ.

I was talking about Hitler’s day. Years ago I heard a pastor, I guess thirty years ago, tell a story that I’ve never been able to get out of my heart. Hitler gave an edict as he was persecuting the Jews that no Jews would be allowed in the Christian worship services. You know there were many Jews who were Christians. But Hitler gave an edict. No Jew would be allowed. The pastors had to make up their mind. Would the pastor be arrested? Would the church be closed? Or would they say to the Jews, “We’re sorry. You cannot attend?” One pastor wrestled with this—wrestled with it. It’s not an easy question. Finally, he decided it would be better for the church to remain open, even though the Jews could not attend. He stood in his pulpit and he said, “This is the requirement. And with a broken heart I must say if there are any Jews in this congregation, they must stand now and leave.” And one who was sitting there said, “In my mind, I saw the Jew on that crucifix climb down and walk out the door.” If there’s not

a place for everybody, there's not a place for anybody 1 Cor. 14:6-9 and especially Jesus, especially Jesus. Sanctify, sanctify the Lord God in your hearts. The principle of lordship.

## II. The Principle of Learning

Second principle: The principle of learning. Look again in verse 15: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you of the reason of the hope that is in you..." Can you do that? The people of this world have got some good questions they want to ask the church. And, friend, they are good questions. And if you don't have any questions, it's cause you're not thinking. I mean, friend, there are some good questions they have. But I want to give you some news. We've got some good answers. We're got some wonderful answers. But do you know those answers? Have you learned? Do you know that the word here answer it's the word we get the word apology from—apologetics? That doesn't mean apologizing for the gospel. It just simply means a verbal defense like you would give in a court of law. Can you verbalize your faith? Can you intellectually, logically, systemically defend what you believe?

One lady, who was a member of a church, was asked, "What do you believe?" "Oh," she said, "I believe what my church believes." They said, "Very fine. What does your church believe?" "Oh, they believe what I believe." "Well, very well, what do you and your church believe?" "Oh, we believe the same thing."

That's not enough. The Bible says you need to be ready. You need to be informed. And, by the way, with that bookstore right over there, there's very little reason that you should not be informed. Spend less time with the newspapers and less time with the television and more time putting something between your ears, because you're to love the Lord God with all your mind as well as with all of your heart. It's the principle of learning. We need Christians who will go to the school boards and articulate some things. We need some Christians in the places of industry who can explain some things. We need some people in society and in politics and the city council who know what they believe and why they believe it. I'm often embarrassed by those who do speak for us, because they've not practiced the principle of learning, and the world doesn't respect us. As a while back, the Washington Post in an editorial spoke of us; I mean, folks, they were talking about us, and they said, "Evangelicals are" and I quote, "poor, uneducated, and easy to command." That's what they think of us. They have no respect because we've not done our homework.

## III. The Principle of Lowliness

Third principle. First principle, lordship. Sanctify the Lord God. Secondly, learning. Be

able to give an apologetic, a defense, for the hope that's in you. Third principle: The principle of lowliness—lowliness. Look, if you will, in this verse: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you of a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

You know what meekness is? It's not weakness. It is strength under control. And the word fear here has the idea of a holy reverence for Almighty God. We're not to be arrogant. We're not to be boastful. We're not to be rude. This city and this nation is not going to be won by arguments alone, not by the ballot box only, not by organizations and marches. Do you know what most of the people think about us, and, and many in this city think about Bellevue Baptist Church? They think we're hateful and spiteful. That's what they think. Now we don't perceive ourselves that way. But they think of us as hate mongers, and many of us, when we stand up against some of these issues, our rhetoric is not the rhetoric that the Bible teaches us to use. Lowliness was the method that the very Son of God used. It's the method we ought to use. James said this, and put this in your margin, James 1, verses 19 and 20: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." And then here's what James says, "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

Down in Pensacola, an abortion doctor was shot by a man in an abortion rally and in the name of pro-life killed a man. The wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God.

You say, "Didn't Jesus get angry?" Yes. You know who He got angry with? The religious crowd. Jesus' most scathing words were the, for the self-righteous hypocrites. Do you know how Jesus talked to the sinners? Study and see how Jesus dealt with the publicans and the harlots, the tax collectors, the down and out. They crucified Jesus because they called Him a friend of sinners. Do you know why Jesus was that way toward sinners? Because He knew they were depraved. He knew they were victims of Satan. He knew they were downtrodden. We talk about what all these sinners do. Well, friend, what do you expect them to do? They're sinners! What does a sinner do but sin. I mean, that's their nature. They don't have Jesus. They don't know God. They need love.

Now if you get your mind right, a full mind and loving heart is a powerful combination. Many of you have unsaved loved ones you've been lecturing without loving. If you can't love, don't lecture. Be ready to give a reason of the hope that's in you, but do it with fear and trembling in meekness and reverence.

A man who was a soul winner went to witness to a man who was an agnostic. The soul winner studied. He wanted to have all the answers. He went armed with what he thought was truth and the Word of God and with fear and trembling presented the message of Jesus Christ. And the man to whom he was speaking with his wit and with

his logic, with his sarcasm, with his ungodly mind and heart just pushed back everything. That man's witness was like beating a pumped up tire with a hammer. Bump, just came back. Finally, the soul winner was just crushed. He was moved to tears. He said to the man, "I'm sorry. I've made a fool of myself. I just wanted to share Jesus. I just wanted you saved," and broke down and wept and left. The man to whom he witnessed walked to that man's house, knocked on the door, and said, "I want to see thus-and-such a man, that man." His wife said, "Well, he's back there in the bedroom. I don't think he wants to see anybody." The man said, "I believe he wants to see me." She led him back there. The man said, "Listen, I'm sorry for the way I treated you. Continue. Tell me about God. I need God. I'm sorry for my arrogance." The soul winner did, but he said, "I can't understand it." Said, "You were so hard, so arrogant, and, and it seemed like everything that I said just fell to the ground. I can't understand it. What changed you?" He said, "Your last argument." He said, "I don't even remember what it was. What was it?" He said, "Your last argument was when you put your arm around me and wept and told me you loved me." He said, "I couldn't figure out what would make a man like you love a man like me unless what you had was real."

And, friend, I'll tell you that is one of the arguments that we need in presenting the Lord Jesus Christ is a broken heart. Lowliness. Nobody is really argued into the kingdom of heaven. Many times we win the argument and lose the audience.

Jesus, when He was mistreated, did not lash back in anger. Jesus didn't have to even the score. Look in chapter 2, verse 23. It speaks of Jesus, and it says, "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." Now look at that. Friend, if somebody mistreats you, take them to court. I don't mean any court. Take them to the Supreme Court. And I don't mean the one in Washington. I mean the one up there. That's what Jesus did. He committed Himself to the One that judgeth righteously. God's eyes are over all of this. You don't have to even the score. God knows. Just commit yourself to the Lord. Be like the Lord Jesus Christ. We can wait for heaven's verdict. It will be right. Lowliness is a principle we need.

Back in this time when this book was written, Nero was persecuting the Christians. Historians believe that Nero wanted to clean out the slums so he could build some palatial buildings. Had the slums burned. The fire got out of control. People realized that an arsonist had done it. There was some rumor that Nero may have done it. His advisors said, "Why don't you blame the Christians. They're always talking about setting the world on fire, the fire of the gospel, the fire of the Spirit." And Nero, in order to deflect that judgment that looked like it was coming to him, made an edict that Christians were to be put to death. Many of the Christians were captured, covered with oil and tar, crucified, and then lit aflame to light up Nero's gardens like human candles.

And these Christians suffered in such a way, suffered in such a godly way, that they brought the Roman Empire crashing down. The blood of the martyrs has been, and continues to be, the seed of the church. And that uprising in Tiananmen Square that you and I witnessed on television; we saw those Chinese standing up against that regime, many of them being slaughtered and murdered. One Chinese student said this: “Lies written in ink cannot obscure truth written in blood. Lies written in ink cannot obscure truth written in blood.”

Well, we need true humility. I need it. And it will often disarm those that we speak to. Put this verse down, Nehemiah chapter 1 and verse 6. Nehemiah is praying. Now listen to what he says. “Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father’s house have sinned.” And do you know where judgment needs to begin? It needs to begin with Bellevue Baptist Church. I’ll tell you something else. It needs to begin in your house and my house. I’ll tell you something else. It needs to begin with you and me. Lowliness. We’re wondering about society. There are parents who are bent out of shape because their children can’t pray in school, and they don’t lead those children in prayer in their very own homes. That’s unmitigated hypocrisy, is it not? Lowliness.

#### **IV. The Principle of Lifestyle**

Now here’s a fourth principle, the principle of lifestyle—lifestyle. Now look, if you will, in verse 10. “But sanctify...” Verse 15, rather. “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you...” That means that somebody sees something different about you. Well, go back to verse 10. What is it that they see? “For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile. Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensure it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous...” A lifestyle.

Has anybody asked you recently what makes you tick? Has anybody said to you, “You have a superior lifestyle. You are different. Tell me, please, the secret of your life?” That’s way, that’s what he’s talking about. He is saying you live a lifestyle, a lifestyle that others can see and that invigorate them to ask you about your life.

I am embarrassed and humiliated at some of the scandals in the modern church. We were talking about radio and television. Some of the erstwhile, so-called televangelists, so forth. Those of us who preach and those of us who teach, we’ve got two strikes against us before we start. And do you know what the world needs? They may not have to agree with us, but, dear friend, don’t you think they ought to respect us? I

mean, don't you think that they ought to at least hold some respect for us? And I'll tell you how we're going to get respect. We're going to get it the old-fashioned way. We're going to earn it by living as we ought to live. We need to out live, out give, out love, out pray, out preach, out give the pagans. They ought to see a difference. When we begin to live that way, people will ask us why—they really will.

Paul and Silas in prison, thrown in prison, in the innermost prison. Acts chapter 16 says at midnight they were singing praises to God. And that jailer heard them. He'd heard moans and groans, but not songs. He'd heard cursing, but not praising. And then, there was an earthquake, a jail-house rock, and that man came in and he asked this question: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Now why did he ask that question? Well, obviously, he had seen the lifestyle of these two men of God there in that prison. "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" The people of your household, the people in your neighborhood, the people in your school, the people in your business ought to ask you, "What must I do to be saved?" I want to ask you a question. Is there an appreciable difference in you and the people that you associate with? I'm not talking about what you say. I'm talking about what you are. Do you know what the smart aleck, the intellectual Niche, said? Niche said to the Christians, "If you want me to believe in your Redeemer, you're going to have to look a little more redeemed." The principle of lifestyle. That's what Peter says.

## **V. The Principle of Love**

Here's the last principle, the fifth one, the last one I'm going to mention, anyway. It's the principle of love—of love. Now why do they ask this? Well, go back to chapter 3, verse 8: "Finally, be ye of all, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous." Look in chapter 4, verses 8 and 9: "And above all things have fervent charity..." That word charity means love. "...fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging."

I was looking for something to epitomize Bellevue Baptist Church, so I decided that we would call this church "Love Worth Finding". Love Worth Finding. The world is starved for love. If we're against abortion, then we need to show love to those pregnant, young, unmarried women and help them. If we're against pornography, then we need to show compassion to those whose minds are fevered with pornography who need help and can't get it. If we're against homosexuality, we need to say to the homosexual, "We love you, and there's help in the gospel of Jesus Christ." And we need to wrap society's wounds in suave and balm and not in salt. Our church needs to be a place of love. And people need to know this church not only for what we're against, but what we're for, which is the gospel of Jesus Christ. The world is looking for answers, folks. I mean, it's

looking. And do you know what? They hate to admit it, but they, they know they don't have the answer. And in the back of their mind they're asking one more time, "Do we have the answer?"

## Conclusion

I told you a while back, William J. Bennett, former Secretary of Education in the United States of America, did a survey and he found out that in the last thirty years the crime rate in America, violence, has escalated five hundred and sixty percent. Illegitimate births are up, in thirty years, four hundred percent. The divorce rate has quadrupled. Children living in single parent homes has increased three fold. Teen suicide up two hundred percent. Those are just numbers. Or can you, if you don't know anything about mathematics, you know that's not sickness, that's not an epidemic; that's pandemic. And, therefore, they're going to be looking to us. I'm going to tell you something, folks. The church of Jesus Christ is the only institution that has the answer. We do have the answer. And persecution, if it comes, cannot snuff out the answer.

When the Cultural Revolution began in China, Mao Tse-tung and his henchmen decided that they would wipe out every vestige of Christianity. All western books were burned. Pastors were either killed or imprisoned. Churches were turned into warehouses. On the collective farms when these people were there on the communes and these government-owned farms, they would put a picture of Mae Su Tong there and say, "Bow to the picture." Christians who would not bow had their legs broken at the knees. All Christians had their jobs taken from them, their means of subsistence. When that began, there were a half million known Christians in China. When, finally, after years of the most repressive brainwashing, and I mean repressive. They even went into the cemeteries. If there was a cross on a grave, they chiseled the cross off the tombstone. But after all of those years of repression, from a half million there are fifty million believers in China. That didn't happen from pulpits, because they couldn't preach it from pulpits. That went from heart to heart, from life to life, from lip to lip – people doing exactly what Peter said we're to do here. And, folks, I've got good news for you. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is not only going to survive; it's going to thrive. Jesus said, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." Thank God for that.

Thank you, Lord, for Your Word. In Jesus' name, amen.

# How to Answer a Skeptic

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: November 25, 1990**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 3:10–17**

*“For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:”*

1 PETER 3:10

## Outline

Introduction

- A. You Must Be Real
- B. You Must Be Ready
- I. Forego the Folly of Fools
- II. Learn the Limits of Logic
  - A. Creation Says There Is a God
  - B. Design Says There Is a God
  - C. Moral Law Says There Is a God
- III. Remember the Resource of Revelation
  - A. The Inspiration of the Word of God
  - B. The Illumination of the Word of God
  - C. The Confirmation of the Word of God
- IV. Fortify the Force of Faith

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God’s Word this morning and turn with me, please, to the book of 1 Peter, and, we’re going to be looking in chapter 3. 1 Peter chapter 3. I hope you brought a Bible. If you didn’t, share one with your neighbor. Maybe there’s one in the pew there before you, and pick it up. As I’ve already told those who are watching by television, that today we’re going to be talking on this subject, *How to Answer a Skeptic*.

Now, if you go to the modern universities in this city or any other city, you’re going to be faced with hostility toward your faith. If you go to a university philosophy class, by and large, your faith is going to be ridiculed. We live in a day and, of accelerating skepticism and humanism and scientism. Many of those of us who believe are made to look like country bumpkins who just fell off a load of pumpkins somewhere and, that we really don’t have any sound reason for believing what we believe; that we are uneducated and that we are somehow, not worthy of real, honest thought. Well, how do

you respond to this skepticism in this day and age in which we live? Thank God the Bible tells us 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 10: *“For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing”* (1 Peter 3:10–17).

Now, often we're told to keep the faith. But, my dear friends, in the strictest sense, not only should we keep it; we need to give it away. And, in my estimation, if you have no desire to give it away, you ought to give it up, because what you have is not the real thing. Any man who has been born of the Spirit of God has an innate desire to share his faith with others. Now, you're going to be ridiculed, as I've said, and before we get into the main core of the message, let me just tell you two things that must be true of you before you're ready to share with anybody.

#### **A. You Must Be Real**

First of all, you must be real. Look, if you will, in verse 13, and who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? Now, the word follower here is the word that we get our word zealot from, and it means that you are to have a full-hearted, burning, compassionate, overflowing love for God. You're to be a zealot for the Lord Jesus. Yours is to be a full faith. It is to be a fearless faith. Notice he says, And who is he that will harm you... in verse 13. In verse 14, but and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled. Don't let anybody intimidate you because you are a Christian. Now, this verse says that they may hurt you, but they can't harm you. I hope you'll learn the difference. Who is he that will harm you? That is, a little hurt won't harm. As a matter of fact, it will do you good. They may hurt you, but they can't harm you. Therefore, don't be afraid. Have a firm faith. Have a fearless faith. And, my dear friend, enthrone the Lord Jesus Christ in your heart. Look in verse 15 ...but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts... Just realize that Jesus Christ is there as a bright, living reality. So be real! Be real! Be real! Our world is not looking for a new definition of the gospel, but a new demonstration of the gospel, primarily. Be real!

## B. You Must Be Ready

And then, be ready! Be ready! Look in verse 15. The Bible says... be ready always to give an answer to him that ask you... When you start being real, people are going to start asking questions about you. When they see something about you that cannot be explained, they're going to ask why you believe as you believe and why you act as you act. Remember, Paul and Silas were there in prison that night when they'd been cast into the innermost prison for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. And, at midnight, Paul and Silas were singing praises to God. And, God sent His earthquake angel. Maybe I shouldn't have used that word. God sent His earthquake angel in there to shake that prison. And, when He did, the bonds fell off of everyone. And, the keeper of the prison came in, and he looked at Paul and Silas, and he said to them, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" That is, he saw the reality of the faith of Paul and Silas and it caused him to ask them a question.

Now, I want to ask you a question. When's the last time anybody asked you to explain to them your faith because they saw something in you that they could not explain any other way? Answer that in your own heart. Don't answer it out loud. But, when's the last time somebody came to you in your office or in your school or in your club and said, "Say, there's something about you that I don't understand. There's something about you that's different. Would you tell me what it is?" Now, verse 15 says you are to be ready to give an answer to every one that asks you of the hope that's in you. Are you ready? Do you know how to respond to a skeptic; do you?

Well, I want to give you four basic ideas, propositions, today. I pray God the Holy Spirit will just emblazon them in your heart and in your mind. Four things I want you to remember as you respond to this skeptical age and people want to know what makes you tick, what makes you different, what is the reason for the hope that you have in you in verse 15, okay?

## I. Forego the Folly of Fools

Number one: Forego the folly of fools. Forego the folly of fools. Now, some skeptics are fools. Not all skeptics are fools, but some skeptics are fools. Now, when I say a fool, I don't mean a person who is mentally deficient. When the Bible uses the word *fool*, it doesn't mean someone who is mentally deficient.

It means someone who is morally depraved, somebody who is morally depraved. That's what the Bible means when it uses the word fool. For example, the Bible says, "*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God*" (Psalm 14:1). Now, my dear friend, when you come to a fool, and he shows himself to be a fool, don't argue with him. Just don't argue with him. Give him the mind of God, tell him what God says, and go your way!

Now, the Bible makes it very clear. In Proverbs chapter 26 and verse 4 the Bible says, *“Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him.”* (Proverbs 26:4). Just don’t answer him. Don’t get in a debate with a fool. Now, you may witness to him, but you just don’t answer him. To answer him means to get into an argument with him. Oh, you witness to anything that moves, but the Bible makes it very clear, *“Answer not a fool according to his folly...”* And, here’s the reason. *“...lest thou also be like unto him.”* You’d be surprised how many people I have who challenge me to debates. I don’t get into debates like that. If a person wants to know, and a person wants to be reasonable, I’ll reason with a person. But, I have a philosophy that you never argue with a fool because someone standing around is not able to tell who’s who. That’s exactly right. That’s what this Scripture says. *“Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like him.”*

Jesus said the same thing in Matthew chapter 7 and verse 6: *“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you”* (Matthew 7:6). Again, our Lord says we’re not to argue with every individual that comes along. In Matthew chapter 10 verses 14 and 15, Jesus sent His witnesses out to witness. And then our Lord said, *“And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city”* (Matthew 10:14–15).

So, don’t just simply beat your brains out and expend your time and energy arguing with a person who is morally degenerate, who has hostility toward the truth, who really is not an honest doubter, who really does not want to learn, who is really not interested. Now, the Bible speaks of these kind in chapter 3 and verse 16: *“Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ”* (1 Peter 3:16). God says, *“These are the kind of people that you’re not going to be able to do much with these kinds of people.”* Just forego the folly of fools.

I heard about a man who came to a preacher. He was one of these argumentative types. He said, *“I’ve never seen a miracle. I’ve never had a revelation. I’ve never had God speak to me. What would you suggest that I do?”* This pastor said, *“Well,”* he said, *“I’ll give you an experiment.”* He said, *“The next time there’s a hard, driving rain,”* he says, *“you go right outside and look straight up into the sky, look right up into the rain, and,”* he said, *“I promise you, you’ll have a revelation.”* Well, this man decided he’d take the preacher at his challenge. There was a hard, driving rain. He went out and looked right up into the sky. Later on, he came back to the preacher. He said, *“You told me I’d have a revelation.”* He said, *“I looked up into the sky. The rain came down my face and*

went down my collar.” He said, “I felt like a fool.” He said, “Wasn’t that quite a revelation for the first try?” Answer not a fool according to his folly. All right. Now, listen. Forego the folly of fools when you deal with skeptics.

## II. Learn the Limits of Logic

Number two: Learn the limits of logic. Have you got it? Learn the limits of logic. You see, logic can carry you only so far. Now, there’s nothing wrong with logic. Logic is a valuable tool. And, when this Bible says, “...give an answer...” The word there that is for answer is the word we get our word apologetics from. Give an apologia, an apology. It doesn’t mean I’m so sorry. It means a reason to answer, as one would give in a court of law. You can be logical. Our Bible tells us that we are to reason.

Isaiah 1 and verse 18. Our God invites us, “*Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD*” (Isaiah 1:18). So, logic is a valuable tool. But, learn the limits of logic when you deal with a skeptic. For example, logic can only take you so far. That doesn’t mean it’s wrong. It can only take you so far. We’ve used this illustration. Suppose you want to go to Europe. You get in your automobile and you drive to New York City. And, you drive to the ocean, New York harbor there. You’re in your automobile. You want to go to Europe. There’s no bridge that crosses that great Atlantic. You park your automobile there and you get on an airplane, and you go the rest of the way on an airplane. Now the automobile is good, but it can only take you so far. And then, dear friend, you have to take some other conveyance. Logic is like that. Logic is good. Logic is wonderful, but it will only take you so far.

And, when you come to a chasm that is so wide that logic can’t leap, then faith must fly. But, there’s nothing wrong with logic. And, there are some logical reasons that we ought to give to people. Simon Peter calls it “an answer, an answer, an apologia to those who ask you.” And, so what are some reasons for believing in the God that we believe in?

### A. Creation Says There Is a God

Well, for example, creation. I mean, creation is a good reason. Put in your margin Romans chapter 1, verses 19 and 20. The Bible says, “*Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them*” (Romans 1:19). God is not trying to hide Himself. God has showed it to them. “*For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse*” (Romans 1:20). Everything that is made has this stamp on it: “Made by God.” Now, dear friend, this is logical that out of nothing, nothing comes. If we have a creation, we must have a Creator.

Now, if you read in the Sunday supplement of the newspapers every now and then,

you'll come on an article by the humanist, Carl Sagan. You'll study him in philosophy and in college, and so forth. Now, Carl Sagan. How does Carl Sagan, who does not believe in the God of the Bible, how does he answer the existence of the universe? Do you know what he says? He says, and I quote, "The cosmos is all that is, or ever was, or ever will be." That is, he just believes it just happened. It never had a beginning. It's all that was, and is, or ever will be. Yet the scientists tell us, other scientists, that it is absolutely reasonable to say that everything had a beginning. They say, "Somewhere there was an incredible amount of energy that was released." They call it the Big Bang. And, they study our universe, and they say that everything in our universe is winding down. They call that entropy, or the second law of thermodynamics. That is, that all of the energy in our system is winding down. It is unraveling. Now, if it all winds down, there had to be a time when it was all wound up. Now, it had a beginning. And, even the great Carl Sagan is wrong when he says it just simply always was. Now, Robert Gastro, the founder and director of NASA's, Goddard Institute of Space Studies. That is a man that is really high up. He said this: "A sound explanation may exist for the explosive birth of our universe, but if it does, science cannot find what the explanation is. The scientist's pursuit of the past ends in the moment of creation." The scientist, you have to feel sorry for him. He only studies what? He never knows why. He never knows why.

If you walk into the kitchen, I walk into my kitchen, and the water is boiling and somebody says, "Why is the water boiling?" I say, "Well, the, the electric elements in our stove are transferring heat to the bottom of the kettle, which is a good conductor, and it's agitating the molecules of water that are causing them to expand and dance around—that is—eventually turning that liquid into gas or steam, which is forcing its way by expansion out through the nozzle of that kettle and making a whistling sound." And, you ask Joyce why is a kettle boiling? She says, "I'm making you some tea."

Now, the scientist may explain what, but he never knows why. He says, "This is all happening." God is the why, my dear friend. God is the why. And, God is the scientist can't explain how. He can't explain why. He only knows what. The argument for God just simply comes out of creation.

## **B. Design Says There Is a God**

And, then the argument for God comes out of design. Not only do we have a creation, but what an infinitely complex creation we have. And, when you have design, logic says that a design means a designer. Isn't that right?

I mean, this building. Do you believe this building just happened or do you believe there was an architect? I think there was an architect, and a wonderful one. If you found a watch out in the field, would you say it just happened or would you say there is a watchmaker? Well, you would say there is a watchmaker. If you, dear friend, see a painting, a beautiful painting, you would believe in an artist. When you see a creation,

and that this creation has design— you see—you believe in a designer. And, the more complex the design, the greater the designer.

For example, if you see a dam built by beavers, as we had back here on one of the lakes on our property—that's a kind of a simple dam—but if you see Hoover Dam, as some of us have seen Hoover Dam, you'd say that Hoover Dam was designed by someone more complex than a beaver. And, the more complex the design, the more complex the designer, the greater the designer. And, we see that God is a great God because He has made it all.

You know, man forces himself not to believe in the simple and the obvious. About, oh, I guess, ten or fifteen years ago, I picked up my newspaper and it said: "Scientists have created life in the laboratory." Well, I didn't believe that, but I thought I'd read that article. But that's what it said, "Scientists have created life in the laboratory." Well, you know, God is the giver and the author of life. So, I read that article, and it was written from a humanistic point of view. That is to say, that belief in God is no longer necessary, for we have created life. And, what they had done is to create some amino acids in a laboratory that they believed may have been the building blocks of life. Now, here's what the newspaper said, "Scientists create life in the laboratory."

Now, suppose my father is a master builder. I mean, he can build houses, the most beautiful houses and buildings and skyscrapers you've ever seen. Suppose I study what my father has done, and I watch very carefully to see everything he does. I see his methods, his techniques. Then, I take my father's materials, I take my father's tools, I take my father's plan, and rather than building a magnificent skyscraper, I build a chicken coop. And, when I'm finished building that with my father's plans, materials, and tools, I step back and say, "You see that chicken coop? That proves my father doesn't exist." That's what they did in that laboratory. They took God's tools, God's materials, God's plans and made, compared to God's creation, a chicken coop, and said, "Look what we have done!"

### **C. Moral Law Says There Is a God**

Oh, my dear friend, what I'm trying to say to you is that when we present our case, whether you are in a college philosophy class or anywhere else, you don't have to sit in the back room sucking your thumb. You don't have to be intimidated. Don't be terrified by your adversaries. Be bold! Creation says there is a God. Design says there is a God. And, the very moral law of the universe says there is a God. Romans 2 verses 14 and 15. The Bible says, "*For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts*" (Romans 2:14–15).

Did you know that there is a moral sense in the universe that you cannot explain apart from a moral God? All men universally believe that the same things are wrong.

They believe, dear friend, that it is wrong to murder, it is wrong to rape, it is wrong to steal, it is wrong to lie. You can find that in any society across the world, around the world anywhere. Oh, there may be exceptions to it, but I'm talking about universally held beliefs. And, that tells us, dear friend, that the God who created it all is powerful. The design tells us He's intelligent. And, moral law tells us that He is a moral God.

Well, that's all well and good, but, dear friend, logic has its limits. Let me tell you something. If anybody comes up to you and says, "Prove there's a God," don't ever try because you can't prove there is a God, or you can't prove there is no God. Somebody says to me, "Prove there's a God." I just simply say, "I can't." And, then I just turn back to them and I say, "Prove there is no God." And, if he's honest, he'll say he can't. And, he says, "Well, you're just a credulous person because you believe there's a God." I say, "That's right. I'm a believer. And, you're a believer, too. I believe there is a God; you believe there is no God. You see, I have faith that there is; you have faith that there isn't." You see, listen. What we believe is reasonable, but it goes beyond reason.

Now, dear friend, forego the folly of fools and learn the limits of logic. Just learn the limits of logic. What we believe is rooted in logic, but it goes beyond logic. What we believe is not unreasonable, but it is supra reasonable.

### **III. Remember the Resource of Revelation**

Now, here's a third thing as you respond to a skeptic. There's a third thing, dear friend. Remember the resource of revelation. Remember the resource of revelation. If you're to know God, if I'm to know God, God is going to have to reveal Himself to us. The finite can never understand the infinite unless the infinite explains Himself and reveals Himself to the finite.

Now, you're in 1 Peter. Just turn to 2 Peter here, chapter 1 for a moment and see what Peter has to say about revelation. Look, if you will, in 2 Peter, chapter 1 and verse 19. Peter says, he's talking about an experience he had with Jesus on the mountaintop when Jesus was transfigured. And, then he says in 2 Peter chapter 11 and verse 19: "*We have also a more sure word of prophecy...*"—now, he's talking here about God's revealed truth, what we would call the Bible—"*...whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day stars arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*" (2 Peter 1:19–21).

Now, three things I want to say about The Word of God out of that passage.

#### **A. The Inspiration of the Word of God**

First of all, the inspiration of The Word of God. Look in verses 20 and 21: "Knowing this

first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.” Now, what does that word private mean? Well, it’s used 114 times in the Bible, and it means “of its own.” All right. Now, look at it. It is not of any private interpretation. What does the word interpretation mean here? It comes from a Greek word which means, “To untie or unfold or loose”—that is, what Peter is saying is this: no Scripture is of its own unfolding. It’s not like any other book. It’s not like any other book. How did the Scripture come about? Well, look in verse 21: “For the prophecy came not in old times by the will of man”—that is, it’s not of its own unfolding—“but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” Now, the word moved by the Holy Ghost is a term from the sea, that when the wind would blow upon the sails of a ship, that ship would be moved along. And, what Simon Peter is saying is that the writers of the Scriptures had their sails up, and the Holy Spirit of God just bore them along, carried them along. And, this is what we call the inspiration of the Scriptures.

### **B. The Illumination of the Word of God**

Now, it’s not enough that we have the inspiration, but also we have to have illumination, because even if the Scriptures are perfect, and they are, we have to be able to understand them. And, God knows that. So look, if you will, in verse 19 of this same passage, and it’s such a blessing: “For we have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day star arise in our hearts.” Now, this Scripture that is inspired, the inspiration of the Scripture, also illumines. Now, it shines into our hearts. It gives light. Now, look at the word dark here. You know, you see it in verse 19: “...it shineth in a dark place...” It doesn’t mean dark like the kind of dark where you turn out the lights, but it has a meaning of being squalid or murky or dirty or filthy. It shines into a squalid, murky, dirty, filthy area. Look, if you have the idea here. It says “...until the day dawn—do you see that?—and the day star arise in your heart.” He’s not talking about the second coming of Jesus here. He’s talking about the sunrise of the soul. That dark, squalid, murky, filthy place is your heart. And, The Word of God inspired, shines into your heart, into that dark place, and reveals the Lord Jesus. You see, what happens is the Holy Spirit takes the curtain of your skepticism and He pulls it aside and pins it with a star of hope and floods your heart with gospel light. He did that for me, and He did that for you. You have the inspiration of The Word of God. My dear friend, you have the illumination of The Word of God.

### **C. The Confirmation of the Word of God**

And, you have the confirmation of The Word of God. Look, if you will, in verse 19 of this same chapter. It says, “We have a more sure word of prophecy...” More sure than what? Well, Simon Peter has just told about what he’d seen on the Mount of

Transfiguration. And Peter then says, “I’ve got something more sure than what I saw and what I heard. It is The Word of God. It is The Word of God,” the confirming power of The Word of God.

Friend, you don’t believe because you’ve seen miracles. You don’t believe because you’ve had experiences. You don’t believe because someone has proved anything to you. God has revealed Himself in this book. And you need to tell a skeptic that the Bible is The Word of God. It is the inspiration of The Word of God, the illumination of The Word of God, and the confirmation of The Word of God.

I have a sermon on “Why I Believe the Bible is The Word of God.” If you’ve not listened to that, get the tape and listen to it. But, when you deal with any skeptic, dear friend, don’t forget there is this power in The Word of God. You say, “But, Adrian, he doesn’t believe the Bible.” Well, suppose a man breaks into your house tonight and you have a gun, and you’re pointing it at him, and he says, “I don’t believe it’s a gun.” What are you going to do with it? Shoot him if you have to. What if you’re in a sword fight? You’ve got a sword in your hand, and somebody says, “I don’t believe it’s a sword.” It won’t keep you from sticking him. What I’m trying to say is, dear friend, the Bible is power, whether he believes it or not. You use The Word of God. I have seen so many skeptics broken down by The Word of God. God says, “Is not my word like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?”

You know, you have to be so careful when you preach in public. I’ll get a dozen letters from someone who says, “I don’t believe you ought to go around shooting people.” And, that’s not even what I’m talking about, folks. I’m not talking about shooting people. I’m saying that the Bible is The Word of God. If a man has a gun and somebody says, “I don’t believe it’s a gun,” that’s not going to keep you from using the gun on him. Do you understand what I’m trying to say? I’m trying to say, dear friend, whether a person believes the Bible is The Word of God, or whether he doesn’t, The Word of God still has power, even with an unbeliever. It’s a two-bladed sword. If it doesn’t cut him in salvation, it’ll cut him in judgment. Be careful how you grab that blessed blade. It is The Word of God. It is a savor of life unto life; it is a savor of death unto death.

So, what have I said? Listen, forego the folly of fools. Learn the limits of logic. But, remember the resource of revelation. Remember, dear friend, when you’re dealing with somebody, that God has given you the Word. It is quick, it is powerful, and it is sharper than any two-edged sword. Even if he says he doesn’t believe the Bible, the Bible still has incredible power.

#### **IV. Fortify the Force of Faith**

Now, here’s the last thing I want to say. Fortify the force of faith. Fortify the force of faith. Notice again in our original text what we’re talking about in, 1 Peter 3 verse 15. The

Bible says: *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts”—do you see it?—“and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason”—now watch this next phrase—“of the hope that is in you...”*(1 Peter 3: 15). I’ve told you before; I want to tell you again. To quote Dr. Vance Havner, “A Christian with a glowing testimony is worth a library full of arguments.” The hope that is in you. Fortify your faith!

You see, Joyce, for our Thanksgiving dinner, made an incredible pumpkin pie. I mean, out of a real pumpkin. She didn’t get it out of a can. I mean, she made it out of a pumpkin. I didn’t know people did that any more. Took a pumpkin and made a pie. I want to tell you, it’s good. I had it, and I had a second piece. There’s one more piece, and I’ve got my eye on it. Now, listen. Suppose, after I’ve eaten that piece of pie, somebody comes to me and they say, “I don’t believe in pumpkins. Much less, I don’t believe in pumpkin pies, and I don’t believe in cooks and ovens and all of the rest of it.” And, all that time I ate pie and, dear friend, I enjoyed it. And, you tell me there is no such thing as pumpkin pie. Friend, I’ve got the witness in myself, isn’t that right?

The Bible says: *“O taste and see that the LORD is good”* (Psalm 34:8). Taste and see.

## Conclusion

Oh, listen, listen, friend. How do you answer a skeptic? Forego the folly of fools. Learn the limits of logic. Rely on the resource of revelation. But, fortify the force of faith. Let Jesus be real to you. Sanctify the Lord God in your heart, and be ready always to give an answer of the hope that is in you. And, do it with meekness and fear. Don’t be a smart aleck.

Your faith will be as much caught, as it will be taught. O dear friend, we need to hold our heads up high in this day in which we live. Thank God for that blessed assurance that we sung about this morning.

Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. Father God, I pray this morning that many will come to know Jesus. Open hearts and help them to discover, Lord, what we know. In Your Holy Name I pray. Now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you would like to know Jesus Christ and be saved, this is such a precious time. Let me tell you that you are saved not by joining a church or getting baptized or giving your money or living a good life. All of these are well and good. They all have their purpose. But, none of these, nor all of these, can save you. If they could, Jesus never would have died on that cross. He died to do for you what you cannot do for yourself, and with His precious blood He paid your sin debt. Now, I want to tell you right now, if you will trust Him, you’ll be saved. The Bible says that, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. With the heart man believes unto righteousness; with the mouth confession is made

unto salvation, for the Scripture saith, whosoever believeth in Him shall not be ashamed.” Will you believe in Him right now? Will you trust Him right now, not only in your heart, but openly and publicly? Will you take a stand for Jesus? Father, I pray that many in this building today will accept Christ as their personal Lord and Savior and commit their lives to follow Him until, Lord, we meet in glory. In Your holy name, amen.

# A Lifestyle for the Last Days

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** September 7, 2003

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 Peter 3:13–16

*“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:”*

1 PETER 3:15

## Outline

Introduction

I. Settled Lordship

II. Solid Logic

III. Superior Lifestyle

IV. Steadfast Love

V. Satisfied Longing

Conclusion

## Introduction

Unique, wonderful, and beautiful. Thank you, Theresa, ladies. Thank you, Jesus. Find God’s precious Word—1 Peter chapter 3. And when you’ve found it, look up here, and let me tell you something that you may know. If you don’t know, you need to know. It is open season on Christians, okay?

Now, you may not understand that because of your lifestyle—nobody can tell that you are one. But, listen. All who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. If you’re not suffering any, it’s just plain *ipso facto* that you are not living godly in Christ Jesus. If you are a child of God, you’re living in hostile territory. We’re twice-born people in a world of once-born people, and we’re going to be going against the tide most of the time. What we believe and how we live starts at a different source. It follows a different course. It is headed toward a different conclusion. It is open season on Christians.

But this is not the first time that has ever happened. It happened in Peter’s time. And I want you to see what the apostle Peter said to those saints then, because it’s what God is saying to us now. First Peter chapter 3, verse 13: “And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: having a good

conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation or behavior in Jesus Christ.”

Now, I want to tell you again, in Peter’s day there were those who were opposing the saints of God. And they accused them of all manner of things. They accused them, for example, of subversion against the government, because they would not say that Caesar’s Lord. They said that Jesus Christ is Lord. They accused them of being an economic threat, because they preached against idolatry. Idolatry, in that day, was not only a subject of religion; it was a great source of income. You can see that, for example, if you read, in the book of Acts, the trouble that Paul got into at Ephesus.

Also, their lifestyles—the lifestyles of the Christians accused and condemned the pagans because Christians lived a different lifestyle. And, by comparison, they rebuked the immorality of that day.

Now, the book of 1 Peter really is a handbook for survival. And so, therefore, you need to be aware of it. And the book of 1 Peter, and particularly this passage that I’m speaking from tonight, teaches you not only how to survive, but how to thrive.

Now, I want to talk to you tonight about “A Lifestyle for the Last Days.” Now, a lifestyle is not simply to hunker down and begin to sing, “Hold the fort.” We need to be militant, reaching out singing not “hold the fort,” but “Onward Christian Soldiers.” You cannot hunker down, nor can you run, because today there’s no place to run to. It’s very similar as it was in the days of the Nazis in Germany. There was a pastor there, Martin Niemöller—Martin Niemöller—who stood up against Hitler, and he was put in prison. Later, he was put in a concentration camp. After the war, he was released, but he went around talking about how he failed to stand up and speak up when he could, and when he should, and this is what he said—and I want you to listen to it. These words have been repeated often. He said, “First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak up, because I was not a socialist. And then they came for the trade unionists. But I did not speak up, because I was not a trade unionist.” Then, he said, “Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak up, because I was not a Jew.” Then, he said, “Then they came for me, and, by that time, there was nobody left to speak up for anybody.”

Now, folks, we do still have some freedoms in America today. We still have a time to speak. We still have a time to let our voice be known. But, before long, there may not be anybody to speak up for us, if we don’t speak up for ourselves, and speak up for others.

Now, Peter says in this passage of Scripture that we have to be real and we have to be ready. He says, for example, “who is he that will harm you if you be followers of that which is good?” The word “followers” is the word we get “zealot” from. It means, if you are zealous for that which is good. Not just a Sunday morning bench warmer, not a ho-hum Christian, not a casual Christian, but somebody who is on fire for the Lord Jesus Christ with a burning, blazing, passionately emotional love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want to ask you a question: Are you zealous? Are you zealous for the Lord Jesus Christ? And then, not only must we be real, but we must be ready. Look again in verse 15: “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you of the reason of the hope that’s in you.”

Question: when’s the last time anybody ever asked you about your faith? When’s the last time anybody looked at you, and said, “Man, you’re different. How are you wired? What makes you tick? How is it that you can live the lifestyle that you live? What is there about you that is different?”

There was a philosopher whose name was Nietzsche—Nietzsche. Nietzsche lived in the time of Hitler, and Nietzsche was a student of Darwin. He was anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-Bible. And Nietzsche was a wicked, vile man. He used to ridicule Christians. And here’s what he said to Christians. He said, “If you want me to believe in your Redeemer, you’re going to have to look a little more redeemed.” Do you look redeemed? Has anybody ever said to you, “What is the reason for your hope? Where’d you get this belief that you have?”

Now, remember that in that day there was persecution. And in the day in which we live there will be persecution. Now, what’s the persecution going to be? Well, number one: They’re going to call you intolerant. If you say there is one way to heaven, there’s a fixed standard of right and wrong, you will be intolerant in this day. And the one sin this world will not tolerate with their vindictiveness against intolerance is our belief that there is but one way to heaven, and His name is Jesus. We will be called a part of the Religious Right—as if there is a religious left and a religious right. Friend, the answer is not right or left. The answer is right or wrong. And, if we stand up for that which is right, we’re going to be called bigoted. We’re going to be called fundamentalists. We’re going to be called intolerant. We’re going to be called narrow-minded.

Now, with that in mind, let’s look at this passage of Scripture, and see if we can find what will be a lifestyle for the last days. For my heart, for your heart, for this beloved church, that we might reach this city, and, hopefully, reach our world, with the message of Jesus Christ. And, by the way, these will not be on the screen, so you’re going to have to pay a little more attention.

## **I. Settled Lordship**

First of all, a settled lordship. Now, let’s say that since it’s not on the screen: settled lordship. One more time: settled lordship. Look, if you will now, in chapter 3, verse 15: “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts”—a settled lordship. Nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing, must stand in the way of your loyalty to Jesus Christ.

What does the word “sanctify” mean? It means to set Him apart. How do you set Him apart? As Lord. You don’t mix Him in with anything else. He is sanctified, set apart

as Lord. And that has to be settled in your heart. If you have not, once and for all, now and forever, settled the question of lordship, settle it! He is Lord! Is He your Lord? Now, don't answer out loud, but answer in your heart. Is Jesus Christ Lord?

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said this, and I want you to listen to it, because these are rich words. He said, "If the professed convert distinctly and deliberately declares that he knows the Lord's will but does not mean to attend to it, you are not to pamper his presumptions. But it is your duty to assure him that he is not saved."

For example, if there's somebody here tonight, this is not Spurgeon; this is Adrian here. There's a big difference. But if there's somebody here tonight who says, "I know that I ought to be baptized by immersion. I know that Jesus wants it, the Bible teaches it, but I'm not going to do it," by what right do you have to call yourself a Christian? Jesus Christ said, "Why call ye Me Lord, Lord and do not the things that I say?"

Listen to it: "If the professed convert distinctly and deliberately declares that he knows the Lord's will but does not mean to attend to it, you are not to pamper his presumptions, but it is your duty to assure him that he is not saved. Do you suppose that the gospel is magnified, or God glorified, by pandering to the worldlings, and telling them that they may be saved at this moment by simply 'accepting Christ as their Savior,' while they are still wedded to the idols and their hearts are still in love with sin? It is interesting to note that the apostles preach the lordship of Christ. The word "Savior" occurs only twice in the Acts of the Apostles. On the other hand, it is amazing to notice that the title "Lord" is mentioned 92 times." Is Christ your Lord?

Precious friend, you cannot have what He gives unless you accept what He is. And He is Lord. The Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Let's just imagine this scene. The wedding is over. The cake has been cut. The guests have gone. The new couple gets in their automobile, and they go off. And she says to him, as she moves over to her side of the car away from him, "John, take me home." She says, "Now, darling, you know we can't go home. Our house won't be finished for three weeks. We're going on our honeymoon."

She says, "no, no, no, no. Take me to my mother's home, back where I was. Now, John, I want you to understand that I accepted you as my husband. And I'm grateful for your love for me. But I want you to take me back to my home, back to my old lifestyle. Now, John, if I need you, if I have some difficulty, I will call on you. And I will try to visit with you at least once a week. And I expect you to take care of my needs. John, I have given you my life in the fact that I took you as my husband. But John, don't expect me to change my lifestyle."

Now, friend, listen. A lot have done that exactly to Jesus. Oh, I've accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior. And, if I get in trouble, if I get in difficulty, I'll call upon Him. And, if the weather's good and I'm feeling right, I just may come to church, to His house and

visit Him. Don't you think that it is time for those of us who name the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to sanctify Him as Lord? He's Lord. He's absolute Lord. So that's the first thing—that's the first thing: a settled lordship.

## II. Solid Logic

The second thing: a solid logic. Say, solid logic. Alright now, look at it. Look, if you will now, at verse fifteen: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

Now, the pagans have some good questions, real good questions. But we've got better answers. We've got good answers. We have solid answers. As a matter of fact, the word "answer" here, "to give an answer," is the word we get our word "apologetics" from. You know what apologetics is? In theology, apologetics is a reasoned defense of our faith. To say, this is what we believe, and why we believe it. And you don't have to check your brains at the door when you become a Christian. The Bible says we're to study to show ourselves approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed.

And many who are Baptists ought to be ashamed of the weakness and shallowness of their faith. They understand so little. You ask the average Baptist, "What do you believe?" and they begin to stutter and stammer. Somebody asked a woman, "What do you believe?" She said, "I believe what my church believes." "What does your church believe?" "Oh, the church believes what I believe." "What do you and your church believe?" "Oh, we both believe the same thing."

Some of you, if you were to come up to automobile accident, and a man were dying pumping his life's blood out on the asphalt, and he were to say to you, "Are you saved?" you would say, "Oh yes, I'm a Christian. I'm a member of Bellevue Baptist Church. Adrian Rogers is my pastor." "Well, I'm dying. Will you tell me how to be saved, how to get to heaven?" You say, "Now, don't die yet. I'll run get my pastor." That's true. I mean, people do not know how to share their faith. They are not ready to give an answer of the hope that is in them.

Now, we need to sharpen up on our faith. Our college students need to know before they leave this church what they believe in, why they believe it. Because their faith is going to be assaulted in these last days, and they need a solid logic. The Washington Post said this about you. Do you want to know what they said about you as a Bible-believer, as a class of people? They said you're poor, uneducated, and easy-to-command. That's what they think about us: Poor, uneducated, and easy-to-command. We need some articulate people who will speak up on the job, speak up in society, speak up in politics, speak up in the city schools, speak up for the Lord Jesus Christ, and do it reasonably with a solid logic.

Now, that doesn't mean that we are to argue with unreasonable people. As a matter of fact, the Bible warns against that. Let me give you a couple of verses—Proverbs 26, verse 4. “Answer not a fool according to his folly.” I have people trying to draw me into all kinds of arguments all the time. But you know, if you wrestle with a pig, you'll get dirty. And the pig doesn't care. When you argue with a fool, somebody standing around can't tell who's who. The Bible makes that very clear. Jesus said, in Matthew chapter 7 and verse 6, “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine lest they trample them under their feet and turn again and rend you.” So we're not going to argue with foolish people about our faith.

But friend, we are to share our faith. God gives us wonderful, wonderful answers. And there needs to be a logic in our answers. I mean a sanctified, divine logic. Second Timothy 2, verses 24 and 25: “And the servant of the Lord must not strive...”—that means, you don't you don't argue with people. You don't debate—“...the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth.” God has to give them repentance. You will never argue anybody into the kingdom of heaven. But you do need to give an answer if you want them to believe. You've got to give them something to believe, “that God may grant them repentance that they might come to an acknowledgment of the truth.”

Somebody wrote a letter to our paper about myself. A recent letter to the editor said this—listen to it: “Rogers claims, as other Christians have, that, while they worship an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving God, and that God knew what was going to happen on September the 11<sup>th</sup>, and had the power to protect innocent human life, He did not. But they claim He did act in some small ways to comfort people. They can't have it both ways. Either their God could act and chose not to, or He did not have the power or will to do so. So, either way, their God is not so all-powerful or all-loving.”

Now, that argument—if you took college logic, you'll face that argument right away. I mean, I face that. People face that. You know, that argument's been going on for hundreds of years. Now, you say, if God were all-good, He would destroy evil. If He were all-powerful, He could destroy evil. Evil is not destroyed. So, therefore, there is no God that is all-powerful or all-good.

That's a faulty syllogism. It doesn't have logic. Any Christian who knows the Word of God can refute all of that. God could not destroy evil without destroying freedom. A person has to choose to be disloyal in order to be loyal. A person has to choose not to love in order to love. Forced loved is a contradiction in terms, and not love at all. Well, what is the great commandment? Matthew 22, verses 36 through 37: “Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy

God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” That’s the big one: to love God. You cannot love God without the freedom to choose to love God. If God were to destroy evil and force love, forced love is a contradiction in terms, and is no love at all. So to destroy evil, so as to take away the opportunity to choose, would in itself be an act of evil.

The great question is not “Why doesn’t God destroy evil?” The great question is how could God love us so much that He would allow His darling Son to die on a cross to save us from our sins? But I want to tell you that these kinds of arguments ought not to stampede us. They ought to cause us to go to the Word, and to see from the Word what the Bible teaches.

Now, friend, there is to be a settled lordship in these last days. There is to be a solid logic. Get the Word of God. Open up your mind. Study to show yourself approved unto God. And don’t say you can’t learn. I’m sick and tired of people telling me they can’t learn. If you got a thousand dollars for every Bible verse you memorized, you’d be a rich man. It’s true! It’s a matter of motivation, what you want to learn, what you want to know. Most people spend very little time studying the great truths of the Word of God. How do you expect to get it? By osmosis?

### **III. Superior Lifestyle**

Number three: a superior lifestyle. Say it: superior lifestyle. Settled Lordship, a strong logic, and a superior lifestyle. Notice again in verse 13: “But sanctify the Lord God in your heart, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you of a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.” Why would anybody ask you about your faith? There’s one reason. Because of your lifestyle; when they see your superior lifestyle.

And the Bible says the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. Do you know what meekness is? It is strength under control. The Roman army was called meek. Moses in the Bible was called the meekest man that ever lived. He certainly wasn’t weak. Jesus said, I am meek and lowly. He means strength under control. And fear does not mean cringing dread. It means reverence. When people see Adrian or you, or Mark or Jim, or any of these people over here, even David—excuse me, David—when they see us with lives under control in a chaotic age, they know that there is a difference.

Now, the sad thing is they don’t see many Christians with meekness and reverence. Do you know what they think of us? Do you know what some of them think of Bellevue? They think of us as being hate mongers; they think of us as being arrogant. I want to tell you that angry rhetoric is not the answer.

You know when I cringe a little bit? I cringe a little bit when sometimes I’ll stand in

this in the pulpit and speak to you about some of the social issues of our day, then I see some of you—bless your sweet hearts—will take pen in hand, dip it in acid, and write a letter to the editor that is not productive at all. It's not well thought out. It is not kind. It is arrogant. It is filled with pride. It is filled with superiority. And I sometimes think, Dear God, help our people to be wise in their very answers that they give.

You know, the Bible says here, in James chapter 1, verses 19 and 20. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Did you see when Roy Moore had the monument of the Ten Commandments, there was a man red-faced, he said, "Put our God back!" I said, "Oh, God, dear God." I believe the man's heart was good, but he wasn't helping us—not at all, not at all. How we need to let our speech be always seasoned with salt—a full mind wedded to a loving heart. The logic and the lifestyle have to go together.

Notice 1 Peter chapter two. Just go back, look, if you will, in verses 20 through 23. "For even here unto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." Peter is writing at time of Roman Emperors when Nero was Emperor. They took Christians, poured oil on them, hot tar on them, nailed them to crosses, set them on fire, and used them to light their gardens. That's what was happening to these Christians. But do you know what it was that turned the Roman Empire upside down, and caused the gospel of Jesus Christ to spread? It was the ability of these Christians to suffer righteously—not timidly, not fearlessly, but righteously—as the Lord Jesus Christ gave us an example.

A Chinese student standing up against the oppression of a godless Chinese red government said, "Lies written in ink cannot obscure truth written with blood." We have to have a superior lifestyle. We don't need to be arrogant. Did you know that you can win an argument and lose an audience? God help us to use the logic, and the love, and turn that into a lifestyle. True humility—true humility—will disarm those who oppose us.

And friend, I want to tell you something. We have enough scandals in the church; we have no right to strut anyway. And when we say, "Yes," God have mercy upon us; when we're willing to admit our fault, then God will help us.

Listen. What I'm calling you to do in these 40 days of purpose, and from now on, my own heart, my own life—we need to out-live, out-give, out-study, out-pray, out-preach, and out-sacrifice the pagans. When they look at us, they need to see somebody who is different. A Christian ought to stand out like a gardenia in a garbage can. When we live that way, people are going to be able to ask us, what makes you tick?

Classic example: Paul and Silas were thrown into prison for preaching the gospel in

Philippi. The Bible tells us that there was an earthquake, and the jail doors were shaken loose, and the bonds fell from the hands and legs of Paul and Silas and all of the other prisoners there. The keeper of the prison thought that the prisoners had fled, and he was about to fall on his sword, because he figured, I'd rather kill myself than be tortured and be killed for letting these very significant prisoners escape. But Paul and Silas said to this man, "Look, don't hurt yourself. We're all here. We haven't taken advantage and tried to escape. We are here. We recognize governmental authority. And, if God doesn't set us free, then here we are. We're all here."

But the important thing is this: that this man had heard Paul and Silas at midnight praising God and praying. Do you know what he did? The Bible says, in Acts chapter 16, that he called for a light, came in there, looked around, and he asked this question: "Can you guys tell me what I've got to do to be saved?" Wouldn't you like somebody to ask you that question? Would you? Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

Now, I am absolutely convinced that that man saw in Paul and Silas something that he had never seen before. He saw a different lifestyle, a superior lifestyle.

#### **IV. Steadfast Love**

Now, here's the next thing: steadfast love. Say it: steadfast love. All right now, look here, if you will, in 1 Peter chapter 4, beginning in verse 8: "And above all things have fervent charity..."—I am reading King James; you may translate that love on fire—"fervent charity among yourselves: for charity—love—shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging." That is in the very church itself. When people think of this church, or any church, they need to say, "Behold, how they love one another." The love that we have, the steadfast love, stands out like a diamond on the bright velvet of the hostility and debauchery and wickedness and hatred.

Our church—our church—needs love. Love not only for one another, but love for the lost. Are we against abortion? Yes, we're against abortion. But we need to show love for those who have participated in abortion—the abortionist and the one who has practiced abortion. And what are we going to do to help young pregnant women who, through their own sin, in most instances, have gotten pregnant and seek an abortion. Do we wrap our robes of self-righteousness about us, look down on them, and drive them into the very arms of the abortionist?

We believe in the permanency of marriage. We're not going to lower the standard. God's plan is one man for one woman, till death do them part. What about the people who are divorced? Friend, there are millions and millions and millions of people who are divorced. Are we just going to say, "You go to hell; we are a good church; we don't believe in divorce; you're not welcomed here"? They need our love. They need our love. They're bruised and broken and hurt. And we can be like a bunch of self-righteous

Pharisees and drive them not only away from our presence, and keep them coming from the Lord Jesus Christ.

What about those whose minds are twisted and tortured with the pollution of pornography? Pornography doesn't just lead to degeneracy; it is degeneracy. But they need help and love.

What about those who are in the homosexual lifestyle? Will we say that you can't come to Bellevue if you believe homosexuality or you practice homosexuality? They need Jesus. They need to be saved. They're not going to be saved by our self-righteousness. Oh yes, we're going to preach against abortion. We're going to preach against divorce. We are going to preach against adultery. We're going to preach against homosexuality. But how are we going to reach this world? How are we going to reach our city? The only one way that we're going to do it is to sanctify the Lord in our hearts, to be ready always to give an answer of the hope that is within us, to have a lifestyle that is so different that people will see that lifestyle and say, "What makes you tick?" and all of that, to be soaked and saturated with genuine love, a steadfast love.

## **V. Satisfied Longing**

Last of all, there needs to be a satisfied longing. Say: satisfied longing. Now, notice what he says—look again in verse 15: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer that asketh you of a reason of the hope that is in you." Hope is a longing that is satisfied. That's what hope is. Hope means more than certainty. It means something you long for, something you desire. It is faith transformed into reality in your heart and in your life. Faith is rooted in reason. It goes beyond reason. It becomes it's own best reason, and the Bible calls that hope.

Now, we're to have that that satisfied longing. And we're going around without hope, without a steadfast hope; then we have failed to show the greatest thing that this world needs. This world is wondering, is there hope? Is there an answer? My brothers and sisters, there is an answer: His name is Jesus. The Bible is true. The Holy Spirit is real. There is a hope in Christ. And we need to demonstrate that. We need to have in our own hearts a satisfied longing that Jesus has met the deepest needs of our heart.

Let me tell you something else. I'm an American, but our job is not ultimately to save America—although I hope America will persevere for many years. I love freedom. But our job is not primarily to preserve our freedom. Our responsibility is to stand up for Jesus Christ, and to witness His grace and power with unshakeable hope.

A satisfied longing, that Jesus had met the deepest needs of our heart. I want to give you some good news, and I'll be finished. God is moving in a mighty way in our world. We may look sometimes at a pagan society, and we may say, well, it's all over. Friend, these are the greatest days of evangelism in the history of the Christian church.

I want to tell you just a few things. My friend, Bill Bright, recently stepped over into glory. I've known Bill for over 30 years. He's a close, dear brother. Bill and Vonette Bright got on their knees and gave all that they had to Jesus Christ, signed a contract on their knees, and said, Lord, we will be your slaves, and give You everything that we have. When Bill Bright stepped over into heaven, Campus Crusade had a staff that had exploded to over 25,000 on the staff. There are more than 553,000 volunteers. The Jesus Film alone has helped to start over 750,000 churches. Just by a couple that got on their knees and became slaves to the Lord Jesus Christ. Bill Bright told me before he died, he expects a million churches to begin in the next 10 years around the world.

Recently, Newsweek magazine reported this of what is happening in Africa. April 16, 2001: all across the African subcontinent, Christianity is a 24-7 experience—24 hours a day, 7 days a week. On decaying asphalt highways, the backs of trucks and buses proclaim Christian slogans: "In His name," "Abide with Me," and "God is good." Inside urban malls, the lilting pop music carries an upbeat Christian message in Ebo, Kiwi, or Swahili. Even the signs above the storefronts bear public witness: "Thy Will Be Done" Hair Salon, "The Lord is My Light" Car Wash, and "Trust In God" Auto Repair, Specialists in Mercedes Benz. Here among the Ashanti and Beganda and a thousand other tribes occupying the world's second largest continent—listen to this now; don't miss this—Christianity is spreading faster than any time or place in the last 2,000 years." Think about it. Think of what's happened through Campus Crusade.

Dr. James D. Kennedy, who is the progenitor of Evangelism Explosion, a great pastor in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, said—and I quote: "We are in the midst of the greatest ingathering into the kingdom in the history of the world. " And then, Dr. Kennedy quotes a study giving the approximate number of converts for a day worldwide. He said, "In the year 100 A.D., there were estimated about 100 converts a day. By the year 1900, it had risen to 943 converts a day in the world. By 1950, there were 4,500 a day. By 1980, 20,000 a day. By 1995, 100,000 souls a day coming to Christ. Today, 200,000 souls a day and growing—coming to Jesus Christ." The greatest days of evangelism are right now, happening today.

Dr. Tim LaHaye, who's spoken from this pulpit, and has been the author of the Left Behind series, gave a report to Time Magazine. And he said that the revival going on now in China may be the greatest revival in the history of the world—going on right now in China. We as Southern Baptists are seeing an astounding rate of growth in our mission efforts around the world. Annual baptisms went from 262,758 in 1993 to 451,301 in 2000—from 262,000 to 451,000. A 172% increase. New churches went from 2,019 in 1993 to 6,526 in 2000. A 323% increase. Total churches overseas almost doubled.

We're receiving reports of many Arabs and Muslims coming to faith in Jesus Christ.

Many of them are seeing visions. Strange things are happening. And they are hearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. And God, in His infinite mercy, seems to be stepping behind the lines and revealing Himself to these people.

Chuck Colson spoke several years ago, and said, “We’re seeing crime begin to decline now down to pre-1973 levels. Welfare rolls have been cut in half. The divorce rate is down 19% in America since 1991. Teenage pregnancies have been down for the past 3 years. Every year, they’ve been down from the year before. And the number of high school students who say they are sexual active has declined for three straight years, as well. Abortion is down 15% since 1990. And I tell you that, in the face of the regime of the most pro-abortion President”—he said this when Clinton was President—“in America’s history. We have nonetheless brought abortion down 15%.” And then, he said, “Don’t tell me that God can’t make a change in a pagan culture.”

## Conclusion

Now, folks, I don’t know what that does to you, but it just tells me that we’d better not say it’s too late for God. These are great days. What we need is a lifestyle for the last days. We need to settle it once and for all, now and forever, that Jesus Christ is Lord. We need to understand what we believe, and why we believe it. We as God’s people need to begin to live like God’s people, and live a superior lifestyle, so that people can see a difference in us, what makes us tick. And we need to show love, genuine love, Christ-like love, so people can come to our church and say they’ll be welcomed, they’ll be received, no matter if they look different from us. I don’t mean that we’re going to overlook this sin. I don’t mean we’re going to compromise. But friend, we’re going to love them to Jesus Christ. And friend, we need to do it all with a hope, a settled hope, in our heart, a satisfied longing that Jesus has met the deepest needs of our life. Because, folks, I don’t know how much longer we have. The anniversary of September 11<sup>th</sup>, I don’t know what’s going to happen, folks. But I know who’s in control. And I know that God has called us. God has anointed us. God has equipped us to do what we ought to do. And God’s people said, We will—we will.

Father God, help us to live with a lifestyle in these last days that You can be pleased with. Now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you are here today, tonight, you’re not absolutely certain that you’re saved, you know God wants to save you, and God will save you. And you don’t have to beg Him to save you. He longs to save you. He promised to save you. He will save you, if you will trust Him.

Would you pray a prayer like this: Dear God, I need You so much. I need You, God. I want You. I’m sick and tired of this old life. I want a new life. I want a purpose for living, and a hope in dying. I want to know you personally, God. Lord Jesus, I believe You paid for my sin with Your blood on the cross. Thank You for that. Thank You, Jesus. Now, I

receive it by faith into my heart. Come into my life right now while I'm in this chair, in this church. Now come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me, Lord Jesus. Take control of my life from this moment on, and begin to make me the person you want me to be. Thank You for doing it. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Now, look up here. We're going to sing an invitational hymn. If you prayed that prayer, or you're willing to pray it but you need some more help, I want you to leave your seat and come forward. And I want you to say to the minister who will be standing at the head of each of these aisles, one will be standing at the head of each of these aisles all the way across. Say to him—well, you can say whatever you want. But let me give you a suggestion. Just say, I'm trusting Jesus—I'm trusting Jesus. We'll rejoice, give you some Scripture to stand on, seal it in prayer, and you can go home tonight a child of God, and know if you died in your sleep, you'd eat breakfast with Jesus in the morning, or whatever they eat up there. You'll be with our Lord, to know Jesus Christ.

You know, if I could do it for you, I would; but I can't. I preached. I'm telling you that God loves you. He wants to save you. He will save you. Well, you say, I trusted Him right now. Did you really? Are you willing to make it public? As soon as we stand and sing, you slip out and come.

And others of you, if you need a church home, you're saved, and you need a church home, I want you to come at the same time. Some are coming, saying, I'm trusting Christ. Others who are already saved will be coming, saying, I want to place my membership here.

Father God, bless that many will come. In the strong name of Jesus, O God, work in our hearts. Amen. Let's stand together. You step out and come.

# Bright Lights in a Dark World

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: October 21, 2001**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 3:13–16**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. We Must Enthrone Christ as Lord
- II. We Must Be Ready with an Answer
- III. We Must Practice Genuine Humility
- IV. We Must Live a Superior Lifestyle
- V. We Must Display Genuine Love
- VI. We Must Always Hold on to Hope

Conclusion

## Introduction

**W**ould you take God's Word and turn to 1 Peter chapter 3. We're thinking today on this subject: "Bright Lights in a Dark World." Now the first-century world was very dark. When Peter wrote the Scripture that I'm about to read to you, friend, I want to tell you something: It was open season on Christians. They despised Christians. Number one: They accused them of insurrection and subversion, because they would not bow down and call Caesar lord. Number two: They looked upon Christians as an economic threat, because there was a great business in idolatry and so forth, and they saw them somehow as a roadblock, an impediment to progress. And number three: Their lifestyle condemned others, and they accused them of all kinds of things: incest, because they called one another brother and sister, and—number two—even people they were married to they thought of as a sister or a brother. They accused them of cannibalism because of the Lord's Supper; they said they were eating and drinking the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And they would take anything, and twist it, and use it against these early Christians.

And so Peter wrote this Scripture, and I want you to read it now—1 Peter chapter 3, beginning in verse 13; he asked this question: "*Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?*"—The word *followers* is the word from which we get our word *zealot*; you be zealous of that which is good—"*But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror*"—now, just underscore that—"*Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled*"—that's God's word for you, this morning—"*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with*

*meekness and fear: having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as evildoers, they may be ashamed and falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ”* (1 Peter 3:13–16).

Now what do we do in a time where there are those who want to terrorize us? Do we just hunker down? Do we close up shop, put our head between our knees and pray, Lord, keep us safe till the storm passes over? Not at all. There has never been a greater day, a greater age, a greater time to preach the glorious gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ than this day and this age. And we don't need to sing “Hold the Fort,” friend, we need to sing “Onward Christian Soldiers.” Not armed with bullets, not armed with bombs, but armed with the glorious gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with a mighty, mighty, mighty demonstration of love. But we cannot be silent.

Back in Hitler's time, when Hitler was trying to rule the world, there was a pastor named Martin Niemoller. Martin Niemoller began to preach, and as a result of it, Hitler had him put in the concentration camp, and then, finally, in solitary. But finally, Martin Niemoller was released, and he began to preach, and he always ended his messages with this statement: “First, they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out because I was not a socialist. Then, they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist. Then, they came for the Jews but I did not speak out because I was not a Jew. Then, they came for me, and there was no one left to speak out for anyone.”

Now the time has come for us to speak, and Peter tells us, in this passage, that—number one—we need to be real; we need to be followers of that which is good. We don't need a card, some sort of a plastic cardboard mentality of Christianity. And number two: We need to be ready. Verse 15 he says, “You be ready to give an answer to anyone that asks you of the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). By the way, when's the last time anybody asked you of your faith? When's the last time anybody ever asked you, sir, what makes you different?

There was a cynic named Nietzsche. Hitler learned much from Nietzsche. Nietzsche didn't believe in Jesus Christ, and he loved to look in Christians' face, and sneer at them, and say, “You want me to believe in your Redeemer, you're going to have to look a little more redeemed.”

Hmm, well, do you look redeemed? I mean, when's the last time somebody's ever said, “Hey, what makes you tick? What puts that smile on your face? What gives you peace in the midst of the storm? What motivates you, what drives you, how do you have this hope?” Would you be able to give an answer? Would you shine as a bright light in a dark place? I want to mention six things that Peter mentions, right here—things that we need to be, in this dark day.

## I. We Must Enthroned Christ as Lord

Number one: We must enthrone Christ as Lord. Look in verse 15: *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts”* (1 Peter 3:15). The word *sanctify* means to set Him aside as special, above all, as reigning Lord. May I ask you a personal question? Don’t say yes because I’m going to ask it anyway. Is Jesus Christ Lord in your life? I didn’t say, “Did you admit that He is Lord in the generic sense?” Have you ever bowed the knee to Him? Have you ever taken the crown off your head and put it upon His head?

There was a preacher of yesteryear; his name was Charles Spurgeon. Most preachers agree, together, that Charles Spurgeon was probably the greatest preacher outside the Apostle Paul that ever lived. I’ve copied down something that Charles Haddon Spurgeon said. I want you to listen to it carefully. I’m going to read it carefully. Here’s what he said: “If the professed convert distinctly and deliberately declares that he knows the Lord’s will, but does not mean to attend to it, you are not to pamper his presumptions. But it is your duty to assure him that he is not saved.” “If a man says, ‘Well, I know what God wants me to do, but I’m not going to do it,’” Spurgeon insists, “Mister, you need to be saved.” Do not suppose that the gospel is magnified or God glorified by pandering to the worldlings and telling them that they may be saved at this moment by simply—*tsk, tsk*—accepting Christ as their Savior while they are still wedded to their idols and their hearts are still in love with sin. It is interesting to note that the apostles preached the lordship of Christ. The word *Savior* occurs only twice in the Acts of the Apostles. On the other hand, it is amazing to notice that the title *Lord* is mentioned ninety-two times.

Now often we hear people say, “Well, you need to accept Christ as your Savior.” Well, friend, you cannot have what He gives unless you accept who He is; and He is Lord. He’s Lord. Now I’m not asking, “Are you a member of Bellevue Baptist Church?” I’m not asking, “Are you baptized?” I’m not asking you, “Do you know the plan of salvation?” *You’re not saved by the plan of salvation; you’re saved by the Man of salvation; His name is Jesus.* Is He the Lord of your life?

Imagine this scene: The wedding—the marriage—has taken place. The cake has been cut. The gifts have been exchanged, and Susan and John, now, are in the car driving away; they’ve just been married. Susan says, “John, would you please take me home?” He says, “Well now, Susan, we’re going on our honeymoon. You know that our home is not going to be ready for several weeks. I’ll take you there when the contractor’s finished on the house.” She says, “No, I don’t mean that home. Would you please take me to my mother’s house? I want to go back to my mother’s house. Now John, I want you to understand something. You and I are married, and, John, I appreciate your love for me. And John, if you have any love for me, don’t fail to give it. I’m most grateful for it. And John, if I have a need, if I get sick, I’ll call on you. If I need

money for expenses, because you're my husband, I expect you to supply my every need. But don't think that I'm going to change my lifestyle just because I'm married to you. John, take me home and keep your hands off of my life! Now what kind of a marriage would that be?

That's the same kind of salvation that some people think they have. They call upon the Lord Jesus Christ and say, "Now Lord Jesus, thank You that You're going to take care of me, but I'm going back to my old lifestyle. I'm going back to my old ways. Take Your hands off my life." Friend, you can't have it that way. Has there been a radical change in your life? Is Jesus Christ the Lord of your life?

## II. We Must Be Ready with an Answer

Number two: Not only must you sanctify the Lord, but—number two—we must be ready with an answer. Look in verse 15: "*But sanctify the Lord in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you*" (1 Peter 3:15). Are you ready for an answer? I mean, suppose somebody came to you and said, "What is the reason for your hope?" And they will come to you, if you have a changed life. They're going to ask you, as they did on the Day of Pentecost, "What meaneth this?" Now the problem is that. And then, they ask, "What must we do?" The reason that many people don't ask, "What must we do?" is they haven't seen anything that is different; they can't say, "What means this?" On the Day of Pentecost, there was something that was not explainable.

Is there something about you that is not explainable? Can you explain the life of Mark Dougharty apart from Jesus Christ? Can you explain my life, the life of these two men, apart from Jesus Christ? Friend, has anybody ever asked you a question, "What is the reason for your hope?" Suppose somebody today, maybe in an automobile accident, would ask you, "What is the reason for your hope? Help me." You'd say, "Just stay right there; don't die. I'm going to go get Pastor Rogers." No, you are to sanctify the Lord in your heart, and you are to be ready.

I'm appalled at how little the average Baptist knows about what he's supposed to believe. One man asked a woman, "What do you believe?" She said, "I believe what my church believes." "Well, what does your church believe?" "Well, my church believes what I believe." "Well, what do you both believe?" "Oh, we believe the same thing." Are you ready? Do you have an answer? Friend, there are some good answers.

The word *to give an answer* is the word that, that we get our word *apologetics* from. It's a word that is used in a courtroom, *apologia*. It means "to give a defense of your faith," just as a lawyer would defend a client. Can you defend your faith? I want to tell you something, friend: The people out there have some big questions. Right now, our world is swimming in questions.

A few days ago, in the newspaper, somebody wrote a letter to the editor concerning something that I'd said. This is his question: He said, "Rogers claims, as other Christians have, that while their all-powerful, all-loving, all-knowing God knew what was going to happen on September 11, and had the power to protect innocent human life, He did not. But they claim He did act in some small ways to comfort people." And then, this man said, "They can't have it both ways. Either their God could act and chose not to, or He did not have the power or will to do so. Either way, their God is not so all-powerful or all-loving." And then, this man asks, "Why does the Commercial Appeal have so many religious columns and articles, and none devoted to free thinkers, atheists, agnostics, and humanists?"

Now what he has done, he has gone back to an argument that every sophomore in any secular university is used to. And here's their little syllogism: They say, "If God were all-good, He would destroy evil. If God were all-powerful, He could destroy evil. But evil is not destroyed, hence, there is no such God." That's their logic. Listen to it again: "If God were all-good, He would destroy evil. If He were all-powerful, He could destroy evil. But evil is not destroyed. Hence, there is no such God."

Well, suppose somebody were to ask you that question. Believe me, it's being asked today. And somebody says, "How can you have faith in God?" Are you ready to give an answer to the person that asked it? Well, there's an answer in the Word of God. Let me give you some Scripture: Matthew chapter 22, beginning in verse 36. There was a lawyer who asked Jesus: "*Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love*"—underscore this—"*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind*" (Matthew 22:36–37). Friend, that is it, that's the bottom line. By the way, the faith of Jesus Christ is built on love, not hate; life, not death. "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God*" with all thy being: This is the first commandment (Matthew 22:37). This sums it all up.

Now when God made man, God made man a free creature. Why did God make man a free creature? Because, God wanted man to love—to love Him and to love one another. Forced love is a contradiction in terms. For a person to be able to love, he has to be able not to love. If we were created where we could only love and do nothing else, it wouldn't be love at all. We would be automatons; we would just simply be machines. God gave man the freedom of choice. We cannot choose to be disloyal unless we can choose to be loyal. We cannot choose to love unless we can choose not to love.

And what is *love*? *Love* is the highest good. And for God to take away choice would be for God to destroy the highest good. And if He did that, if God were to destroy evil, that is, to give man a choice, then that act itself would be evil. No, God allows evil in this world. God does not destroy evil. God defeats evil by putting His Son upon a cross and taking that sin into His own heart and His own life. And there are answers to these

things. The Bible says, in John chapter 15, verse 13: *“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends”* (John 15:13).

### **III. We Must Practice Genuine Humility**

Now thirdly—listen, friend—if we would be a bright light in a dark world, we must practice genuine humility. This is no time to strut in arrogance. Notice, again, what Peter says, in 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 15: *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you”*—now, notice this—*“with meekness and fear”* (1 Peter 3:15). With meekness and fear. *Meekness is not weakness; it is strength under control.* Fear is not trembling at what is happening around us; it speaks of a holy reverence for Almighty God.

Now you can have the reasons, but America’s not going to be won by arguments alone, not by the ballot box, not by organization. And there are so many people who think of those of us who are Bible-believers as people of arrogance. They’ll say that about us. They’ll think of us as hate-mongers. They will think of us as intolerant. And we must be very careful that we do not use angry rhetoric when we respond to them. Listen to this scripture—put it in your margin—James 1, verses 19 through 20: *“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God”* (James 1:19–20). Your anger, your wrath, does not bring about God’s righteousness.

Now Jesus showed anger against those who were persecuting helpless people. He showed anger towards the religious hypocrites of His day. But to those who were victims of sin—the prostitutes, the thieves, the tax gatherers (who in that day were guilty of extortion)—He showed them love. He was a friend of sinners. That’s why they crucified Him. Do you know what we need in this day and in this age? We, dear friend, need a full heart and a bright head, both together. Be ready to give an answer; but also, show love in genuine humility.

Now when this was written, Nero was the emperor. You say, “Well, they had it easy in those days.” Oh no, they didn’t. Nero wanted to remodel Rome, so he had the slums burned. The people rose up because their homes were destroyed. He had to have a scapegoat. Somebody said, “Why don’t you blame it on those Christians? They’re always talking about setting the world on fire.” And so they blamed it on the Christians. And again, as I said, it was open season on the Christians. They would take Christians in that day, nail them to crosses, cover them with boiling oil, and set them on fire to light the gardens for their banquets. Can you imagine such a thing? These are people who love the Lord Jesus Christ. They reddened the mouths of lions with their own blood. They had to fight with gladiators in the Coliseum. Many of them would not fight, they would just simply give their lives.

I wonder what would happen to some of us if we had to make those kind of choices. These early Christians, friend—they had to make those kinds of choices. They had meekness and fear, and their humility—their ability to suffer for Christ—brought that Roman Empire crashing down.

Recently, there was an uprising in China. A Chinese student wrote these words: “Lies written in ink cannot obscure truth written in blood.” Now folks, it’s possible for us to be so arrogant that we’ll win the argument and lose the audience. I’m calling upon you to have genuine meekness—genuine reverence—in this day and in this age. This is not the time to go pointing fingers at everybody else. The Bible says, “The time is come, but judgment must begin at the house of God” (1 Peter 4:17). And I tell you, folks, all that’s happened in America today, has happened on our watch. And we need to confess the sins of the Church. We need to confess our indolence, our laziness, our selfishness, our pride, and our refusal to live a separated life and to share the gospel, the glorious gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

#### **IV. We Must Live a Superior Lifestyle**

Number four: If we would be a bright light in a dark world, we must live a superior lifestyle. Notice the next verse. We’ve been in verse 15; look in verse 16: *“Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ”* (1 Peter 3:16). You’re going to be falsely accused, but it’s going to become evident; it’s going to be to their shame, because your lifestyle will be superior. You will be blameless. I didn’t say *sinless*, but you will be *blameless*. You see, verse 15 says they’re going to be asking us questions of the hope that’s in us. Why? Because they can see something different about us.

Go back to the chapter before this—1 Peter chapter 2 and verse 12. Listen to what it says: *“Having your conversation”—and, the word conversation in the old King James Scripture always means “behavior”—“Having your [behavior] honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation”* (1 Peter 2:12). That is, when Jesus comes again—when the daystar rises—they’re going to have to say, “Those Christians were living a superior lifestyle.” God forbid that you, I, any of us, would be a part of any scandal—this church. And they’re to see your life at school, in the neighborhood, on the job. **You should stand out like a diamond in a coalmine, like a gardenia in a garbage can.** You should be different. We need to out-love, out-live, out-give, out-pray, out-witness the people of this world. Amen? Are you willing to do it?

You want them to believe in us? What we believe in? If you want respect, we’re going to have to get it the old-fashioned way—we must earn it. Let them see your good

works. When we begin to live this way, others will begin to ask us, “What makes you tick? What is the reason for the hope that is in you?”

What happened to Paul and Silas when they were in that prison—that Philippian jail—at midnight? Other people around them were cursing, moaning, screaming. Paul and Silas were praying; they were singing praise to God, giving God thanks. Everybody in the prison saw there was a difference. What do you think made that Philippian jailer come in there after that earthquake and say, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” He would never have asked them that question if they’d been cursing and complaining. No, they were praising God. There was something different about their lifestyle in the midst of tribulation. I’ve told you before: The Bible doesn’t say that if you’re saved, you’ll not have tribulation. You may get cast in the prison. I may get cast into prison. And in prison, we need to be a bright light in a dark place. That’s what Paul and Silas are doing. That’s the reason that man said: “*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*” (Acts 16:30). “*And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*” (Acts 16:31). Remember what Nietzsche said? “If you want me to believe in your Redeemer, you’re going have to look a little more redeemed.”

## **V. We Must Display Genuine Love**

Number five: We must display genuine love. Look in 1 Peter chapter 4, now—verses 8 and 9. Listen: “*And above all things have fervent charity*”—the King James says *charity*, it means “love”—“*among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging*” (1 Peter 4:8–9). I think of the tragedy—the despicable thing—that was done to our nation on September 11. It wasn’t based on love; it was based on hate. Now that’s terrible; but I’ll tell you one thing—one thing it does: that is, the dark velvet upon which the diamond of God’s grace and God’s love can be seen—that gives us an opportunity to respond in love. I’m calling this church to love.

We are against abortion in this church, because we believe that abortion is the shedding of innocent blood. But what are we doing for the teenage girl, the person who’s caught in a situation with a baby, and they need help? Do we turn our backs on these people? How do we show them love? We turn our backs on them and shove them into the arms of the abortionist, who’s looking for a few more hundred dollars for performing an abortion.

We believe, in this church, in the permanency of marriage. We believe that one man is to be married to one woman till death do them part. But there are many people whose homes have been broken by divorce, severed by divorce. What do we do? Do we wrap our robes of self-righteousness about them, and turn them away, and say “You’re second class, no good; you’ve made a mistake; there’s no hope for you, and no help for

you?” No! In the name of Jesus, we open our arms and say, “You’re welcome here! We have a message for you in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

We’re against pornography. It’s terrible. It’s horrible. It’s a vice, vile, filthy. It is antithetical to true love; it’s based on lust. *Lust wants to get; love wants to give.* But there are so many today, and, especially with the tidal wave of slime that’s coming in through the Internet, we’re caught up in pornography. What do we do to these people? Do we step on them? Or, do we offer help to those who are driven to such a compulsion, and do we say to them in love, “We love you, and there’s an answer in the Lord Jesus Christ”?

We’re against the homosexual agenda; we believe that it’s contrary to the Word of God and contrary to human health and welfare. But what do we do to those who are caught up in this lifestyle? Do we merely criticize them, put them down? Or, do we reach down the loving hand so love can lift and give a helping hand? Friend, this is the day, this is the age, where the Church needs to demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ.

*If we would be bright lights in a dark world, we need to be known, not merely for what we’re against, but what we’re for.* The newspaper delights in printing—anytime we take a stand against sin, that’s bold headlines. Friend, what we need is an explosion of random acts of love, so that they can see the love of Jesus Christ.

## **VI. We Must Always Hold on to Hope**

Number six: We must always hold on to hope. Look again in verse 15: *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you”* (1 Peter 3:15). The hope that is in you. Now the word *hope*, here, does not mean “mere wish, fond desire,” but it means “rock-ribbed truth, based on the Word of God—divine certainty, based on the Word of God.” And friend, listen to me. I don’t care how dark the day is—you listen—we’re on the winning side. Sin can’t win; faith cannot fail. Have faith in God. I know that many of us just sat in horror as we watched, over, and over, and over again, those twin towers collapse.

Augustine was one of the early Church Fathers, many, many years ago. Augustine was told that Rome had been sacked. I guess that modern America is the closest counterpart to ancient Rome. Ancient Rome was the most powerful force on Earth, and the Vandals came and sacked Rome, destroyed Rome. Augustine is reported to have said this—listen to it: “Whatever men build, men will destroy... So let’s get on with building the Kingdom of God.” Whatever men build, men will destroy. If you put all of your eggs in brick, and stone, and mortar, and computers, and technological advance, friend, you’re only living for the moment.

*I don’t want you to think that I’m un-American, because you’re looking at a red-*

*blooded American patriot. But our job is not to ultimately save America; our job is not to preserve our lifestyle or our freedoms—oh, we must do that; God helping us, we will do that. But our main responsibility is to stand for Jesus Christ, here and around the world, and put our hope, our faith, our prayers, in something that cannot fail—a Kingdom that cannot be shaken.* That, friend, is our hope. That is the hope that is in me.

Now you say, “Well, Adrian, evidently then, you’re a little discouraged by the way things are going.” Friend, I’m not discouraged at all. I want to share with you some of the most optimistic news I’ve ever shared from this pulpit. I want to tell you what God is doing in the world, and I pray that this will ignite in you a flame of hope that cannot be extinguished.

One of my dearest friends on this earth is Bill Bright. Bill Bright founded Campus Crusade for Christ—he and his precious wife Vonette. Recently, Campus Crusade reported that their staff has exploded to 25,000 missionaries, and they have more than 553,000 volunteers. Did you hear that? 553,000 volunteers. Campus Crusade generated, and then, has been showing the Jesus Film around the world. 750,000 churches—750,000 churches have begun.

Now let me read a little bit of *Newsweek* magazine. April 16, 2001. This is speaking of Africa. Brother Wayne, you recently got back from Africa. Wayne was telling me of the explosive growth in Africa, and these people there, in Africa, are planning to start, in the area where he went, 10,000 churches. Here’s what *Newsweek* said. “All across the African subcontinent...Christianity is a 24/7 experience”—that means 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. “On decaying asphalt highways the backs of trucks and buses proclaim Christian slogans: ‘IN HIS NAME,’ ‘ABIDE WITH ME,’ and ‘GOD IS GOOD.’ Inside urban malls, the lilting pop music carries an upbeat Christian message in Ibo, Twi or Swahili. Even the signs above storefronts bear public witness: ‘THY WILL BE DONE HAIR SALON,’ ‘THE LORD IS MY LIGHT CAR WASH,’ and ‘TRUST IN GOD AUTO REPAIR, SPECIALISTS IN MERCEDES BENZ.’” This article—now this is *Newsweek*; listen to this—it says that among the thousand tribes who occupy the world’s second largest continent, in these tribes, “Christianity is spreading faster than at any time or place in the last 2,000 years. That’s in Africa.”

Dr. James Kennedy, that we know and love, is a personal friend of mine. He said this, and I want to quote him: “We are in the midst of the greatest ingathering into the Kingdom in the history of the world.” Then, Dr. Kennedy quotes a study giving the approximate number of converts per day, worldwide, beginning in the year 100. In the year 100, it is estimated there were 100 converts a day. By the year 1900, it had risen to 943 per day. By the year 1950, 4,500 a day were coming to Christ. By 1980, 20,000 a day were coming to Christ. By 1995, 100,000 a day were coming to Christ. By the year 2000, the projected amount, when this was written, was 200,000 a day coming to Jesus

Christ. Think of it.

The Gallup Poll, perhaps one of the most accurate of all the polls, reports this: They went and asked people in America, “Are you a Christian?” The answer has been fairly consistent over the years, at about 85 to 86% in America. “Are you a Christian?” “Yes, I’m a Christian.” But when more specific answers were asked, such as about whether or not there had been a *born-again* experience, and whether the person believed the Bible is the Word of God, and Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the numbers were formerly only in the 20% range. Some people would say, “I’m a Christian,” but they didn’t believe the Bible is the Word of God, Jesus Christ the Son of God, or they had not been *born again*; they were just *cultural Christians*. There was in the low 20% range. “However,” Dr. Kennedy said, “the latter figures have increased gradually, and were, at last count, 47% saying, “I believe the Bible’s the Word of God,” “I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God,” and “I believe I’ve been *born again*.” Up 3% in just one year. At this current growth rate, Dr. Kennedy says that Americans who profess belief in the Bible as the Word of God, and Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and who proclaim a *born-again* experience, will soon be in the majority in this nation, perhaps in 5 years. Because of this, he says, in the next 10 to 15 years, we will see revolutionary changes in America. That’s amazing. Friend, that’s good news.

Dr. Tim Lahaye, another personal friend that I know, and has spoken from this pulpit, gave a report, and it was printed in *Time* magazine. Tim Lahaye said that the revival going on in China today may be the greatest ingathering in the history of the world. I mentioned that, a while back, I was in Seattle, preaching at a Promise Keepers Rally. Coach Bill McCartney said to me, “Adrian, things are happening in Promise Keepers.” He said, “We started out, and then we bottomed down.” And then, he said, “We’re coming back, and there is such a great interest in the things of God.”

And reports have been given of many Arabs and Muslims that are coming to Jesus Christ in today’s world, and God seems to be doing even supernatural things. Some are reporting having visions and God speaking to them very much like He spoke to Cornelius of old in the New Testament.

Dr. Chuck Colson, who’s also spoken from our pulpit, the man of Watergate fame, the infamous man at that day, spoke, and here’s what Chuck Colson said three or four years ago. He was speaking to a Campus Crusade gathering in 1997, and here’s what he said. Now listen to this—by the way, we’ve been having fasting and prayer for America; we’ve been meeting, fasting and praying. Colson said, “We are seeing crime begin to decline now down to pre-1973 levels. Welfare rolls have been cut in half. The divorce rate is down 19% in America since 1991. Teenage pregnancies have been down for the last three years. Every year, they have been down from the year before, and the number of high school students who say they are sexually active has declined

for three straight years as well.” Listen to this figure: “Abortion is down 15% since 1990.” I tell you that in the face of the regime of the most pro-abortion president in America’s history (talking about Bill Clinton), we’ve nonetheless brought abortion down 15%. Don’t tell me that God can’t make changes in culture apart from whatever the government does.

## Conclusion

Now friend, I’m just sharing with you some news. I’m sharing with you some good news. I’m sharing with you that more souls are coming to Jesus Christ, in this day and in this age, than ever, ever, ever since Jesus Christ in His sandaled shoes walked the shores of Galilee. Is that not good news? Praise God! What I’m saying is this: We don’t need to hunker down in the corner; we need to go out with the banner unfurled and march out under the blood-stained banner of Prince Emmanuel, our Savior, our King, our Lord. God is our source of supply. The Holy Spirit is our ally. Jesus is our Commander in Chief. We’re brothers and sisters in Christ in this mighty army of love, and may God help us, in this day and in this age, to be “Bright Lights in a Dark World.”

Amen and amen. Would you bow your heads in prayer. All heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. Friend, remember I told you about God’s amazing grace—that God wants to save you? Why should there be a mighty revival in Africa and not one in your heart, here, today? Why should souls around the world be coming to Jesus and you be left out, when Jesus died for you? Would you like to be saved? I’m telling you: You can be saved, today, if you receive Jesus Christ.

Would you pray a prayer like this: “O God, thank You for loving me. Thank You, Lord, for loving me in spite of my sin. Jesus, thank You for paying for my sin with Your blood. Oh, thank You for doing that. I believe You’re the Son of God. I believe You walked out of that grave. I believe You paid my sin debt with Your blood. And now Lord Jesus, I receive You into my heart. I yield my life over to You. I acknowledge You as Lord, trust You as my Redeemer. Forgive my sin; cleanse me. Cleanse me, Lord; save me. Take control of my life, and begin, now, to make me what You want me to be. I’m so weak, Lord, but You’re strong. Lord, I’m going to give my heart to You, then You’re going to have to start working on me, Lord, because, Lord, I’m weak. But Lord, You’ll do it. I just trust You, I give You my heart. Save me, Lord Jesus; do it, right now. Give me the courage to make it public. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

# Why I Believe in Jesus

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** September 2, 1990

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 Peter 3:15

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”

1 PETER 3:15

## Outline

Introduction

I. Historical Reasons

II. Scriptural Reasons

III. Biblical Reasons

IV. Personal Reasons

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take the Word of God that you have there and open with me if you would please to 1 Peter chapter 3. If you have a Bible like mine it's page 1510. If you don't you can find it it's back near the back of the New Testament. A wonderful epistle and I want to bring to you what I hope tonight will be a very pertinent and a very helpful message. The Bible gives us a command in 1 Peter chapter 3 and verse 15. It says this, *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear”* (1 Peter 3:15).

If someone were to ask you why you are a Christian, could you give a good answer? Why are you excited about the Lord Jesus? Or, why you believe you believe in Jesus? I want to talk to you tonight on this subject *Why I Believe in Jesus Christ*. Why I am a Christian.

Now, are Christians fools for believing in Jesus? Are we mere sentimentalists or do we have reasonable reasons for believing in the Lord Jesus Christ? Now, may I tell you that everybody is a believer? People just believe different things. Some for example believe in atheism. They are believers. They just believe there is no God. Now, if you don't believe that in the beginning God created the Heavens and the earth, then you must believe in the beginning the heavens and the earth made themselves and then they created man. Now, if you want to believe that as far as I'm concerned you've got rooms to rent upstairs unfurnished, but you can believe that if you want.

May I tell you this? Don't get the idea that atheism is the sign of intelligence. It is not a sign of intelligence. Socrates believed in God. Lord Bacon believed in God. Galileo believed in God. Sir Isaac Newton believed in God. Pasteur believed in God. Albert Einstein believed in God. The space scientist Verner Von Braun believed in God. I mean, it's not a sign of intelligence that you don't believe in God.

Well, you say, "I believe in God, but I am more of a philosopher. I wouldn't say that I'm a Christian." Well, dear friend, if you're a philosopher and you don't believe in the Lord Jesus do you think that philosophy has the answer to life? Schopenhauer was a great philosopher and he said, "Life is a curse of endless cravings and endless unhappiness." I'm glad that's not my philosophy. Huxley said that as he looked around at human beings he was a great philosopher, but he said, "It seems that we talking of human beings, we are a cancer on the globe." That's you and that's me. Bertrand Russell, oh they study him in college, but he said of philosophy, "Philosophy proved a wash out to me." I like what Dr. Robert G. Lee said about philosophy. He said, "It was a chunk of cloudbank buttered with the night wind." Dear friend, is that what you're going to turn to? Oh, well you say, "I'm not necessarily a philosopher or an atheist. I am very religious. But, I just don't happen to believe in your Jesus." Well, that's your privilege. My dear friend, false religion will never satisfy the hungry heart.

If you go to the tomb of Confucius, you find it's occupied. If you go to the tomb of Buddha, you'll find it's occupied. If you go to the tomb of Mohammed you'll find it occupied. If you go to the tomb of Jesus, you'll find it empty, my dear friend. He is a risen Savior. Now, that's very important because you see you can take Confucius out of Confucianism and still have Confucianism. And, you can take Buddha out of Buddhism and still have Buddhism. You can take Mohammed out of Mohammedism or Islam and you can still have Islam, but you cannot take Jesus Christ out of Christianity and still have Christianity. Because Christianity's not a code, it's not a creed, it's not a cause. It is Christ Himself in you.

And, I want to tell you, my dear friend, and those of you who are listening by radio that Jesus alone, only Jesus, can satisfy the hunger in the human heart. Jesus alone is the answer to man's sin. Jesus alone gives meaning to life and death. Jesus alone takes the sting out of sin, the pain out of parting, the gloom out of the grave, and the dread out of dying, and Jesus alone gives a hope that is steadfast and sure.

## **I. Historical Reasons**

"Therefore, Adrian Rogers, may I ask you this question, why sir, do you believe in Jesus?" Well, I want to give you four reasons very quickly. The very first reason, the reason I believe in Jesus is an historical reason.

May I tell you that Jesus Christ is a fact of history? Only object ignorance would try

to deny that Jesus Christ lived upon this earth. No historian who is worth his salt, no scholar who is worth his salt would ever deny that there was a being named Jesus of Nazareth who lived approximately two thousand years ago. I could quote many scholars, but I will quote Sir J.C. Frazier and you certainly wouldn't call him a born again Christian but a great scholar and he said and I quote, "My theory assumes the historical reality of Jesus of Nazareth as the great religious and moral teacher who founded Christianity and who was crucified in Jerusalem under the governorship of Pontius Pilate. The testimony of the gospels confirmed by the hostile evidence of Tacitus and younger pliney appears ample sufficient to establish these facts to the satisfaction of all unprejudiced inquirers."

Now, that's what the historian is saying. Just plain out flat ladies and gentlemen. Jesus Christ was an historical character. Nobody doubts that. Well, you say, "Yes I would admit that He existed as a human being but that doesn't mean I'll put my faith in Him. That doesn't mean He's the Son of God. That is true. But, you must face Jesus Christ. You must do something with Jesus. I mean, Jesus is one of three things as you've often heard me say, liar, Lord, or lunatic. Either He was a liar who knew He was not God, but said that He was or He was a lunatic who thought He was God and really wasn't, or He was the Lord Himself. Liar, Lord, or lunatic. Deceiver, deceived, or deity. He was one of the three there's no fourth alternative. He was one of these.

## **II. Scriptural Reasons**

So, I believe in Jesus first of all for historical reasons. There is in history the unassailable fact that Jesus Christ was here upon this earth. Now, let me give you a second reason I believe in Jesus Christ. Not only for historical reasons, but scriptural reasons.

I believe in Jesus Christ because of the teaching of the Bible. You say, "But, now wait a minute. How do I know the Bible is true?" Well, I'm glad you asked. I could preach a great message tonight, not great because I preached it, but great because of the subject matter as to the validity, the authenticity, the infallibility, the impeccability, the trustworthiness of the Word of God. My dear friend, this book is not like any other book.

If you take the Bible and study the Bible, you're going to find out that there are four mighty reasons for believing that the Bible is indeed the Word of God. There is fulfilled prophecy. It is astronomically impossible that the prophecies of the Bible could be fulfilled apart from divine revelation. There is the wonderful unity of the Bible. The Bible is not one book, it's sixty-six books, thirty-nine in the Old Testament, twenty-seven in the New Testament and they are so complex dealing with many subjects written by 40 different authors over a period of fifteen hundred years and three different languages,

and yet you have an incredible unity in the Word of God. You could take no other sixty-six books and put them together and make them read like one book.

There is the longevity of the Bible the Bible says of itself *“Heaven and earth shall pass away”* Jesus speaking of the Bible, *“but my words shall not pass away”* (Matthew 24:35). Just before I went out of my office this morning to preach, I have a Bible there that I always stop, and just look at a verse before I preach out of Psalm 119:89 and this morning as I walked out I looked and it just put still in me that said *“For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven”* (Psalm 119:89). Dear friend, the Bible is the Word of God because of its longevity. Wars have been fought against it. Men have ridiculed it, lied it, spurned it, scorned it, laughed at it, burned it, and outlawed it, but the book still lives on and here we are the twentieth century delving into the truth of God’s Word.

And, my dear friend there is the accuracy of the Bible, incredible accuracy of this book, but this is not a message on why I believe the Bible. This is a message of why I believe Jesus Christ, but dear friend, I believe Jesus Christ because I believe the Bible and the Bible presents the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me give you a wonderful verse. Acts chapter 10 and verse 43: *“To him give all the prophets witness”*—The Him refers to Jesus, the prophets refer to the Old Testament—*“To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.”* Do you know what that tells me? It tells me that all of the Old Testament, this book that I know to be the Word of God, presents the Lord Jesus.

In Genesis chapter 3 verse 15, Jesus Christ is presented as the seed of the woman. Seed is normally spoken of as the seed of the man, but here in Genesis 3 verse 15, we have a reference to the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, the seed of the woman. In Genesis chapter 20 and verse 3, He is seen to be the seed of Abraham. In Genesis chapter 22 I see the Lord Jesus when Abraham offered his son Isaac on Mount Moriah. I see a beautiful picture of Calvary. In Exodus chapter 12, again I see the Lord Jesus. This time He’s the Passover Lamb.

Then I turn to the book of Leviticus, and in Leviticus where I see that scapegoat, where the priests would lay his hands upon the head of the goat and confess the sins of the people. And, then that goat would be a led, led away into the wilderness, I see Jesus burying my sin away, never to be brought back again. There in the little morning turtledove, that dove that was sacrificed I see the Lord Jesus Christ as the man of sorrows. When they sacrificed in Leviticus that white pigeon, I see the purity and the sinlessness of the Lord Jesus. When they took those sacrifices out of fine flower, I see Jesus like that flower beaten and bruised, wounded for our iniquities.

When I see that flower anointed with oil, I see the spirit-filled man of God, the Lord Jesus. When I see the frankincense put into that fine flower And, those sacrifices, I think of the Lord Jesus whose intercession rises to God like sweet incense. When I see the

Old Testament priesthood, I am led to see Jesus Christ, my great High Priest. When I go into the book of Exodus and I see the tabernacle there, that intricate tabernacle, I know that it's a picture, a type of prophecy of Jesus. For the Bible says the Lord was made flesh and tabernacled among us. The wood of that tabernacle speaks of the humanity of Christ, the gold of that tabernacle speaks of the deity of Christ, the veil in that tabernacle spoke of the flesh of Christ, and the alter speaks of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh dear friend, in the book of Numbers that serpent lifted up on a pole as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up. That brazen serpent represents Christ who took our sins and was made sin. In the serpent we see the symbol of sin, in the brass we see judgment upon sin. I wish I had time to go into that.

In the book of Ruth, the Lord Jesus is the kinsmen redeemer. In Psalm 2:12 we hear the psalmist say "*Kiss the Son, lest he be angry*" and the Son of God is presented. Isaiah 53:5 reads like one of the gospels where we see the Lord Jesus "*...he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities*" (Isaiah 53:5). He's there presented as the suffering serpent. In the book of Daniel as we preached some weeks ago, in the book of Daniel chapter 9, oh we see the Lord Jesus as the Messiah, the Prince, the very day of His crucifixion is given in the Old Testament.

In Micah, we learn that He was to be born in Bethlehem. In Zechariah, we see that when He comes again we'll see those wounds in His hands and in His feet. And, in the book of Malachi, He is presented as the Son of Righteousness with healing in His wings. Even His forerunner, John the Baptist is shown in the book of Malachi.

I've just gone through that little litany just to tell you, my dear friend, that if you read the Old Testament and you don't see Jesus, you better go back and reread it. Why do I believe in Jesus? He is a historical character number one. Number two, I believe the Bible to be the Word of God, and the Word of God, both Old and New Testament has what He wrote His name is Jesus. They all give one plan of salvation.

When you study the Bible therefore and you study the man Jesus, you'll find out there was never ever another man like the Lord Jesus. Listen to me. Jesus Christ, listen now don't miss this, Jesus Christ is absolutely unique. Have you ever thought about the fact that Jesus never withdrew or never modified any statement he ever made? Have you ever had to withdraw or modify a statement you've made? Nod your head. Listen, my dear friend, many things open by mistake but none as frequently as the mouth. Isn't that true? Nonetheless, Jesus never modified or withdrew any statement.

Jesus never once apologized for anything He ever did. Have you ever had to apologize? Jesus never did. Now, He did many things that people did not understand. It was not because people did not take umbrage at Him or get angry with Him. But, even if they did, He never once apologized.

Have you ever thought about the fact that Jesus never one time ever sought advice from anybody? Never. Oh you say, “Well one time he asked Phillip where he’s going to get bread to feed the multitudes.” But, the Bible makes it plain He wasn’t asking for advice. He already knew what He was going to do. Jesus never asked for advice. He went and among the doctors of the law and He taught them, He corrected the scribes and the Pharisees. Moses had seventy elders and advisors. Solomon the wisest man who ever lived sought the advice of others, but Jesus never, never sought anyone’s advice.

Jesus never troubled Himself to justify any of His actions. Many of the things He did were inexplicable and you couldn’t understand them, for example, in the meat midst of the storm there is Jesus asleep in the back of the boat. When Lazarus is dying, Jesus stays away. He never tries to justify anything that He does. He just simply does it.

Jesus never asked anybody to pray for Him. That’s remarkable. Oh you say, “In the Garden of Gethsemane He told His disciples to watch and pray.” Indeed He did. But, He told them to pray lest they enter into temptation. Jesus never asked anyone to pray for Him.

Think about this man named Jesus. May I tell you, dear friend, that Jesus did not have any strong points? To say that Jesus Christ had strong points would be to imply that Jesus had some weak points. But, never did you see in the Lord Jesus Christ, never can you see a life that is incomparable symmetry and absolute balance, that the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is absolutely unique.

You say, “There were other founders of other religions.” Yes, but Jesus Christ did something that no one else has ever done He came to die. Other religious leaders came as teachers. But, Jesus came to die. And, may I tell you that He was the only man who ever chose to die? You say, “No people commit suicide, they choose to die.” Oh no, they just chose the time of their death. All of us are going to die. None of us can choose not to die. Therefore, none of us can choose to die. Jesus was the only one who need not to die because there was no sin in Him. He said, “*No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself...*” (John 10:18).

### **III. Biblical Reasons**

I believe in Jesus Christ my dear friend for biblical reasons. This book presents someone who is absolutely, incredibly unique. There is none like the Lord Jesus Christ. But, not only do I believe in Him for historical reasons and not only do I believe in Him for biblical reasons, but I believe in Him for spiritual reasons.

It is not that I have been intelligent therefore, and I have figured it all out on. No, my dear friend, God took the history and God took the Bible but then God opened this poor man’s heart and God taught me. Turn with me please to 1 John chapter 5 if you will in

the Word of God and this is worth turning to. Let me here the pages rustle. 1 John chapter 5 verses 6–9. It speaks of Jesus, *“This is he that came by water and blood”*—That is Jesus Christ was the actual Christ, physical Christ—*“even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.”*

Now, listen to John’s argument beginning in verse 8. He says, *“And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.”* And, then John asked this question, *“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son”* (1 John 5:6–9).

Now, “Why Adrian do you believe in Jesus Christ?” Because of the witness of God. Because the Holy Spirit of God has taken the work and the person of Jesus and has made it real to my heart. I believe because the Holy Spirit of God has convicted me. Look in verse 9. You see it begins with an “if.” If you’re reading the King James, but that word may also be translated “since,” and in this case it should. “Since He,” what He’s doing is arguing logically. “Since we received the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.”

Now, if you trust men, then you ought to trust God. You say, “When do I trust men?” Well, have you ever gone to a restaurant? You trusted the cook. When you ate that food, how do you know it wasn’t poisoned? Well, you just assumed that it wasn’t. Do you ever go to the doctor and he wrote something you couldn’t read and you took it down to the pharmacist and he gave you some names of some medicine you couldn’t pronounce and you went home and you ingested it? You took the witness of men when you took that. How do you know it wasn’t poisoned? Do you ever get on an air airplane and let some pilot fly you around? How do you know he can fly? Well, somebody said he could. You believe the witness of men. We could not exist without believing the witness of men.

Now, my dear friend, the witness of God is greater. Don’t tell me that you can’t believe God. You can believe God if you want to and I’ll tell you why. Because the Holy Spirit enables you to believe. The Holy Spirit enables you to believe. That’s what he’s saying. He says the Holy Spirit of God takes the Word of God and He says this is true. We receive the witness of men. The witness of God is greater. The Holy Spirit witnesses to me about Jesus, now watch it, and then the Holy Spirit witness in me. Look in 1 John chapter 5 and verse 10: *“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself”* (1 John 5:10).

Now, in verses 6 through 9, the Holy Spirit is witnessing about Jesus. Then when I believe, the Holy Spirit witnesses inside of me concerning Jesus. Not only about Jesus,

but He witnesses in me, not only to me, but in me.

Now, today when I went to lunch, and I had a very lovely lunch with my family, they served in that place where I ate some peach cobbler. And, I went over and helped myself to some and, friend, I want to tell you it was worth it. They are wonderful. Now, suppose after I've eaten that peach cobbler you were to come to me and say, "Mr. Rogers, I have an announcement I want to make to you, I don't believe in peach cobbler. As a matter of fact, I have many arguments to tell you that there is no such thing as peach cobbler." Well, friend you can argue all you want, but I had the witness in myself. You see that's what the Bible means when it says "*O taste and see that the LORD is good*" (Psalm 34:8). And, a man with experience is never at the mercy of a man with an argument, especially if that experience is mediated by the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

Now, I'm just telling you why I believe in Jesus Christ. Friend, Jesus is an historical figure. I have to deal with Jesus. Is He liar, Lord, or lunatic? Then I have the Word of God that is shown to be the Word of God across the centuries. And, may I tell you that only ignorance scoffs at the Bible. And, the Bible presents a glorious, wonderful, unique, incredible, individual whose name is Jesus Christ. And, then on top of that there is the Holy Spirit of God who takes this historical fact, that takes this Word and that Holy Spirit of God convicts me of it and then I believe it. And, then something very wonderful happens on the inside of me. The Holy Spirit of God witnesses in me.

#### **IV. Personal Reasons**

Now, I want to give you the fourth reason why I believe in Jesus Christ. Not only historical reasons, not only biblical reasons, not only spiritual reasons, but I believe in Jesus Christ for personal reasons. "What do you mean personal reasons?" Well, my mamma taught me to believe in Jesus and I love her, my mamma. You say, "That's a silly argument." I don't think so. I don't think so. She wants my welfare. She wanted to give me the best she knew. My mamma believed in Jesus and does to this day. I want to tell you, my dear friend, that I know a lot of people and the best people I know believe in Jesus Christ. You think about it. The most wonderful people that I know, the most loving, godly, kind, and compassionate people that I know believe in Jesus Christ. I have seen the difference He makes.

#### **Conclusion**

And, I'll tell you something else, there was a teenage boy. You wouldn't have liked him very much, I don't think, if you had known him at that time. Lived in West Palm Beach. But, Jesus loved him and Jesus saved him and called him to preach. He's the pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church. And, I can't explain it to you, dear friend, what may satisfy you,

but He has met the deepest longing of my heart. I have seen Him change the lives of others and He has personally changed my life for time and eternity. And, if someone were to ask me “Adrian, give me a reason for the hope that’s in you.” That’s what I’d tell them. Dear friend, Jesus, in John 6:67–68, some of the people were leaving Him. *“Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.”* Hallelujah. What a Savior.

# How Does God Forgive Sin?

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: March 27, 1983**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 3:18**

*“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.”*

1 PETER 3:18

## Outline

Introduction

- I. A Substitutionary Sacrifice
- II. A Suffering Sacrifice
- III. A Settled Sacrifice
- IV. A Sufficient Sacrifice

Conclusion

## Introduction

Now, we've been making our way through the book of 1 Peter, so I want you to take your Bibles now and turn to 1 Peter, if you will, chapter 3. We're going to pick up approximately where we left off last Sunday. And today, however, we're only going to deal with part of one verse, because this one verse is so packed with gospel dynamite that a spark of faith can set it off in your heart and literally blow the sin, the hatred, the disappointment, and the disillusionment out of your heart and transform your life. What a magnificent, magnificent verse is 1 Peter 3:18. Now, I'm going to read the first part of that verse: *“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”* (1 Peter 3:18) Now, isn't that a great verse? *“Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”* (1 Peter 3:18) Now, our general heading for this book has been “Timeless Truths for Tough Times,” and the truth today that we're dealing with is “How Does God Forgive Sin?”—“How Does God Forgive Sin?” What an important question that is because what a reality sin is!

Now, suppose somebody comes up and punches you in the nose. Now, let's just suppose they do. And then, they stand there, and you look at them; and you decide that you'll be bighearted about it, and you'll say to that person, “Well, I want you to know, even though you punched me in the nose, I forgive you.” And, suppose he says to you, “You don't need to forgive me. I've already forgiven myself.” That would be kind of

strange, wouldn't it? And then, suppose a third person standing by sees the two of you talking. He says, "Hey, fellows, don't worry about it—who's going to forgive who. I want you to know I've already forgiven both of you." What's he got to do with it? I mean, he didn't get punched in the nose. Look, who is the one who really needs to do the forgiving? The one who got punched in the nose. I mean, the one who did the punching is not the one who forgives himself. It is the punchee, not the puncher—amen?—who does the forgiving. You understand what I'm trying to say? He's the one that had his nose punched. Now, you say, "What does all this have to do with?" Well, we need to understand really who it is that forgives sin. You see, what is sin? Sin is an affront against God, and, therefore, God is the One who must forgive sin. You see, David said, "*Against thee, [and] thee only, have [we] sinned.*" (Psalms 51:4) Sin, if it is sin, is against God, and, therefore, as the Bible says, "Only God can forgive sin." (Mark 2:7)

Now, you say, "What is the point?" Well, we have a lot of psychological and theological garbage going around today where people are saying, "Well, I want you to know that I've forgiven myself." Well, you don't forgive yourself. Sin is against God. Or, we have some other people who are going around saying, "Everybody's supposed to be affirmed. I want you to know I affirm you. You're okay. I'm okay. You're okay." Well, friend, you're K.O., and so am I, without Jesus. You know, we don't go around affirming people. I mean, what's that have to do with it? I mean, how can I affirm two people when one of them punched the other one in the nose? And, I say, "You're both okay"? No, no, no. Let me point it out. It is God that has been offended. Sin is against God. We don't forgive ourselves. Someone else cannot forgive us. God must forgive us because this sin is against God.

Now, the question is, how does an offended God—sin is an offense against God—how does God forgive sin? How does God deal with sin? First Peter 3:18 tells us. And, there are four things I want you to notice about the sacrifice of Calvary upon the cross.

## **I. A Substitutionary Sacrifice**

The very first thing I want you to notice is that it was a substitutionary sacrifice. Do you have that down? A substitutionary sacrifice. Now, look at the verse: "*For Christ...hath [also] once suffered for sins*"—now, notice this phrase—"*the just for the unjust.*" (1 Peter 3:18) And, that word *for* means "in the place of," "as a substitute." Christ actually took our place. He was our substitutionary Savior.

You see, we are sinners. We are the ones who morally have struck God. We're the ones who have offended a holy God. We're sinners by birth. We are sinners by nature. We are sinners by choice. We are sinners by practice. And, sin is a moral affront to Almighty God. Not only are we sinners, but God is holy. God is infinitely holy. And, God never has, God never can, God never will let one-half of one sin go unpunished. God

must punish sin. And yet, we're sinners. We deserve punishment. And yet, at the same time, God loves us. So, if we could speak of God of having a problem, God has a problem: How can He love and forgive the sinner and at the same time punish sin? The way is with a substitutionary sacrifice—someone who takes that suffering, someone who takes that punishment on our behalf; a person who is righteous enough, holy enough, good enough to become our substitute; someone Himself who has known no sin who can suffer in our stead. And, the only One who could do that was the Son of God that we're preaching about today. He is God's substitutionary Savior. He died as a substitute. He died not merely for us, for let's put it this way: He died instead of us.

Now, that's really what Passover is all about. Now, our Jewish friends are celebrating Passover week. Tomorrow, the next day, in the orthodox homes and other Jewish homes, they are celebrating Passover. And, that deals with the Passover lamb, and what is the message of the Passover lamb? That God is a God who provides a substitute to atone for our sins. Remember that people were sinful in that day, as well as in this, and God told the people there—and through Moses, He said, "I'm going to judge sin. My death angel is going to come through the land, and my death angel is going to slay the firstborn in every home as a judgment upon sin." But, God said to His children, to the Jewish people, "I want you to take a lamb—a lamb, a male, the firstling of the flock, without spot, without blemish—I want you to take that lamb; I want you to kill it. I want you to take the blood of that lamb, and I want you to sprinkle the blood upon the lintel and the doorposts of the house." (Exodus 12:21–22)

And, last week, as we observed a Seder Supper to remind us as Christians what our Jewish friends are celebrating this week, as we observed that, the young man who said, "Have you ever thought about how that blood was applied to the door exactly as the Bible gives it?" He takes that hyssop, and with that hyssop dipped in the blood, he would apply that hyssop, first of all, to the lintel and to the doorposts of the house. Can you see the sign of the cross? To the lintel and to the doorposts of the house. And there, as that blood was applied, when the death angel came through the land of Egypt, he saw the blood and he passed over. Inside that house was a sinner. But, applied to that house was the blood of an innocent lamb, a substitute. Now, down through the years, people, our Jewish friends, have been keeping the Passover, and we Christians look back to the Passover with great admiration and gratefulness to God for the lesson that He taught us.

The priests had a system of sacrificial offerings of Passover lambs. And, back in Jesus' time, there were special Passover shepherds who would keep special Passover lambs. Those lambs would be bred and fed and cared for in the fields of Boaz outside of Bethlehem—not without significance that Christ was born in Bethlehem. And there, just near the city of Jerusalem, just a few miles away in the fields of Bethlehem, those lambs

would be being taken care of. As a matter of fact, it was to the shepherds of those kind of lambs, I believe, that the angel appeared and told about the baby Jesus there. But, let me tell you this: that those shepherds taking care of those lambs on a particular day would bring those lambs into the city to be sacrificed. Do you know the day that they were brought into the city in Jesus' time was the day that we call Palm Sunday? In through the Sheep Gate. This is Palm Sunday, you see. And, Christians around the world are celebrating this day as Palm Sunday. We call it "Palm Sunday" because it was the day that our Lord triumphantly came into Jerusalem. And, you remember, they cut down the palm branches and put them under His feet. And, Jesus is riding that white Syrian colt "[whereupon] never [a] man [had] sat." (Mark 11:2; Luke 19:30) And, Jesus is coming into the city of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, and they're putting palm branches before Him. And, they're saying, "Hail Him! Hail Him!" And, just a few days, they would be saying, "Nail Him! Nail Him!" Oh, that fickle crowd that is saying, "Crown Him!" would before long be saying, "Crucify Him!"

But, here Jesus comes into the city of Jerusalem, and at that same time—at that same time that Christ, on Palm Sunday, is entering into the city, the Passover week—at that same time these lambs are entering into the city, these special lambs. And, they bring these lambs to the temple area on Mount Moriah; and then, the priests come, and they start to examine these lambs. Do you know why they examine them? To see if they were perfect because it had to be a perfect lamb—a lamb without spot, without blemish. They meticulously examined the lamb. They looked at its hooves. They examined its skin. They would open its mouth. They even examined the eyelids to make certain there was not a flaw, not a blemish, in those lambs, those Passover lambs.

Now, have you ever wondered why the gospels deal so much with the last week of Jesus Christ? I mean, Jesus had a ministry of over three years; and yet, one-third of the gospels is given over to the last week, and most of it to the last three days of the life of Christ. Why? I'll tell you why: it was during that time that the Son of God was also being examined. How carefully they were examining Jesus! He appeared before the Pharisees, and they examined Him. He appeared before the Sadducees; they examined Him. The Herodians examined Him. The civil leaders examined Him. The religious leaders examined Him. They all examined Him, and they had to say, "*Never [a] man spake like this man.*" (John 7:46) And, even Pontius Pilate had to say, "*I find no fault in him.*" (John 19:4, 6) This perfect Lamb was being examined. Not a blemish was in the Son of God.

And then, the priests started to sharpen their lethal knives because they were getting ready to cut the throats of those Passover lambs. On that same day, ladies and gentlemen—pay attention—on that same day, at the exact same time, three o'clock in the afternoon, when those priests took the chins of those lambs and cut their throats

and the blood of those innocent lambs spurted out to be caught in a basin, at that same time, God's Lamb, the Lord Jesus, bowed His head and said, *"It is finished."* (John 19:30) Both those lambs and Christ were both sacrificed on Mount Moriah, where God had told Abraham centuries before, *"God will provide himself a lamb."* (Genesis 22:8) And, God did provide Himself a lamb. And, Jesus bowed His head and said, *"It is finished."* (John 19:30) And Levites, you can go home now. Priests, we don't need you any more. I want you to know, God has now provided Himself a lamb. And, the Old Testament Levitical system is finished—it is over with—because God's Lamb has fulfilled it all. And, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, *"the just for the unjust,"* (1 Peter 3:18) has become our Passover. And now—hallelujah!—we can say, when the blood is applied to our hearts by faith, God's angel of judgment passes over us.

You say, "You think Peter had that in mind?" I want you to go to chapter 1, verse 18, and look at it: *"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as...a lamb without blemish and without spot."* (1 Peter 1:18–19) Amen. God's Lamb. The blood of Christ. *"As...a lamb without [spot] and without [blemish]"*—1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 18. (1 Peter 1:19) Now, that makes 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 18 all the more clear: *"Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."* (1 Peter 3:18) What I'm trying to tell you is this: that He was our substitutionary Savior. He was God's Lamb who took upon Him the sin of the world and suffered as an innocent substitute—*"the just for the unjust"* (1 Peter 3:18)—that He might bring us to God.

And, even in the gospel story, the Bible gives us such a wonderful illustration of what substitution is all about. Have you ever heard of a man named Barabbas? Barabbas—his name literally means "son of the father," but he certainly did not live up to his name. Barabbas—let me tell you some things about Barabbas. Barabbas was a prisoner who lived in Jesus' day. Now, why was he in prison? Well, first of all, he was a rebel. Secondly, he was a thief. Thirdly, he was a murderer. The Bible tells us all of those things about this man named Barabbas. And, therefore, he is bound and held for judgment, and they're going to give him capital punishment. Barabbas is to be crucified.

Now, he's being held in a dungeon, but Pilate, that pussyfooting politician, trying to relieve himself of the responsibility of crucifying Jesus, came up with an ingenuous but nefarious scheme. What he said to the people is this: "Look, I've got this prisoner called Jesus, and I've got this prisoner called Barabbas. Now, I've got a custom that I'll release to the people any prisoner they want once a year, so which of these two do you want me to release to you—Jesus, who is called Christ, or Barabbas?" (Matthew 27:17) They said, "Barabbas! Release Barabbas." (Matthew 27:21) "Well," he said, *"what shall I do...with Jesus [who's] called [the] Christ?"* (Matthew 27:22) And, they said, *"Let him be*

*crucified.*” (Matthew 27:22) And so, they chose this murderer—they chose this insurrectionist, they chose this thief—to be released; Christ, the innocent one, to be condemned—“*the just for the unjust.*” (1 Peter 3:18)

Now, I want you to imagine a scene. I want you to see a Roman guard as he goes down the narrow corridor of that Roman jail with his flickering torch and he comes to a cell. And, he holds up his torch, and he looks through the bars. And there, quivering in the corner on a mat of straw with terror written on his face—a face that is the very mirror of hatred and evil and sin—is Barabbas. The guard says, “Barabbas, come.” “No,” he says, “no, no, no, not now. I don’t want to go. Please.” He says, “Barabbas, get up. Get your things. You’re not going to die, Barabbas. You’re the most fortunate man I’ve ever seen.” And, he tells Barabbas about the howling mob and how the people had chosen Christ to be crucified in his stead. He says, “Barabbas, the governor’s released you. You’re a free man. But Barabbas, come here, mister. I want to show you something.” And, they go, and he says, “Barabbas, look over there on the hill. Do you see those three crosses? Do you see those three men writhing in agony and blood? Barabbas, look at the man on the middle cross. Barabbas, that was your cross. We made it for you. I mean, that was literally made for you. You were to have been crucified on that cross. You see that man? He is dying on that cross in your place.” What a picture God has given us in the gospels of the Just for the unjust!

“Well,” you say, “that doesn’t apply to me. I’m not a thief.” Oh, yes you are. If you’ve not given your heart to God, you see, you’re an unjust steward because you breathe God’s air, and you walk in God’s sunshine, and you walk on God’s green earth, and you’ve not given God the glory that belongs to Him. You’re a thief.

You say, “Well, I’m not a murderer.” Oh yes, you are. You helped to murder the Son of God. Our sins were the nails that held Him to that cross and our hard hearts the hammers that drove those nails. Rembrandt painted a picture of the Crucifixion, and if you look at that picture carefully, you’ll see that the great artist Rembrandt, in one of the figures standing around the cross, had painted his own face because he realized what we all need to realize—that we were there when they crucified our Lord.

“Well,” you say, “I’m not a rebel.” Oh yes, you are, because Christ is Lord, and if you’ve never made Him your Lord, if you’ve never bowed the knee, if you’ve never received Him, like Barabbas, a thief; like Barabbas, a murderer; like Barabbas, a rebel. But, I want to tell you—praise God! Hallelujah! Bless the Lord!—the Just died for the unjust. That’s what it’s all about. “Him who knew no sin God hath made to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (2 Corinthians 5:21) And, therefore, God is both just and the Justifier of them that believe in Christ. He’s just because sin is punished. He’s the Justifier because we have we a substitute. And, mercy and justice are met together in the cross. Thank God for the substitutionary death

of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It was the Just for the unjust.

## II. A Suffering Sacrifice

Now, the second thing I want you to see—not only was it a substitutionary sacrifice, but it was a suffering sacrifice. Look again in verse 18: *“For Christ also hath once”*—what’s that next word? Go ahead and say it. What is it?—*“suffered.”* (1 Peter 3:18) I told you last week—didn’t I?—that you, know you, you act like you’re understanding it, but, see, I preach ’til I think you understand it. So, if you want to get out in a hurry, just answer when I ask you a question, okay? Now look: *“Christ also hath suffered.”* (1 Peter 3:18) It was a suffering sacrifice.

Now, we’re going to see tonight Living Pictures, many of us, and in the Living Pictures, we’re going to see depicted the cross and the Crucifixion. And, when I see it, it moves my heart. But, I want to tell you something, friend: no drama, no song, no orator, no poet, no artist can describe the suffering of Jesus Christ. Do you understand that? The only way that you can know how Christ suffered—begin to know—is for the Holy Spirit to reveal it to you. Another man wrote these words: “Tongue cannot tell, throat cannot sing, hand cannot paint the tragedy that was enacted on that hill called Calvary. Gather the wail of the icy winds that howl through the frozen north; extract the heart despair of a mother—a helpless mother—watching wild beasts tear at the throat of her baby; gather all the hopeless groans and the helpless shrieks of the damned; and with all of this at your command, you will still not be able to paint the picture that is Calvary.” Only the damned in hell can begin to know what Christ suffered on that cross.

Now, are you paying attention? If you do not therefore allow Him to become your substitute, you will experience a Calvary of your own. You will have a cross of your own. You will have a hell of your own because you refuse the One who died in your place and who was your substitute. But, are you listening? And please, God, help me to say it; help me to let this crowd understand that sin causes suffering. Now, I may be talking to some young man right now—boy, you’ve got a strong body; you’ve got money in your billfold; you’ve got a girlfriend; you’ve got a sports car, and you don’t give anything for God. Maybe you just tuned into this service to see what this babbling Baptist will have to say, and you don’t even know the meaning of the word *suffering*. “[*The*] bread of deceit is sweet...but [afterward a man’s] mouth [will] be filled with gravel.” (Proverbs 20:17) I want to tell you something: as surely as night follows day, suffering follows sin. And, you will suffer for your sin unless you have a substitute. It’s a good place for an “amen,” folks. You will suffer for your sin without substitute. Sin causes suffering. *“Christ also hath once suffered.”* (1 Peter 3:18) Suffering and sin are inseparably linked. And, either Christ does the suffering for you or you do the suffering for you. But, we’re sinners, and sin demands a payment, and that payment, dear friend, is suffering.

### III. A Settled Sacrifice

So, He was our substitutionary sacrifice. Secondly, He was our suffering sacrifice. Thirdly, I want to say He was our settled sacrifice. Now, pay attention here. Look at the scripture again: “*For Christ also hath*”—what’s that next word?—“*once suffered*”—“*once suffered.*” (1 Peter 3:18) Do you know what that means? That means He suffered, never to suffer again. He died, never to die again. This word *once* does not mean once like “once upon a time.” It literally means “once for all”—that He has suffered and He’s not going to die upon the cross again. It has fully been paid.

You see, when Jesus Christ died upon the cross, He said, “*It is finished.*” (John 19:30) And, He bowed His head and cried out, “*It is finished.*” (John 19:30) Three words in the English language, one word in the Greek language: *tetelestai*, *tetelestai*, *finished*. Now, what does that word really mean? Well, back in this time in the Roman government, in Roman law, when a man was brought before the judge for a crime, the judge would adjudicate this man either guilty or innocent. And, if the man were guilty, then the judge would prescribe the sentence and he would write out a piece of paper called a “certificate of debt.” And, on one side of that piece of paper was the crime the man had committed, and on the other side was the penalty that his crime incurred. Now, if that man were put into prison, this certificate of debt would be nailed to his prison door and all who could come by would read it—what is against this man and what he’s paying. Now, when he had paid to the uttermost—I mean, when he had done his last second of time and paid the last farthing of his fine, when it was all over—then they would come and write on that certificate of debt this word: *tetelestai*, the same word that Jesus said on the cross—*finished*, which literally means “paid in full.” They would take it, roll it up to him, un-nail it from the door, give it to him, and this was his proof positive that the full demands of the law had been met. He had suffered. He had paid in full. And, he’s not to be brought into double jeopardy, and he’s not to be brought for those crimes again—paid in full.

Now friend, that’s what Christ did on the cross. He bowed His head, and He said, “It’s paid in full, folks—I mean, with my blood; not with silver and gold, but with the silver of my tears and the gold of my blood. I have redeemed you. I have suffered in your place. It is done once for all.” Friends, it’s finished! Done! It is paid in full! Friend, I’ve got a certificate of debt stamped in the crimson blood of the Son of God—“paid in full,” amen? It’s finished. You can’t add to it. You can’t take from it. Without Christ, you can do nothing. With Christ, you need do nothing. Paid and paid in full once and for all—brother, believe it.

Some people have the idea that they can be saved and lost again. Well, friend, if you do get saved and then get lost again, which is an impossibility, but were it a possibility, you could never be saved again. You say, “Why not?” Well, for you to be

saved again, Christ would have to die again. You see, when you got saved, you entered into a relationship with Christ purchased by the blood of the cross that was good for one salvation only. It's not like getting your hand stamped so you pass out and pass back in. You see, Hebrews 10:14 says, *"For by one offering hath he [sanctified] for ever them that are [perfected]."* (Hebrews 10:14) It is one offering forever. Now, if it doesn't last forever, you just had a defective offering, and there's not going to be another one. I mean, Christ is not going to come and die again. He died once and for all. And, the Bible says in Hebrews 10:12: *"But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down [at] the right hand of God"—"one sacrifice for sins for ever."* (Hebrews 10:12) Hallelujah for the blood of Jesus Christ that pays in full, that saves us and keeps us saved! *"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever."* (Hebrews 10:14) Listen, if you really understood what you have in the Lord Jesus Christ—your salvation by grace and what Christ did upon that cross—how you just never really ever stop praising God for saving you.

#### **IV. A Sufficient Sacrifice**

Now, I must close this message, but not only, friend, was it a substitutionary sacrifice, not only was it a suffering sacrifice, not only was it a settled sacrifice, but, therefore, because of all of these other things, it was a sufficient sacrifice. Now, this verse goes on to say, *"That he might bring us to God,"* (1 Peter 3:18) and that's the purpose of it. As I said before, sin has offended God. There's a chasm eroded by our sin, our rebellion, that has separated us from God.

Now, the Lord Jesus wants to bring us to God. Now, this word *bring* is an interesting word. It's the word that was used... The bringer was a person who would introduce a person to a king or a potentate. He was called the "bringer"—*prosago*, a man who would take a person and introduce him.

When I was the President of the Southern Baptist Convention, I was invited to go to the White House to meet President Jimmy Carter because I happened to be the President's president. He was a Southern Baptist; I was the President of Southern Baptist so they invited me to go up there and meet him. Well, now, what do you do when you go to the Oval Office to meet the President? I mean, how do you get in? Do you just walk up and knock on the door and say, "Hi, Prez?" I mean, how do you get in? How do you go in to see the President of the United States of America? Well, what happened is they took us to a room and sat us down, and they came and checked us out to make sure, indeed, we were the right person and so forth, and that we were friendly and all of these things. And then, this man who was an introducer took us and presented us to the President. Now, what he did was exactly what this word means—someone who brings a person into the presence of a king, a potentate, a dignitary.

## Conclusion

Now friend, that's what Jesus Christ does: Christ is the One who brings us to God. Do you understand? Have you ever heard that verse—Jesus saying, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man [comes to] the Father, but by me"*? (John 14:6) Now listen, you go to Washington and see—you just go to the White House now and just see if you can get in that Oval Office. Just start climbing the fence and see what happens. I mean, just tell those guards, "I'm going in to see Ronnie," and see what happens. And, just start going in there. Now friend, they're going to keep you out unless you have someone who has the authority to bring you in, right? They're going to keep you out. But, it would be ten thousand times ten thousand times ten thousand times easier for you to walk right into the White House than it would be for you to come into the throne room of a holy God without Christ to bring you in. You see, on the basis of a substitutionary sacrifice, He is the One. *"[By] him we...have access [through] one Spirit unto the Father."* (Ephesians 2:18) He brings us to God. You cannot come to the Father apart from Jesus, who said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: [and] no man [comes] unto the Father, but by me."* (John 14:6)

Years ago I read an interesting story. I'm not sure that I have all the details; it was something like this: when Dwight L. Moody—you know, he was the Billy Graham of his day—when he was preaching in a big tabernacle one day, the tabernacle was just filled with people. And, the ushers weren't letting anybody else in. Moody was coming with his entourage, getting ready to go to the pulpit to preach, and he noticed a little boy standing outside the tabernacle, crying. Well, this preacher had a sympathetic heart, and he stopped and he said, "Son, why are you crying?" He said, "I wanted to go hear Moody preach, and they won't let me in." He didn't know he was talking to Moody. And, Moody said, "Do you really want to hear Moody preach?" He said, "Yes, sir. I sure do." He said, "Son, I can tell you how you can get in if you'll do what I tell you." He said, "What's that, sir?" He said, "I want you to take hold of my coattails." Now, Moody was wearing one of those long coats with swallowtail coats—you know, one of those. And, he said, "Just get hold of my coattails, and," he said, "don't let go." And, he said, "We're going in." And so, the little fellow just took him at his word, and he got hold of Moody's coattails. And, of course, when Moody walked in, that little boy was coming right behind him, holding onto those coattails, and the ushers just smiled as they went on in together.

Oh, when I thought about that, I thought, "That's how I'm going to heaven. That's how I'm going to the Father—just clinging to Jesus, amen? And, I'm going in because He's going in. They don't care about me as a person, but oh, the worth of Jesus! And, I'm in Christ, and He's in me. He's my substitute. He became my sin, that I might become His righteousness. He took my hell, that I might take His heaven. He has

become *“the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”* (1 Peter 3:18) Hallelujah!  
Hallelujah! What a Savior! How I love him, and how you ought to love Him.

# Remembering the Cross

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: February 9, 1997**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 3:18**

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Substitutionary Sacrifice of the Cross

II. The Suffering Sacrifice of the Cross

III. The Settled Sacrifice of the Cross

IV. The Sufficient Sacrifice of the Cross

Conclusion

## Introduction

Now, as we think about the cross tonight, I want you to find 1 Peter chapter 3, and we're going to look at one verse, and in that one verse I want us to see four things about the cross to help us to remember the cross—Remembering the cross.

First Peter chapter 3 and verse 18: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but being quickened by the Spirit."

### I. The Substitutionary Sacrifice of the Cross

Four things tonight I want you to think about as we meditate on the cross. The cross of Jesus Christ is worth remembering, and we glory in the cross because of the substitutionary sacrifice of the cross. That's the first thing: the substitutionary sacrifice of the cross.

Notice as to why Jesus died. The Bible says He died as a substitute, "the just—that was Jesus—for the unjust"—that is me. Now, you'll hear many theories about the atonement or why Jesus died. The more liberal people are, they speak of Jesus dying as an example. The more ignorant people are, they speak of Jesus dying as a martyr. The more unconcerned people are, they think of the death of Jesus as incidental. Jesus did not die as an example, not primarily. He did not die as a martyr, some helpless victim. He said, "No man takes my life from me; I lay it down of myself." Jesus' death is not incidental; it is fundamental, and the purpose of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ is substitution. My sins deserve judgment. Jesus became a man, took my sins upon His innocent self, "Him who knew no sin, God hath made to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Now, Dr. Moyers puts it this way: “He was forsaken of God that we might be favored of God. He entered into the prison house that He might set the prisoners free. He went down into the bottom of the pit that He might lift us up to the bosom of the Father. He went into the awful doom that we might enter in to the glory. He endured the sinner’s pain that we might enjoy the Savior’s presence. He lost the sunshine of the divine smile that we might bask in the sunshine of divine love. For a moment, He was separated from God; but for an eternity we might be united with God. He bore the burden to bring us the blessing. His hands were nailed to the tree that in His arms He might bear us to the throne. God entered into humanity for death that we might enter into life. Where sin brought man, love brought our Lord, that where He is now we also may be.” I mean, it’s well put. That speaks of the substitution of the cross.

I was thinking today about an illustration of substitution that we could all understand. Do you remember that the Bible tells us that it was a tradition of the Romans to release a notable prisoner to the people? And the day that Jesus was to be crucified, or in the season that Jesus to be crucified, there was a very notable man. His name was Barabbas. Now, he was a murderer. He was an insurrectionist. He was a thief, and he had been adjudicated worthy of death. Now, Pilate, the Roman governor, thought that perhaps he could get Jesus off of his hands by offering the people a chance. They could have Jesus released, or Barabbas. It was unthinkable to Pilate that the people would choose Barabbas rather than Jesus, and so Pilate just asked this question: “Which of these two men would you that I would release unto you?” And the Bible says they said, “Release unto us Barabbas!” He said, “What then should I do with Jesus?” And they said, “Let Him be crucified.” And Pilate, that pussyfooting politician, released Barabbas, and said of Jesus, “Take Him away; let Him be crucified.” Now, remember, Barabbas had been under a penalty of death. I want you to imagine this scene.

I want you to see a Roman jailor with a flickering torch. I want you to see him as he makes his way down into the very bowels of a filthy jail where the most dangerous prisoners are kept. And he opens a thick wooden door with metal straps across it, and he places that torch inside to look. Back in the back of that cell is a man on a mat of straw. His face is the very mirror of evil. When that man sees the Roman guard come with that torch, he begins to cringe further back into the filth of that cell, and he begins to beg for mercy. He begins to say, “No, please. Don’t let them do this. Don’t let them crucify me.” And the guard says, “Barabbas, you’re the luckiest man I’ve ever seen. Quit whimpering. Quit sniveling. You are not going to die! You thieving murderer! You’ve been set free. Come on, get your stuff and get out of here.” Barabbas can hardly believe it. He gathers his few little belongings. They lead him down that corridor. He blinks his eyes getting used to the light. The sun he’s not seen in a long time. And the guard says, “Barabbas, come over here. Look over there on that hill, the one they call Calvary, the

skull here, look at it. You see those three crosses up there, Barabbas? You see your two buddies up there? You see the cross in the middle? You see it? We made that one for you. That was your cross. That was the one we fashioned for you. Do you see Him there? He's on your cross."

Now, when we take the Lord's Supper tonight, I want you to remember that, folks, because we're Barabbas. You see, God arranged it this way. God arranged it this way, "the just for the unjust..." I said, we are Barabbas. You say, "I'm not a thief." Yes, you are! We were made to be stewards of Almighty God, and we've lived our lives for ourselves before we came to Christ. We've stolen from Him the glory. You say, "I'm not an insurrectionist." Yes, you are! Sin is rebellion against God. You say, "I'm not a murderer." Yes, we are! Our sins nailed Jesus to the cross. You say, "I'm not a prisoner." Without Christ, you are. You're a prisoner under the sentence of death. God arranged it where Barabbas typifies the just dying for the unjust. Now, I don't mean that Barabbas got saved. He may have. I hope he did. He ought to have. But what I'm saying is that what a graphic illustration we have of substitution. The next time you say, "Jesus died for me," change it a little bit, and when you take the Lord's Supper tonight, say it this way: "Jesus died instead of me, instead of me," the just for the unjust. And so we see that the sacrifice of the cross was a substitutionary sacrifice.

## **II. The Suffering Sacrifice of the Cross**

Now, here's the second thing I want you to see. Not only was it a substitutionary sacrifice; it was a suffering sacrifice. I want you to see not only the substitution of the cross, but the suffering of the cross. Look at our verse again: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins..." And when you hold that ruby red cup in your hands, when you take that bread made of grain that has been beaten and crushed and baked, that represents the broken body and shed blood of the Lord Jesus, don't just hold it in your hand. Understand that Jesus suffered for you. And don't get the idea that because He was God He did not suffer. He suffered infinitely. You cannot describe the suffering of Jesus. Jesus suffered as no man ever suffered. He died for sin, but He died for the sin of the world. All of the sins of the world were distilled upon Jesus. The eternities were compressed upon Jesus. And, Jesus, being infinite, bore in a finite period of time what we, being finite, would bear in an infinite period of time. Jesus suffered.

I borrowed these words from another. I copied them down, because they touched my heart. Listen to them. "Tongue cannot tell, throat cannot sing, hand cannot paint the tragedy that was enacted on that hill called Calvary. Gather the wail of the icy winds that howl through the frozen north. Extract the heart despair of a mother watching wild beasts tear at the throat of her baby. Capture all of the hopeless groans and the helpless shrieks of the damned. And with all of this at your command, you will still be

unable to paint the picture that is Calvary. Only the damned in hell can begin to know the suffering of the Lord Jesus on that cross.” He suffered.

### **III. The Settled Sacrifice of the Cross**

Now, here’s a third thing as we prepare our hearts for the cross. Think not only of the substitutionary sacrifice of the cross. Think not only of the suffering sacrifice of the cross. But look at our verse again. There’s so much in this verse. “For Christ all, hath also once suffered for sins...” I want you to think of the settled sacrifice of the cross. It has been done. It has been done once for all. When the Bible says, “He hath once suffered for sins,” it doesn’t mean once like once upon a time. It means once like once for all—never to happen again! Put in your margin Hebrews 10, verse 12: “But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God.” That is the settled sacrifice of the cross.

Now, when we come to the Lord’s Table tonight, we are not performing a sacrifice. This is not the mass, as our Roman friends believe, where they say that one more time the body and blood of Jesus is being sacrificed for sins. Listen to me. No, no, no—ten thousand times no! There’s one sacrifice for sin. It’s done! It’s over! It is paid in full! “He hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” That’s one of the reasons I believe in eternal security. Friend, if you ever got saved and got lost again, Jesus would have to die for you to be saved again. You see, the Bible says for by one offering we’re perfected forever. When you got saved, you got a salvation stamped “Good for one salvation only.” And Jesus does not die over and over and over again. This is not the sacrifice of the mass. This is the remembrance of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And as we come to the cross, and as we think about the cross, we think of the substitution of the cross, the just for the unjust. We think of the suffering of the cross, that Jesus baptized His soul in hell for us. We think, friend, of the finished work of the cross, the settled sacrifice of the cross.

### **IV. The Sufficient Sacrifice of the Cross**

Then the final thing I want to say is this: I want you to think of the sufficient sacrifice of the cross. That and that alone brings us to God. Look at it: “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins; the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” The cross and the cross alone can bring us to God. Don’t get the idea that you can be saved some way other than Jesus and the death of Jesus on the cross. If there were some other way, why didn’t God take it? What kind of a God would allow His Son to die in agony and blood upon that cross when there were some other way? I don’t think I’d like to meet that God in a dark alley. No! Jesus suffered that He might bring us to God,

because sin has separated us from God. Sin must be paid for in order for God to maintain His integrity, His holiness. The only way was the cross, the cross of Jesus Christ, where, “Him who knew no sin became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” This word bring is the word *prosago*, which means “to escort somebody into a throne room.” Jesus died, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us into the very presence, the throne room of God.

Years and years ago, I read a story about the evangelist Dwight L. Moody. Moody was the Billy Graham of his day. And he was preaching in an auditorium, a tabernacle. It was absolutely jammed packed. It was so full that the fire marshal didn't want anybody else to come in. There was a little boy out there, and the little boy wanted to get into the meeting. Moody was there, and the entourage came to bring the evangelist up to the platform. He saw the little boy and somehow got to talking with him. He was always interested in children. The little boy did not know who the preacher was. He didn't know he was the preacher. But he said, “Mister, they won't let me in. I want to go hear Mr. Moody preach.” He said, “Son, I am Mr. Moody. I'll get you in.” He said, “How?” He said, he was wearing one of these long, swallowtail coats. He said, “Son, get hold of my coattail, one with each hand.” He said, “Don't let go and just follow me in.” And so, the little guy got a hold of Moody's coattails, and they cleared the way, and he went in, holding on to the coattails of that preacher, all the way in, and found a seat on the inside. Friend, that's the way I'm going to heaven: just holding on to Jesus—holding on to Jesus—that He might bring us to God. I'm so grateful for the cross.

## Conclusion

Yesterday, I was cleaning my garage. It was a royal mess. And, you know, when it gets so bad, after a while you just start throwing stuff, you know. And I had to clean the garage. I promised Joyce I would do it, and I did it, and, you know, it's beautiful. You ought to see it. It looks so good. I cleaned the garage and swept it all out. I was right in the middle of that, and it was kind of spitting snow, and I was carrying things in and out. And I'd just come from around the side of the house, and I saw a man cutting through my property. He was raggedly dressed and had a woolen hat on, had his socks up over his trousers. The guy was bent over, white beard, two teeth missing, raggedy clothes. I hate to admit it, but I looked at him very suspiciously, and put on that gruff voice that I have. I said, “May I help you?” There was a man walking through my property. Right away, I knew that my attitude wasn't right. He said to me, “I'm, I, I, do you need some work? I'm looking for some work. I need some help.” And I said, “No, I don't. I don't need any help.” He looked too weak to help anybody. I really did need some help, but he couldn't do it. I said, “No, no, I don't need any help.” But I knew I needed to do something. I said, “Look, I'm busy. Let me give you something.” I reached in my billfold

and took out \$20, gave him \$20. Then I said, “Well, Adrian, he needs more than that. He needs a blessing.” So I said, “Sir, God bless you.” He said, “God bless you, sir. Thank you, sir.” And he took that \$20 and he walked away. I went back to my work. The Holy Spirit said, “Adrian, you didn’t tell him about Jesus.” I said, “Well, Lord, I’m busy. I’ve got to get this garage clean.” He said, “Adrian, you didn’t tell him about Jesus. It wasn’t \$20 he needed. You were trying to get rid of him. Why didn’t you tell him about Jesus?” I said, “Well, he’s gone now.” The Holy Spirit said, “You could catch him.” I knew I could. I went out. I said, “Hey, Raymond, come back.” He came back. I said, “Raymond, I want to tell you something. A long time ago I was burdened about my sin, and I deserved to go to hell. But I called upon Jesus Christ and asked Jesus Christ to save me, and He forgave my sins, and He saved me.” And I said, “Do you know what? I’m still not the kind of a person, as good a person as I ought to be, or want to be, but I’m on my way to heaven. I’m saved. Do you know, do you absolutely know, if you died, you would go to heaven?” He said, “No, sir, I can’t say that. I couldn’t say that I know that I’m going to heaven. I’m not good like you.” I said, “It doesn’t have anything to do with my being good.” I said, “Jesus died for me, and salvation is a gift.” I said, “Let me tell you how you can know that you’re saved.” I said, “Do you have \$20?” I guess he thought I wanted it back. I said, “Do you have \$20?” He said, “Yes.” I said, “Are you sure you have \$20?” He said, “Yes.” I said, “How did you get it?” He said, “You gave it to me.” I said, “Did you work for it?” “No, sir, you just gave it to me.” I said, “That’s right. Are you sure you have it?” He said, “Yes, I received it.” I said, “Sir, the Bible says the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life. And if you’ll reach out your hand and take God’s gift, you can be just as sure that you have eternal life.” And I led him in a prayer, and with tears he prayed and asked Christ into his heart. And I hugged him there on my front yard. And I felt as I was hugging that man I was hugging a treasure. How God smote me about my selfishness and my pride and my self-sufficiency. I want to tell you, I never had so much fun cleaning the garage as after that. I sang and wept—praise the Lord—just for the joy of sharing Jesus.

# The Cross

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: March 27, 1994**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 3:18**

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Vicarious Suffering of the Cross

II. The Vital Satisfaction of the Cross

III. The Victorious Salvation of the Cross

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God's Word and be finding, please, 1 Peter chapter 3 and verse 18? What a marvelous depiction we have of the cross of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. But here is the question. What was the reason for the cross? What was the necessity of the cross? I can give it to you in one word and that one word is sin. Now you pick up the newspapers this morning and you read of arson. You read of rape, pillage, war, pornography, disaster and when you read all of that you never read the word sin. Life is short. Death is sure. Sin the curse, Christ the cure. And how does He cure? Through the cross of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Listen to this scripture: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins." Why the cross? "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Say, isn't that a great verse? Is that not a great verse? There is enough gospel dynamite in that one verse to blow the sin, the hatred, the sorrow, the sickness, out of anybody's life, but that dynamite must be ignited by the spark of faith. I want us to learn today exactly how God forgives sin—how God deals with sin.

Suppose someone were to come up and with their big fist, punch you in the nose. And suppose, in an act of compassion, you were to say to that person who punched you in the nose, I forgive you. And suppose they said to you. Oh, there's no need for you to forgive me—I've already forgiven myself. And then, suppose the person standing by said, Oh well, neither one of you need to worry about it. I have forgiven both of you, and you were the one who got punched in the nose. Friend, listen to me. Only the punchee can forgive the puncher. Now, understand that. Sin, is a clenched fist in the face of God and only God can forgive sin. Away with all of the psychological, psychobabble that says we need to forgive ourselves, and we need to affirm one another, and we need to forgive one another. There is a holy God. God is a holy God, and sin is an affront, a

reproach, a rebellion against a holy God, and that sin must be dealt with. We've said that over and over again.

Our text today points out three wonderful, wonderful truths about how God forgives sin, and about how God deals with sin.

## **I. The Vicarious Suffering of the Cross**

The very first thing I want you to see as we look at our text, and that again, 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 18, is the vicarious suffering of the cross. Do you have that down? The vicarious suffering of the cross. The word vicarious means in the place of another. The word vicarious means, substitutionary. Look at it. "For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust..." That is, Jesus, who is just, who never sinned, the virgin-born, sinless, spotless, stainless Son of God. The just died for the unjust. The unjust, that's me, you. We're the ones. He became our substitute. All through the Bible, God has been teaching the lesson of substitution.

Today is the first day of Passover. It is also Palm Sunday. Do you think that it is by happenstance? Oh, my friend, no. What is Passover? Well, back in the Old Testament, God wanted to give a prophecy and a picture of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. So He instituted the ritual of the Passover Lamb. There was judgment upon the land because of sin, but God told His people to take a lamb, a spotless lamb without spot, without blemish, they were to kill that lamb. The blood was to be shed and then they were to take the blood of that lamb, you will remember, and put the blood of that lamb upon the doorpost of their house. Not on the inside, on the outside—openly, publicly, unashamedly, the blood of the lamb. And have you thought about it? It was to be upon the lintel and upon the side posts. Now, just think of a person with a sop with blood, and he goes to put that blood here and here and here. What has he done? He made the sign of the cross? Even there so old, so long ago, God is picturing and God is prophesying that it is the blood. And God said to those Israelites so long ago, when I see the blood, I will pass over you. And that is how we get the name, the word, Passover. God will Passover you when the blood is applied, but if you put the blood beneath your feet and you pass over the blood, God will not pass over you. But when you put yourself under the blood, then God, the death angel, the judgment of Almighty God will pass over you. And this Passover Lamb, it's all a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. You're in 1 Peter, go back to 1 Peter chapter one and look with me if you will in verse 18—1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 18. "For as much as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers..."—but now, watch it—"but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Jesus is the Passover Lamb. He is the lamb without blemish and without spot. Over here is the Mount of Olives where

Jesus prayed in Gethsemane. Over here is Mount Moriah, where Jesus Christ will die. Mount Moriah, the same place where Abraham was willing to offer up his only begotten son, Isaac. The same place where the temple was built. Mount of Olives, Mount Moriah. Down here is Bethlehem where Jesus was born, not many miles away. By the time of Christ, the priests and the Levites had instructed a special rank of shepherds to grow very special lambs—Passover lambs. These were the finest, the best. They were grown in Bethlehem. On Passover week, those lambs would be coming from the fields of Boaz from Bethlehem, up to the temple mount, and they would be going in through the sheep gate, up there to be examined by the high priests and by the Levites, by the high priests and the other priests and the Levites. Coming down from the Mount of Olives, the same day riding upon a donkey is the Lord Jesus Christ, God's lamb, going up to Mount Moriah—on the same day, the lambs and God's lamb entering into the city. Palm Sunday, Passover, the same day—this day so long ago. When those lambs come, those priests began to look at those lambs, and examine those lambs. They would look inside the mouth. They would go through the fleece—the little hooves, the eyes, even the eyelids were examined. If there were any flaw, that lamb was not worthy. He had to be a special lamb, a lamb without spot or blemish. But the same time those lambs were coming, God's lamb was coming. You see, there was another lamb born in Bethlehem. Mary had a little lamb. His fleece was white as snow. He never knew sin. He was the virgin born Son of God, God's sinless lamb. The lamb that Abraham talked about on Mount Moriah, when he said, God will provide himself a lamb. Not a lamb for himself, He himself will be the lamb. God will provide himself a lamb. See how it's all coming together. Have you ever wondered why so much of the Gospels are given over to the last week of Jesus' life? Have you ever thought about that? I mean, so much that Jesus did. But it is the last week—why? Because this is the climax of it all, and it is there in that last week that Jesus is being examined. He is being examined by the Pharisees. He is being examined by the Sadducees. He is being examined by the Herodians. He is being examined by the civil leaders. And they all have to say: I find no fault in Him. Never a man spake like this man. Oh, Jesus was there. Jesus could look at all of them, and God's perfect lamb, and Jesus Christ could look them in the eye, and say, Which of you convinces me of sin—that is, convicts me of sin? He was the sinless, spotless lamb, and He was being examined. Then came that day, that day when the Passover lamb was to be slain. At 3:00 in the afternoon, the priest would tilt the head of that little spotless lamb and take their sharp and lethal knives and slit the throat of that little lamb. The same time that was happening, on cruel Golgotha, God's lamb was pouring out His precious, precious, ruby, red, royal blood for the sin of mankind. And Jesus said from that cross, it is done. It is finished. It is paid in full. And priests, I want to tell you, you can go home now. Levites, put away your knives. Shepherds, your job is finished,

because it's done. Amen? It is done. Hallelujah. It is finished. Jesus, God's lamb, died upon that cross. The purpose of the cross is substitution. Passover has shown us very clearly and very plainly.

Again, when the Lord Jesus Christ died, He fulfilled another Old Testament symbolism. The high priest would take a goat called the scapegoat. He would lay his hand upon the head of that goat and confess the sins of the people upon the head of that goat. Then that goat would be led outside the city, and there outside the city wall that goat would be killed, his blood would be shed. And that's the reason the Bible tells us that Jesus died outside the city walls: because Jesus was our scapegoat. Our sins were laid upon Him and He carried those sins to the cross and in agony and blood He died. Another illustration, Pilate was there in his judgment hall. Pilate did not want to crucify the Lord Jesus. Pilate was fit, straddling politician and whatever buttered his bread, determined his conduct. And so he's trying to get out of this situation. And the people are clamoring for the blood of Jesus. Pilate thinks he has an ingenious scheme. Well, he says, we've got another man here. That man's name is Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a thief. Barabbas was a murderer. Barabbas was an insurrectionist and they thought surely, if there was ever a man that needs to be put to death, it was Barabbas. So here's what Pilate says. Pilate says, according to tradition, we always release a prisoner to the people. We let them choose whom they will pardon and so we have here Barabbas. And we have here Jesus. Which of these two do you wish that I will release to you? And do you know what they said? Barabbas. But he said, what then shall I do with Jesus who's called the Christ? They said, let Him be crucified. That's the same crowd, the same fickle crowd when He was coming in on Palm Sunday who were saying, Hail Him, Hail Him, and now they're saying, nail Him, nail Him. Oh, the wickedness of human hearts. And they are saying, let Jesus be crucified. And they carried Jesus, God's Passover lamb—Jesus, God's scapegoat—they carried Him out here, the just for the unjust. And He is hung up on a cruel, Roman cross to die. But I want you to picture another scene. I want you to see another Roman soldier—he has a torch. He walks down a narrow corridor in a Roman prison. He comes to a door that has iron bars on it. He holds the torch up. Back in the shadows on a mat of straw is a man. That man is trembling like a bird caught in a cage, caught in a trap. That man's face in the mirror of evil, and yet fear is written all over him. The guard with his key opens the door, and says, Barabbas, get up and come with me. See Barabbas, as he begins to plea, and say no, no, wait, wait, don't, don't take me. Please, have mercy. The Roman soldier says, Barabbas, quit sniffing. I've never seen a man with the fortune and the luck that you have. Barabbas, you rascal, you're not going to die; there's somebody else who's going to die in your place. Come here, Barabbas. Look over on that hill. Do you see the middle cross? Barabbas, that's the cross we've made for you. But there's

someone else on that cross. He has taken your place. I don't mean to say or infer that Barabbas was saved, or he ever got saved, but I am saying that God has arranged a perfect picture of substitution—the just for the unjust—that He might bring us to God. And so, the very first thing that I want you to see in how God forgives sin is what I want to call the vicarious suffering of the cross.

But look at our text; look at it. It says, “Christ also hath suffered for sin.” He hath suffered for sin. We have the Passion Play here and the Passion Play depicts the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ. But no Passion Play can depict the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ. I've told you before that tongue cannot tell, throat cannot sing, hand cannot paint, the tragedy that was called Calvary and the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ. There was the emotional suffering of Christ. We talked about that when we talked about the cup. When the Lord Jesus said, in Matthew chapter 26 and verse 28, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. Oh, the emotional agony. Luke chapter 22 and verse 44: And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood. Some years ago, somebody handed me an article from the American Medical Association journal—the journal of the American Medical Association. And in that journal physicians were talking about the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ. And they tell about this bloody sweat. It's called hematidrosis—hematidrosis. And this is what the article said: A very rare phenomenon, it may occur during highly emotional states or in persons with bleeding disorders. As a result of hemorrhage into the sweat glands, the person's skin becomes fragile and tender. This is what happened to the Lord Jesus. He is in such agony that the minute capillaries are rupturing and breaking down. There was the emotional suffering. It is in agony.

And not only was there the emotional suffering; there was the bodily suffering of the Lord Jesus. They scourged the Lord Jesus. The Romans knew how to scourge. They would tie the hands of the victim and hoist him till he's on the balls of his feet. This is to increase the pain. The back would become smooth as silk. The scourging instrument was a whip with a sturdy handle and then leather thongs. And on the ends of those leather thongs, there would be little bits of bone, and metal and glass, ingeniously tied. There would be two scourgers, two lictors. And as the body is stretched out, one would start at the nape of the neck and work downward. The other would start at the ankles and work upward. And as a team they would flay that person standing on the balls of his feet stretched out there. As the whip would reach around the body, each time it's pulled back, it pulls away a piece of flesh. These were experienced men. They knew how to do that. They knew how to pull away the flesh so as to expose the nerves and the muscles without yet disemboweling the individual. And after a man is cut down from being scourged and he falls to the ground, men did not walk away from a scourging. They crawled away. That's the reason the Bible says, they brought Him to the judgment hall.

They brought Him, why? He's too weak to walk. You can understand why later Jesus stumbled and fell beneath the cross. The physical abuse of the Lord Jesus Christ—they battered Him with their fists. They beat Him with clubs. And then they took Him out for the actual crucifixion. Do you know why the Romans used crucifixion? Do you know why they used the cross? You talk about cruel and unusual punishment. Crucifixion was meant to be cruel. Crucifixion was meant to be unusual. Crucifixion was meant to inspire stark terror. Anybody who saw a crucifixion said, whatever caused that I will not do that. Romans whatever you tell me to do, I'll do it. But don't crucify me. That's what crucifixion was all about. Have you ever heard the word excruciating? That comes from a Latin word, excruciates—excruciatos. It literally means, out of the cross—out of the cross. Our word excruciating comes from crucifixion. It was out of the cross kind of pain, excruciating pain. They would nail the victim's hand to that cross. They would separate the metacarpals, put the nail right there. Not really in the palm of the hand, but there in the wrist so the body would not fall from that cross. They would try if they could to hit the median nerve to send pain up the body and into the torso. They would drive those nails through those nerves. He would be crucified with his hands at a 90-degree angle, but when the body falls, it goes down to a 65-degree angle as the hands are out like this. And the feet are nailed to the cross. The weight of the body comes down on the chest and the person who's crucified is gasping for breath. And so in order to breathe, He has to lift himself, but in order to lift himself, He has to push down on those nails that are there on his feet and so He is between gasping for breath and searing with pain. He is there. And there is nausea and there is shock and there is a searing pain as every nerve in that body becomes a pathway for the feel of pain. And the individual stays there agonizingly long and dies an excruciating death. There was the physical agony of the cross. There was the emotional agony, the emotional suffering of the cross as we preached last week. Not only did Jesus Christ drink the cup—that is the pollution of sin. But Jesus Christ wore the crown—that is the penalty of sin. And so the cup and the crown tell us of the cross and Jesus there, having the pollution, bearing the penalty. Not that He ever sinned. He was the just for the unjust. But He paid that price. And what was that price? Separation from Almighty God. Not only would God the Father be separated from Him, but He, for that moment, would become the object of the Father's loathing, and God the Father must look upon Him as God the Father would upon a sinner, and deal with Him as He would deal with a sinner. Now do you understand Peter's text? Christ also hath once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust. That's the vicarious suffering of the cross. Do you have it? The vicarious suffering of the cross.

## **II. The Vital Satisfaction of the Cross**

Now here's the second thing I want you to see. And, friend, my heart was so moved

as I studied for this sermon. I want you to see the vital satisfaction of the cross—the vital satisfaction of the cross. Look at the text, and there’s a word there I don’t want you to miss—look at it: “For Christ also hath...”—what’s that next word? I can’t hear you. Hello? Once, once—Christ also hath once suffered for sin...” Friend, that does not mean once upon a time. That means once for all. That was a good place for an amen. That means once for all. When Jesus said, It is finished, He meant that the debt had been paid, absolutely. Now remember that I told you before in Rome when a man would be put in prison, when a man would be adjudicated guilty for a crime, they would put that man in prison. They would write out a certificate of debt. This was his debt to the state. This was his debt to society. This is what his sin, his crime, had incurred. It was called a certificate of debt, and it would be placed on his prison door. And then, after he had done his time, after he had paid the penalty, whatever it was, after he had satisfied the demands of the law, then they would write across that certificate of debt, Paid in full, and give it to him. And do you know the word that they would write on there? Tetalestai. Do you know what that is? It is finished. It is finished. It is paid in full. That man won’t have to go back to prison again. He’ll never come into double jeopardy. If they ever arrest him for that crime again and say, this is what you’ve done, he may say, yes, but I have paid. It is paid. It is done. You can’t bring me in twice for the same crime. And this is what it says, Jesus has once suffered for sin and what blasphemy to say that again there needs to be another sacrifice for sin. Listen to Hebrews chapter 10, verses 12 through 14. “This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.” Now listen to this: “But by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” Hallelujah! That’s why I believe in eternal security. Did you know for if you were to ever get lost after you get saved, which you never could do, but let’s suppose you could get lost after you got saved. For you to be saved again, Jesus would have to die again. You see, when Jesus died, it was good for one salvation only—good for one salvation only. He by one sacrifice hath perfected forever. Jesus said, It’s finished; it’s done; it’s paid in full. There’s nothing you can do, nothing you need do. There is the vicarious suffering of the cross. There is the vital satisfaction of the cross. The Bible says, in Isaiah chapter 53, God the Father shall see the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied. God is satisfied with what Jesus did on the cross. The sin debt is paid. Hallelujah!

### **III. The Victorious Salvation of the Cross**

Now, here’s the third thing I want you to see. Not only the vicarious suffering of the cross. Not only the vital satisfaction of the cross. He hath once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust. But I want you to see the victorious salvation of the cross, the victorious

salvation. He hath suffered for sin, the just for the unjust—why? That He might bring us to God. Do you see it? Look at it. That He might bring us to God. What will sin do? Sin separates us from a holy God. What does the cross do? On that cross, Jesus took holy God with one hand, sinful man with the other hand and by the blood of his cross He hath reconciled God and man. He's made peace by the blood of his cross, with his cross that He might bring us to God. Listen to Romans 5, verse 10. "For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son. Much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his light." That He might bring us to God. The word bring—prosago—is the Greek word, it means to take an individual and present him to a king or a dignitary. That's what Jesus has done. Jesus has taken us by the hand to present us to God the Father. He's bringing us to God. He's saying, Father these are mine. I purchase them with my blood on that cross. Does that excite you? Oh, it excites me. King David in the Old Testament had a son. His name was Absalom. And Absalom rebelled against his father, and there was a woman in the kingdom who said, David, you need to do something to reconcile your son, to get him back, to bring your son back. But David did not do it. And the woman said, David, you're not acting like God acts. And then, I want you to jot this verse down in the margin of your Bible. It's a precious verse—2 Samuel 14:14. Here's what that woman said to David: "For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person: yet doth He devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him." Isn't that a great gospel text in the Old Testament? We're like water spilt on the ground, and God doesn't respect persons, and yet God has devised means that his banished be not expelled from him. God has a way of bringing us back.

## Conclusion

I want to tell you a story, a true story. The Reader's Digest recounted this story. I heard it recently from a preacher named Ravi Zacharias. There was a man in Long Island, New York. That man was a commuter. He would ride the commuter train that would stop in Long Island, the subway. He would get on at 9:02 or 9:05 every morning and he would ride. He was of Hungarian background, a business man in New York. Upon a day this man had a friend who was sick, and so this businessman, whose name was Marcel Sternberger, said, I'm going to stay with my friend today and go in later. So Marcel Sternberger stayed with his sick friend, and then, rather than riding the 9:02 commuter, he got on the noonday commuter to ride to Long Island. He wasn't used to riding that train, and the train was filled with people. And when Marcel Sternberger got on that train, a great host of people got off, a great host of people got on, and Sternberger is looking for a seat. One man gets up, and Sternberger says, I'll get that seat, and he goes over and plunges into that seat and sits down. Next to Marcel

Sternberger is a man reading a newspaper, and he spread it out, and it is a Hungarian newspaper. Sternberger looks over, can read Hungarian, sees the man is reading the classified ads, and he says to the man, just conversationally, are you looking for a job? And the man says no, I am looking for my wife's name. He said, well, tell me about it. Well, he said, in the war we lived in Debrechen. Said, the Nazi's were there, and they began to oppress us. And the Nazis came and took me away from my home. I was happily married, and the Nazis took me to the Ukraine to bury the German dead. I had to do that. I was afraid to leave my wife, because I was afraid the Nazis would come and put my wife in a concentration camp. But, he said, I went, and when I came back home after the war, I couldn't find my wife. I asked around, and they said, Well, the Nazis came, and they took a number of people off to Auschwich, maybe your wife was taken there. He said, I began to read and study to find out what happened to the people who were taken to Auschwich. Many of them, you know, ended up in the crematoriums where they were seared and burned in the Holocaust. But I also read that when the allies came, they came into that prison camp and they freed some people. And, he said, I'm just thinking that perhaps my wife might not have been killed. She might have been freed. And then I got to thinking, maybe the allies took those people to America. And then, he said, I was thinking, if they took those people to America, where would be the point of entry? It would be New York. And then, he said, I was thinking, if my wife would be in New York, she wouldn't know where I am. But I know my wife; she's a thinker. She would put an ad in the Hungarian newspaper, and I'm just reading the newspaper, if by chance I might find my wife. Marcel Sternberger remembered that he had been a few days before this at a party. He had met a Hungarian woman. And she had given her name. She had said that she had lived in Debrachen. She had said that her husband was taken away to the Ukraine. Marcel Sternberger's mind began to run just like this. He said, what is your wife's name? The man said, my wife's name is Marie Basken. Sternberger, without saying a word, got out his wallet. Pulled out a slip of paper that he had folded and looked at it. And there was the name Marie Basken. He said, sir, It's very important. Will you get off this train at the next stop with me? He didn't yet tell him why, but the man trusted him and they got off. Sternberger had Marie's telephone number. He went to a pay phone, put in a coin, dialed the number, and said, Hello, who is speaking? She said, this is Marie. He said, Marie, do you remember me? We met at a part about three days ago. Yes, I remember you. I'm Marcel Sternberger. Yes, I remember you, Marcel. Marie, did you have a husband? Do you have a husband? She said, I don't know whether I have a husband or not. I did have one. But I've not seen him since the war. Marie, what is your husband's name? My husband's name is Bello—Bello Basken. He said, wait just a moment, sir, what is your first name? He said, Oh, my name is Bello—Bello Basken. He said, sir, take this receiver, you are about to witness a

miracle. He picked up the phone and said, Hello? Maria, Maria, Maria, Maria, Maria. Maria said she'd been praying that she could find her husband. The Reader's Digest told that story, and then they said, some will say, if they're skeptical, that was chance. But the Digest asked this question: Was it a chance that this man who normally rode the 9:02 rode the 12:00 train? Was it by chance that he sat in the one seat in that entire train that was unoccupied? Was it by chance that this man was reading a Hungarian newspaper? Was it by chance that three days later he had met this woman Maria and written her name down? And then, the Digest said, no, it wasn't by chance. God rode the subway that morning. God devised means to bring these two together. But I want to tell you, friend, there's a greater miracle than that—a greater miracle than that. God devised means that his banished be not separated from Him, and Jesus, on that cross, died for you. Oh, the love that thought it! Oh, the grace that brought it! Wonderful, wonderful salvation!

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. All of this was for you—for you, for you. He bowed His head and died. How many of you could say, Pastor Rogers, if I died today, I know—I know—I'd go to heaven, because I've been saved by the precious blood of Jesus? Would you lift your hand? Hold it up. Take it down. Now, if you couldn't lift your hand, if you would pray a prayer like this, O God, I'm a sinner; I'm lost; I need to be saved; I want to be saved; come into my heart; forgive my sin, and save me, He will save you because He suffered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. O friend, hallelujah. God is satisfied by what Jesus did on that cross. Now, you must receive it. What should you do today? Put your faith where God has put your sins—on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Father, I pray that many will come to Christ today. In His wonderful name. Amen.

# Why Did Jesus Die?

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: September 10, 1989**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 3:18**

*“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:”*

1 PETER 3:18

## Outline

Introduction

- I. A Substitutionary Sacrifice
- II. A Suffering Sacrifice
- III. A Settled Sacrifice
- IV. A Sufficient Sacrifice

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you find in the New Testament 1 Peter chapter 3 and find verse 18. Tonight we're not even really going to look at a full verse, but half of a verse. One half of one verse that is so crammed full and packed with Gospel dynamite. This one half of one verse is sufficient to blow the sin out of any heart. However, this dynamite must be ignited by the spark of faith. I want you to see what God's Word says in 1 Peter 3 verse 18. It says, *“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God...”* (1 Peter 3:18). And, I'm going to stop reading right there. *“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God...”* (1 Peter 3:18).

Now, I want to speak to you tonight, and I want us to study together on this subject, Why Did Jesus Die? Or, to put it another way, how does God forgive sin? Now, everybody is interested, I suppose, in having his sin forgiven. And, how is sin forgiven? Obviously we cannot forgive our own sin.

I hear a lot of pop psychology today saying, “Well forgive yourself.” People need to forgive themselves. Well, that's ridiculous. You can't forgive yourself. Suppose that Brother David were to come up here and punch me in the nose. And, then after he punches me in the nose he says, “Now, Pastor, don't worry about it. I have forgiven me.” No, my dear friend, only the punchee can forgive the puncher. And for people to say, Oh, just forgive yourself. You see, sin is against God. Now suppose somebody else

comes around and says, well, neither one of you need to worry about it. I forgive both of you. Well what has he got to do with it? We have a lot of people going around saying, “I’m okay and you’re okay; you affirm me, and I affirm you.”

What we need to understand is that sin is an affront to a holy God. Only God can forgive sin and only God can forgive sin according to certain of His own principles. And, we’re going to deal therefore with the subject Why Did Jesus Die? Or on the other hand, how does God forgive sin?

Now I want you to notice four things about the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **I. A Substitutionary Sacrifice**

First of all, I want you to notice this about his sacrifice. And, it’s what I’m going to call the purpose of His sacrifice, which was a substitutionary sacrifice. The purpose of a substitutionary sacrifice is found in 1 Peter 3:18. It says, “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins—now notice this next phrase—the just—that’s Jesus—for—or in the place of—the unjust—that is, me and you.” Jesus did not die contrary to some popular opinion as a martyr. Martyrs are those who die tragically, but not necessarily because they planned to die. Now, neither did Jesus Christ die primarily as an example. His death, in some ways, is an example. But, that is not how or why Jesus died primarily. Jesus died as a substitute.

Now, the more liberal people get—and the more filled with fluff some theologians heads are—the more they tend to get away from the old-fashioned doctrine of the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus Christ. But, the Bible teaches that Christ died the just for the unjust. Now, let me tell you why God could not just simply say, “I forgive you.” Why did Jesus have to die? Well, point number one, God is a Holy God. If you were to take all of the dictionaries and all of the lexicons of all of the earth and try to find just one word that would describe God, it would be impossible. But—in my estimation—if you had to find one word, or at least the best word, that word would be holy. God is holy. That means that God is infinitely righteous. God is infinitely just. Being infinitely righteous, infinitely just, and completely holy God has a burning hatred and an antithesis for the thing called sin. God is holy. And, by contrast man is sinful. Man is sinful by birth. Man is sinful by nature. Man is sinful by choice. Man is sinful by practice. And, he is a sinner.

Now, the word sin is almost out of date today. And, people today mock at the idea of sin. And, that’s the reason they don’t understand the doctrine of the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, you can pick up any newspaper and you can read in there stories of violence, theft, and rape. But, if you read all of these stories, you’ll never read the word sin. They talk about bad behavior, they talk about societal problem, but they never really talk

about sin. But, yet America today is filled with sin. Let me tell you what will happen. Twenty-four teen-age girls will have an abortion in America the next 30 minutes. Fourteen will give birth to illegitimate babies. No, let me take that back. There are no illegitimate babies, just illegitimate parents. Two hundred and twenty eight children will be beaten, molested, or abused by their parents in the next thirty minutes. Two hundred and eighty five of America's youngsters will become victims of broken homes. Sin is destroying the soul of America and ruining her children. The problem in America is a 3 letter word, sin.

Now, my dear friend, God is holy and man is sinful. And, I want to tell you with all of the unction, function, and emotion of my soul as surely as I stand here, surely as there's a God in Heaven, no ifs, ands, buts, and doubts about it, all sin, not some, all sin will be punished. Did that sink in? All sin. The one thing God will never do and can never do is overlook sin. If God were to overlook one half of one sin for all eternity God would be no longer holy. God would topple from his throne of holiness. All sin will be punished. The only question is this. Who will bear that punishment? That's the only question. Either Christ bears it for you, or you will bear it. But, all sin will be punished. That's the reason I said that your sin will be pardoned in Christ or punished in hell. But it will never be overlooked.

Now, in the Old Testament, God gave a picture of a Passover lamb. And, do you remember the story of the Passover lamb? That Passover lamb was a picture and a prophecy of the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus Christ. That lamb was a substitute for the first-born male in the land of Egypt. God said, "when I see the blood of the lamb upon the doorposts of that house, my death angel will pass over because that lamb has become a substitute for the first-born child in that family."

Now, you're in 1 Peter chapter 3. Just go back to 1 Peter chapter 1 and look with me if you will in verse 18. It says, "*Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*" (1 Peter 1:18–19). Jesus Christ was God's lamb. He died for us upon that cross. When we go to Israel—as we have been wont to do more than a dozen times—we always go out to the fields of Bethlehem to the shepherds' fields. And, out there we stand and look away at that little town of Bethlehem where Mary had a little lamb whose fleece was white as snow. And, we stand out there in the shepherds' field and sing Christmas carols and I talk about the virgin birth because in the time of Christ the Levitical shepherds had begun to raise lambs in those fields—the fields of Boaz—just outside the little town of Bethlehem. They were not raising lambs for propagation of stock. They were not raising lambs for food or wool. These lambs were special lambs. These lambs in that particular field were raised by these particular shepherds. They

were Passover lambs. They were given a special diet and special care. And, then those lambs were brought into the city of Jerusalem on Passover week and they were sacrificed there.

Now, on that particular day just before the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross, on that particular week—the Passover week—they brought those lambs from the fields—the shepherds' fields—and they were bringing them into the city of Jerusalem. And, they would bring them up on Mt. Moriah, the same mountain where God had said centuries ago, “...*God will provide himself a lamb...*” (Genesis 22:8). He said that to Abraham on Mt. Moriah. They would bring those same lambs in through that sheep gate up on that bedrock, Mt. Moriah. While these shepherds were bringing those sheep in the sheep gate—on that same day—the Lord Jesus Christ was coming from the Mount of Olives in through the Eastern Gate—on what we call Palm Sunday—his triumphal entry. Those lambs were coming in. The Lord Jesus was coming in to the city of Jerusalem.

Have you ever wondered why the Gospel stories are arranged as they are? The Gospel seems to hurry through so much. But, when it gets to the last week of the life of Jesus it slows down. And, when it gets to the last three days of the life of Jesus, the time seems to go very slow and the details are brought out those last three days. Why is that? Well, in the last three days of the Passover the lambs were examined. They were microscopically examined by the priest to see if there were any spot or any blemish. And, if they could find a spot, a blemish, some kind of a problem, maybe a torn ear, maybe a blemish on the skin, or maybe some deformity. No matter how small—they would look inside the mouth of the lamb and they would even examine the eyelids—if there were any problem with that lamb it would be rejected because God demanded a perfect sacrifice.

Now, the same three days when they were examining those Passover lambs, the Lord Jesus—on that temple mount—was also being examined. Have you ever thought about how they picked at him and how they examined him? The Pharisees examined him up there. The Sadducees examined him there. The Herodians examined him there. The civil leaders examined him there. They questioned him. They challenged him. They nit-picked him but they finally had to say, “...*I find no fault in him*” (John 19:6). Pilate did. The others said, “...*Never man spake like this man*” (John 7:46). The Lord Jesus—God's perfect lamb—said, “...*Which of you convinceth me of sin?...*” (John 8:46).

Now, the same time they were building that cross for the Lord Jesus Christ, on that same mountain those Levitical priests were sharpening their knives; they were getting ready to cut the throats of those little lambs. Then came that day of crucifixion, the day the Lord Jesus Christ died upon the cross. At three p.m., when the Lord Jesus was on that cross, the knives of those Levitical priests began to flash. They would take the chins of those little lambs—put that razor sharp knife up there—and cut the jugular. The

blood would flow out into a basin. At that same time, the Lord Jesus—God's lamb—was on that cross. He cried out and said, “...*It is finished...*” (John 19:30). It is done. From that time on there was no need ever again for a Passover lamb because God had provided himself a lamb. Passover had been transcended by the cross. And, the Bible tells us that Jesus died “...*the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God...*” (1 Peter 3:18). He was God's substitutionary lamb.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, that great Baptist preacher, lay dying. You know, there's never been another preacher like Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Charles Haddon Spurgeon was incredibly intelligent. Not only was he incredibly intelligent, but he had such a grasp of the Bible. He had such a facility with words and such a deep devotional love for the Lord Jesus. Everybody thought, “Well, what will Spurgeon say on his deathbed? What is he going to leave us? What will be a word of wisdom? What will the mighty Spurgeon say as he lay dying?” Someone came to Charles Haddon Spurgeon and said, “Mr. Spurgeon, what is your Gospel now that you are dying?” Charles Haddon Spurgeon smiled sweetly and answered in four little words, “Jesus died for me.” Don't you love that? Jesus died for me. Here's the greatest mind of a Baptist preacher since the apostle Paul. Here's a man who preached the Gospel in incredible dominions and yet he realized that the purpose of the cross was a substitutionary death. Jesus died for me. The purpose of the cross was a substitutionary sacrifice.

## II. A Suffering Sacrifice

There's something else I want you to see. I want you to see the price of the cross. Not only was it a substitutionary sacrifice but it was a suffering sacrifice. Go back to our text now. 1 Peter chapter 3 and verse 18 says, “*For Christ also hath once suffered for sins...*” (1 Peter 3:18). Sacrificial sacrifice—yes—but a suffering sacrifice. The Lord Jesus—our substitute—suffered for us. We have a passion play here at our church called Living Pictures. Sometimes I see that scene in Living Pictures and my heart breaks. But, I realize that is only artistry—our actors, our participants, our music, our artwork—it falls so far short. I'm not diminishing what is done here. But, someone has written these words. Tongue cannot tell, throat cannot sing, and hand cannot paint the tragedy that was enacted on that hill called Calvary. Then this person said this, “*Gather the wail of icy winds that howl through the frozen north; extract the heart-despair of a mother watching wild beasts tear at the throat of her babe; capture all the hopeless groans and helpless shrieks of the damned in the land of shadows and unending doom; and with all this at your command, you will still be unable to paint the picture that is Calvary!*” (Dr. Jack Shuler). And, then he went on to say, Only the damned in hell can begin to know the suffering of the Lord Jesus upon that cross. “*For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God...*” (1 Peter

3:18).

I want to say again—my dear friend—that just as a holy God cannot overlook sin and requires a substitute before he can pardon sin. I want to say that this text also teaches us that if your sin is not pardoned, you will suffer for your sin. Because this text teaches us that sin brings suffering. And, suffering follows sin, as night follows day. You say, “Well, I’m sinning and I’m not suffering.” I’m not trying to be smart and snide when I say this, but dear friend if you talk that way, you’re an unmitigated fool. You see, the judgment is yet to come. *“Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel”* (Proverbs 20:17). There is a fearful, horrible, awful, and agonizing penalty for sin. It is suffering.

### III. A Settled Sacrifice

Now, it was a substitutionary sacrifice and it was a suffering sacrifice. I want to say something else about it. It was a settled sacrifice. I’m talking to you about the purpose of it. I’m talking to you about the price of it. And, I’m going to talk to you about the permanence of it. Look again if you will at our text. Look in verse 18 chapter 3 and verse 18. The Bible says, *“For Christ also hath once suffered...”* (1 Peter 3:18). He suffered once. He didn’t suffer twice. He suffered once. The word “once” here does not mean “once upon a time.” It means “once and for all, never to be repeated again.” You see, when Jesus Christ died upon that cross, the sin debt has been fully paid. God’s justice has been absolutely satisfied. I think by now you’re aware of the fact that when Jesus hung his head and died upon that cross He gave up his spirit to God the Father. He said, *“tetelestai,”* one word in the Greek language, meaning “it is finished”, or “it is paid in full.”

In Roman times, when a man was put in a Roman prison for a crime against the state, there was a written document that was nailed to his jail door. It was his crimes against the state. What he had done and what his punishment would be. How long he would be incarcerated and how long he must suffer to pay for his crime against the state. When he had finished—when he had paid his debt to society—they would come and write upon that document on the jail door, “tetelestai, paid in full.” He would take that document and if anybody ever accused him again he’d say, “You can’t bring me into double jeopardy. I have paid in full. Here it is.”

My dear friend, I want to tell you that my sin was laid upon the Lord Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ carried my sin to the cross. And, he bowed his head and he said, *“tetelestai, it is finished, it is paid in full.”* And, my dear friend, if God ever demands payment again he will bring me into double jeopardy and God is just and the justified of those who believe in Jesus. Thank God, who is he that can lay any charge to God’s elect? Who is he that can condemn? It is Christ that justifies. Let me show you

something here. Turn this time to Hebrews chapter 10 with me. Just turn left just a little bit, and you'll come to Hebrews chapter 10, and look with me in verse 12. *“But this man—talking about the Lord Jesus—after he had offered—now notice this—one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool”* (Hebrews 10:12–13). Now, notice verse 14. *“For by one offering he hath perfected—for ever them that are sanctified”* (Hebrews 12:14).

Now, friend let's get our theology straight here tonight. The Bible says in 1 Peter 3:18 that *“...Christ also hath once suffered...”* (1 Peter 3:18) And, then, the writer of Hebrews says, *“For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified”* (Hebrews 10:14). We have some people today who have the idea that you can get saved and then lost again and then get saved again. Don't believe it. My dear friend, the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus perfects those of us who are sanctified, who are saved forever. There's only one sacrifice. Now, my friend, suppose that you could get lost again after you got saved. Do you know what would be necessary for you to get saved again? Jesus would have to come and die all over again. You see, the Bible says, *“For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified”* (Hebrews 10:14). Good for one salvation only. My dear friend, he's not coming back again and he's not going to die again. It is done and it is finished. *“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God...”* (1 Peter 3:18). Thank God it is done. It is finished. It is a permanent sacrifice.

#### **IV. A Sufficient Sacrifice**

Now, I've said that the purpose of the cross, Jesus died as a substitutionary sacrifice. I've talked not only about it being a substitutionary sacrifice, but a suffering sacrifice. I've talked about it being a singular sacrifice or a settled sacrifice. Then I want you to see also that is a sufficient sacrifice. It does exactly what it's supposed to do. Go back, if you will again, to 1 Peter chapter 3 and look at what it does. Look at it. *“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God...”* (1 Peter 3:18). That's the purpose. Now, sin separated us from God. It is not that God has moved. God has always been where He always has been. He always will be upon His throne of holiness. But, sin has separated us and distanced us from God. Now, the Lord Jesus on that cross suffered, bled, and died. By one sacrifice he paid the sin debt that he might bring us to God. You see, we have been separated or distanced from God. Romans chapter 5 and verse 10 says, *“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son...”* (Romans 5:10). So what the Lord Jesus Christ did was to reconcile us to God.

**Now, let me explain to you what happened. Over here on this side is holy God,**

infinite in holiness and purity, the complete opposite and antithesis of sin. Over here on this side is sinful man, a sinner by birth, by nature, by choice, and by practice. And, there is a chasm between holy God and sinful man. That chasm is deep and wide. It is eroded by centuries of sin and wickedness. There is holy God. Here is sinful man. Now, holy God loves man, but sin has separated God from man. Over here, man says in his heart, "I need God." He has a longing for God, a God-given longing for God, and a desire to be what he ought to be. So man has the idea that he will reach God and he tries to build a bridge that will span that chasm. And, so he builds a bridge. He starts to build a bridge and he builds it out of the ephemeral materials. He builds it out of combustible materials, materials that crumble and disintegrate. But, he tries to build this bridge. Some are very elaborate bridges. Some are very simple bridges. Some are bridges that are ingeniously constructed. But, they have all one thing in common. They all collapse. Those who try to cross these bridges fall into that chasm and they perish because they cannot build a bridge that will span the chasm.

Now, over here is holy God. And, holy God looks at man and his pitiful efforts. God is moved in mercy by the pitiful plight of sinful man. And, God says, "I will build a bridge to span that gap." And, so here on this side God puts down the bulwark of his absolute deity of the Lord Jesus. And, over here He puts down the bulwark of the absolute humanity of the Lord Jesus. Jesus is both God and man, the deity and the humanity of Christ. And, then with the rough-hewn timbers of a cross the Lord almighty builds a bridge from man to God. The bridge is a bloody cross. And, then those who come to God must come that way and that way alone.

*I must needs go home by the way of the cross.*

*There is no other way but this.*

*I'll never catch sight of the gates of light if  
the way of the cross I miss.*

*"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"* (John 14:6). That's the way we come, dear friend, and the only way that anybody can come to God is through Jesus Christ. Call it narrow if you will—I'm telling you my dear friend—if there were any other way God would not have let his darling Son die upon that cross. Don't tell me that there are many ways to God. Jesus said, *There is no other way. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12). My dear friend, it was a satisfactory sacrifice. It brings us to God.

I was reading this week about Abraham Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln had a son named Tad. The boy was born with cleft palate. He had a speech impediment. Abe seemed to love Tad more than he loved his other children because he had a heart of compassion for this boy. And, he could get things out of his Dad that others couldn't get. One day

there were some frontiersmen from Kentucky who had come to Washington and they wanted to see the president. And, they had known Abe Lincoln in Kentucky. But, he for one reason or another, didn't want to talk with them. It was not politically expedient for him to talk with them and he'd been dodging them. And, little Tad was out there listening to some of these men out across from the White House—or the President's residence—and they were saying, “Old Abe won't talk to us, old Abe won't talk to us.” He said, “You want me to take you in to see old Abe?” They said, “Can you?” He said, “Sure.” He said, “Come with me.” He was a little fellow now. And, he walked right on past the guards, right on past the secretaries, and right into the President's office. He said, “Daddy, I've got some friends that want to talk with you. Will you talk with them, Dad?” He said, “Tad, any friends of yours are friends of mine. Bring them on in.” And, these men came into the office and sat down. And, Tad, with great dignity, introduced each one of them to his papa, to his daddy. That's just a faint illustration, my dear friend, just a poor illustration of what the Lord Jesus does for us. God so loved his Son, he says, “Son, any friend of yours is a friend of mine. Jesus brings us to God.”

The Greek word, *prosego*, is the word that is used to bring us to God. It's a technical word. It's the word that is used to introduce someone to a king or to an important potentate. The times that I've had the privilege to meet the President of the United States, there's always been someone who would take you and bring you into the President's office. You don't just walk in.

## **Conclusion**

My dear friend, when you come to Jesus, Jesus takes you by the hand and brings you to the Father. That's why he died. My dear friend, I want to tell you that his death was a substitutionary sacrifice, it was a suffering sacrifice, it was a settled sacrifice, and it was a sufficient sacrifice. Hallelujah, what a Savior. Let's pray. Father God, I pray tonight for any who may not know Jesus, that tonight will be the night that they will say to him an ever-lasting yes. O Holy Spirit, convict us of our sin and to understand that Jesus Christ died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

# Why the Cross?

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** December 5, 1999

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 Peter 3:18

*“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.”*

1 PETER 3:18

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Substitutionary Purpose of the Cross
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  - A. The Emotional Suffering of Christ
  - B. The Physical Suffering of Christ
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## Introduction

Be finding 1 Peter chapter 3 and verse 18, and this morning for our message we are going to spend all of our time in one verse. Now we will visit some other verses, but in one verse we are going to find some wonderful, glorious truth. I believe by now you've seen the three magnificent crosses that are out here on our property and their spires pointing up to the sky. A newspaper lady called me and she asked me this question: "Why the cross?" I got to thinking about that, and I thought, "Well, that's what I want to speak about this morning: 'Why the Cross?' " Why did we put those three monumental crosses out there on the Interstate? Well, we certainly have a reason for doing that, and I believe we can find that reason here in 1 Peter chapter 3 and verse 18: *“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.”* (1 Peter 3:18)

Now, folks, there's enough gospel dynamite in that one verse to blow the hatred and the sin out of any heart. But that gospel dynamite must be ignited by the spark of faith. And I'm praying that God will take this verse today and God will bring it to your heart, and that a spark of faith will cause a spiritual explosion, and you'll come to know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior.

Now behind me is a Christmas tree, and we use that to celebrate a very happy occasion: the birth of a baby. But there's another tree, an old rugged cross, that we're going to think about today, because the cradle and the crucifixion and the coronation are inextricably interwoven and linked together. My wife sings a little song at Christmas called, "Jesus, baby Jesus, there's a cross along the way."

‡ Somebody has a painting of the Lord Jesus Christ. He's been working in the carpenter's shop as a lad. He's about fifteen or sixteen years of age. The wood shavings are on the floor, and you can see the saws and the planes and the squares and the tools in the background. The sun is setting, and this young lad, who would one day die upon a cross, has come to the door of the carpenter's shop. And He's on His tiptoes, and He's stretching out. And He's stretching and yawning because it's the end of a hard day. And the sun is setting there in the west. And on the back wall of that carpenter's shop, if you look, you'll see the shadow of a cross that was made by that lad—for Jesus lived in the shadow of the cross. He knew from His youth up that He was born to die. ‡

Now I want to lay upon your heart four truths that come out of this one verse, and I pray God that you'll not miss a one of them. I pray God that every time you see those three magnificent crosses out there on our property, it will remind you of these four great truths, as we try today to ask and answer the question: Why the cross?

## I. The Substitutionary Purpose of the Cross

Reason number one: There's the substitutionary purpose of the cross. Look in this verse again: "*For Christ also hath once suffered for sins,*"—watch this now—"*the just*"—that's Jesus—"*for the unjust.*" (1 Peter 3:18) Friend, we are the unjust.

Now God forgives sin, but how does God forgive sin? He must do it with a substitute. There must be somebody who pays the penalty for sin. God cannot just overlook sin. If God were to overlook sin, God would no longer be a holy God any more than a judge would be a righteous judge if he were to overlook a crime. I've told you before, there's a saying in jurisprudence, in the laws, that, when a guilty man is acquitted, the judge is condemned. If a judge were to just say, "Well, I'm a loving judge. That's all right. I will overlook rape, murder, arson, pillage, whatever it is; that's all right; I'm a loving judge," at that moment the judge becomes a criminal. If God were to simply overlook sin without sin being punished, God would topple from His throne of holiness.

If you were to go through all the lexicons of this world, the dictionaries of this world, the books of theology of this world, to try to find one word that would describe God, what word would that be? Well, all the words in the world cannot describe God. But if you had to distill it to one word, what would it be? Most people would say, "God is love." And He is matchless, infinite, holy, indescribable, unfathomable love. But that one word

would not be *love*. The one word, in my estimation, would be *holiness*. God is holy. “*Holy, holy, holy, LORD God Almighty.*” (Revelation 4:8) And that word *holy* means that God is the opposite, God is the antithesis, of sin. God is a righteous and a holy God. And sin must be punished. God cannot overlook sin, so God must punish sin. But not only is God holy; God is love. So God must have a way that He can have sin punished and yet have us forgiven.

Now we are sinful by birth. We are sinful by nature. We are sinful by practice. The world rejects the idea of sin. You don’t hear much about sin anymore. You read the newspapers, and you read about rape, you read about pornography, you read about drunkenness, you read about drug addiction, you read about all kinds of mayhem; but the word *sin* is hardly mentioned. God, who is infinite love, has a holy hatred for sin. So God had in His heart and His mind a plan by which sin could be punished and yet man could be forgiven—and that method is substitution.

Now God had prophesied the cross many, many years before Jesus died on the cross. There was a man named Abraham. He was the first of the Hebrews—Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation; Abraham, Father Abraham, the father of the faithful, the brightest star in the Hebrew heavens. And God said to Abraham, “Abraham, I’m going to give you a son, and this son will be a part of your lineage. And through this son, Abraham, all the nations of the world will be blessed. We’ll call his name Isaac, which means ‘laughter.’ He’ll be the joy of your heart. He’s the son of prophecy, because I’m telling you about it before he’s even born. I’ll give his name before he’s born”—just like Jesus’ name was given before He was born and like Jesus was the Son of prophecy—“and, Abraham, he’s going to be born of a miracle. You’re going to be an old man and a hundred when he’s born. Your wife, Sarah, her womb is dried up. She is past the menopause. It’s impossible from men’s viewpoint for her to have a child, but she’s going to conceive in her womb, and she’s going to have a son. And through this son all of the nations of the world are going to be blessed.” (Genesis 18:10–18) That son, as you can tell, that Isaac, is a picture, a prophecy, in the Old Testament of the Lord Jesus.

And then one day, God comes to Abraham, and God says to Abraham, “Abraham!” “Here am I, Lord.” “Abraham, take Isaac, your son, your only son, the son that you love, take him to a place that I will show you—not just any place, but a place that I will show you—and offer him up there, a burnt sacrifice.” Abraham knows that God is speaking. He doesn’t understand it all, but he must obey, because if God tells him to do this, the God that gave him a miracle is still the God of miracles. And the Bible tells us in the book of Hebrews that Abraham knew that God was able to raise him from the dead if necessary. (Hebrews 11:19) So they go up; they come to this place. God points out this place. It’s a rocky limestone hill. It’s called Mount Moriah. It’s the same mountain that the temple would be built upon. It’s the same mountain that Jesus would be crucified

on—Mount Moriah. There was no temple there then. This was many, many years before the temple. This was many, many years before Calvary would transpire.

Young Isaac has the wood upon his back, and he starts up Mount Moriah, just as Jesus had that cross upon His back and started up that same rugged hill so long ago. Abraham has a torch with a flame—that speaks of the burning wrath of God against sin. Abraham has a knife in his hand—that speaks of the penalty of sin, for *“the wages of sin is death.”* (Romans 6:23) And they start up there, father and son, together. When they start up the mountain, Isaac says, “Father, I see the wood. I see the knife. I see the fire. Father, where is the sacrifice?” Abraham chokes back the tears, but he makes one of the greatest statements in all of the Bible: “My son, God will provide Himself a sacrifice”—“God will provide Himself a sacrifice.” (Genesis 22:8) They get up to the top. Abraham says, “Isaac, stretch out your hands,” and he begins to bind the hands of Isaac. Now you understand that Abraham is an old man. You understand that Isaac is a strapping youth, full of vigor and strength. He could have overcome the old man at any moment. He certainly would have outrun him. But he stretches out his hands in obedience, just as Jesus said, “No man taketh my life from me. I lay it down of myself. I have the power to lay it down, and I have the power to take it up.” (John 10:18) And here the son is willingly submitting to the father and saying, *“Not my will, but thine, be done.”* (Luke 22:42)

There comes that moment—other than the crucifixion of our Lord, I believe the most poignant moment in all history. Abraham takes that lethal knife. He is ready to plunge it into the quivering bosom of his son Isaac, and an angel from heaven speaks and says, “Abraham, listen. Abraham, do the lad no harm. Don’t touch him. Look, Abraham.” And over there in a thicket was a ram with his horns, and his horns are locked in the thicket. He can’t escape. He’s caught in the thicket. He is crowned with thorns. And God says, “Abraham, take him. Offer him in the stead, in the place, of your son.” (Genesis 22:12–13) By double illustration, He’s teaching substitution. God had that in His heart and His mind. God knew what He was going to do. Abraham didn’t know it, but God knew it. When Abraham started up one side of that mountain, unseen to him, I believe that ram started up the other side of that mountain. And Abraham didn’t see it, but God knew what He was going to do. I can see Abraham with tears of gratefulness as he undoes the hands of Isaac. And they take that ram and they sacrifice that ram. And the blood of that ram comes over those stones, and that burnt sacrifice is offered.

No wonder Jesus said, “Abraham saw my day, and was glad.” (John 8:56) By faith he learned substitution. Now he named that place Moriah, and he got a name for God there: *Jehovah Jireh*, “the God who will provide.” God would provide Himself a lamb. Abraham learned the lesson of substitution: that ram for his son.

Now, fastA forward. God has now taught His people about the Passover lamb, and

thousands and thousands of lambs were sacrificed by the Jews. The Passover lamb, again, the picture of substitution: *“When I see the blood, I will pass over you.”* (Exodus 12:13) And the Jews had begun to breed lambs, Passover lambs. And do you know where they bred them? At Bethlehem. That’s where they bred the Passover lambs. Those shepherds who first heard the Christmas message—they were shepherds watching over a special breed of lambs: Passover lambs. The little lambs were being born out there in the fields of Bethlehem. But in a smelly stable, a virgin woman was having a baby. *“Mary had a little lamb—its fleece, white as snow”*—virgin born, the Lamb. When John the Baptist saw Him, John knew He was the Lamb. He said, *“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”* (John 1:29)

There came that week of the crucifixion, the week of Passover. Jesus is coming into the city of Jerusalem over the brow of the Mount of Olives, up through the Eastern Gate, and they’re shouting, *“Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna! Glory to God! Hallelujah! Hosanna!”* Jesus, the Lamb of God, riding a donkey, is going through the Eastern Gate. At that same time, these Passover lambs from Bethlehem are coming—the Lamb from Bethlehem, the Passover lambs. The Passover lambs are going through the Sheep Gate; Jesus coming through the Eastern Gate. They are all there on the Temple Mount at the same time. The priests are examining the Passover lambs to make sure they are perfect. They are looking at Jesus Christ, the Lamb, and He’s being criticized and interrogated and castigated. And they are trying to find some flaw in Him. They said, *“Never man spake like this man.”* (John 7:46) Even that hardhearted, pussyfooting politician Pilate had to say, *“I find no fault in him.”* (John 19:4, 6) Jesus could look at them and say, *“Which of you convinceth me of sin?”* (John 8:46) He was a perfect lamb.

And then, at three o’clock in the afternoon, they took those Passover lambs that pictured substitution, and the priest would lift up the chin and draw that knife under the chin, and that blood would spurt out of those Passover lambs. At three o’clock in the afternoon, they are nailing the Lamb of God to the cross—at the same time, on the same mountain where God had said to Abraham, *“God will provide himself a sacrifice.”* (Genesis 22:8) Do you think all of this is happenstance—that all of this just happened like that? It’s clockwork. It’s an amazing thing. And Jesus, the Lamb of God, bows His head in agony and blood, and says, *“Tetelestai. It is finished. It is paid in full.”* (John 19:30) *“Levitical priests, you can go home now.”* *“Passover shepherds, we don’t need you now.”* *“It is done. It is finished. The plan is done.”* God is teaching substitution: the just for the unjust.

Now before Jesus was put up on that cross, Pilate, trying to escape from a predicament, thought that perhaps he could get himself off the hook, because it was the custom in that day that one notorious criminal would be released. And they had a man there; his name was Barabbas, the son of Abbas. And Barabbas was an insurrectionist.

He was a thief. He was a murderer. He was a rebel. He was an ungodly, lascivious, evil, wicked, horrible, hateful man—Barabbas. Pilate had a plan. This was his way to let Jesus go and for him to maintain his dignity and his station with Rome. So Pilate gathered the people, and the people were clamoring for the blood of Jesus. But Pilate said, “Look. Here’s Barabbas, and here’s Jesus. Which of these do you want me to release to you: Barabbas the criminal, or Jesus, who is called Christ?” They said, “Release Barabbas.” “Release Barabbas? Well, what do you want me to do with Jesus?” “Let Him be crucified. Crucify Him!” (John 18:39–John 19:6) And so Jesus loses an election to a crook, a criminal, a murderer.

Now I want you to imagine the scene. They take Jesus and they nail Him to the central cross. That’s why in our monument the central cross is the highest: because there’s no greater love. There were two thieves on either side. But those crosses were really put up for three thieves—the two thieves who were crucified and Barabbas. It was Barabbas’ cross. I want you to imagine the scene. A soldier with a torch goes down a narrow corridor in a dingy Roman jail. He comes to a certain cell. He puts in his big key. Back there in the back of that cell, on the ground, on a mat of straw, is a man whose face is the very mirror of evil. He cringes back. The guard comes and puts the torch in his face and says, “You! Barabbas, get up! It’s time!” Barabbas says, “No! No! Please! I don’t want to go!” And he cringes back, and the guard says, “Barabbas, would you be quiet? You are the luckiest, the most fortunate individual I’ve ever known. Barabbas, you’re not going to die. You’re not going to be crucified, Barabbas. I don’t understand it. Come out here, you rascal. I want to show you something. Look over there on that hill. Barabbas, look! You see those three crosses? See the man on the middle cross? Look at Him, Barabbas. That cross was made for you. We could hardly wait to nail you up there. But Pilate says you are going to go free. That man up there, whoever He is, is dying in your place.”

Now I don’t know whether Barabbas ever got saved or not. I don’t know. But isn’t it wonderful how God arranges the whole thing so we can learn and see the lesson of substitution? Now you say, “Christ died for me.” And that is true. Say it, and keep saying it. But may I ask you to tweak it just a little bit, and change it just a little bit, and say this to yourself today: “Christ died instead of me.” That’s what it is. The purpose of the cross is one of substitution. If we could only learn that it is! You see, Barabbas was a thief. We are thieves. We’re meant to be God’s stewards, and we have failed. Barabbas was a rebel. We’re meant to be God’s servants, and we have failed. Barabbas was a murderer. And we ourselves have put the Son of God to ignominious death. He was a prisoner. We ourselves are bound with sin. He represents all of us.

There was a great preacher of yesteryear. His name was Charles Spurgeon. And, you know, some of us have a religion that’s okay to live by, but not much good to die by.

Charles Spurgeon was dying, and somebody said to him, “Now that you’re dying, now that you’re facing death, Mr. Spurgeon, what is your theology now?” He just smiled and he said, “Christ died for me”—“Christ died for me.”

All right, so here’s the first thing. Look at it again in verse 18: “*Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust*” (1 Peter 3:18)—the substitutionary purpose of the cross. Now liberals don’t like the idea of the substitution of the cross. They think that Jesus died as an example or as a martyr. He did not. He died as a substitute.

## II. The Suffering Passion of the Cross

Here’s the second thing: I want you to see in this verse not only the substitutionary purpose of the cross, but I want you to see the suffering passion of the cross. Look at the verse again: “*For Christ also hath once suffered.*” (1 Peter 3:18) Now we put on in our church a passion play. The word *passion* means “feeling, suffering.” Jesus suffered on that cross. Don’t miss this: He “*hath once suffered.*” God suffered! Tongue cannot tell, and throat cannot sing, and pen cannot write, heart cannot understand the suffering of our Lord Jesus upon that cross. Sin brings suffering—and unless you have a substitute, you will suffer for your sin. I hope you can understand this.

### A. The Emotional Suffering of Christ

Think of the emotional sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Turn to Luke 22, verse 41, and look at it. It speaks of dark Gethsemane. Jesus is facing the cross. And it says this: “*And he was withdrawn from them about a stone’s cast...*”—so how far could you throw a stone? Maybe as far as from here to the back of the auditorium, if you could throw that far. Some of us couldn’t—“*he was withdrawn from them about a stone’s cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.*” Now, watch this: “*And being in agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground*” (Luke 22:41–44)—not just oozing out, actually dripping great drops of blood. The very blood of the Son of God is profusely falling on the ground. I’ve read about this in medical books. In a time of great duress, the minute capillaries will rupture. And in a time of great stress, this is possible—very rare, but it is possible.

He said, “*My soul is...sorrowful unto death.*” (Mark 14:34) The Bible says He was in agony. (Luke 22:44) The word *agony* comes from a Greek athletic contest or a battle—either one may be used. It was called the *agon*. It means “to strive with all of one’s strength.” Jesus was in a battle here. He is battling. He’s not battling with God the Father. No, He wants the will of God the Father. He is not battling with Satan; He can decimate Satan. What’s He battling with? He’s battling with His own humanity. He knows what He is about to face, and He says, “*Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass*

*from me.”* (Matthew 26:39)

Now the cup is a metaphor for suffering. There was a cup that Jesus must drink from. What was in that cup? If we were to pass that cup through this congregation today, and you were to put all of your sin in that cup—every dirty thought, every foul word, every selfish deed, every lie, everything that you’ve ever done would be in that cup—but then pass that cup to all six billion people who are alive on the face of the earth, and let them put their sin in that cup; and then go back through time, from Adam and Eve up until the time when the trumpet shall sound and time shall be no more, and let them put that in that cup—put rape in that cup, put sodomy in that cup, put arson in that cup, put lasciviousness in that cup, put drug addiction in that cup, put demon worship in that cup, put violence and filth in that cup—and Jesus knows that because He is going to be a substitute—“Him who knew no sin God hath made to be sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21)—He must take our sin. He must put those pure and holy lips upon that filthy cup, and He must drink it down! He will not become a sinner, but He will become sin. He, the Lord Jesus Christ, will suffer that emotional suffering.

I want you to see Jesus in Gethsemane. When I see Gethsemane, I want to cry. I want to weep. See the very Son of God, with black dirt and red blood on His face, as His face is in the ground and He is praying, “Father, Father, if there be some other way, please, let this cup pass from me!” (Matthew 26:39) Don’t get the idea that He just strolled to the cross saying, “You can’t hurt me.” Nobody has ever suffered like the Lord Jesus Christ. He suffered the penalty for all the sin of all the world of all time upon that cross, and He said, “There’s no suffering like unto my suffering.” (Lamentations 1:12) Jesus knew that when He took that cup upon Him, when He took that sin upon Him, that God would have to treat Him as God treats sin—because He’s the substitute. There can be no mercy. The Bible says God “*spared not his own Son.*” (Romans 8:32) The Bible says, “*It pleased the LORD to bruise him.*” (Isaiah 53:10) And Jesus knew that He who had been in the bosom of the Father from all eternity would now become the object of the Father’s wrath—that He would be separated from God the Father. Jesus knew that the fires of God’s wrath would burn themselves out in Him. Jesus knew that He was going to baptize His own soul in hell. There was the emotional suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **B. The Physical Suffering of Christ**

And then, friend, not only was there the emotional suffering of the Lord Jesus; there was the physical suffering of the Lord Jesus. Pilate, hoping to get Jesus off his hands, thought maybe if they saw Jesus brutalized, the people would be satisfied—if they could just see a little suffering. So Pilate said, “Let Him be scourged.” (John 19:1)

Do you know what scourging was? There was a pillar or post. The Romans would take the person to be scourged and tie his hands above his head so that he’s standing

on the balls of his feet. His back would be smooth as silk. They would strip from him his clothing. And scourging was done not by one, but by two. They took a whip called a *flagrum*—with a sturdy handle, thongs of leather. Embedded in those thongs of leather would be bone and glass and lead and iron, and it was an instrument of torture. Probably some psychopathic dungeon keeper would volunteer for the job—the lictors. One would start at the front and start at the throat and whip downward. The other would start at the back, at the heels, and whip upward. And those thongs would reach around the body, and the little bit of bone and lead would pick little pieces of flesh off. They were artists. They knew how to whip a man so as to take away the flesh, expose the nerves, yet not disembowel him. It was not a pretty sight. Historians tell us, no man ever walked away from that. If anything, he crawled—if he could move at all—when they cut him down.

Then they took Jesus. He went through these mock trials—six of them, a travesty of justice. And, finally, He's there, just before the Crucifixion, in Pilate's Judgment Hall. The soldiers had a game. They called it the Game of the Kings. They played it with others before, because they, in their hatred against authority, took some figure that they could take their hostility out on—some king. And I've been there to that Judgment Hall. You can still see etched in the stones, in the courtyard of the Judgment Hall, where they played the Game of the Kings. They enjoyed their game with Jesus. They reached up and snatched His beard from His face. The Bible said He "*was so marred more than any man.*" (Isaiah 52:14) You couldn't tell if He was a human being.

Then they took their big fists. The Bible says, "*They smote him.*" (Mark 15:19; John 19:3) I mean, they're pushing Him now from person to person. He's reeling. They smote Him. Then they took clubs, and they beat Him with clubs. They said, "Ha ha! He's blindfolded. Hey, if you're God, if you're King, if you know everything, who is this that is hitting you?" And they slapped Him. They spat in His face, the Son of God. "*Christ also hath once suffered for sins.*" (1 Peter 3:18) Then they put on His back that cross, and they led Him to the *Via Dolorosa*, "The Way of Sorrows." He stumbled beneath the load. He was a strong man, but He stumbled—the loss of blood, the shock, the pain, the agony.

Finally, when He comes to Moriah—I believe the same spot where the ram was caught in the thicket; I believe the exact same spot where "*God will provide himself a lamb*" (Genesis 22:8)—they stretch Him out. They were experienced. They knew how to put the nails right where they'd find the median nerve so every nerve would be a river of pain. They put those searing nails in His hands and in His feet. They nailed Him at a ninety-degree angle. But when He is lifted up to the cross, the arms go up to a sixty-five-degree angle, putting the weight down upon the nails in the feet. When He tries to pull Himself up, then the pain is upon the hands. His throat is filled with surcharge

blood. He can't breathe. He has nausea, convulsions, pain, agony, dizziness, sweat, tears. He is suffering—He is suffering.

The Romans did this on purpose. Do you know why the Romans crucified? It was the worst form of death that man can devise. They wanted their victim to squirm on the cross, and they wanted everybody to see it. Do you know what the word *excruciating* means? *Ex* means “out of”; *crux* means “cross.” It means “out of the cross”—*excruciating*. It was out of the cross that this word comes—*excruciating*. Jesus is there in excruciating pain upon the cross, raging fever through His body! He who made the oceans and the rivers and the rain clouds said, “*I thirst.*” (John 19:28) He's there upon that cross. Do you know who He did that for? For you. You say, “Will God let a man go to hell?” I believe hell's too good for a man who walked over the blood of Jesus Christ, and who would let Jesus die in agony and blood for him as a substitute. “*Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust.*” (1 Peter 3:18) He died in agony.

### C. The Spiritual Suffering Christ

There's the emotional suffering. There's the physical suffering. But, friend, that pales compared to the spiritual suffering. The Bible says in Isaiah chapter 53 that “*it pleased the LORD to bruise him; [God] hath put him to grief*” (Isaiah 53:10)—to death. Habakkuk says of God Almighty that He is “*of purer eyes than to behold...iniquity.*” (Habakkuk 1:13) And when Jesus had my sin and your sin upon the cross, Jesus was treated upon that cross as you and I would be treated if we were punished for our sin. God did not ameliorate. God did not negate. God did not dampen down the punishment. To the contrary, Jesus didn't die for one sinner's sin; He died for all sinners' sin. He died for the sin of the whole world.

And the sin of the world was distilled upon Jesus, and the suffering was compounded upon the Lord Jesus. No one ever suffered like the Lord Jesus upon that cross! But the quintessential matter of His suffering was this: He cried out in agony, “*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*” (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34) I'll tell you why: because if you don't get saved, God will forsake you. That's why. He was taking your place! He was taking my place! And He took it all—the spiritual suffering.

David came to die. David, who wrote that Twenty-second Psalm, came to die. But David also wrote the Twenty-third Psalm: “*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me.*” (Psalms 23:4) Jesus couldn't say that. Jesus walked that narrow valley by Himself.

## III. The Satisfying Provision of the Cross

There is the substitution of the cross. There is the suffering of the cross. The last two points will be very brief, but I want you to notice a third thing here. Look in 1 Peter 3: verse 18 again: “*Christ also hath once suffered*”—“*Christ also hath once suffered.*” (1

Peter 3:18) Just underscore that. And here's the third thing I want you to see: the satisfying provision of the cross. The emphasis here is on the word *satisfying*. He *"hath once suffered."* Look up here and let me tell you something, friend: It's over. It is finished, and the righteousness of God is completely satisfied in the Lord Jesus Christ. He will never ever, ever, ever, ever face that cross again. He *"hath once suffered."* This does not mean once upon a time; it means once for all.

Now, understand this: It is done. It is finished. When He bowed His head, He cried on that cross, *"Tetelestai,"* which means, "It is finished; it is paid in full." And He bore our sins. He will not come into double jeopardy, and neither will you come into double jeopardy, because *"who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."* (Romans 8:33) His rich, red, royal blood forever hath paid the penalty for sin! It is done! *"It is finished."* (John 19:30)

In Bible times, when a man would be adjudicated guilty of a crime, he would be put in prison. They would write the charges against him and nail it to the prison door. Once he had paid his debt, they would let him out of prison. They would take that writing that was against him, and the judge would write on there *"Tetelestai"*—"it is finished; it is paid in full," and give it to him, and he could keep it. If anybody ever wanted to accuse him of that crime, he could hold that up and say, "Look. That crime has been paid for. It is finished."

The Bible says that Jesus has taken away *"the handwriting of ordinances that was against us..."*—read it in the book of Colossians—*"...nailing it to his cross."* (Colossians 2:14) And He said, *"It is finished."* (John 19:30) That's the reason I believe in the eternal security of the believer: because Jesus *"hath once suffered."* (1 Peter 3:18) When Jesus saved you, it was good for one salvation only. Friend, if it doesn't last, then Jesus would have to get crucified all over again. And He's not going to do that—He's not going to do that. It's once, and once for all.

Brother, believe it, and thank God for it. You come to Him through the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, He will save you radically, dramatically, instantaneously, and eternally. He *"hath once suffered for sins."* (1 Peter 3:18) And the Bible says of God the Father, who is infinitely holy, *"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."* (Isaiah 53:11) That's the only thing that can take away your sin.

#### **IV. The Saving Power of the Cross**

Now, let me come to the very last point, and notice this—look again in verse 18: *"For Christ also hath once suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."* (1 Peter 3:18) And that speaks of the saving power of the cross: *"that he might bring us to God."* The reason for the cross is that you and I might come to God. Did you know that

the Bible says, “*We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son*”? (Romans 5:10) God is not reconciled to you. We’re the sinners. We’re reconciled to God. The word *bring* has the idea of taking a person. It’s the Greek word *prosagagē*, which means “to take a person and bring him into the court of the king.” A person would have no way to come, except through the cross.

*I must needs go home by the way of the cross,  
There’s no other way but this;  
I shall ne’er get sight of the gates of light  
If the way of the cross I miss.*

—JESSIE B. POUNDS

If there had been some other way for you to have been saved, God would have taken it. If God could save apart from the cross, I have no respect for Him, because He did not take that way. That’s the reason the apostle Paul said, “*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation.*” (Romans 1:16)

## **Conclusion**

Look up here at this preacher now. I want to tell you something. Jesus died for you. And He brought you here today that you might be saved. “*Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.*” (1 Peter 3:18) That’s why the cross—that’s why the cross. †

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# The Conquering Christ

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 3, 1983

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 Peter 3:18–22

*“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.”*

1 PETER 3:18

## Outline

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I. Christ’s Victorious Atonement

- A. Mental Suffering
- B. Physical Suffering
- C. Spiritual Suffering

II. Christ’s Victorious Announcement

III. Christ’s Victorious Achievement

IV. Christ’s Victorious Attainment

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take your Bibles and turn, please, to 1 Peter, the third chapter. We’ve been preaching through 1 Peter under the general heading “Timeless Truths for Tough Times.” And in the providence of God, we come, today, to a passage that deals with the Resurrection, which proves that all things work together for good to those who preach the gospel. And we’re coming right to this wonderful passage on the resurrection of our dear wonderful Savior. And we’re going to read verse 18 on through the end of the chapter. All right, 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 18 and following. Our sermon title is “The Conquering Christ.” And in this passage, Simon Peter is going to be talking about what we just sang about: victory in Jesus:

*“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus*

*Christ: who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him” (1 Peter 3:18–22).*

Now the best news that this old world has ever heard came from a graveside just outside Jerusalem: He is not here. He is risen. He is risen, friend; indeed, He is alive. Because, on that day, life and death met in a tomb in mortal combat; and, life won, and death died. And Jesus’ death was the death of death. And on that cross, and in that tomb, Jesus has won a victory.

Now Peter is talking to people who are suffering, people who are having problems, and people who are having tough times. And I’ve been preaching about Peter’s timeless truths for these tough times. Now folks, there is no more timeless truth than this: that Christ was raised from the dead. That’s it. That’s a truth that science cannot explain. That’s a truth that history cannot repeat, and that is a truth that time cannot erode away: that Christ was raised from the dead. It is the basic fundamental truth—the truth of all truths. It’s the truth that proves Him to be the Son of God.

You know, they said on the cross, “If You’re the Son of God, come down from the cross, and we’ll believe.” That was the wrong question. They should have stayed outside that tomb and said, “If You’re the Son of God, come out, and we’ll believe.” And He did, my friend, because He came out of that tomb. Someone has well said, “If Jesus Christ is still in that grave, nothing really matters; but if He came out of that grave, nothing but that really matters.” I say *amen* to that.

Now Peter is, therefore, telling us of the conquest of Christ over suffering. He mentions the suffering of Christ, but he ends with the enthronement of Christ. Now I want you to see how Christ conquers. I want you to see four things in this passage before us. First of all, I want you to see His victorious atonement; and then, secondly, I want you to see His victorious announcement; and then, thirdly, I want you to see His victorious achievement; and then, fourthly and finally, His victorious attainment. I believe all of these are mentioned right here in the passage that we have before us.

## **I. Christ’s Victorious Atonement**

First of all, His victorious atonement. Look again in verse 18: *“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that...”* (1 Peter 3:18). Now look at the word *suffered*: *“Christ also hath once suffered.”* Jesus suffered as no man ever has suffered nor ever could suffer. There’s no sorrow like the sorrow of Christ. That’s what the prophet said about him: *“See if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow”* (Lamentations 1:12).

### **A. Mental Suffering**

Now Jesus, as a perfect man, had body, soul, and spirit; and, Jesus suffered body, soul,

and spirit. He suffered in His soul. He said at Gethsemane, *“My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death”* (Matthew 26:38). And the weight of that anguish—that mental anguish—bore upon Him. Know that the Lord Jesus lived all of His life in the cross.

Have you ever thought about the agonies of anticipation? Have you ever known that you had to do something that was distasteful or hurtful, and you anticipated it over and over again? The psalmist says of the Lord Jesus, *“I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up”* (Psalm 88:15). I believe that every thorn that Jesus saw upon a rose reminded Him of that crown of thorns. I believe that every roughhewn timber that Jesus handled in Joseph’s carpenter shop reminded Him of that cross, as a little boy. I believe that, every time Jesus took a hammer and drove a nail, it reminded Him of those nails that would seal Him to that cross. Jesus lived in mental anguish, anticipating His cross. *“My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death”* (Mark 14:34), he said.

## **B. Physical Suffering**

But not only did Jesus suffer mentally; Jesus suffered physically. And friend, the Bible just says, for example, in John, the nineteenth chapter, they scourged Him (John 19:1). And perhaps we read that very carelessly and just pass over it, but I’ve been doing some reading as to what a scourging was like.

Let me tell you how they scourged a man: They took him, and stretched him out, and tied his hands to two pillars. They hoisted the body so that just the balls of the feet were touching the ground; and then, they stripped him of his clothing. And his back was smooth as silk, and every muscle is stretched out smoothly. And then, they had two men who did the flogging—not one, but two. They had a whip with a wooden handle about *that long*, and in that, coming out of that whip, were thongs of leather. In the end of each leather thong was a bit of bone, or lead, or sharp metal; and, this was meant to tear the flesh. Because, you see, these men who did the whipping probably were psychopathic volunteers who took great pleasure in giving pain; these men who did the whipping were experts.

Now what they would try to do was this: remove as much flesh as they could without killing their victim. And these whips, when they struck a limb, would wrap around the limb—sometimes, several times, if it’s a small limb—and then, the men would pull the whips away, like a little boy does as he spins his top. And as the whips, which had been dipped in vinegar to make them bite all the more, would unwind, that bit of bone, or lead, or metal would pull the flesh and expose the veins and the nerves. They would wrap those things around the body. They were such artists that they could do this and take the skin away without disemboweling the person, so that he would still live. The purpose was to whip him as close to death as possible and still let him live. Historians

tell us that, if a man could move after having been flogged, after having been chastised with this whip, he never walked away. If he could move at all, he crawled away from this whipping.

Then, they took Jesus—He looked like an animal that had been filleted; I mean, His skin was hanging in ribbons—and, they took Him to Pilate’s judgment hall. And there, the soldiers made sport of Him. They put a purple robe on Him. They put a wilted reed in His hand for a scepter. They wove a crown of thorns with cruel spikes and pressed it down upon the tender nerves in His brow. And then, they blindfolded Him, and they began to play a game called *the game of the kings*.

And what they did: They had, at this particular time, corresponding to the Jewish Passover, they had the feast of Saturnalia; and, in this feast, they made sport of a mock king. And if they could not have a real prisoner to make sport of, they would make a man of straw and buffet him around—their mock king. But this time they had a very special prisoner—One who called Himself the King of the Jews. And so they made a crown for Him. They put a purple robe on Him, and then, they blindfolded Him, and they began to shove Him from one soldier to another. They would shove Him to a soldier, and that soldier would take his big brawny fist and smite the Lord Jesus. And then, they’d say, “If You’re a prophet, tell us who smote you.” And then, they’d shove Him to another one, and this one would take His beard and pluck it from His cheeks. The prophets said they tore the hair from his face (Isaiah 50:6). Can you imagine?

Then, another—He’d be shoved to another one, and this one was a foul mouth, full of spit, who would spit in the face, mingled with blood, with foul human spit, in the face of the Lord of glory. Then, they shoved Him to another one; this one had a club. Now the Bible says they smote Him with a reed (Mark 15:19). Don’t get the idea that it was a reed like some fragile limb from a shrub. It was a bamboo club; and, with that bamboo club, they battered and bruised the Lord Jesus. And with that club, they drove those nails, or those thorns, hideous thorns, into His temple. When they had finished with the Lord Jesus—blood running from His nose, His teeth loosened, His temples pierced, His face swollen, His body flayed—it would have been hard to tell whether He was a man or an animal that had been stripped of His skin. It is no wonder that Christ was unable to bear His own cross.

They took the Lord Jesus Christ to the place called *Calvary*, the Place of the Skull. They stretched Him out on that hellish machine called a *cross*. And then, they took iron nails—and, again, they were experts—they found a place right here, between the metatarsals, and in that place they put that spike, hoping to hit the median nerve, because, if they could hit that special nerve, it would send flashing pain up both arms into the upper torso.

You see, they were not interested merely in killing a man. They wanted Him to

suffer, so it would be an example to everybody else. The cross was not merely a means to execution; the cross was the means to strike terror into everybody else, lest they rebel against Rome. And so they wanted this individual to suffer as much as possible. And once they fixed Him to that cross, His arms were at a 90-degree angle. But when they lifted Him, His arms went up to a 65-degree angle and put the weight of the body on His chest cavity. In order to keep the legs from flogging around, they also took nails and drove them through the feet.

And so the feet are fastened to the cross, the arms are fastened to the cross, and the weight of the body down upon the chest cavity makes it impossible for the victim to breathe. And He's trying to breathe, and He can't take a breath. And the only way He can get His breath is to push with His feet. But as He pushes with his feet, then He's pushing against those nails that have been driven into His feet. And He gets a breath, but the pain is so great that He releases the tension in His legs. And the pain begins in His hands, and the suffocation, again, comes into the chest. By this time, Jesus is doubtless in a state of shock. His throat swells with discharged blood. The fever is raging through His body. He is in a state of physical torment that is absolutely indescribable—hunger, thirst, wounds, dizziness, cramps, shame, nausea, muscle spasms, convulsions, bones out of joint—all of these things are happening to the Lord Jesus Christ at the same time. Christ suffered mentally. His soul was sorrowful unto death (Mark 14:34). Christ suffered physically. There is no *"sorrow like unto my sorrow"* (Lamentations 1:12), He said.

### **C. Spiritual Suffering**

Christ suffered spiritually. Upon that cross, He died alone. He who had been from eternity past in the bosom of the Father, the only begotten of the Father, now has become the object of the Father's scorn, the Father's wrath. The sins of the centuries are distilled upon the Lord Jesus Christ. The eternities are compressed upon the Lord Jesus. And all of the sin of all of the world was upon Him, *"the just for the unjust."* The One who'd never known any sin became sin for us, *"that He might bring us to God."* And *"Christ also hath once suffered for sins"* (1 Peter 3:18).

And what is the suffering for sin? It is spiritual death, and Christ died a spiritual death on that cross. What is spiritual death? Not the separation of the soul from the body, but the separation of the soul from God, as Jesus cried, *"Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? ... My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* (Matthew 27:46), and God the Father, who was *"of purer eyes than to behold [iniquity]"* (Habakkuk 1:13), had turned His face upon God the Son, and, there upon that cross, suspended between Heaven and Earth, forsaken of the Father, and despised by men, was the Lamb of God. *"Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."*

Why did He die? His death—listen to me—was a vicarious death. That means, when He died, He died for us, and we died in Him. He died in our place. But not only did He die vicariously, He died victoriously; because, when He died, His death was the death of death. And the Bible says that, *“Through death [he destroyed] him that had the power of death, that is, the devil”* (Hebrews 2:14). And Satan’s time of greatest victory seemingly was Satan’s greatest defeat. Satan thought that everything was going well, doubtless. Hell had a holiday, and the envious elders looked at Him and said, “He is dead.” The proud Pharisees looked at Him and said, “He is dead.” The sneering Sadducees looked at Him and said, “He is dead.” And delighted demons looked at Him and said, “He is dead.” And He was dead. He was put to death in the flesh. He died. Jesus died. The One who said, “I am,” looks like *I was*. The One who said, “I’m the vine that is not dead,” and the vine has withered. The branch has died; the light of the world has gone out. He is dead. Christ died, *“the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”*

## **II. Christ’s Victorious Announcement**

But now wait a minute. Not only do I want you to see His victorious atonement, but I want you to see His victorious announcement. I want you to see what happened while He was dead, while His body was dead. Look, if you will, in verse 18, again: *“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh,”*—but now, watch it—*“but quickened”*—*“made alive”*—*“by”*—or *“in”*—*“the Spirit”* (1 Peter 3:18).

Now Jesus died upon that cross spiritually. His spirit was separated from God the Father, and He died spiritually; but, He was also made alive spiritually. He was put to death in the flesh, but He was made alive in the spirit. And His spirit was given life, and He says, *“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit”* (Luke 23:46). Now what happened was this: that while His body was put in that cold, clammy tomb, His body was restrained, but His spirit was released. And with that spirit, Jesus went on a preaching mission. The Bible says he was put to death in the flesh, quickened by the Spirit, in which he went and preached (1 Peter 3:19). Did you know that Jesus Christ preached while His body was in the tomb? While Jesus Christ’s body was there, in that tomb, Jesus Christ went on a preaching mission. Well, to whom did He preach?

Well, let’s see. He preached to the spirits in prison—verse 19. Well, who are the spirits in prison, and what did He preach? Is He giving people who died a second chance to be saved? No, sir. It’s appointed unto man once to die, and after this judgment (Hebrews 9:27); there is no second chance after death. Well, is He telling angels that they can be saved? No, angels cannot be saved. And yet, Christ is preaching to spirits in prison.

Who are these spirits in prison? Let’s let Peter tell us. Turn to 2 Peter chapter 2 and

verse 4. The Bible says, “*For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell...*”—and, the word for *Hell*, here, is a very special word; it’s not the normal word for *Hell*. It’s *Tartaros*, which means “a murky place in the underworld”—“*cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment*” (2 Peter 2:4). That is, there’s a certain class of angels, and these angels are chained, and they’re in a pit. They’re in a place called *Tartaros*. Here, the Bible translates that word “hell”; and, they’re being reserved there. They’re kept there, waiting for the fulfillment of God’s judgment. They are in prison.

Now Peter says that, when Christ was on that cross, He died physically, He died psychologically, and He died spiritually, but His spirit was given life; and, in that spirit, He went on a preaching mission, and He preached to spirits in prison. He descended into the lower parts of the earth, and what did He preach? Well, the word for *preach*, here, is a very interesting word. It’s not the word that means “to evangelize.” There’s one word for preaching in the Greek that we get our word *evangelism* from, but that’s not the word that used here. He’s not going on a mission to save souls, but the word that is used here is the word *kerusso*, which means “to proclaim as one would proclaim a victory.” He’s going as a herald. When a Roman general would win a victory, he would have a runner who would go in front of him, and that runner would proclaim that victory had been won.

Now that’s what Jesus Christ has done. There are some fallen angels who are loose in the world today, and we call them *demons*. But there are some fallen angels who are not loose. They are in *Tartaros*. They are under chains, reserved unto judgment. And it was to those fallen angels, those rebels, that Jesus went and announced His victory.

You say, “I don’t understand the point of all of this.” You have to understand what Simon Peter is saying. Simon Peter is preaching to people who are suffering. Simon Peter is preaching to people who have been victimized by the devil. And he’s going to tell them, in a moment, “Your adversary, the devil, goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). But Simon Peter is saying, “I want you to know that Jesus Christ has been victorious.” Do you know what Paul said, in Philippians 2, verse 10? “There’s coming a time, *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things...*”—where?—“*things in heaven,*”—where else?—“*and things in earth,*”—where else?—“*and things under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*” (Philippians 2:10–11).

And what Peter is saying is that Jesus Christ has won the victory in Heaven above, Earth beneath, and Hell below. And there’s no place where His victory has not been complete. And on the cross, Jesus has conquered Hell, and He has rendered him that has the power of death, that is, the devil, helpless (Hebrews 2:14). He has stripped him, He has shamed him, and He has subdued him. And the lowest caverns of Hell, they

know of the victory of Jesus Christ. *“Every knee should bow...and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.”*

And so Christ—we see Him with His victorious atonement. And then, we see Him with His victorious announcement. He went to the spirits in prison, and He said, “Men”—or spirits, or whatever you call those beings—“it’s over. It is finished. It is done.”

### **III. Christ’s Victorious Achievement**

But I want to say not only that, but I want you to see His victorious achievement. Now what else do we have? Well, as a result of this, we can be saved. So Peter goes on to say, In verse 20, he speaks of these spirits *“which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by”—or, “through”—“water.”* Now: *“The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us...”*—twice we’ve used the phrase “to be saved”—*“baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 3:20–21).

Now what on Earth does that mean? Well, it’s very clear he’s talking about salvation, and he’s talking about salvation by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He’s saying that by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are saved. We’re not fools, friend, for believing in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Dr. Thomas Arnold, one time—a professor of history at Oxford—said, “I know of no fact in the history of mankind which is proven by better and fuller evidence of every sort to the mind of a fair inquirer than the great sign which God has given us that Christ died and rose again.”

Jesus Christ was raised from the dead—and why? The Bible says he was raised for our justification (Romans 4:25). He accomplished our salvation. And then, in order to illustrate that, Peter gives us two illustrations: One is Noah’s ark, and the other is baptism. And Peter is teaching us that both Noah’s ark and baptism illustrate salvation. That’s why he brings Noah’s ark in here. You say, “Why on Earth did he bring Noah’s ark in here?” Well, Peter is saying, when he talks about these angels—and, by the way, their sins were connected to the days of Noah—and, while Peter is preaching, he says, “Oh, by the way,”—under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit—“that reminds you of salvation through Noah’s ark.”

You see, there were eight people saved in Noah’s ark. Noah’s ark, the Bible tells us, illustrates our salvation. You see, that ark is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now God was going to judge the world in Noah’s day. The sins connected with these fallen angels and others had caused this world to become a stink in the nostrils of God, and God is going to judge that world, and cleanse it, and start all over with Noah and his family. And so God says to Noah, “Noah, I want you to build an ark, and build it according to

these specifications.”

And then, He said an interesting thing. He said, “Noah, I want you to pitch it within and without” (Genesis 6:14). Now the word *pitch* is another word for “tar,” a thick substance. Now every sailor knows that once you build a boat, you’ve got to make it watertight. Now what Noah did was to paint the outside and the inside—within, without—with tar. Now it’s an interesting thing. The word in the Hebrew that we translate *pitch* is also translated *atonement*. Now that is not by accident. I believe that God is making a play on words. He’s saying to Noah, “Noah, I want you to put tar on the outside and tar on the inside to keep the water out. But the name of that tar is *atonement*. Put *atonement* on the outside and *atonement* on the inside.”

Now what does the water represent? The water represented judgment. But not one drop of judgment could come through God’s atonement. Do you get the picture? Not one drop could come in. As long as Noah was in that ark, he was safe from the water, which was on the outside; and, therefore, that ark becomes a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. There was one door in that ark—one door and only one. And God said to Noah, “Noah, come thou and thy family into the ark.” Now God didn’t say, “Noah, go into the ark.” He said, “Noah, come into the ark” (Genesis 6:18). That means that God was already in the ark. Had the ark gone down, God would have gone down. Friend, if Jesus fails, God will fail, for “*God [is] in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself*” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Now Jesus cannot fail anymore than God Himself could fail. Noah’s ship could not sink, because God was the captain. And God said “*into the ark*”; and, when Noah went into the ark, God shut the door. Now again, that’s the picture of our salvation, for the Bible says, after we believe in Christ, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (Ephesians 1:13).

Not only did God shut the water out, but He shut Noah in. That’s the reason why we’re so secure. Do you know that there are some people who don’t believe in eternal security? They believe you can get saved and lost again. They, somehow, have the idea that Noah was holding onto the outside of the ark, hoping that he wouldn’t fall off. No, friend, Noah wasn’t holding on the outside; he was shut in the inside. Amen? After we believe in Christ, we’re sealed. Now Noah may have fallen down many times in the ark, but he never fell out of it—couldn’t fall out, because he was shut in. The same God that shut the water out, He shut Noah in.

Now you know, these folks who don’t believe in eternal security, they believe in eternal security, but they just believe that they’re going to be secure when they get to Heaven. They think they’re going to jump into Heaven, slam the door, and say, “Boy, I made it. Hot dog! I’m secure.” Friend, let me tell you something: If you’re not secure down here, you won’t be secure up there.

I just read to you about some angels that fell from Heaven. Do you understand what I'm trying to say? Security is not in a place; it's in a person, and He is Jesus. And either you're in that ark, or you're not in that ark.

You see, the Bible says that Noah was saved by water. Now you say, "How on Earth could he have been saved by water that near about drowned everybody? How did that save him? It almost killed him." Well, it all depended on his relationship to the ark. You see, if he was in the ark, the water saved him. It buoyed him up. If he was outside the ark, the water would condemn him. You see, dear friend, it is the righteousness of God. And that water represented God's righteous judgment. It is the judgment of God that is either going to save you or condemn you.

Now pay attention. Let the water represent the judgment of God. That judgment will save you or condemn you. That judgment fell upon Jesus. Now if you let what happened to Jesus become your ark of safety, then that judgment will bear you up. But if you let what happened to Jesus—if you refuse what happened to Jesus—then that judgment is used to condemn you and to bring you down. And it all depends on whether you were inside or outside the ark, whether you're going to sail over or sink under—you see? The water that brought judgment to some brought buoyancy and deliverance to others.

And so this is what Peter is saying: He's saying that being saved is like being in Christ. He is our ark of safety. And then, Peter, you see, he goes from one thing to another. First of all, he starts talking about the angels. That reminds him of the ark, and the ark reminds him of water; and, water reminds him of baptism—logical, if you'd just follow it, see?

Now he starts talking about baptism. He'll say, "Oh yeah, also, '*baptism doth also now save us*'—ah, but wait a minute—"*(not the putting away of the filth of the flesh...)*" (1 Peter 3:21). Friends, you could be baptized in that pool so many times that the tadpoles would have your Social Security number, and that still would not save you if all that happened was that the water touched the skin. Peter is making clear that he is not talking about what some people call *baptismal regeneration*. Well, you say, "Right there, it says..." The Bible says, in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 13: "*For by one Spirit [have] we all baptized into one body*" (1 Corinthians 12:13). The Holy Spirit puts us into Christ, just as Noah was put into that ark. You see, I am placed into the Body of Christ.

Now Christ is my ark of safety. It is the Holy Spirit that puts me into the Body of Christ, "*for by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body*"; that's the baptism that saves us. Now water baptism pictures that. Notice the figure, or notice what he says: "*The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us*" (1 Peter 3:21). That's convoluted language, in a way, in the old King James English, but what it says is this in plain English, I believe: "What baptism figures saves us." That's exactly... The word *like*

*figure* is *antitupos*, and it means “a type” or “an illustration.” Water baptism is a picture, a type, of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That’s what Peter is saying. “The like figure, even baptism”—what baptism figures—“saves us.”

Water baptism is a figure of Spirit baptism. Water baptism is a symbol of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And folks, let me just tell you something: Some people think we Baptists make too much of water baptism. Somebody says, “When it comes to baptism, Baptists are all wet.” Well, yeah, we’re all wet all right, because we believe in baptism by immersion. I want to tell you why we believe it. We believe it because the Bible teaches it. I’m not trying to be a smart aleck, and I’m not trying to tell you only Baptists are going to Heaven. I am saying that baptism pictures the death, and burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Then, you ought to be baptized by a like figure. You see, the Bible says, in Romans chapter 6: “*Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*” Now listen to this—Paul tells us, “*For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness*”—or, the figure—“*of his resurrection*” (Romans 6:4–5).

You see, when I got saved, they baptized me. Now why did they take me, put me in that pool, and immerse me? Well, that was my funeral. They fixed my hands like a man that’s dead, and they laid me back under that water. That water was a liquid tomb, and I went under that water, just as the people in Noah’s day who weren’t inside the ark were drowned. I went under that water. It symbolized my death and my burial. The old Adrian Rogers is dead; he’s buried. He’s underneath the water of judgment. He’s in the grave of God’s judgment. Death is passed upon him. That’s what happened. It was my funeral. The only mourner there was the devil, and he hated to see me die, because he depended so much on me. But his old friend, Adrian, died and was buried.

But wait a moment. Not only was I buried in the likeness of Christ’s death, but I also was in the likeness of His resurrection. I came up out of that water, raised to walk in the newness of life. Baptism pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. And I want to say to everybody listening to me: If you’ve not had a believer’s baptism, you ought to—you ought to. You say, “It doesn’t make much difference.” Who are you to say what Jesus commanded doesn’t make much difference? He said, “Go into all the world *‘and baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you’*” (Matthew 28:19–20). Don’t say it doesn’t make any difference. You see, it is God’s way of preaching—figuring the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

Suppose you’d never seen my lovely wife, Joyce, and you say, “Adrian, do you have a picture of Joyce?” “Sure do. Lookie there.” And it’s a picture of a racecar. You say,

“Well, that doesn’t—you know—that doesn’t even look like a woman, much less Joyce.” “Oh, let me show you another one.” This one’s a picture of Lassie; and you say, “Wait a minute. You’re showing me a speedboat; you’re showing me a collie. I want to see a picture of your wife.” “Well, any ole’ picture will do.” That’d be stupid, wouldn’t it? That’s what some people say about baptism: “Well, any ole’ picture will do. We’ll pour a little water, sprinkle a little water.” You can’t picture death, burial, and the resurrection by sprinkling. You just can’t do it.

Suppose I die physically, and you took me out to the cemetery. You say, “We’re going to bury the ole’ preacher,” and you sprinkle a few grains on my head and left me to bake in the sun. Wouldn’t that be a disgrace? Now look, if I die, I want you to bury me. Now make sure I’m dead. But I want you to bury me. I want you to put me under.

Listen to me, friend. I’m not trying to be a smart aleck. The Bible says, “*We are buried with him by baptism...*”—emphasis mine—“*we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*” (Romans 6:4). And what Peter is saying—Peter is saying, Jesus, on the cross, made an atonement. Jesus, on the cross, made an announcement. And then, my dear friend, Jesus made a victorious achievement—He saved us by His resurrection. Don’t you think the devil would love to get that picture out of the Church?

You see, the reason... We’re going to see some folks baptized at the end of this service, and every one of them who’s baptized will be preaching a sermon. They’ll be saying, “I believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.” That’s the figure of what saves us. “*The like figure*”—the thing that baptism figures—“*doth also now save us*” (1 Peter 3:21). This is “the gospel which we preached unto you: how that Christ died for our sins, how that he was buried, how that he was raised again the third day” (1 Corinthians 15:1–4).

#### **IV. Christ’s Victorious Attainment**

Well, I’ve got to leave that point and get to the last one, so I can get to the invitation. Not only was there a victorious atonement, not only was there a victorious announcement, not only was there a victorious achievement—salvation, but, friend, there has been, now, a victorious attainment. Look in verse 22—it speaks of our Savior, “*who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authority and powers being made subject unto him*” (1 Peter 3:22).

#### **Conclusion**

Friend, there is no area where His victory is not complete. Heaven above, in my heart; Hell beneath. Christ is Lord. We have victory in Jesus. He has ascended the high hills of

Heaven. He is not behind us, in a tomb; He's above us, on a throne. And within our hearts, He is Lord.

*Living, He loved me;  
Dying, He saved me;  
Buried, He carried my sins far away;  
Rising, He justified, freely forever.  
One day He's coming –  
Oh, glorious day!*  
—J. WILBUR CHAPMAN

I'd like every head bowed, and every eye closed. †

# How to Win the War with Sin

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: May 15, 1988**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 4:1–6**

*“Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;”*

1 PETER 4:1

## Outline

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## Introduction

First Peter chapter 4. And we're going to be talking on this subject: "How to Win in the War with Sin." Now folks, we're in a battle with sin. I want to tell you three things that sin does: Sin dominates, and then sin dissipates, and then sin destroys. Sin fascinates, and then it assassinates. Sin thrills, and then it kills. Public enemy number one is sin, and sin is at war with you, and you'd better learn how to be at war with sin. Don't play with sin. If you want to know how ugly and dirty sin is, see what sin did to Jesus on the cross. Sin murdered Jesus. Sin murdered Jesus. Yes, He died willingly, voluntarily and vicariously. But it was because of sin that Christ was nailed to the cross.

If there's any sin in your heart, in your life unconfessed, un-repented of, I don't care how small you may think it is, you'd better be done with it. You had better learn how to treat sin like sin treats you. Because sin will have no mercy on you, you should have no mercy on sin. There's a war that's being waged against you. And I want to tell you how to win in the war with sin, okay?

Now let's begin reading here—1 Peter chapter 4, verse 1: "Forasmuch, then, as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries, wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you; Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."

Now look up here and let me tell you something. Jesus Christ did not come to this earth and die on the cross to save you from hell. Jesus Christ came to this earth and died on the cross to save you from sin. The Bible says, Matthew chapter 1, verse 21, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sin." Now if you're saved, you'll not go to hell. But He came to save you from sin. And my dear friend, if He hasn't saved you from sin, He hasn't saved you from hell. And if Jesus Christ cannot deliver you from sin, He will not deliver you from hell.

And as a matter of fact, if the only thing that keeps you from sinning is your fear of going to hell, I doubt you've ever been saved anyway. It ought to be the love of God that constrains you. It ought to be the Christ and the new life in you that keeps you from sinning. So many people simply want fire insurance. And thank God we have fire insurance.

But you see, there's something that Augustus Toplady called "the double cure" that I want to speak about tonight. You remember the grand song that we sing, "Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee. Be of sin the double cure, save from wrath and make me pure"? That's "the double cure." Now if He just simply saves you from wrath, but He doesn't make you pure, that is not real salvation. Saving from wrath deals with the penalty of sin. Making you pure deals with the power of sin. Again, we sing this song: "He breaks the power of cancelled sin; He sets the prisoner free. His blood can make the foulest clean, His blood availed for me."

You are to be having victory in the war with sin. Now many Christians are living defeated lives, and they are not winning in the war with sin. Now my dear friend, I want to tell you this: you may be defeated, but defeat is not necessary, and victory is expected. Okay? Learn that. "How to Win in the War with Sin."

## **I. Sin Dominates**

Now in the introduction, I told you that sin does three things. First of all, sin Dominates; then sin dissipates; and then sin destroys. Now I want to show you how to deal with

those things. First of all, let's think of the dominating power of sin, and learn that we don't have to be controlled by it. Look in verse 1: "Forasmuch, then, as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind." Now the word *arm* means just like a man would arm himself for a battle. It actually has the idea of taking artillery. And in here it has the idea of heavy artillery. "Arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God."

#### A. **Substitution**

Now God's method of dealing with sin is always death—always death. The only way that you can deal with sin is through death. And the death of the Lord Jesus Christ was, first of all, substitutionary. That's the very first thing you want to learn about the death of the Lord Jesus. It was a substitutionary death. Look again in chapter 4 and verse 1: "As Christ hath suffered for us..." Just underscore the phrase "for us." You might write it down this way: "Christ has suffered instead of us, in our place."

Back up, if you will, to chapter 3 and verse 18: "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." The more liberal people get, the more they like to do away with the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is repugnant to them. But my dear friend, you cannot preach the gospel of Christ and victory over sin without the truth, the doctrine, of the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross. "Christ hath also suffered for us, the just for the unjust." He died for us.

Robert Moyer put it this way: "He was forsaken by God that we might be favored of God. He entered into the prison house that He might set the prisoners free. He went down into the bottom of the pit that He might lift us up to the bosom of the Father. He went into the awful gloom that we might enter into the Glory. He endured the sinner's pain that we might enjoy the Savior's presence. He lost the sunshine of divine smile that we might bask in the sunshine of divine love. For a moment He was separated from God that for an eternity we might be united with God. He bore the burden to bring us the blessing. His hands were nailed to the tree that in His arms He might bear us to the throne. God entered into humanity for death that we might enter into life. Where sin brought man, love also brought our Lord that where He is now we also may be." I think that's well written. It speaks of the substitutionary death for our sins. Your sin debt is paid for.

But not only is there the doctrine of substitution, there's another doctrine that you need to learn before you will have victory over sin, and before you will win in the war with sin, and that is the second doctrine that deals with His death. And it is called the doctrine of identification. Now I hope you'll learn both of these.

## B. Identification

Number one: substitution; but number two: identification. He died for me, but I die with Him. Now this is deep, and it's a little nebulous sometimes. It's hard to get hold of. So as my teacher used to tell me in the third grade, "Put your thinking cap on," okay?

Now we died with Him. Look at verse 1 again: "Forasmuch, then, as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin."

Now what he's saying is that, when Jesus died, you died also. When Jesus died, He ceased from sin. Now does that mean that Jesus was a sinner? Oh no. But it does mean that Christ took our sins and carried them to the cross. And there on the cross He paid the sin debt. And when He bowed His head, He said, "It is finished." That means He was done with sin. I mean, He's finished with it. The power of sin that nailed Jesus to the cross has no more power over Him. He is finished with it. He ceased with it. It is done. And likewise, you arm yourself with the same mind.

The sin that had no more power over the Lord Jesus when He took our sins to the cross has no more power over you because you died with Him. His death had your name on it. That's what the Apostle Paul meant when he said in Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ." "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live. Yet not I but Christ liveth in me." When Jesus died, you died.

What does that mean? It means that the devil has no more authority in your life. Did you know before you got saved, there was no way possible that you could live the Christian life because you were a slave of Satan? Everybody is somebody's slave. Either you're going to be a slave of Satan or a servant of Christ, but a slave you will be.

And Satan had a legal hold on your life. You were sold into sin, the Bible teaches. The Bible says, "The whole world lieth in the wicked one" (1 John 5:19). And all Satan had to do was say, "Jump," and you'd say, "How high?" You say, "Well I did I wanted to do." Yes, but you didn't do what you ought. You were free to sin, but you were not free to live right until Christ died. And when Christ died, He broke the power of cancelled sin; He set the prisoner free. And the shackles of sin were broken. And the devil has no more authority in your life. Now you need to learn that. When He died, He died for you, and you died with Him.

Now he's not saying that when he says, "you have ceased from sin," he does not mean that you will no longer sin. But what He means is that you need not sin; you're no longer controlled by sin. And so, first of all, I said that sin dominates. But the death of Jesus Christ has broken the dominion of sin.

## II. Sin Dissipates

Now here's something else sin does. Sin not only dominates, but sin dissipates. Why

does the devil dominate you? So he can corrupt you. But you see, you no longer need to be controlled by the corruption of sin or no longer need to be corrupted by sin.

Notice here in verses 2 and following, the Bible says we ceased from sin, we are done with it, "that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revelings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries, wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you."

Now what Peter has done, Peter has contrasted two lifestyles. In verse 2, look at this phrase—you're going to see it down at the bottom: "the will of God." Underscore that. And then in verse 3, in the middle of that verse, you're going to see another phrase: "the will of the Gentiles." Now when he says "Gentiles" here, he doesn't just simply mean non-Jews, although it means that, roughly speaking. But we would say today "pagans." What he's saying is, "Here's a godly lifestyle," verse 2; "Here's a pagan lifestyle," in verse 3. The will of God and the will of the Gentiles: that's what he's contrasting here. He's talking about the dissipated life, and he's talking about the dedicated life; the will of God and the will of the Gentiles.

Now I want you to see what I'm going to call the tragedy—the tragedy—of a dissipated life. I want you to see how sin not only dominates, but it dissipates. Perhaps you need to see this so you'll really get into the war with sin.

#### **A. A Wasted Life**

Now the very first thing I want to show you about a sinful life is that it is a wasted life. Look again in verse 2: "That he no longer"—underscore the phrase "no longer"—"should live the rest of his time"—underscore the phrase "the rest of his time." Look in verse three: "For the time past of our life may suffice us."

Notice how Paul is all wrapped up with the idea of time. That is, what he is saying is: "You've wasted enough time living for the devil." The best thing you can say about sin is that it is a colossal waste of time—a colossal waste of time. You just, you're wasting time. Every day without Jesus is a wasted day.

I don't know who first said this, but it is so true: "'Tis one life, will soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last." I believe in deathbed repentance. I believe that people can be saved on their deathbed. I believe the thief on the cross was saved in what we would call a deathbed repentance.

Someone may be listening to me tonight by radio. Maybe you're in a hospital room tonight. Maybe you'll never leave that hospital bed. And if you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ, I beg you, call out to Him. Say, "God, have mercy upon me, forgive my sin, and save me." And if you mean it, I promise you He will save you right where you are. If you never leave that hospital room, He will save you. But what a colossal waste

of time to live all your life and then call on Jesus. Thank God that you call on Jesus.

But do you know what Billy Sunday said that deathbed repentance was? Billy Sunday said that deathbed repentance was "burning the candle of life for the devil and then blowing the smoke in God's face." Oh, God is a God of mercy. But oh, in times past, that's the way you walked; that's the way you lived. You wasted that life.

I'm so glad I got saved as a teenage boy. I wish I'd been saved earlier. I'm glad, young people, I don't know what it is to be drunk. I'm glad I don't know what it is to smoke marijuana. I'm glad I never had the nicotine habit. I'm glad that I've only been to bed with one woman, and that is the woman that I married. I'm glad that I was a virgin when I went to the marriage altar. I'm glad that I've lived that kind of life. I'm not ashamed of the fact that I've lived that kind of a life. I'm glad I knew Jesus Christ when I was in high school and could witness to my high school buddies and tell them about Jesus. I'm glad that I've been able to live this life for Christ. I have not been what I ought to be. But I thank God for the saving grace of God that I can look back on these many, many years of serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Friend, I want to tell you the best thing that you can say about sin: It's a Wasted Life—it's a wasted life.

### **B. A Wicked Life**

Not only is it a wasted life; it's a wicked life. Look again in verse 3, as he begins to describe that life. First of all, he calls it a life of lasciviousness. Do you know what this means? It means sin that shocks and sin that disgusts. We have a generation of young people today who've forgotten how to blush. Lasciviousness. I was reading a newspaper last week and there was a picture of a young girl, a beautiful young girl. She was talking about posing in the nude. She said, "I don't have any hang-ups about my body." I thought, "What a shame." I wonder what her mama thinks. Maybe her mama's proud of her—I don't know. Lasciviousness.

We have things now called "gay pride." Lasciviousness. Wickedness. Sin. Where we ought to hang our heads, we don't do that anymore. We're proud, a generation of unblushables.

But not only are they unashamed; they're unsatisfied. Look again in this thing. He speaks of lusts. Now what is *lusts*? It just simply means unsatisfied desires. It may mean sexual lusts. But it just simply means people who are ever searching and never able to find the meaning.

*"Friends all around me are trying to find  
what the heart yearns for by sin undermined.  
I have the secret, I know where 'tis found,  
only true pleasures in Jesus abound."*

He speaks of excess of wine. They feel that somehow happiness and peace come

out of the mouth of a bottle or a pill. Not only are they unashamed and unsatisfied, but they're unruly.

Look at that word *revelings*. You know what it means? It's a Greek word that means wild parties that end in orgies. I looked this word up in a Greek word study. I was amazed at one of the definitions. It was "a party of revelers parading the streets." I thought of that St. Patrick's Day parade in Memphis, the *pub crawl* or the *saloon slither*, or whatever they called it, and these people who are proud of that. Revelings.

Not only are they unruly; they're unwholesome. Banquetings. This doesn't mean going to a meal. It has the idea, literally, of a drunken feast.

Then, not only are they unwholesome, but they're ungodly, abominable idolaters. You say, "Well, Pastor, now my goodness, I haven't done all of those things. I haven't done most of them; maybe I haven't done any of them, very much.

I read something in the newspaper a while back. It really caught my eye. It took place in South Africa. A woman was passing a haystack, according to our Memphis Commercial Appeal, and she saw the tail of a snake. She thought she'd pay her respect to that snake, so she got a stick and hit it. Minutes later—are you ready for this?—she was wrestling with a 17-foot-long python that was in that haystack. She hit the tail, about that long, sticking out. And if a man had not come along with a fencepost and killed that snake, according to the newspaper, it would have crushed her to death.

Now friend, I want to tell you your little sin is only the tail of the same snake. I want you to remember this: sin is sin, and it's all connected together. You might think, "That little old sin in my life." I'll tell you what it'll do: it's going to crush you.

Listen. Let me tell you about sin, the sinful life. It is a wasted life. It is a wicked life. And here's the thing: you almost have to laugh at this next one, but it is a warped life.

Look in verse 4 of this same chapter: "Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you." Now do you know what people think about us? They think we're strange. I mean, they really do. They think it is strange that we don't run with them. Now they run like animals from one garbage can to another and they wonder why we don't run with them.

Now look there at the word *excess*. Do you see the word *excess*? The word *excess* has here the idea of something that overflows and runs down into a crevice or into a ditch. What he's talking about is just a gutter life, this overflowing filth that runs down into the ditch. Now he speaks of excess of riot. Look at the word *riot*. It's an interesting word. The Greek word for salvation is *sozo*. But here it is *asozo*. Now in other words, what he is saying here is, riot is just the opposite of being saved. It is being wasted. When you put the alpha privative there, it just simply negates the thing. And what he's saying is that here is the filthiness of a wasted life down in the gutter, and it's a life that's being thrown away. It's not a saved life; it's a lost life. Excess of riot.

And they think that we're strange because we don't run with them, that we don't throw our lives away too. Did you know that we think the unsaved people are weird, and they think we're weird? They really do. And do you know who they really think are weird are Baptists? I mean, I just want to tell you they think we're really weird. And they're the weird ones. They really are weird. I mean, a person who throws his life away is weird. But they think it's strange that we don't run with them.

They remind me of the guy that went to see the psychiatrist. He had a strip of bacon over each ear and a fried egg on his head. He said, "I came to see you about my brother." They think we're the weird ones. They think it's strange that we don't run with them from garbage can to garbage can, that we're not in that excess of a wasted, thrown-away life.

And I'll tell you why they think we're strange. And you need to have sympathy for them and understand this. Friend, they only see what we've given up. They don't understand what we have. That's why they think we're strange. I mean, they only know what we don't do. They don't understand what we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. They say, "Man, you don't drink?" "No." "You don't smoke?" "No." "You don't go to those movies?" "No." "You don't read Playboy?" "No." "You don't do this?" "No." "You don't do that?" "No, no." "Well, what do you do?" I have a wonderful time—that's what I do. But they can't figure it out. They just know what we don't do.

They don't understand the joy and the happiness and the peace that we have. And I want to tell you something, friend: I'm not envious of that crowd. It's not that I just can't do it; I'd rather eat dirt. I mean it. I mean, don't feel sorry for me. Man, I tell you, I thank God for my Christian home. I thank God for the joy. I thank God for my precious wife who fixed me a meal today. We sat there and held hands, got so happy we jumped up and danced around the room. That's right, today.

I can't understand why people don't want Jesus. Man, if they knew what we had in the Lord Jesus, you couldn't keep them away with a machine gun. But they don't understand. They think we're strange. They think that we're weird because we don't run with them.

### **C. A Warped Life**

It's a wasted life. It's a wicked life. It's a warped life. That's what it is, dear friend. And you need to understand it. Now dear friend, let me say something—let me see if I can say it as I want to say it. Not only do they think it's strange, but look in verse 4: If you don't run with them, they'll also speak evil of you. I mean, they're not just content to say, "Now look, you do your thing, and I'll do mine."

You see, the life that you live is a condemnation to them. That's why they always try to get you to read that filthy magazine. That's why they always want you to listen to that joke. That's why they always want you to get to flip for that Coca-Cola. Anything they

can do to get you in it makes them feel better. And if you won't do it, they'll put the bad mouth on you. They will speak evil of you.

Now let me tell you how to keep them from speaking evil of you: just run with them. They won't speak, they don't care if you're a Christian, as long as you run with them and claim to be a Christian.

I mean, you come down the aisle of this church and you give your heart to Jesus Christ and you get saved, or say that you got saved, and then you go back to that bar and sit down and hoist a wet one, and you say to the guy next to you, "Hey, guess what? I've become a Christian. I've given my heart to Jesus." He'll say, "That's right, my good for you. You into Jesus? I'm into jogging. And let's have another drink." But boy, when you don't run with them, when you're different, that, my friend, is when they are going to begin to speak evil of you.

### **III. Sin Destroys**

Sin. First of all, it dominates. And then, it dissipates. But my friend, Christ died for you that He might give Himself to you. And the power of sin has been broken in your life. And so let's see what's going to happen now. Sin not only dominates, sin dissipates, but sin destroys. But my friend, we need to be no longer controlled by sin and corrupted by sin. We're no longer condemned by sin. Look, if you will, in verses 5 and 6. The Bible speaks of the one, "who shall give an account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."

#### **A. A Day of Reckoning**

Now what is God saying? God is saying in verse 5 that a day of reckoning is coming. God is going to judge the quick and the dead. That means the living and the dead. It refers to the people who are persecuting the people of God, those who speak evil of us. One of these days, they're going to face the judge. A day of reckoning is coming for the lost.

#### **B. A Day of Recognition**

But verse 6 tells us that a day of recognition is coming for the saved. Look in verse 6: "For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."

Now what on earth does that mean? You say, "Pastor, does that mean there's a second chance to be saved after you die, the gospel's preached to dead people?" Well, the gospel was preached. Now look at it very carefully: "For this cause the gospel was"—past tense—"preached also to them that are dead." When was the gospel

preached to them that are dead? When they were alive. It doesn't say, "Now is the gospel preached to them that are dead." "Was the gospel preached to them who are now dead"—it was preached to them when they were alive, and they got saved.

Now men judged them in the flesh. They said, "They're weird; they're not worthy to live." And they put many of them, out of judgment, to death. And many of these Christians that Peter was talking to were put to death. But listen. That was men's judgment upon them. They were judged according to men in the flesh but they live according to God in the spirit. They're God's dear children. And they're in Heaven with our Lord right now. And that's the reason Jesus said, in Matthew chapter 10 and verse 28, "Fear not him which is able to kill the body, but able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

### **C. A Day of Reward**

Now dear friend, not only is a day of reckoning coming, and a day of recognition coming, but, thank God, there is a day of reward that is coming. The Bible teaches here that our Lord is going to recognize those who are His own. And He is going to judge the quick and the dead, the living and the dead. And He is going to reward His own.

### **Conclusion**

Now what does all of this tell me? What does it tell you? Well, it tells me that when Jesus Christ died for me, He broke the power of sin. He rendered Satan helpless in my life. He gave Himself for me that He might give Himself to me. And sin has no attraction; temptation has no power. Satan has no authority that I cannot break in the power of the Holy Spirit of God if I will say yes to Christ, and let Him live His life in me and through me.

# The Conquering Christian

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 10, 1983

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 Peter 4:1–6

*“Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.”*

1 PETER 4:1

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Conclusion

## Introduction

And, that leads right into our message, “Timeless Truth for Tough Times.” I want you to turn to 1 Peter 4, and today, we come to the first six verses in that chapter. We’ve been studying 1 Peter. It’s been a real blessing to my heart. Last week, we talked about “The Conquering Christ,” and today, we’re going to be talking about “The Conquering Christian,” because the Bible says, “*As he is [in this world], so are we*” (1 John 4:17)—not as He is in heaven, but as He is right here. He’s victorious; then, so are we to be

victorious. So, we're going to be talking about the conquering Christian—how to live a life of victory over sin.

Let's read it together. All right, 1 Peter 4:1: *"Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."* (1 Peter 4:1–6) And, in these verses, Simon Peter is talking to you—to us—about victory over this matter of sin through the cross of Jesus Christ.

Now, I want to tell you something; I want you to pay attention: Jesus Christ did not come into this world to save us from hell; Jesus Christ came to save us from sin. Matthew 1:21: *"thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."* (Matthew 1:21) Right? From their sins. Now, I'm not saying if you're saved, you won't go to...that you're going to hell—of course not. You're not going to hell if you get saved. But friend, not going to hell is the byproduct of being saved from sin. *"Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."* (Matthew 1:21)

Now, I want to say something else: it didn't say He was going to save His people in their sin but from their sin. Has the power of sin been broken in your life? If not, you've never been saved. *"Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."* (Matthew 1:21) It's going to be a sad day at the judgment bar for some of these rooting, tooting, shooting church members who are living a lifestyle of sin who have their name on the church roll, never been born again. *"Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins."* (Matthew 1:21) We are to live victorious lives. So many people are just looking for fire insurance. They don't want to go to hell. But friend, that's not enough. I love that song that we sing:

*Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee;  
Let the water and the blood,  
From Thy wounded side which flowed.*

Now, watch this phrase:

*Be of sin the double cure;  
Save from wrath and make me pure.*

—AUGUSTUS M. TOPLADY

Have you had the double cure? “Saved from *wrath*”—that’s the penalty of sin. “Make me pure.” That’s saved from the power of sin. The double cure—saved from wrath and make me pure.

Let me illustrate. I read years ago about a man who was languishing in a prison, and they came to this man, to his prison cell, and they thrust a piece of paper through the bars and said, “It is your pardon. The queen has pardoned you. You are a free man.” And, this man seemed to have no joy; he seemed to have no exhilaration. They thought perhaps he didn’t understand it. They said, “Don’t you understand? You’re a free man. The queen has pardoned you.” With this the man unbuttoned his jacket and showed a cancer in his chest that was eating away his life, and he said, “What can the queen do about this?” What good is it, friend, to have a pardon if we’re still being consumed with sin? You see, there needs to be the double cure—“saved from wrath and make me pure.”

Our Lord needs to do something within us about this thing called “sin” that is consuming the lives of so many. And so, here, Peter is talking to us about how to be victorious over the power of sin. You see, sin will do three things to you: first of all, sin will control you; and then, sin will corrupt you; and then, sin will condemn you. Now, Peter is dealing with sin here, and he’s showing us how the cross of Jesus Christ breaks the control of sin, and how the cross of Jesus Christ removes the corruption of sin, and how the cross of Jesus Christ destroys the condemning power of sin in our hearts and in our lives.

## **I. Jesus Released Us from the Control of Sin**

Now, with that, by way of introduction, let’s just look at the passage before us. And incidentally, if you don’t have a Bible with you, reach there into the pew before you and get a Bible out. And, turn to 1 Peter 4. You’ll get so much more out of any message if you’ll just handle the Word of God, and look to it, and read it along with us. Now, verse 1: “*Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.*” (1 Peter 4:1) Now, in this verse, Peter touches on two tremendous doctrines. One is the doctrine of substitution; the other is the doctrine of identification. The doctrine of substitution is that Christ died for us. The doctrine of identification is we died with Him. He died for us, and we died with Him.

### **A. The Doctrine of Substitution**

Now, He died for us. Notice what it says: “*Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us.*” (1 Peter 4:1) His death upon the cross was a substitutionary death. We already have preached on 1 Peter 3:18—how that “*Christ...hath [died] for [our] sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.*” (1 Peter 3:18) That is, His death was a

payment in full for the penalty of my sin, and it was a substitutionary death. And, He paid the sin debt in full. His death had my name on it.

Now, therefore, He died for me. Now, I've already preached on that, but Peter tells us that when He died, that is, He paid the price in full. Look down at the last part of verse 1. He goes on to say, "*For he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.*" (1 Peter 4:1) Now, the One who has suffered in the flesh is the Lord Jesus. He tells us in the first part, "*Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh.*" (1 Peter 4:1) So, he's talking about the Lord Jesus. And then, it says, "*He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.*" (1 Peter 4:1) Does that mean that Jesus quit sinning? Of course not. Jesus never sinned. What does it mean, therefore, when it says, "*He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin*"? (1 Peter 4:1) This word "hath ceased from sin" means He's finished with it; He's done with it. When He bowed His head and said, "*It is finished,*" (John 19:30) it was. It's done. He doesn't have to deal with sin any more. Friend, Jesus Christ knew no sin before He came into this world. He took our sins upon Him. He dealt with those sins, and He's finished with that. I mean, it's done. The power of sin is broken, and Jesus says, "*It is finished.*" (John 19:30) He has "ceased from sin"—He doesn't have to deal with sin any more. Now, that is, He died for us.

#### **B. The Doctrine of Identification**

But now, secondly, we died with Him. Now, you see, look, if you will again, in verse 1. He says, "*Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same mind.*" (1 Peter 4:1) That is, what happened to Jesus should happen to you. That is, not only did He die for you, but we died with Him. "*Arm yourselves with the same mind.*" (1 Peter 4:1) And, this word *arm* means "to take artillery." He's talking here about the artillery of heaven that shall overcome the artillery of hell. I did a word study on this word *arm*, and it means not only "to arm yourself," but "to arm yourself with heavy artillery"—that is, as over against weak or small artillery. It's like the devil has a hand grenade but you've got a tank. That's what he's saying here.

Now, "*greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*" (1 John 4:4) He's going to give you some great truth. He's going to help you to put on the armor of God, that you may learn to live victoriously in these tough times in which we live. "*Arm [yourself] with the same mind*"—that is, as Christ was done with sin, so should you be. As Christ was done with sin—"he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin." (1 Peter 4:1) Well, if He died; and sin has no more demand upon Him because God's way of dealing with sin is death; and once someone dies, the penalty is paid; then, if you have died with the Lord Jesus Christ, then you, too, should be done with sin. That we died with the Lord Jesus—now, we call this "the doctrine of identification." That is, we were identified with the Lord Jesus in His death.

Now, you know, somebody says, "Well, Brother Rogers, I really don't understand

how someone dying two thousand years ago—how is that going to change me life here in the twentieth century?” Well, I’m glad you asked because I’d like to answer it. In Galatians 2:20, Paul said—listen: *“I am crucified with Christ”—*that is, when He died, I died. He died for me. Therefore, I died in Him. His death for me was a vicarious death—*“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ [that] liveth in me”—**“but Christ liveth in me”—*and then, he went on to say—*“the life...I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”* (Galatians 2:20) He gave Himself for you, that He might give Himself to you. And now, the life that you live is His life in you. It is a supernatural life. The risen Christ inhabits you because, you see, not only did you die with Him since He died for you, but you rose with Him since He rose for you.

Now, you say, “Brother Rogers, this is kind of complicated.” Well, let’s get more complicated. Turn to Romans 6 for a moment. Just put a bookmark there in 1 Peter 4, and turn to Romans 6. And incidentally, I’m going to be preaching from this chapter tonight so I want to wet your appetite a little bit. And, I want to give you three key words as we’re talking about this matter of identification with Christ and His death. We’re just going to take a little detour and go into Romans, and then we’ll be right back to 1 Peter. But, I want you to notice three words, and if you understand these three words, put them into practice, you’re going to find out that you need no longer be controlled by sin. So many people are. They’re controlled by sin because they have never really entered into the truth of our identification with Christ.

### 1. Know

Now, notice here Romans 6:6. Underscore the first word, *knowing*: *“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him”—*who’s our old man? That’s the person we were before we were saved. The old Adrian Rogers crucified with Him—*“that the body of sin might be destroyed”—*and what’s the result of that?—*“that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.”* (Romans 6:6–7) Are you freed from sin? “Well,” you say, “Brother Rogers, that’s what it says, but I tell you, my life’s a mess.” Well, then, you need to get some more truth than that. But, first of all, you need to know it. It is an intellectual fact—it is an empirical fact—that Christ died for you. And, when Christ died for you, you died in Him and with Him. Know it. All right, so the first word is the word *know*.

### 2. Reckon

Second word is the word *reckon*. Look, if you will, now, please, to verse 6—chapter 6:11: *“Likewise reckon”—*underscore the word *reckon*—*“reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it [to] the lusts thereof. Let not*

*sin therefore reign in your mortal body.*” (Romans 6:11–12) *“Reckon [yourself] to be dead.”* (Romans 6:11) Now, what does the word *reckon* mean? The word *reckon* is a bookkeeping term. It’s like a man reckons a balance on a ledger. What Paul is saying here is, “Bank on it”—“bank on it.” He’s not trying to get you to feel a certain way about it. He’s not trying to get you to be emotional about it. He’s trying to get you to be very factual about it. This is something that you do—not by closing your eyes and pretending. You know, like the little boy said, “Faith is believing something to be ain’t so.” No, no, no, no, that’s not faith. We’re not talking about pretending; we’re talking about something that is real and factual. And, once you know it, then you reckon on it. Feelings don’t have anything to do with it.

### 3. Yield

Now, the third word—not only must you know, and not only must you reckon, but there’s still one more step, because you can know it and reckon on it and still not have that victory. But, let me give you the third word: it is the word *yield*—*yield*. Turn to chapter 6:13: *“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin”*—now, what are my members? He’s talking about my hands, my eyes, my ears, my mouth, my feet, my body. I don’t yield this body to the devil to sin. I don’t have to. Now, listen to what he says—*“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin”*—but now, watch it—*“but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God”*—now, put a star by verse 14—*“For sin shall not have dominion over you.”* (Romans 6:13–14) You do not have to be a slave to sin through the cross of Jesus Christ. *“He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.”* (1 Peter 4:1) He’s done with it. When Jesus died, I died. And, when Jesus was finished with sin, so can I be, for the Bible says, *“Let this mind be in you.”* (Philippians 2:5) That’s what Peter is saying.

Say, “Brother Rogers, I’m not sure that I understand all of that.” All right, number one: You must know it. It’s a fact. Number two: You must count on it; bank on it. It is a fact that is applicable to your life. But, number three: You must yield to it. Now listen, God is not going to do it without you. You cannot do it without Him. But, when you just simply say, “Here is my life, Lord Jesus. I yield it to you,” then there is a supernatural power. It’s not just saying, “Lord, I’m going to do this for you.” It is, dear friend, that the power of sin is broken. And, He does it in you and through you, but you must yield; you must cooperate.

You need to be like that man out in the country who prayed, “Lord, help me to cooperate with you so you won’t have to operate on me.” Okay. We need to just simply learn how to yield to the Lord and just say, “Here are my hands, Lord. Here are my eyes.” And, sin shall not have dominion over you. Personalize it. Just say, “Lust will not have dominion over me. Laziness will not have dominion over me. Dishonesty will not

have dominion over me. Pride will not have dominion over me.” Whatever it is, just put it in there, and say, “Here, Lord, this problem, I am yielding it to you. Your supernatural strength, Lord, I’m counting on.” Friend, what Peter is saying here—that through the cross of Jesus Christ *“he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.”* (1 Peter 4:1) And, we’re to arm ourselves with the same mind. This is heavy artillery.

Now, you say, “I’m not quite certain I’ve got it yet.” Okay, come back tonight, and we’re going to replot this same field and intensify it quite a bit tonight, God willing—and the Rapture doesn’t come, and we’re still alive, and I still have my mind, and you come, and all those things. We’re going to be dealing with this tonight.

All right, now, what Peter is saying... We’re right back here in 1 Peter 4. And, look again: *“For he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.”* (1 Peter 4:1) He’s done with the dominion of sin. He has gotten release from the tyranny of sin. We died with Jesus. *“Let this mind be in you.”* (Philippians 2:5) Now, neither Peter nor Paul is talking about sinless perfection. He’s not saying that we never ever will sin, but what he is saying is we don’t have to. You say, “Isn’t that sinless perfection?” No, but I would to God that Baptists were as much afraid of sin as they are sinless perfection, amen? There are so many people today who are absolute slaves to sin. We don’t have to be slaves to sin. That power of sin was broken when Jesus Christ died on the cross. Know it. Reckon it. Yield to it. *“Let this mind be in you.”* (Philippians 2:5) Okay?

## **II. Jesus Released Us from the Corruption of Sin**

Now, let’s move on to the next point because, you see, not only did Jesus die to give us release from the control of sin, but because of that, from the corruption of sin. So, begin reading now in verse 2. He does this, he says, *“that he no longer”*—that is, the one who’s been set free—*“should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God”*—now, just underscore that phrase, “the will of God.” And now, let’s just keep reading—*“For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles”*—underscore that phrase, “the will of the Gentiles”—*“when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: Wherein they think it strange that [you] run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.”* (1 Peter 4:2–4)

Now, what Peter is doing here is contrasting two lifestyles. One lifestyle he calls “the will of God.” The other lifestyle he calls “the will of the Gentiles.” Now, the word for Gentiles here does not just simply mean “people who are non-Jewish,” but it’s a biblical phrase for “pagan,” “pagan,” “the pagans.” So, you’ve got a godly lifestyle and a pagan lifestyle. There is the thrill of the dedicated life. There’s the tragedy of the dissipated life. That’s what he’s contrasting now: the thrill of the dedicated life—living for God, the will of God—and then he talks about the tragedy of the dissipated life. And, he’s going to

mention this dissipated life here, the tragedy of sin—what he calls there “the will of the Gentiles.” And, he just tells us what he’s talking about. I like Peter. Not only does he preach against sin; he calls it by its first name. I mean, you don’t have to wonder what Peter’s talking about. One thing about the old fisherman—he was blunt.

I heard about a preacher one time who was being interviewed for a church. They wanted him to be the pastor, and they said, “Do you preach against sin?” He said, “Yes.” He said, “Not only do I preach against it; I call it by its first name.” Say, “What do you mean?” He said, “Not only do I preach, ‘Thou shalt not steal.’” He said, “I preach, ‘Thou shalt not steal watermelons.’” Now, that’s the kind of preaching we need, I believe, in this day and in this age in which we live.

And so, Peter here is just going right down the list. Now, Peter talks about the will of the Gentiles, this dissipated life, and he tells us what’s wrong with it.

#### **A. The Pagan Life Is a Wasted Life**

In the first place, he tells us that it’s a wasted life. Look, if you will, in verse 2: “*That he no longer*”—underscore the word “no longer”—“*should live the rest of his time*”—underscore the phrase “the rest of his time”—“*in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God*”—verse 3—“*For the time past of our life.*” (1 Peter 4:1–3) Do you get the thought? No longer the rest of his time—“the time past.” What Peter is saying is you’ve been wasting time—you have been wasting time. You have been wasting your life.

I don’t know who first said this, but it’s well said: “‘Tis just one life. It’ll soon be past. Only what’s done for Christ shall last.” The will of the Gentiles—the best thing that we could say about sin is it’s a waste of time. And, if I were to go through this congregation—if I had time today to go through this congregation—and find those of you in this place who’ve been saved late in life, every one of you would say, “I’m so happy I found Jesus, but I regret that I wasted so much of my life before I got saved.” Isn’t that true? Every person would say, “I just regret that I wasted so much time before I found the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and Lord.” You know, we preachers are saying to people, “Get right with God; you may die. Get right with God; you may die.” Friend, get right with God; you may live. What a joy to live for Jesus, not just to die and go to heaven. But, why waste any more time? You see, it’s wonderful to know the Lord Jesus. It is not a waste of time.

Do you know what Billy Sunday said deathbed repentance is? Now, I believe in deathbed repentance. I mean, some people don’t even believe in it. They don’t believe that you can live a life of sin and then get saved on your deathbed, but I do. There may be some man listening to me right now in the hospital who’s sick, and you’ll never leave that hospital room. Some woman listening to me right now in the hospital—you’re sick, and you’ll never leave that hospital room ’til they carry you out. I don’t mean to be somber about it. But, you’re not saved. You say, “Well, it’s too late now.” It is not too

late—it is not too late. And, if you want to be saved, whoever you are, wherever you are—anybody, any place, any time—you want to be saved, you can be saved. But now, you listen to me: what a waste that people would live all of their lives for the devil and then finally on their deathbed get saved. Do you know what Billy Sunday called that deathbed repentance? He called that “burning the candle of life for the devil and then blowing the smoke in God’s face.”

## **B. The Pagan Life Is a Wicked Life**

Oh, friend, the best thing that you could say about this pagan lifestyle, this life of dissipation, is, number one, it’s a wasted life. But, not only is it a wasted life; it’s a wicked life. Look again, if you will, in verse 3: *“For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles”*—that is, the pagan lifestyle—*“when we walked in lasciviousness.”* (1 Peter 4:3)

### **1. Sin That Is Unashamed**

Now, what does *lasciviousness* mean? It means sin that is unashamed. This is a Greek word for sin that shocks and sin that disgusts. And yet, the people who commit this sin are not ashamed of their sin. Have you ever noticed—or, have you noticed—how much of this kind of sin has been on television and in the newspapers in our city in the last three or four months? I mean, sin, as Dr. Havner said, that used to slink down back alleys now struts down Main Street. I mean sin that wants to parade, sin that wants to rally—*lasciviousness*. Jeremiah said, *“Neither could they blush.”* (Jeremiah 6:15; 8:12)—sin that’s brazen—a generation of unblushables—sin that flaunts itself. The Bible word for sin that flaunts itself is *lasciviousness*—sin that’s unashamed.

### **2. Sin That Is Unsatisfied**

And then, sin that’s unsatisfied. The next word here he mentions is the word *lusts*. Now, this doesn’t just simply mean “sexual lust,” though it may include that; it just means “strong and unsatisfied desire.” Why are people doing these things? Because, friend, they’re trying to be satisfied. There’s a yearning; there’s a hunger for fulfillment. And, they look here, and it’s not there. And, they look here, and it’s there. And, they try this, and it’s not this. And, they try that, and it’s not that—ever searching, never finding.

*Friends all around me are trying to find  
What the heart years for, by sin undermined;  
I have the secret, I know where ’tis found:  
Only true pleasures in Jesus abound.*

—HARRY D. LOES

But, you see, lusts—unsatisfied.

### 3. Sin That Is Unsober

But, not only, dear friend, are they unashamed and not only are they unsatisfied; they're unsober. He goes on to mention "*excess of wine*" (1 Peter 4:3)—these people who believe that somehow happiness and fulfillment comes out of the mouth of a bottle or, perhaps in our day, from some powder, some pill. "*Excess of wine*" (1 Peter 4:3)—they are unsober.

### 4. Sin That Is Unruly

And then, he mentions the fact that they're unruly. This word *revellings* is a very interesting word. I looked in *Wuest's Word Studies* to see what the word *revelling* really meant, and I was amazed what he said. As a matter of fact, he said it's a Greek word that means "wild parties that end in orgies that is often preceded by a parade." Now, let me give you a direct quote: "a party of revelers parading the streets." Think about that. Does it remind you of anything? "A party of revelers parading the streets." That's the word that he's using here.

I was interested to read in the newspaper, I think, Friday, about a lady—wrote a letter to the editor, talking about this St. Patrick's Day. Isn't it a shame to mention a saint in a St. Patrick's Day Parade? And, she said, "You know, we had to stay up 'til two o'clock in the morning to keep men and even women from using our front yard as a restroom, a bathroom." I'm talking about here in Memphis, Tennessee. And, you know, as a matter of fact, there are some people who are proud of that. They say, "Boy, we've really arrived as a city." You know, the Bible speaks of those "*whose glory is...their shame*"—"whose glory is...their shame." (Philippians 3:19) A parade—the Greek word itself: "a party of revelers parading the streets." They're unruly.

### 5. Sin That Is Unwholesome

But, not only unruly—unwholesome. The word *banquetings* here does not refer to sitting down at a meal, but the Greek word itself means "a drinking bout."

### 6. Sin That Is Ungodly

And then, they are not only unwholesome, but ungodly. He goes on to mention "*abominable idolatries*." (1 Peter 4:3) That is, the pagan lifestyle is a lifestyle that worships anything but God, loves everything but God, fears everything but sin—unlawful idolatries.

Now, this is the pagan lifestyle. Well, you say, "Brother Rogers, you certainly haven't mentioned me. I mean, I'll confess all those things are bad, but that's certainly not my lifestyle."

You know, I was interested to read in the newspaper a while back... I clipped this little clipping, and the title of the clipping—was an Associated Press release from South Africa—the title of the newspaper article was "Tail Was Short; Snake Was Not." And, it's

about a lady in South Africa, and she passed a haystack; and she saw sticking out of that haystack a snake's tail—just a little, short snake's tail. So, she took a stick and thought she would kill it. And, in a few moments, she was wrestling with—are you ready for this?—a seventeen-foot python that came out of that haystack. And, she just hit the tail of the thing that was sticking out—about that much tail. She thought she had a little snake. And, this article goes on to say that had a man not come along and killed that snake with a fencepost, it would have crushed her to death. Now, you may think that your sin is just a little sin, but I want to tell you, it's part of the same snake—part of the same snake. There's no such thing as a little sin. Sin murdered Jesus, and sin will crush you.

### C. The Pagan Life Is a Warped Life

Now, what he's talking about here is about the dissipation of sin, and what he's saying is that the lifestyle of the Gentiles not only is a wasted life and not only is it a wicked life, but he goes on to say it's a warped life—a warped life. Look, if you will, in verse 4. Here's almost a humorous thing: *"Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you."* (1 Peter 4:4) Now friend, not only are they going to do it; they think we're odd ducks because we don't. I mean, they think we've got a screw loose. They think it's strange. I mean, they think that we are strange because we don't do it.

Now, look at the word here *"that [you] run not with them."* (1 Peter 4:4) The idea of running with them is like a animal that's running from one garbage pail to another. *"That [you] run not with them to the same excess of riot."* (1 Peter 4:4) You see the word *excess*? Now, the word *excess* there has the idea, in verse 4, of something that overflows and runs down into a ditch, a crevice. And, that's literally what it means—a sort of a swamp or a cesspool. They think it's strange that we don't run with them from gutter to gutter.

And then, he goes on to say, "the same excess of riot." (1 Peter 4:4) Now, the word *riot* is a very interesting word. You remember the Bible says that the prodigal son *"wasted his [life in] riotous living"*? (Luke 15:13) That's very good, because, you see—not very good that he did it, but a very good illustration of this word. The word for *salvation* is *sozo*, and that's the word that's used here, only he adds a Greek prefix to it: *asozo*. Now, *sozo* means "to save," but when you put the alpha in front of it, it means "not to save"—"not to save." That is, it's a wasted life.

Here are people who don't care about saving their lives. I mean, it is a throwaway life—a throwaway life. And, they think it's strange of us—now, pay attention—they think that we're weird because we don't run with them from gutter to gutter to throw away our lives. That's what he's saying here—that we don't live that kind of a life. And, they say, "Man, aren't they strange?" Do you know what they remind me of? They remind me of the man who went to see the psychiatrist. He had a fried egg on his head and a strip of

bacon over each ear, and he said, “I come to see you about my brother.” Now, that’s the way... You know, they think we’re strange. They think that we’re the ones who need to get our lives all straightened out. Look at it—they even speak evil of us. (1 Peter 4:4) I mean, they say, “My goodness, these people will ruin a community.” *“Wherein they think it strange that [you] run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.”* (1 Peter 4:4) I mean, you’re going to be the troublemakers if you don’t run with them.

Now, let me say this: that you can claim to be a Christian and run with them, and they’ll love you. I mean, you can have the same lifestyle. You can just go in the tavern and say, “Hey, guess what? I went down there, heard that preacher preach, and gave my heart to Jesus Christ. I’m saved now,” as you lift your suds. “I’m saved now.” And, you say, “Man, that’s wonderful. Are you into Jesus? I’m into jogging. Have another Bud.” You see, he doesn’t care, you know—I mean, if you don’t change your lifestyle. But friend, let me tell you something: if your lifestyle hasn’t been changed, you haven’t been saved. I’ve told you before, *if your religion hasn’t changed your life, you’d better change your religion.* “If any man be in Christ [Jesus], he is a new [creation]: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (2 Corinthians 5:17) *“They [will] think it strange that [you do] not run with them to the same excess.”* (1 Peter 4:4)

Do you know why they think it’s strange? Hmm? Do you know why they criticize? You see, all they know is what we reject; they don’t know what we receive. All they see is what we give up. I mean, to them this is the only satisfaction they’re getting. Man, this is the only bang they’re getting. And, they say, “Man, it’s strange. You don’t drink. You don’t carouse. You don’t smoke. You don’t curse. You don’t... Man, what do you do?” You see, they think because we don’t drink from their polluted wells that we don’t have the well of salvation—because we don’t eat their molded bread, they don’t understand we’re feasting on manna. Honest to goodness, folks, I don’t envy those people; I pity them. I don’t envy the Playboy crowd. Let me tell you something: people who understand God’s laws concerning sex enjoy sex more and more sex than people who break God’s laws. Did you know that? Don’t pity that crowd. I mean, don’t envy that crowd; pity them. They’re running from gutter to gutter trying to find fulfillment. And, we know it, but they think that we are the strange ones. *They think we’re nuts—and I am, but I’m fastened to a good bolt—amen?—the Lord Jesus Christ.* Paul said, *“[We’re] fools for Christ’s sake.”* (1 Corinthians 4:10)

Now, so, what is the lifestyle of the pagan? It’s a wasted life. What’s the lifestyle of a pagan? It’s a wicked life. What’s the lifestyle of a pagan? It is a warped life, where he thinks bad is good and good is bad. And, they think it’s strange that we don’t run with them, Peter says. Now, this is not just what God has been saying; friend, that’s what God is saying right now to you today. I’m talking about some timeless truth for tough times—right now, because you’re going to be faced with this.

### III. Jesus Released Us from the Condemnation of Sin

All right, now thirdly and finally, I want you to see that because of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, not only are we no longer controlled by sin and not only should we no longer be corrupted by sin, but, praise God, we'll not be condemned by sin because, you see, sin, after it controls us and corrupts us, condemns us. But, notice what Peter goes on to say here in verses 5–6: he speaks of those *“who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead”*—and then, he says—*“For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.”* (1 Peter 4:5–6) “Now, Brother Rogers, what on earth does that mean?”

#### A. There Is a Day of Reckoning Coming

Well, number one: It means there's a day of reckoning coming. The Bible says God's going *“to judge the quick and the dead.”* (1 Peter 4:5) You know what the word *quick* means? It means “the living” and the dead. Now, with Memphis traffic, either you're quick or you're dead. Now, it literally means, though, “the living and the dead.” When Jesus comes, some will be living, some will be dead, but all will be judged who don't know Him. Now, I've told you before, you can't crawl up in the grave and pull the dirt over your face and hide from God. He's going to judge the living and the dead. So, there's a day of reckoning coming.

Now, people may laugh at you. They may think it's strange that you live for God, but there's a day of reckoning coming. There's a Judgment Day coming as surely as my name is Adrian Rogers and I stand in this pulpit. He is going *“to judge the quick and the dead”* (1 Peter 4:5)—He is. That's what Peter says.

#### B. There Is a Day of Recognition Coming

But, not only a day of reckoning coming; friend, there's a day of recognition coming. Now, look in verse 6. This is kind of a complicated verse so put on your spectacles: *“For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead”*—now, you say, “Uh-oh, when was the gospel preached to dead people?” When they were alive. He doesn't say, *“is the gospel preached to those that are dead”*; *“was the gospel preached to those that are dead.”* They're dead now, but they were alive when they heard the gospel, see. He's not talking about a chance after death. That's not it at all—*“For this cause was the gospel preached [unto] them that are dead, that they might be judged”*—now, watch it—*“according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.”* (1 Peter 4:6) Now, what happened is this: many of these people were judged by men in the flesh. They looked at these Christians in Peter's time, and they said, “They're not worthy to live.” And, they judged them, and they put them to death. And, multiplied thousands of Christians died because they were judged by men in the flesh. The world wrote them

off, but they lived unto God in the spirit. It was a time of recognition when those that the world does not recognize God recognizes.

There's another world coming. And so, there's coming a day, a time, of reckoning. There's coming a time of recognition. There is coming a time of reward, for he says they're going to live unto God. (1 Peter 4:6) It'll be worth it all when we see the Lord Jesus. And so, some of these people were being put to death, and Peter is telling them, "Don't be afraid. They may judge you. They may even martyr you. They're going to be judged by my righteous judgment, and I'm going to show the difference in their unrighteous judgment of you."

You know what Jesus said in Matthew 10:28? *"Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him [who] is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."* (Matthew 10:28) So, sin has the power of condemnation. I mean, sinners without Christ are coming into the Judgment. *"As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then"—"so now then"—"every one of us shall give [an] account of himself [unto] God."* (Romans 14:11–12) There is a judgment coming. But, if you know the Lord... I mean, because of the cross, the Bible says in Romans 8:1, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to [those who] are in Christ Jesus."* (Romans 8:1) You see, the cross—through the cross—there's no more control of sin. Through the cross there's no more corruption by sin. Through the cross there's no more condemnation by sin because in Christ Jesus, we live through Him who died for us. *Jesus—bless His wonderful name—has taken the sting out of sin. He's taken the gloom out of the grave. He's taken the pain out of pardon, and He's given us a hope that is steadfast and sure.* And, that's some timeless truth for tough times.

## Conclusion

Now, I want you to bow your heads in prayer—every head bowed and every eye closed. Father, I just thank you for your Word today. Lord, it's been refreshing to my own heart. Thank you, Lord, for letting me know it and preach it. And now, Lord, help me to live it. In your sweet name.

# A Lifestyle for the Last Days

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 17, 1983

**Main Scripture Text:** 1 Peter 4:7–11

*“But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.”*

1 PETER 4:7

## Outline

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- I. We Should Be Learning of His Coming
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- V. We Should Be Laboring Until His Coming
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Conclusion

## Introduction

Get your Bibles now, and turn, if you will, to 1 Peter chapter 4, and we're going to begin reading in verse 7. That's the prayer of our heart, and I pray—now, we open God's holy Word—that the Lord will do just that: that He'll open not only the Word, but as He opens the Word, that He will open our eyes; and as He opens our eyes, He'll open our hearts, and give us, indeed, a vision.

All right, 1 Peter chapter 4, beginning in verse 7: *“But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the*

*same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold”—or, the multi-colored—“grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 4:7–11).*

Now we’re speaking on “Timeless Truths for Tough Times,” and one of the greatest truths that I can think of in these tough times is this: that Jesus Christ may come at any moment. Notice what Peter says in verse 7: *“But the end of all things is at hand”* (1 Peter 4:7). Now having said that, I want to speak today on “A Lifestyle for the Last Days.” If Jesus Christ may come at any moment, if the end of all things is at hand, how then should we be living? And what should be a lifestyle for those of us who are here, in these last days?

You may say, “But wait a minute, Pastor. You say that the end is at hand, but when Simon Peter wrote this, it was almost 2,000 years ago, and Simon Peter said, then, that the end was at hand. He must have gotten confused, because it didn’t come. It’s been 2,000 years, and Peter said, ‘It’s right nigh,’ and it hasn’t come yet.” Well, I want to ask a question, and try to answer it: Was Peter wrong? Absolutely not. When Peter said, *“The end...is at hand,”* he said exactly what he should have been saying, because, you see, from the days of Pentecost right up until this present day, we live in an age called *the last days* or *the end times*.

Let me give you some scriptures. For example, in Acts chapter 2, verse 17, on the day of Pentecost, Peter described what was happening on the day of Pentecost with these words: *“And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh”* (Acts 2:17). And Peter called Pentecost a part of the last days.

And let me give you another scripture, if you’re taking notes—1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 11—Paul said, “All these things happened unto them”—that is, the Old Testament saints—“as examples for us upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Corinthians 10:11) Now Paul was talking. He said, “The end of the world has come to us.” I mean, back there, 2,000 years ago. Or, again, in Hebrews, chapter 1 and verse 2, the writer of the Book of Hebrews—whom, incidentally, I think was the Apostle Paul—said, “God hath spoken unto us in these last days by his Son” (Hebrews 1:2). And so all of the Bible writers speak of the times in which we’re living as *the end times* or *the last days*. Why? Because, ever since Pentecost till this present time, Jesus Christ could have come at any moment. Every Christian is, therefore, living in the last days. If Jesus can come at any moment, then, for every one of us, in any age, the end is at hand.

Now that’s what Paul meant when he said, in Philipians chapter 4, verse 5: *“The Lord is at hand”* (Philipians 4:5). That’s what James meant, in James chapter 5, verse 9, when he said, *“The judge standeth before the door”* (James 5:9)—that is, our Lord

has His hand rattling the door knob, ready to come in. *“The judge standeth before the door.”* I believe that’s what the Apostle John meant, in 1 John chapter 2, verse 18, when he said, *“Little children, it is the last time”* (1 John 2:18).

And friend, every Christian, therefore, ought to be living in keeping with this fact: that Jesus Christ may come *“in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye”* (1 Corinthians 15:52). And I—all of us—know that it is, therefore, the last time, but many Bible scholars believe that we are living in the last days, and the last hours, and the last minutes of the last days. You see, what we need to do, and I pray God the Holy Spirit will help me to do for you, today, is get in your heart and in your mind that eternity is not something way out yonder—it’s only a heartbeat away—and, that the Second Coming of Jesus is right around the corner.

“Well,” you say, “I don’t think He’s going to come today.” Well, that’s the best sign I know that He might, *“for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh”* (Matthew 24:44). Amen? So if you don’t think He’s coming, that’s probably a good sign that our dear Lord is coming. *“In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”*

Now if Jesus Christ is coming, and coming suddenly—swiftly, quickly, cataclysmically—as Peter says, that *“the end of all things is at hand,”* then what should be our lifestyle for the last days? What is the lifestyle of the child of God? All right, I want to mention five things, and these five things ought to be true in my heart and in my life, if I am living in keeping with the urgency and the emergency of these days.

## **I. We Should Be Learning of His Coming**

Number one: We should be learning—we should be learning of His coming. Look, again, in verse 7. He says, *“But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober”* (1 Peter 4:7). Now this does not mean *sober* as in opposition to getting drunk. Of course, you ought not to get drunk, but what this word means is “serious-minded.” Be serious-minded.

As a matter of fact, this same word is translated in Mark, the fifth chapter. You remember that man who was the Gadarene demoniac? That man had so many demons in him that his name was Legion. And when Jesus cast the demons out of him, and they went into the swine, and the swine went into the sea, and the sea went into the swine, and they were all drowned, they came back later; and, the Bible says they found this man *“sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind”* (Mark 5:15). And *right mind*, here, is the same word translated “sober.” That is, what Peter is saying is, “If Jesus is coming, you get right between the ears.” Hmm? You need to get serious in your thinking. You need to learn about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. There’s a lot of studying we need to do, and we need to get serious about it.

Now there are people today who are doing a lot of serious thinking, but they’re just

thinking seriously about the wrong thing. I mean, you can go to the zoo and see a monkey with a serious look on his face, but it's because he has an itch. Now what I'm trying to say is this: that we need to be serious and not frivolous. We need to be sober-minded about the Second Coming of Jesus, because, I want to tell you something, friend: You're not going to understand anything. You're not going to be able to make sense out of anything, if you leave the missing key out of the whole thing—which is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. He is the capstone that makes sense to all history.

An American tourist was in Moscow, and a Russian came up to him, and, in flawless, perfect English, he asked him—he said, “Sir, have you read Marx?” And before the American could answer, he said, “If you have, you know how it will all end, because the Communists believe that Communism is going to take over the world.”

But I want to say, dear friend, I have read the Word of God, and I know how it will all end, too. I know that the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ (Revelation 11:15); and, you cannot make sense out of history until you understand the Second Coming of Jesus.

But when you do understand the Second Coming of Jesus, then you're not going to get led down some blind alley. Then, you understand, for example, that science is not the answer, and that science is not going to bring us into Utopia. So many people think that, somehow, the scientists, they're going to get the cure for all the diseases, and they're going to get the answer to all of our problems, and then, we're going to move into Utopia. But the problem is that science, in many ways, has gotten us into the mess that we're in, because our head and our hands have outrun our hearts. And somebody has described civilization as “an ape and a roomful of dynamite with a blow torch”—and, that's about like we are. We have invented so many things that we're trying to extradite ourselves from the Frankensteins that we've created.

And we know that militarism is not the answer. We're stockpiling atomic bombs, and I believe we ought to be stronger than the Russians; but friend, that's not the answer. Sooner or later, one of them is going to explode; and then, they're all going off. That's not the answer. I mean, if that's what we're looking for, no. Listen. We're experts at winning the war and then losing the peace. We don't even know what to do after we've won the war. We we've won several, and look at the mess we're in. And so that's certainly not the answer. And social reform is not the answer. You know, I believe in more jobs. and I believe in helping the economy, and I believe in feeding the poor, and educating the ignorant, and so forth; but friend, Nazi Germany was educated, and you can go out here to East Memphis—the most affluent part of our city—and find a lot of sin per square inch. Amen? You know it's true. That's not the answer. And social reform is like painting the decks of a sinking ship. The answer to this world and the solution to the mystery of history is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

And I want to tell you something else: You're not going to make sense of suffering until you see it in the light of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Peter was talking to saints who were suffering. Now sometimes, we get the idea that if we go down the aisle, and we give our hearts to Jesus Christ, and we get baptized, then, our troubles are over. Friend, listen. *If you've never met the devil, it's because you and the devil have been going in the same direction. And you turn around—you're going to meet him head-on. And in many ways, your troubles are going to begin when you give your heart to Jesus Christ, because you're going to be a twice-born man in a world of once-born men, and you're going to be going against the tide all the way.* And Jesus said they're going to hate you. And listen. In Peter's day, many of the Christians were being persecuted. They were being lied about; they were being slandered; and they were being passed over for promotions; and their goods were being confiscated. And all of these things happen.

Well then, how's that all going to make sense? When Jesus comes, He says, in Romans 8, verse 18, that *"the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us"* (Romans 8:18). I'm speaking to some of you who are in the hospital. You're listening to me, right now, and your body is wracked with pain; perhaps some greedy malady is eating away your life, and some disease is just taking your strength; and, you love God with all of your heart. Is this all there is? Are you just going to wither and die? Of course not! When Jesus comes, we're going to receive our glorified bodies.

Friend, listen. *When I got saved, I was immediately justified in my spirit; I'm progressively sanctified in my soul; but, one day, I will ultimately be glorified in my body, when Jesus comes.* I'm saying, friend—I'm saying we need to learn about all this. If you don't learn about it; if you don't know it from the Word of God; if you don't do some sober thinking, some serious thinking, the Devil is going to discourage you, and lead you down blind alleys, and get you off base. Nothing makes sense unless you live in the light of His coming. So—number one—we should learn about His coming. Looking, again, at that word *sober*—it means that we should be serious-minded.

## **II. We Should Be Looking for His Coming**

But—number two—not only should we learn of His coming, we ought to look for His coming. Look again, if you will: *"The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch"* (1 Peter 4:7). *Watch*. We're to be looking for Him to come.

*Have you ever had a guest, or a friend, who was coming, and it was somebody who you just anticipated coming, and you kept going to the window to look out to see if they were there? Maybe you hear a car go pass, or you go to the window, and you pull back the drapes; and, maybe you don't even hear a noise, but you just find yourself just going*

and looking out the front door—just looking through the window, or whatever it is. That’s the way we ought to be living. Friend, we ought to be just watching for Him to come.

That’s one of the reasons that I believe in the imminent return of our Lord. He is coming at any moment. Peter would not have told these people to watch, if the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ had not been something that was imminent. And we are to be watching.

G. Campbell Morgan was a great expositor who lived in yesteryear, a man who really understood the Word of God and, I believe, who understood Bible prophecy. And I want to tell you what Dr. G. Campbell Morgan said. He said—and I quote: “I never lay my head on the pillow without thinking that, perhaps, before I awake, the final morning may have dawned. I never begin my work without thinking that He may interrupt it to begin His own. And every night before we go to sleep, we ought to say, ‘Well, He may come tonight.’ Every day when we get out our tools and go to work: ‘This may be the last day’s work I’ll do.’” We are to be watching for His coming. That’s what he is saying.

### III. We Should Be Longing for His Coming

Friend, we ought to be learning of it. We are to be looking for it. But—wait a minute—we are also to be longing for it. Notice what He says, again, in verse 7: “*Watch unto prayer*” (1 Peter 4:7). Now what kind of a prayer is this? It is the prayer for Jesus Christ to come. You see, when you watch for Him to come, you also pray for Him to come. Did you know that through your prayers you can cause Jesus Christ to come more quickly than He would have come? Now don’t get the idea that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is a time cut in stone that can never ever be changed.

Let me tell you what this same Peter said in 2 Peter. Turn to 2 Peter, if you will—the third chapter—and look, if you will, in verse 12—2 Peter chapter 3, verse 12—Peter says we are to be “*looking for*”—I’ve already mentioned that—“*and hasting unto the coming of the day of God*” (2 Peter 3:12)—“*hasting unto the coming of the day of God.*”

Now what does that phrase mean—“*hasting unto the coming of the day of God*”? Well, I’m no Greek scholar, but I’ve consulted a Greek scholar—Vincent—and, here’s what Vincent said about 2 Peter 3:12, that mentions, “*hasting unto the coming of the day of God.*” And he said, “I’m inclined to adopt the transitive meaning: ‘causing the day of the Lord to come more quickly by helping to fulfil those conditions without which it cannot come.’” Now that’s what this Greek scholar says this means. We are causing the Second Coming to come more quickly today, when we fulfill the conditions without which the day of the Lord will not come. Then he goes on to explain—he says, “That day being no day inexorably fixed, but one the arrival of which it is free to the church to hasten on by faith and by prayer.”

And come to think of it, that makes a lot of sense. For example, we have been

taught that the Kingdom is going to come. But how did Jesus teach us to pray in Matthew 6:10. Do you remember? *“Thy kingdom come”*—*“thy kingdom come.”* We are told to pray for the coming Kingdom. We know that, one day, there will be peace in Jerusalem, and there won’t be peace in the world, until there is peace in Jerusalem; and, there will not be peace in Jerusalem until Jesus, the Prince of peace, rules upon the throne of David. Well, when is that going to be? When He comes. And so what does the Bible tell us to do? In Psalm 122:6, the Bible says to *“pray for the peace of Jerusalem.”* And when you are praying for the peace of Jerusalem, you are really praying for the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And so Peter says, *“Watch unto prayer.”*

Do you remember what the aged apostle prayed on the Isle of Patmos? Ole’ John was there, and God gave him a revelation of all the glories, and the wonders, and the things that would take place when Jesus Christ comes as King of kings and Lord of lords. And ole’ John gets swept up in it all. And then, John closes Revelation— Revelation chapter 22, verse 20—the last prayer in the Bible. Do you know what it is—the last prayer in the Bible? *“Even so, come, Lord Jesus”* (Revelation 22:20). Amen? *“Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”* Come! Are you praying that prayer? You ought to be.

Peter says it is the last time. We are to be learning of His coming; we are to be sober-minded. We are to be looking for His coming; we are to watch. We are to be longing for His coming; we are to pray, *“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven”* (Matthew 6:10); *“Let there be peace in Jerusalem, that there might be peace on Earth”*; *“Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”*

I want to tell you something, today: I long for the Lord Jesus Christ to come. Brother Bob, you and I were in a staff meeting this last week—a staff meeting, just the two of us. Big staff, wasn’t it? But anyway, we were there together, talking about the work at Bellevue, and I said, “Bob, just think about it: Jesus Christ is really coming, and we are going to see Him.” I puddled up, and Bob puddled up, because we just got happy, thinking about the fact that this isn’t just some fairytale.

Listen, friend. I’m talking about reality. Just as sure as I’m standing in this pulpit, just any moment, Jesus Christ is going to come. And how we, as the children of God— friend, if you love Him, you—will long for Him to come. I long for Jesus to come. I long, oh... I have Him in my heart, but I long to lay my eyes upon Him. I long to walk with Him and to talk with Him, *“whom having not seen, [I] love”* (1 Peter 1:18). But one of these days, I’m going to see Him—not as He was, but as He is, in all of His majesty, in all of His power, and in all of His glory.

#### **IV. We Should Be Loving at His Coming**

And how should we be living in these last days? We should be learning of His coming.

We should be looking for His coming. We should be longing for His coming. Ah, but wait a minute. Something else He tells us—a lifestyle for the last days: We should be loving at His coming. That is, when He finds us, He ought to find us with hearts filled with love.

Continue to read here, in verse 8, now—he says, *“Above all things have fervent [love] among yourselves...”*—now, the *King James* says “charity,” but that is the translation of the Greek word *agape*, which means “God-like love”—*“And above all things have fervent [love] among yourselves: for [love] shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one toward another without grudging”* (1 Peter 4:8–9). So we are to be so filled with love, at the coming of the Lord Jesus.

Now it’s very interesting that Simon Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, would say, “Above all, have love.” Why? And he’s talking about the last days. And in the light of the last days, he says, “Have love.” Because, you see, Jesus also was speaking of the last days, and, Jesus said, concerning the last days, *“Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold”* (Matthew 24:12). Do you know what that means—*“Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold”*? That means, in the last days, there is going to be a tidal wave of lawlessness. The word *iniquity* literally means “lawless.” There’s going to be a tidal wave of crime, and immorality, and vice, in the last days. And because of that—because there will be great lawlessness—there will be great *lovelessness*.

You say, “Why?” Well, I want to ask you a question: Have you ever found yourself, in these days where we see so much crime, being suspicious of almost everybody, afraid to go to the door and open the door? Somebody calls on the telephone—“Who is it?” You double-lock your door. You ladies walk through the parking lot, and you kind of hold your purse this way, looking around. You lock the door on the car, and somebody comes to you and tries to sell you something, and you say, “What’s his game? What’s he up to? Some kind of a con man; somebody trying to get to my money.” You feel that way. We are almost paranoid about it, aren’t we, living in these last days?

*“Because [lawlessness] shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.”* And what Peter is saying is, “Don’t let that get to you. Don’t let the devil keep you from loving, in these last days. *‘Above all things have fervent [love].’*”

## **A. Why Is Love So Important?**

Why is love so important? Why did he say “above all”? I’ll tell you why, and you pay attention.

### **1. Love Is the Greatest Virtue**

Love is the greatest virtue that you can have. “Now abideth these three, faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is”—what? Tell me—“love” (1 Corinthians 13:13). The greatest virtue that you can have is love.

## **2. Love Is the Greatest Commandment**

But not only is love the greatest virtue, I want to tell you that love is the greatest commandment. Somebody came to Jesus and said, “What is the great commandment?” And “*Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment*” (Matthew 22:36–38). Now dear friend, if it is the first and the great commandment, then we had better learn how to do it.

## **3. Love Is the Greatest Testimony**

I want to say something else: Love is the greatest testimony. Now what is really going to make this city believe that Bellevue Baptist Church is truly a church of the Lord Jesus Christ? The size of our building? The amount of our budget? The way our lawns look? The television, the radio, or the newspaper advertisement? No. Listen. John 13:35: “By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, that you have love one for another.” I tell you that the greatest testimony that this church could have, and the greatest form of communicating the gospel, is that it is known down here, “Behold, how they love one another.” It is the greatest virtue; it is the greatest commandment; and it is the greatest testimony.

## **4. Love Is the Greatest Motivation**

I tell you, it is the greatest motivation. What is it that ought to motivate us to serve the Lord? What is it that ought to cause us to give over and above, and to give sacrificially, beyond the tithe? What is it that causes us to want to be faithful to our Sunday School class, faithful to Church Training? What is it that causes us to want to be here Sunday night and Wednesday night? What is it that causes us to want to spend and be spent? What motivates our hearts? 2 Corinthians 5:14: “*For the love of Christ constraineth us.*” Nothing, nothing should motivate you like a heart full of love for Jesus and, especially, His love for you.

## **5. Love Is the Greatest Confirmation**

I tell you something else, friends: It is the greatest confirmation—love is. Let me tell you something: You are wondering whether you are saved or not, whether you are a child of God or not. 1 John 3:14: “*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.*” Friend, if your heart is a headquarters for hate, you need to be saved. Love is the mark of a child of God. “*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.*”

And so it is very obvious that Peter is saying that, above all, more important than anything else, here is the greatest virtue, the greatest commandment, the greatest testimony, the greatest motivation, and the greatest confirmation. “Above all, have fervent love one for the other.”

## B. What Kind of Love Is This?

Now what kind of love is this? What kind of love is he talking about?

### 1. Love That Costs

Well, first of all, he's talking about love that costs. Look at that word *fervent*. Do you see it—*fervent*? Do you know what that word *fervent* means? It literally means, "stretched out." Now why would he say, "Have *stretched out* love?"

Well, the idea is of an athlete who is stretching his muscles to reach the finish line, to cross the goal line, to make that slam-dunk, or to hit that baseball. Whatever he is doing, his muscles are taut and tense, and he's stretching and yearning for the goal. You see, there is a price to pay. An athlete pays the price to win. And that's the figure of speech that he is using. I was reading some material on weightlifting, last week, and I just read—that's all. And it said, "No pain; no gain. No pain; no gain." See? These men—for a corruptible crown—these men are straining.

Now what Peter is saying is there is no such thing as cheap love. Love costs. This is the kind of love that we are to have in these last days.

Friend, I want to tell you I am calling Bellevue Baptist Church to sacrificial love. "Well," you say, "I don't want that." Well, you are in the wrong church. You are in the wrong church. Now we hope you will stay until you feel you are in the right church. But a love that costs.

### 2. Love That Covers

And also, a love that covers. Look at it, again. Look at it, again. He goes on to say, "*And above all things*"—verse 8—"*have fervent [love] among yourselves: for [love] shall cover the multitude of sins*" (1 Peter 4:8). Now what he is doing here is that he is quoting the Proverbs. Proverbs 10:12 says, "Hatred stirs up strife: but love covers all sins." And Simon Peter, being the good preacher that he was, used the Old Testament as a text. And what he is doing is contrasting *hatred* and *love*. You see, hatred takes joy in exposing the weaknesses of others.

You know, there are some people in every church, in every fellowship, that just seem to have the ability to find out something bad about somebody. I mean, their ears are like garbage cans. They just gather up all the bad. They just go around picking all the scabs and sores and finding fault. And when they find it, they take great delight in exposing it. That's not love. Love does not rejoice in iniquity. Love wishes that it never happened, and love tries to cover it up. That doesn't mean that we condone sin; we just cover it. There is a difference.

Let me illustrate what I'm talking about. You remember when Noah came out of the ark and got drunk? Well, you don't remember; you weren't there. A little boy asked his grandma, "Grandma, were you on the ark?" And she said, "Of course not." "Well, he

said, “Why didn’t you drown?” Noah came out of the ark, and he got drunk. Now Noah was a good man—so good that God chose him out of all those upon the face of the earth. And I’m certainly not trying to make any room for drunkenness. It was a terrible, horrible, hurtful, heinous sin, and it’s recorded in the Word of God; and, when he got drunk, he also got loose. And so the Bible tells of Noah, who lay naked in his drunkenness, in a drunken stupor (Genesis 9:21). Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham came and saw his father’s nakedness—saw his father in that drunken condition—and he was so quick to run and tell the others about it, to stir up something, and to let it be known. But Shem and Japheth took a covering and just sort of backed up and covered their father, so as to help him over this period of shame—not to condone what he had done, but to cover what he had done.

Wouldn’t the world be a lot better if we had that spirit? I mean, rather than just try to rejoice in iniquity, that we would rejoice in truth? Edgar Guest said, “Let me be a little kinder; let me be a little blinder to the faults of those around me. Let me praise a little more.” That’s what love does. Love finds somebody to praise, and love covers sins. It’s *real* love that does that.

### 3. Love That Cares

Now Peter is saying that Jesus is coming, and because Jesus is coming, we need to have a love that costs—“*fervent love*”; we need to have a love that covers; and, we need to have a love that cares. He gets real personal and practical, now. He goes on to say, in verse 9: “*Use hospitality one to another without grudging*” (1 Peter 4:9). That is, put your love in shoe leather. Help the saints.

Now in this day, hospitality was a very important virtue, because there were very few motels, very few inns. And the ones they had were filthy, immoral, and expensive—just like today. Many of them, all right? Not all of them. If you are listening, Marriott, I’m sorry. But many of the inns in that day were filthy, and many of them were not moral; and, they were very, very expensive. And they had churches in homes. And so the homes had to be open to the preaching of the gospel. Some people might gripe, “Why are they going to use my home today?” Peter said, “Do it without grudging.” Or, maybe there was an itinerant evangelist, a missionary, a pastor, or maybe there was a saint that needed to be taken care of. And what Peter is saying, really, is this: that *real* love is very practical; it’s more than words. It is a love that costs, and a love that covers, and a love that shares.

Now listen. When Jesus comes, friends, is He going to find your hearts filled with love? He will be pleased with His Church, if He finds us filled with love. You know, the great desire for my church is that it be doctrinally pure. But I don’t want it to be one of those cantankerous types of people that just find fault with everybody and everything. I believe that there are two dangerous things: One is *truthless love*, and the other is

*loveless truth.* And God help us that we will speak the truth in love and that this place will be a place that, when people think about it, they will say, “Behold, how they love one another.” And I’ll make some mistakes, and you’ll make some mistakes; but we will have a love that covers, and, together, we will give Jesus praise. And when He comes, He will not find His children bickering or quarreling, but loving one another. That’s the lifestyle for the last days. And I want to tell you: In these days of lawlessness, we had better be careful, or there will be days of *lovelessness*. “*Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.*” And so let’s have that kind of love.

## **V. We Should Be Laboring Until His Coming**

But now, there’s one last thing I want to say that ought to be true about our lifestyle in the last days. Now just review, for a moment. What are we to be doing? We are to be learning of His coming. What are we to be doing? We are to be looking for His coming. What are we to be doing? We are to be longing for His coming. What are we to be doing? We are to be loving, when He comes. But one last thing: We are to be laboring until He comes—laboring until He comes.

Now look in verse 10: “*As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God*” (1 Peter 4:10). And by the way, that’s very beautiful terminology—a “good steward.” You know what a good steward is? He’s one that manages the materials and the affairs of another. In other words, these gifts have been placed in our hands, and we have a stewardship over them. “*Of the manifold grace of God*”—do you know what the word *manifold* means? It means “multi-colored.” The rainbow of God’s grace—that’s what he’s talking about. Oh, how good God has been! And God has given us the rainbow of His grace. God has just given us the manifold—the multi-colored, the variegated—graces of God.

And we are going to have to give an account. You see, the Bible teaches that God has given to every one of us a spiritual gift. Now remember that Jesus said that we are to occupy till He comes (Luke 19:13). That is, we all have an occupation—a spiritual occupation. And we are to be busy. We are not to be sitting around on a mountain in a white robe waiting for Jesus to come. Listen. *If we really believe that He is coming, we are not going to have our heads in the clouds of prophecy; we are going to have our feet on the sidewalks of soul winning.* I mean, we are going to have to be busy. We are going to be laboring until He comes. We are going to minister. We are going to work till Jesus comes, and then, we’ll be gathered home.

*I heard of a man who was interviewing one of the astronauts who was going to the moon. And this happened, and so, the newspaper interviewer—or the radio or T.V., whichever one it was—said, “I want to ask you a question.” He said, “When you get to the moon, and after you have done all that you can do, how are you going to leave the*

moon?” “Well,” he said, “we’ll get in a lunar module, and we’ll fire the rockets. And the engine will lift us from the face of the moon.” And then, this reporter—you know, they always have a way of asking the hard questions—he said, “What if the rocket doesn’t ignite? What if the engine doesn’t work? How much time will you have?” He said, “Well, we have six hours of life support on the lunar module.” The reporter said, “I want to ask you another question: What will you be doing during those six hours?” He said, “I’ll be working on the engine, working on the rocket.” I don’t blame him, do you? No. Now listen, friend. If the end is near, the work ought to go on. The work goes on.

We’ll work till the end. We will work till Jesus comes. *We are not going to* slack up, let up, back up, *or* shut up *until we are* taken up. We need to be busy serving our Lord, and this is what he is saying. He is saying, here, that we need to minister. And he tells us why: number one—for the good of others; and, number two—for the glory of God. Now when we are ministering for the good of others, He takes all spiritual gifts—Brother Ken, you are an expert on spiritual gifts—He takes all the spiritual gifts, and He divides them into two main categories. He divides them into the speaking gifts and the serving gifts. Now notice here—look at it, if you will. And by the way, you do have a spiritual gift, and you are a steward over that spiritual gift.

Now he says, “*As every man hath received a gift, even so minister the same one to another,*”—that is, we are to do it for the good of others—“*as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak,*”—that’s the speaking gift—“*let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister,*”—that’s the serving gift—“*let him do it as of the ability which God giveth*” (1 Peter 4:10–11). Now the word *minister* means “to serve.” So these gifts—Peter puts them into the two broadest categories possible: the speaking gift and the serving gift.

### **A. The Speaking Gift**

Now he says, “Listen. In the last days, there is going to be a famine for the Word of God. And I’m going to need some people to speak for me.” Friends, have you seen, have you listened, have you read, have you observed the foolishness, the wickedness, and the despair of the things that are being said today? I mean, there is so much falsehood, so much pessimism, so much confusion, and so many lies. Do you know what we need in the last days? Someone who will speak as the oracles of God. There is a famine for the Word of God. And Peter says, “I’ll tell you how to live in the last days. If you are going to be laboring for me, when you speak, make sure you are a man of God. Don’t speak out of your own well. Speak as the oracles of God, as a man of God”—the speaking gifts.

Whether it be preaching, whether it be teaching, whether it be testifying, whether it be exhorting, whether it be singing, whether it be praising, whether it be praying—

whatever you do, if it comes out of your mouth, let God the Holy Spirit anoint it, friend. This world is hungry for a word from God. And in these last days, people are wanting to know if there is a word from God. Now Peter said, “Your lifestyle in the last days is that you are to take the gifts that God has given you, and if God has given you those speaking gifts—those gifts to articulate—then speak as the oracles of God.” This world needs a word from God—a word from God.

## **B. The Serving Gift**

Then, he also speaks of the serving gifts, for not everyone can stand here, in the pulpit. Thank God for those in the sound room. Thank God for those who run the lights. Thank God for those who send the air conditioning. Thank God for those who usher. Thank God for those who counsel. The serving gifts of leading, planning, working, lifting, giving—all of these gifts.

How are you to do this? Well, look at it again. Pay attention now. The Bible says, “He that ministers—if any man minister—let him do it with the ability that God gives.” Now you do it in your own strength, and you do it for your own glory, and I want to tell you that, when Jesus Christ comes, it will be wood, hay, and stubble (1 Corinthians 3:12). Do you know that God’s work is going to catch fire, when a man speaks as the oracles of God and the people serve in the ability that God gives? That’s the way it is to be done. That is the secret of a great church: All of the teaching, preaching, praying, praising, singing, is to be done with the glory of God upon it; and, all of the work—the serving, the giving, the lifting, the helping, the sharing, the guiding—all of these are to be done, not in the strength of our own flesh—not like we would run Hollywood, not like we would run Madison Avenue, not like we would run General Motors—but there is a supernatural infusion, a supernatural grace and strength, as God has given us all spiritual gifts.

I tell you—now, you listen to me—every man, every woman, every boy, and every girl in this building who is saved has been given a grace gift. And you are a steward over it. And when Jesus Christ comes, He is going to ask for an accounting of your stewardship. That’s what Peter is saying. Peter is saying, “The end is at hand. You have a gift. It may be a speaking gift; it may be a serving gift; but you have a gift. You use it for the good of others and for the glory of God.”

Let’s continue to read. Look at verse 11: *“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth:”* — now, here is the bottom line of it all—*“that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 4:11). Now friend, I want to tell you that that is the bottom line of all bottom lines: *“that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ.”* That is what the whole thing is about, not even really just getting people saved and in Heaven.

The whole thing is that God may be glorified. And when Jesus Christ comes, I want to be found giving God glory through Jesus. Don't you? I mean, that's the way I want to be found.

*When He shall come with trumpet sound,  
Oh may I then in Him be found.  
Dressed in His righteousness alone,  
Faultless to stand before the throne.*  
—EDWARD MOTE

## Conclusion

O friends, it won't be long. It won't be long. Peter said, "Live in the light of His coming; the end of all things is at hand. Be sober. Watch and pray." That would be Judgment Day, wouldn't it? Look up here. If *just like that*, Jesus Christ was to come—and now, He's already come—would you be taken or left? Saved or lost? And those of you who are saved, would this be your lifestyle? Are you using the gifts that God has given you? Is your heart filled with love? Are you longing for Him to come? Were you looking for Him? Have you been learning about Him? Peter says that that's a timeless truth for tough times.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. 🙏

# A Strange Friend

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: November 10, 1985**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 4:12–19**

**Sponsored by: Sponsor**

*“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.”*

1 PETER 4:12

## Outline

Introduction

- A. Common Trouble
  - B. Carnal Trouble
  - C. Christian Trouble
  - I. Trouble Will Purify Your Life
  - II. Trouble Will Bring You Closer to Jesus
  - III. Trouble Will Give You Extraordinary Power
  - IV. Trouble Will Help You Bring Others to Christ
  - V. Trouble Will Cause Us to Mature in Christ
- Conclusion

## Introduction

I'm excited about the message tonight. I believe it's going to be brief but pungent. And we have some very wonderful truths to learn tonight. First Peter chapter 4 and I want us to begin reading in verse 12: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings: that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God, resting upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody (a meddler) in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit their, the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

I want to talk to you tonight about, “A Strange Friend.” And I hope that you have a good friend. I hope that you have several good friends. They say that a man is wealthy who can count his friends on one hand. Now let me tell you one of the marks of a good friend. A good friend will make you a better person. The Bible says in Proverbs 27:7, “As iron sharpens iron, so a man’s countenance sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.” That is, a good friend will put a keen edge on you. A good friend will keep you razor sharp. You’re a better person because of that friend. If you have a friend that drags you down, he’s not really a friend. A real friend lifts you up as iron sharpens iron.

I have friends like that. I tell you, when I get with these friends and stay with them for just a few moments, I want to be a better Christian. I want to love God more. That’s the kind of a friend that all of us ought to pray that God will give us, and that all of us ought to endeavor to be that kind of a friend.

And I’ll tell you something about a good friend. A good friend will love you so much that he may even hurt you to help you. Now that takes a real friend to do that. You know, the Bible says in Proverbs 27:6, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.” Better to have a friend wound you than to have an enemy kiss you. You see, a friend cares enough to hurt us in order to help us in order to heal us.

Now I want to talk to you about, “A Strange Friend” tonight. How would you like this kind of a friend? How would you like a friend that would help you to live a clean life? Would you like that kind of a friend? How would you like a friend that would bring you closer to Jesus? Would you like that kind of a friend? How would you like a friend that would increase your strength? Would you like that kind of a friend? How would you like a friend that would enable you and help you to bring your loved ones to Jesus Christ? Would you like that kind of a friend? How would you like a friend that would help you to be a more mature Christian? Would you like that kind of a friend?

All right. You may have that kind of a friend, and let me tell you what His name is --- trouble! His name is trouble. And I want you tonight to learn to make a friend of your trouble because your trouble will be a friend to you; a strange friend indeed. But if you look at the passage of Scripture that I’ve just read to you, and we’re going to briefly expound on it, you’re going to find out why I say that trouble, though a strange friend, is a good friend. And tonight you need to learn how to make a friend of your trouble. Not all trouble is friendly trouble. Now there are different kinds of trouble, different kinds of sorrow.

### **A. Common Trouble**

We have what we call common suffering, common trouble. Now we all have that kind of trouble. I mean, all you have to do is to be a human being to have that kind of trouble, right, because we live in a world that has a curse upon it. “And man that is born of

woman is a few days and full of trouble.” Anybody here got here any other way than being born of a woman? All right. Now if you got here any other way, maybe you’re exempt. But, “Man that is born of woman is a few days and full of trouble.”

### **B. Carnal Trouble**

Okay, we all have that kind of trouble. That’s what I call common trouble. Then there’s another kind of trouble, and we call that carnal trouble. That’s just the law of sowing and reaping. Some of us are in trouble because it’s our own fault. You know, he speaks here, “If any man suffer, don’t let him suffer as a busybody, a meddler in other men’s affairs.” Some of us get in trouble just because we get ourselves in trouble, and the water we drink is from the well we dug, and the fruit we eat is from the tree we planted, and it’s just our own problem. You know, it’s just sowing and reaping. “Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.” I wouldn’t say that that kind of trouble is necessarily a friend, although it may help you because you’ll be chastised, and so forth. But that’s, that’s not, that’s not the kind of trouble I am talking about tonight. I am talking tonight about the kind of trouble (let me get this thing out of the way). I’m talking tonight about the kind of trouble that you will get into if you’re a Christian. Now if you were here last Sunday night, I talked about being persecuted for Christ. Anybody remember that? Nod your head. Look intelligent. Okay. Now you remember that last Sunday night we talked about being persecuted for the cause of Jesus Christ. Now the message tonight is just Part 2 of that message.

### **C. Christian Trouble**

When I’m talking about the kind of trouble that you need to make a friend out of, I am talking about the kind of trouble, the kind of problems, the kind of persecution that come to you because you are a child of God and because you live for the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what we call Christian trouble. Look, if you will, in verse 12: “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to come upon you...” Look in verse 14: “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ...” Remember our talking about that last week - if you be reproached for the name of Christ.

Now look again, if you will, please in verse 16: Yet if any man suffer as a Christian....” Now this is not the common suffering that we have. It is not the carnal suffering that we have. This is suffering that you would not have suffered had you not been a Christian. Now remember, the Bible says that, “All who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” Isn’t that what the Scripture says? There’s no escape. If you’re not being persecuted from time to time, it’s proof positive that you’re not living a godly life. “Yea, all who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” Jesus said that the servant is not better than his master. “If they hated Me, they’ll hate you. If the world hates you, it’s because you’re My disciple.” That’s what the Lord Jesus said. Now is that

suffering bad? Not at all, friend. That's the best friend, in many ways, that you can have outside the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we have these people on the radio and on the television; they're the happiness boys – the health, wealth, and happiness group. You know, they'll just tell you, "Man, you get saved and that'll be the end of your trouble." Well, they're right, but they don't tell you which end – the front end. Friend, as a matter of fact, that's when the trouble begins. Jesus did not come to this earth to get you out of trouble, mister. He came to get into trouble with you. You need to understand that. Jesus said, "I didn't come to bring peace, but a sword." And if you love the Lord Jesus Christ, you are going to suffer as a Christian. "Yea, and all who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Well, what about it? Why do I say make a friend of that kind of suffering? Because it'll do all those things that I mentioned in the introduction. I want you to look and see.

## **I. Trouble Will Purify Your Life**

First of all, what will it do? Well, it'll purify your life. Look in verse 12 if you will. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." The word *try* here means to test you as gold is tested in a furnace, and it literally means to purify you. It's the same thing that old Job meant when he said, "When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Do you know what that kind of persecution and that kind of trial and that kind of trouble will do for you? Just burn out the impurities. Just burn away the dross. You think of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednigo. They were put in the fiery furnace. And in the fiery furnace the furnace was heated. And when they came out of the fiery furnace, the same men who went in came out, but there was a difference. The bonds were burned off. There was not even the smell of smoke in their clothes.

That's better than you can say for most of us when we've been in a restaurant or on an airplane, right? Not even the smell of smoke in their clothes. You listen to me. The only thing that fire burned off of them was what the world had put on them. You see, "When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." It is the heat of persecution that burns up the dross and enhances the beauty of that gold. Now if you are being made more and more pure, wouldn't you say the one who's done is a good friend?

## **II. Trouble Will Bring You Closer to Jesus**

Trouble will purify you, purify your life. I'll tell you something else it'll do. Look in verse 13. It will bring you closer to Jesus. Notice here. "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings..." Look at that word *partaker*. The word *partaker* means partner with Christ's suffering, and it literally means, it's the Greek word *koinea*, which means a partnership that leads to a fellowship. It means a common sharing. And when

you're persecuted for the cause of Christ, I want to tell you something, friend, Jesus Christ will be closer to you than at any other time when you're bearing His reproach. You become a partaker of Christ's fellowship. That's what the apostle Paul said. "Oh, that I may know Him and the fellowship of His suffering." We're not talking about being on a sick bed now. Anybody can get sick. I am talking about suffering reproach. I am talking about suffering financial loss. I am talking about suffering physical harm. I am talking about suffering social abuse because you love Jesus Christ. I remind you again, when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were in that fiery furnace, who was in there with them? Fourth man, and he was like unto the Son of God. And Jesus Christ will never be closer to you than when you're in trouble for Jesus, for Jesus. He will be close. Now isn't a friend that brings you close to Jesus ought to be a good friend.

### **III. Trouble Will Give You Extraordinary Power**

Now I'll tell you what else, ah, ah, trouble will do. Not only will it, ah, purify you, not only will it bring you closer to Jesus, but it will give you extraordinary power. Look now in verse 14: "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye (now pay attention); for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you..." Hey, we say, "Man, I want God's Spirit to rest upon me. I want that spirit of glory." Who here doesn't want the spirit of glory and the Spirit of God to rest upon them? Do you want to suffer? Do you want to be reproached? Are you willing to stand up? Are you willing to go to high school, willing to go to college, willing to go to the job and be different? Are you willing to let them laugh at you a little bit and scorn you? Bypass you? Overlook you? Ostracize you? Are you? Fine! Cause I'll tell you one thing. The Spirit of God and of glory will rest upon you.

You think of old Stephen. They were stoning Stephen, but the Bible says "His face shone like the face on an angel." The Spirit of God and of glory rested upon him. Most of us are so weak, we need more power. Somebody has well said, "Christians are like tea. Their real strength doesn't come out until they get in hot water." I think that's what Paul meant when he said in 11 Corinthians 12:10, "Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. When these things happen to me," he says, "God then, when God sees me get in trouble for Him, God just pours out upon me that Spirit of God and of glory." Now, friends, isn't someone a good friend if they cause you to be strong and have the spirit of power and glory upon you?

### **IV. Trouble Will Help You Bring Others to Christ**

I'll tell you another thing this good friend called, called trouble will do for you. It'll help you to bring others to Christ. Look again at verse 14: "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you (now watch

this): on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.” Hey, how would you like to bring glory to Jesus; such glory that others will be convinced and want the same Christ that you have? Do you know one of the most powerful tools that we have to bring people to Jesus Christ? Suffering for Christ. Standing up for Christ. You see, when, as a believer in Jesus Christ, I am willing to bear shame and reproach, bear it gladly, steadfastly, without answering back, without reproaching back, as Jesus when He was reviled reviled not again. When I do that, there is something so convincing about that that it causes others to want to know my God. You think about it. When Stephen, that I just preached about, had the spirit of glory and of God resting upon him, there was a man there. His name was Saul. He was holding the clothes of those people while they stoned Stephen. And the Bible says that the face of Stephen shone like an angel. He glorified God. And I’ll tell you, the greatest Christian that ever lived – a little Jew named Paul could never get out of his heart and mind the way he saw angel face that day smile and praise God as they were stoning him.

Friend, one of the most powerful tools that we have is when we can suffer for the cause of Jesus Christ and there is a persuasion there. Do you know what they say? They say that the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. I believe one of the reasons that the Korean church is growing like it is is that it’s a church that has known deep persecution. You know, we’ve been cursed with blessings. Maybe before long, we’ll be blessed with cursings. I mean, maybe we’ll know some trouble. Maybe we’ll know deep trouble. But if we do, and it is for Jesus’ sake, it may be one of the best friends we’ve ever had.

## **V. Trouble Will Cause Us to Mature in Christ**

I want to mention something else that it will do. Not only will it cause us to bring other people to Jesus Christ, but, dear friend, it’ll cause us to mature in Christ. Go to the next chapter. A good friend is a friend that makes you a more mature Christian. Look in chapter 5:10: “But the God of all grace, who hath called you unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen you.” How would you like to be perfect? The word *perfect* doesn’t mean sinless. It means mature. How would you like to be established? How would you like to be strengthened? Peter says, “Well, after you’ve suffered a while.”

Friend, no pain, no gain. No growing in the Christian life without some growing pains. Trouble will do that for you. It’ll not weaken you. It’ll strengthen you. It’ll make a spiritual man out of you, make a spiritual woman out of you; put some concrete and some steel and some stature in you. What a friend we have in trouble. We never have thought about it that way.

## Conclusion

But listen, friend. What should you do when you suffer for the cause of Christ? Let me show you. Look, if you will, in verses 13-14, chapter 4, 1 Peter 4:13: “But”—what’s the next word? I can’t hear you. Let’s say it one more time—“Rejoice...” Now listen.

“Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings...” Now read verse 14: “But if ye be reproached for the name of Christ (what’s the next word?), happy are ye, happy are ye...” Look in verse 16 if you will. “If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.” Friend, what should you do if you bear some shame for Jesus? Just rejoice. Acts 5:41: “And they departed from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.”

Let’s stand together, and I want us to sing, “What a friend we have in Jesus. All our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to Him in prayer. The orchestra will move, and we will prepare ourselves to receive the Lord’s Supper.

# Suffering

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 9, 1998

Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 4:12–19

Sponsored by: Sponsor

*“Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.”*

1 PETER 4:19

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Common Suffering
- II. Carnal Suffering
- III. Christian Suffering
  - A. The Reality
  - B. The Reason
  - C. The Results
    - 1. Purification
    - 2. Partnership
    - 3. Power
    - 4. Persuasion
    - 5. Perfection
  - D. The Reactions
    - 1. Rejoice
    - 2. Review
    - 3. Rest

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn, if you will please, to 1 Peter chapter 4. And in a moment, we're going to look, beginning in verse 12.

God sent His Son into the world, and God only had one Son without sin. But He has never had a son, including myself, without suffering. And, God's Son suffered. And all of the children of God have suffering and pain. And when we have suffering and pain, sometimes we question God. We question God as I did the other day when I saw a film of the devastation in Honduras. And I saw the awful, total devastation and literally wept. And the very first thought in my mind was, *Why, God? Why did you allow this? Certainly, Father, you could have, you could have caused it not to happen.* And we ask ourselves, well, maybe God doesn't know it's happening. Of course, we say, "Now that's

absurd. If He's God, He knows everything. He's omniscient." And then we say, "Well, maybe He knows and He really just doesn't care." And we say, "No, that's absurd. He's infinite love." And we say, "Well, maybe He knows and He cares, but He can't do anything about it." We say, "Of course that's ridiculous. God can do anything." So then the devil says, "Well, maybe there's no God at all. Maybe that's just your imagination." And we have difficulty with this problem of suffering. So that's what I want us to think about tonight is suffering that we face as Christians and others.

Begin now in 1 Peter, chapter 4 and let's begin reading in verse 12: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you—that is, to test you—as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings: that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye: for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part—that is, on the ones who are reproaching you—he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busy body in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing as unto a faithful Creator."

Now he says in verse 12, "Don't think it strange concerning the fiery trial that's going to come upon you." And I want to talk to you a little bit about what to do when your faith is in the fire. What to do when your faith is in the fire when you have this fiery trial. And what I would like to do is to help you to develop tonight some fire-proof faith, because, believe me, you're going to need, all of us do, some fire-proof faith.

Now we need to understand, first of all, the reality of suffering in the life of a Christian, a child of God. And you're going to find out that suffering is no respecter or persons. Whether you're rich, whether you're poor, whether you're young, whether you're old, whether you're male, whether you're a female, whether you're saved, or whether you are lost. It may come as a surprise to you, though it should not, that the righteous suffer as well as the unrighteous.

## **I. Common Suffering**

Now actually, basically, there are three kinds of suffering. First of all, there's what we call common suffering. The very fact that we are here upon this globe, that we are human beings, we're going to suffer. Why? Because when Adam sinned, all creation fell with him, and there is a curse upon all creation. Thorns and thistles have come up. And

there is pain and pain, pang and moan and groan, sickness, sorrow, tears, and fears in all of life. And whether you're saved or lost, if you live here in this natural world, you're going to suffer.

Now why does God allow this kind of suffering? Well, the worst thing that could happen to a fallen humanity would be to continue to live in the Garden of Eden. That would be like having an, an infection without having the corresponding fever. We would never know that we were sick. We would never go for the proper treatment. And so, God allows all mankind to have this, the fever pain. We're in a world, and everything we see, every asylum, every hospital, every tragedy, every pain, every sickness – all of this is a reminder that there is something dreadfully, dreadfully wrong with creation. And Paul tells us in Romans chapter 8 that all creation travails and groans in pain. And so, as the book of Job says is Job 14, verse 1, "Man that is born of woman is full of trouble." Did anybody here get here any other way? Well, if you're born of woman, you're going to be full of trouble. That is a part of life. That's what we call common suffering.

Notice I did not say natural suffering. I said common suffering. Suffering is not natural; it is unnatural. It's not what God planned. It is not what created, God created; it's what sin brought. It is a corruption. It is not a natural thing. It is a perversion of God's creation. But there is common suffering.

## **II. Carnal Suffering**

And then there's another kind of suffering. Not common suffering, but carnal suffering. Look, if you will, in verse 15 here. He says, "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters."

Now sometimes we suffer because we just do something that causes us to suffer. If we're a murderer, if we're a thief, if we are an evildoer, if we are a busybody, we're going to drink water from the well that we dug and eat fruit from the tree that we planted. There is a law of sowing and reaping. And, very frankly, a lot of the trouble that we have is trouble that we brought about ourselves. Sometimes we like to sow our wild oats and then pray for crop failure. That doesn't really work that way. And even if you're a Christian, you sin, you're going to suffer. David sinned, King David. He suffered. God forgave him, but he still suffered. And as someone has written, "Suffering follows wrong like echo follows song – on and on and on and on." And what David did haunted him right on down to his last days, even though he had been forgiven by God.

I always kind of laugh at this a little bit. It talks about those who suffer as a busybody. Stuart Briscoe says, "Verily, he who sticketh his nose in where it doesn't belong shall find a fist on the end of it". You suffer as a busybody, sticking your nose in where it doesn't belong.

### III. Christian Suffering

So there's common suffering. There's carnal suffering. But Peter talks about Christian suffering. That's another kind of suffering.

#### A. The Reality

Look, if you will, here in verse 12. He says here, "Beloved—he's talking to Christians—think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." Look, if you will, in verse 14: "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ—this is not common or carnal. This is Christian suffering—happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you..." And then, look, if you will, in verse 16: "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."

And so you can suffer as a Christian. I want to say this: In spite of what all of the joy boys say on some television programs, the gospel of comfort, cash, and Cadillacs, there's no fine print in the Bible. And Jesus Christ said, "In this world ye shall have tribulation..." And some of that tribulation comes because we know the Lord Jesus. And it is a false gospel that says if we come to Christ it'll be all honey and no bees, that we're going to have no adversity, no misfortune, no persecution, no pain. As a matter of fact, look, if you will, in verse 12. He says, "If we suffer..." And the word here, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is come upon you as though—or as if—some strange thing happened unto you." It literally means it's going to come. There's no ifs, ands, and buts about it. I believe that Peter may have been preparing those to whom he wrote of the persecution that was going to come unto Nero—historians tells us on July 16, AD 64. They have it pinpointed pretty well. That there was a fire that raced through the slums of Rome, and it was, it was a horrible holocaust. And literally, thousands died. Vast areas of Rome were wiped out. Some historians believe that Nero, who was a builder, wanted to rebuild Rome and just had his henchmen to torch these parts of the city so that he could rebuild them in the grandeur that he wanted Rome to have. But he forgot about all of the people, the hurt, and the heartache. And he finally had to have a scapegoat. And so tradition tells us, and some historians tell us, that some of Nero's advisors said, "There's a strange sect here always talking about setting the world on fire. They're Christians and if you're not careful, there's going to be a rising up against you. You need to find a scapegoat, somebody to blame it on." And they blame this on the Christians. And some believe that's what Peter's talking about when he says, "Don't think it strange concerning the fiery trial that's going to test you."

Compounded by this was the fact that the Caesars were worshipped as God. And that was the way that the Romans had of unifying the empire. Now they didn't care what else you believed as long as you believed this one thing – that Caesar is God, Caesar is

Lord. Kiser Curios. That's what that means – Christ, Caesar Lord. And so you could say anything as long as you would confess that Caesar was lord and offer a pinch of incense to Caesar. Then whatever else, that's fine. You could just add Christianity to the pantheon and put Jesus on a niche in a shelf with all the other gods and everything's fine, but just say Kiser Curios. The Christians wouldn't do that. They knew, and as you know.... And, by the way, you're going to be tested about this soon because we're looked upon more and more and more as being intolerant for the same thing. The Christians would say, even at the point of fire or sword, "No! I will not say Kiser Curios. Cristo Curios. Christ is Lord!" And so, these things brought these people into terrible conflict. And as Christians, they would face the dungeon. They would face the rack. They would face the Coliseum. They would face the cross, lions, the flame.

Now Peter was not alone in this teaching concerning fiery trial. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself said in Matthew chapter 5, verses 11 and following, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and shall persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My name sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted they the prophets which were before you." That's what Jesus said.

Here's what James said. James 1, verse 2: "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations—that means different kinds of trials...."

Here's what the apostle Paul said in Romans chapter 5, verse 3: "We glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience."

## B. **The Reason**

Now we're talking about Christian suffering, and we're talking about the reality of it. Now let me tell you why we suffer as a Christian. Look, if you will, in verse 14 here. "But if ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye..." Now the reason that those people in that day and people in this day will be reproached is for the name of Christ. Now Paul said the same thing in 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3, verse 12, when he said, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." That ought to challenge you. You ought to ask yourself this question: Have you taken ever any slings and arrows for Jesus? Is there somebody who does not like you because of Jesus? I'm not talking about because you, you're a busybody or a thief or a meddler, an evildoer, but for the name of Jesus Christ, because they see the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ in you, do you suffer? Well, if you don't suffer, it just may be that you're not living godly in Christ Jesus, for Paul said, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Now the reason for this is, when you live godly in Christ Jesus, when you, ah, stand for the Lord Jesus Christ, look, if you will, in verse 14 again. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the spirit of glory and of God resteth on you."

Now here's the point: If the spirit of glory rests upon you, whatever glorifies Christ will anger Satan, isn't that true? Whatever glorifies Christ is going to anger Satan. And so, it's going to make you a target of Satan. And it's just going to happen.

Now he says in verse 14, "...happy are you..." If this happens, happy are you. Now the word *happy* may be translated prosperous. It doesn't mean that you've got a big smile on your face. As a matter of fact, it's the same word that's used in the Beatitudes, blessed. Blessed are ye, spiritually prosperous of you. It is a sign that you are a prosperous Christian. If you are not persecuted for Jesus' sake, it is a sign that your spiritual life is in poverty, that you are a very poor Christian. "For all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." That doesn't mean that you are to have a Messiah complex and go around trying to get somebody to do something bad to you. Don't do that. It just simply means that when you live for the Lord Jesus Christ, and the glory of God rests upon you, you're going to become a target for the enemy, as night follows day, and if you will live godly in Christ Jesus.

The late, great Vance Havner said this, and I want to quote him. I copied it down verbatim. He said, "I am often amused and amazed at the way we equate Christianity with success, popularity, and prosperity. We may not admit it, but we use the same old gauge that the world uses, except that we employ religious language. It would appear that gain is godliness with us, in spite of Paul's formula that godliness plus contentment equals prosperity." And then, he goes on to say, "Christians are not supposed to run into trouble today. Today, we're diplomats, not soldiers, and we specialize in liaison, not loyalty. Nowadays, we're expected to get along with everything and everybody, including the devil himself." Well, those words were rich enough I thought you needed to hear them from Dr. Havner.

Now we're talking about the reality of suffering in the life of a Christian. And anybody who can pick up this Bible and read it knows that if we are truly children of God, we can expect persecution from this world. And the Bible says in Peter, "If this happens, happy are ye." Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "When it happens, blessed are you when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake."

### C. **The Results**

Now what are the results of this? We've talked about the reality of it. What are the results? What will this suffering do? Why does God allow it? Is it simply a waste? Oh no. There's some good reasons for it. Now let me tell you what they are and then we'll be finished. Well, I'm going to tell you what they are and then what to do about it.

#### **1. Purification**

But, first of all, the first result is write down the word *purification*, purification. Look in

verse 12: “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you...” Now just underscore the word *try*. The word *try* here means to test as precious metal is tested and purified in the furnace. It’s talking about a process of purification. Job said in Job chapter 23 and verse 10: “When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” That’s what he’s talking about – the fiery trial which will try you. “He knoweth the way that I take, and when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” And the prophet Malachi said in Malachi chapter 3 and verse 3: “And He (speaking of God) shall sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver. And He shall purify the sons of Levi and purge them as gold and silver, that they may be unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.”

Now, trials purify us. You see, what the fire does when the gold ore, the silver ore is in the smelter’s pot, what it does is it burns away all of the impurities that obscure the beauty and diminish the value of the gold. I’ve read that, ah, a purifier of gold will continue to purify the gold until he can see his face reflected in the molten gold. And I believe that’s what our Lord is doing. He’s looking there to see Himself reflected in, in that molten gold.

I think of, of the three Hebrew children, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who were thrown into a, a fiery furnace. And, ah, when, ah, the king looked into the fiery furnace.....well, let, let me just read this Scripture for you. Ah, Daniel 3, ah, verses 24 and 25: “Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste and spake and said unto his counselors, ha, Didn’t, did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? And they answered and said unto the king, True, O king. And he answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose. We put three in bound; four are loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” Now they were bound when they were put in, but now they’re loosing, they’re lose. Let me tell you, the only thing that fire burned off of them is what the world had put on them (amen). That’s all! That’s the only thing the fire will burn off of you is what the world has put on you. So, first of all, put down the word *purification*.

## **2. Partnership**

Now here’s the second reason. Not only purification. Put down the second word, *partnership*. Ah, look again in chapter 4 now and verse 13: “But rejoice in as much as ye are partakers of Christ’s suffering.” Now that word *partaker* is the word that I’ve been preaching about in 1<sup>st</sup> John. It’s the word *koinonia*, and it has to do with sharing, it has to do with partnership, oneness that leads to fellowship. That’s what the apostle Paul was talking about in Philippians chapter 3, verse 10. And he said, “This is the ambition of my life, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection (now watch this) and the fellowship of His sufferings.” It’s the same word, the *koinonia* of His sufferings. Now most of us don’t want that. But you will never know Jesus until you get in the fire with Him. When you suffer with Christ and for Christ, Jesus Christ will be so real to you when

you have that partnership and that, that fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

I've often used this illustration. It's, it's, it's a poor illustration, but I can relate to it.

Ah, you would never know it, but I'm an has-been athlete. I used to play football. It was the only sport I was half-way good at. And we had a championship team. And I was captain of the team. And, folks, it hurts to play football; I mean, it really does.

Sometimes we act like we're having fun and it's not fun. You do it – praise, glory, your girlfriend up in the stands, whatever, who knows, but it hurts to play. And when you finish a game, you're so whipped. Ha, if, if you have won a big game, there's their band and our band. And after the game, our band plays and prances and our band bus goes past their band bus, and our band bus says, "Ya-ya-ya-ya because we beat you."

There's the dads up there in the stands. They're giving one another high five when somebody does something down there on the field. And the women are sitting up there talking about shopping until, "Did somebody do something good?" And they hug, you know. And then, all of the different things are happening. The coaches, they go off talking. But I'll tell you, there are a couple of guys down in a locker room. I don't know whether you've ever been in one of those locker rooms or not. They stink! And at the best they can, they still stink. And, and you go in there, and they've got a bare cement floor, and they've got these old metal lockers there. They got these benches, the showers, generally common showers. And you go in there. Your jersey is so wet you can't even get it off. And I've got a, I've got a knot right there on this arm about the size of a small egg right now where I was hit, actually cracked the bone in there. Just the calcium oozed out of it. And I can remember the night. I could not even lift my arm to get that jersey off over my head. And you sit there and you take that old helmet off. I'm talking about the guys that won. You sit in there with a buddy. And you throw that old helmet across the floor and it goes bing, bing, bing, bing up in the corner. And you sit there and you, you want to take off your shoes. You can hardly reach to get them off and rip that old tape off your ankle. And then you look at that boy you've been down there in the trenches with. And you know you've won. And you say, "Hayes, we won!" He says, "Rocko, we won, we won!"

Now that's a kind of fellowship that those people in the stands don't know anything about. The band doesn't know anything about that. The parents don't know anything about that. I'm going to tell you, those guys down there in the trenches on the field, they have a certain something that they have shared together. Now I now it's, it's silly 'cause football is really basically silly, you know. You're taking a zipped-up bagful of air down a cow pasture. That's about all it is. I mean, that's really silly when you think about it. But forget that. That's the kind of fellowship you'll know with Jesus, only deeper, deeper, deeper, deeper. If we suffer with Him, we'll reign with Him. I mean, there is a partnership. There is a koinonia of saying, "Yes, that I know Jesus." And the fellowship

of His suffering – to be a part of that.

### **3. Power**

And so, put down purification. Put down partnership. And then, put down power. Look, if you will, in, in verse 14: “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye (now watch this), for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.”

Do you want the spirit of glory and God to rest upon you? Well, you won’t do it if you fail to stand up for Jesus. Why should God give you glory and power for you to betray Him? Second Corinthians chapter 12, verse 10. Paul said, “Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake, for when I am weak, then I’m strong, I’m strong.” I mean, he said, “Look, I take pleasure in it because I will know the power that I can only know.”

You know, everybody’s talking about how the church is being persecuted in these last days and the Christians are becoming whipping boys. That’s not altogether bad. Now, again, don’t go around with a Messiah complex. But it’s not altogether bad, because history has shown us, and will show us one more time, that the church persecuted is the church powerful. I mean, we have a lot of Sunday morning bench warmers. You let persecution come, we’ll separate the men from the boys and the ladies from the girls. I’m talking about those who really will stand up for the Lord Jesus Christ and count, be counted.

You talk about suffering for Jesus. Folks, our church is full of people who would not begin to suffer for Jesus. They don’t even love Him a dime out of a dollar. They don’t love Him enough to get back to Sunday, church on Sunday night. Ha, you think they’re going to pay a price? No way! As long as the weather is fine, the seat is soft, the music is not too loud or too soft, the air conditioning is right, and the preacher is interesting, they may do us a wild favor and come. No. It’s the church persecuted that will become the church powerful. And, ah, again, we don’t have to bait this persecution, but I’m saying that power is another reason for it.

### **4. Persuasion**

Let me give you another reason for it. Not only power, but persuasion. Look, if you will, in verse 14. Now what it again. “But if ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you. On their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified.”

You know, when we suffer, as Peter tells us that we may suffer, and we suffer as a Christian; that is, without retaliation, when we love those and pray for those that spitefully used us, that’s very different from what the world does, and that becomes one of the most powerful and persuasive influences in the world. We unleash a persuasive power. As a matter of fact, Peter goes on to say this is the way... Or he’s

already said in chapter 3 this is the way, for example, a saved wife can lead her unsaved husband to Jesus Christ. What a persuasion we have.

I think the classic example of this is Paul, who was there at the stoning of Stephen. Remember that story? And they stoned Stephen. And the Bible says the face of Stephen shone like an angel. And as Stephen was dying, he was praying for those throwing the stones. He said, “Lord Jesus, don’t lay this sin to their charge.” Can you imagine that, being stoned? “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Lord Jesus, don’t lay this sin to their charge!” You know one of those who was there watching all of that was a young, proud Pharisee. His name was Saul. He was holding the garments. Can you imagine that, holding the coats of, of a mob stoning a man who was a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ? Later on, Paul was on the road to Damascus. He sees a light above the brightness of the noonday sun. And Jesus appeared to him and said, “Saul, Saul, it’s hard for you, isn’t it, to kick against the ox goad.” To drive a team of oxen, the ox, the wagon master would have a sharp stick called a goad. And if the ox wasn’t doing right, it wasn’t pulling, he’d just jab him in the flank, and the old ox would kick like that. You know what the goad was? It was a face of a man named Stephen. Saul couldn’t get that out of his mind. He remembered angel face. He remembered Stephen’s prayer. He remembered a man that suffered as a Christian. That’s the reason if suffering comes to us, we’d better pray as to how to react.

You know, any day we could have a bunch of pro-abortionists or homosexuals or whatever to come out here and picket us, did you know that? Any day. We could have any kind of weird, esoteric group out here. And you know the thing that bothers me? I’m just afraid some of our men say, “Hey, you, you. Get out of here. Who do you think you are?” Give them the bum’s rush. “Took care of them, pastor. Get up there and preach.” The same spirit that wanted John to call down napalm upon the Samaritans or the John wanted our Lord to do – Jesus said, “Man, you don’t know what spirit you’re of.” The same spirit that was in Peter when he cut off the ear of Malchus, the high priest.

Do you know the way we’re going to influence this world is to out-love them. Now that doesn’t mean that we’re not going to take a stand. It doesn’t mean that we’re not going to be wise and prudent. But I hope on any Sunday anybody shows up here, as long as they’re not disrupting the service, as long as they’re not putting anybody’s children in danger, that they will be surprised at the love this congregation will show. And when they do, friend, they’re going to say, “There’s something different about those people.”

## **5. Perfection**

Now, persuasion – that’s one of the things. Let me mention the last reason, and that’s perfection. Look, if you will, now in chapter 5 and verse 10. Let’s go right on over. We’ll fast forward a little bit. And he says here, “But the God of all grace, who hath called us

unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” Perfection. Make you perfect. Now the word *perfect* here doesn’t mean sinless. The Bible speaks of Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, was made perfect through suffering. Do you think He was made sinless? Ha. He never sinned. No. The word *perfect* here means mature, established, fulfilled. There’s no maturity without suffering.

You know, Peter has already said in chapter 2 to these people that they were living stones built up a holy temple. If you go sometime to Israel, we’ll go to the city of Jerusalem. And sometimes we have groups. The last time we went we didn’t have time to do this. There’s a cave up under the city of Jerusalem. It’s called Solomon’s Quarries. You can go back up in that cave. It’s bigger, more than twice the size of this whole sanctuary. But way back up in that cave where they quarried the stones and cut the stones out to build Solomon’s temple. It’s called Solomon’s Quarry. You can go way up under in that. It’s very interesting. They went in there with their chisels and their hammers and they cut out those stones and made them a certain shape until they were fit for that temple.

You know, Peter said, “You’re built up a holy temple.” And these people that are persecuting us and doing these things, you know, they’re just may be God’s chisel. It’s putting us in shape, you know. Ha, no stone ever said, “Oh wonderful what this chisel’s doing to me.” But, you know, we’re built up, living stones, into a holy temple. And sometimes these things that we think are terrible, they’re just God’s way of forming us and making us what He wants us to be.

#### D. **The Reactions**

Finally, quickly, and I’ll be finished. I’ve talked to you about the reality of this suffering. I’ve talked to you about the reasons for this suffering. Let me just talk to you about your reaction. I want to tell you three things you need to do.

##### **1. Rejoice**

Number one: This is going to be the hardest. You need to rejoice. You need to rejoice. Look in verses 13 and 14 back in chapter 4 now. Notice.... Look in verse 13: “But rejoice...” Do you see that? Ha, you wouldn’t think that would be there with suffering, would you? “But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings: that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with (watch this) exceeding joy.” Now look in verse 14: “But if ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye...” Literally it’s be constantly rejoicing. Look, if you will, in verse 16 again. “If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.” He’s just simply saying rejoice.

There’s only one thing that can steal your joy. Persecution can’t steal it. Persecution

will enhance it. When those disciples were persecuted for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, beaten and told not to preach anymore, Acts 5, verse 41 says, “And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.” They said, “This is wonderful! I’m glad we were counted worthy.”  
Number one: Rejoice.

## **2. Review**

Number two: Review. Maybe that ought to really be number one. See if your suffering is carnal suffering or Christian suffering.

Now verses 17 and 18. Look at it again. “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” What he’s saying is it maybe that your suffering is because of your own sin. And if we would judge ourselves, we’ll not be judged.

So, when it happens, review. If it’s for Jesus, rejoice.

## **3. Rest**

And, finally, review, rejoice, and then rest. Look in verse 19: “Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.” The Greek literally means just be constantly committing.

Now suppose, and this is going to be a big supposition right now. Suppose you had an envelope in your breast pocket, you men, and in that envelope right now is \$500,000. It’s in your breast pocket right up here. Five, half a million dollars right up here. What would your thought be right now? You’d say, “Oh, I ought not to be carrying around this much cash”. “What if I lose it? What if I’m held up? I ought not to be carrying this much cash around with me right now.” So what’s your thought? “I’ve got to get to the bank. I don’t want to keep it in my house. I’ve got to get to the bank. I want to put this in the bank.” So you come to the bank. You fill out a deposit slip. You take that \$500,000. None of us have ever done this. And you, you give it to the teller. And the teller gives you a receipt. What have you done with that? It’s still yours, but what did you do with it? You committed it. You committed it. It’s there. If you didn’t think they could take care of it, you wouldn’t give it to them. You committed it to the bank. They give you a receipt for it. “Whew! Man, I’m glad I got that in their hands. I shouldn’t be carrying a half a million dollars around in my pocket.” Now, if you did that, would you then get you a couple of six-shooters and sit on the front steps of the bank to protect your money? You wouldn’t do that. I mean, if you didn’t think they could take of it, you wouldn’t put it in there to begin with. You’d put it somewhere else.

## Conclusion

Now, folks, once you're committed to Jesus, let Him have it, okay? Let Him have it. He can take care of it. Review. Rejoice. Just simply rest in the Lord, and He's going to bring your righteousness to pass as the noontide.

Now this may seem all theoretical to you, but I pray God, when the time comes, the Holy Spirit will bring it back to your mind, okay. Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for Your Word tonight. And what a blessing it's been to my own heart, Lord, to review these precious truths. Lord, seal them to our hearts this Christmas season and at all times. In Jesus' name, amen.

# When Faith Is in the Fire

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: May 8, 1983**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 4:12–19**

**Sponsored by: Sponsor**

*“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.”*

1 PETER 4:12

## Outline

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## Introduction

First Peter chapter 4, and we're going to begin looking in verse 12. First Peter 4:12.

Now we've been thinking all of these days, as we've been going through 1 Peter, about "Timeless Truth for Tough Times." So let's begin reading now in verse 12: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings: that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be

ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.” What a beautiful, marvelous passage.

Now today, we’re speaking on this subject primarily, “When Faith is in the Fire.” Notice verse 12: “Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial that shall come upon you...” Sooner or later, you’re going to find your faith in the fire. And we’re going to be telling you today what to do about it, because, dear friend, if you’re not familiar with the Word of God, and suffering comes to you as a child of God, you’re going to begin to question God. First of all, you’re going to say, “Well, God doesn’t know that I’m suffering.” And then you say, “Oh no, He knows all things.” And then you say, “Well, He knows, but He doesn’t care.” “Oh no,” you say, “He cares. He loves.” Well, then you might say, “Well, He knows and He cares, but He can’t do anything about it.” Then you say, “Well, He can do all things.” And you get confused and perplexed, and you will be unless you know the Word of God. So we’re going to think about the righteous suffering and why they suffer. And so let me give you a simple little outline. We’re going to be talking about the reality of suffering in the life of a Christian. Then we’re going to be talking about the reasons for suffering in the life of a Christian. Then we’re going to be talking about our reactions, our reactions to suffering in the life of a Christian.

## **I. The Reality of Suffering**

Now, first of all, let’s think a little bit again about the reality of it. I remind you to look one more time at verse 12: “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial that is to try you, as so, as though some strange thing happened to you.” You say, “Oh me, how did this ever happen? Where is God? What went wrong?” Peter’s saying nothing went wrong. It’s not a strange thing. It is an ordinary, common thing. It is a basic reality. Friend, if you’re a human being, you’re going to suffer. It doesn’t matter whether you’re saved or lost, rich or poor, young or old, you’re going to suffer. As a matter of fact, let me give you a Mother’s Day verse. Just kind of work it in here. This is Job, ah, 14:1: “Man that is born of a woman is of a few days, and full of trouble.” “Man that is born of a woman...” Anybody here wasn’t born of a woman, would you lift your hand? All right. We’re all born of women. Nobody’s exempt, therefore, from trouble. “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.” Basically, there are three kinds of suffering. There’s what I call common suffering, then carnal suffering, and then Christian suffering.

### **A. Common Suffering**

Now what is common suffering? Well, that’s the kind of suffering we do because we are

born into this world. Man that's born of a woman. You see, back in the Garden of Eden, God said to Adam and Eve after they'd sinned, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake." Adam and Eve had sinned, and then God put a curse upon the ground, and He said, "Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee." And the thorn and the thistle are symbols of sorrow. Why? The worst thing that could happen to a fallen humanity would be to continue to live in a Garden of Eden. We'd never know that anything was wrong. And thorns and thistles and suffering and sorrow are God's sign from heaven that there's something that is wrong, and sin has caused it. Life is short, death is sure, sin the cause, Christ the cure. That's common suffering. We all have that kind of suffering. None of us are going to get out of life without it. We're human beings. "Man that is born of a woman is a few days, and full of trouble." And I think all of us could say amen. If it not, we could at least say, "Oh me."

### **B. Carnal Suffering**

All right, now. There's another kind of suffering, another kind of suffering, and this is carnal suffering. Look, if you will, in verse 15: "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as a, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters." Now sometimes we suffer because we're just carnal. I mean, we, we, we sin. And because we sin, God's law of sowing and reaping comes into effect. The Bible says in Galatians 6:7: "Be not deceived, for God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. And he that sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." So many times the bitter fruit that we eat is from seeds that we have planted. The poison water that we drink is from wells that we ourselves have dug. And we just suffer for our own doing. As the Bible says, "Thine own backslidings shall reprove thee." God doesn't have to judge us. We just judge ourselves. It is built into humanity. And people suffer for all kinds of reasons. You say, "But I'll get forgiven. Will I still suffer for it?" Yes, yes. In this life, even though your sin is forgiven, you still suffer for it. You see, you don't cancel out God's law of sowing and reaping. A man goes out and gets drunk and gets in a automobile accident and cuts off his arm. And he says, "God, I was a fool. Forgive me." Will God forgive him? Yes. Will he grow another arm? No. He goes through life suffering the result of that sin. Listen. Suffering follows wrong like echo follows song, on and on and on and on. And you're not going to cancel it out. King David sinned against God. Heinous and grievous was his sin. He asked God to forgive him. God did forgive him, but the results of that sin in this life lingered on. There are so many people who think that somehow that they have a license to sin. All they have to do is just say, "God, forgive me," and everything is cancelled out. It is not! It is not! In the Psalms, the Bible says, "God pardoned their sin and took vengeance upon, ah, their iniquities." That's pardon with punishment. That is, there's a law that's written in. You see, your sin can be forgiven, but you still suffer for your sin. There is an epidemic of venereal disease in

America today; herpes, seemingly incurable disease. It is the result of sin. It's just built in. There are horrible diseases that are going through a certain segment of society today, those who are practicing perverted lifestyles. Horrible, terrible sin; horrible terrible disease. "He that sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." There are people who think that they can sow their wild oats six days a week and then come to church on Sunday and pray for crop failure. It doesn't work that way. It doesn't work that way. Suffering follows wrong like echo follows song, on and on and on and on.

Now notice what he says in verse 15: "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or..." Oh, we're doing pretty good, but wait a minute. "...or as a busybody..." I think Peter must have had a sense of humor. I mean, you've always? "Well, I'm no thief. I'm no murderer." A busybody. Do you know what the word *busybody*? It incorporates our word for bishop. Do you know what a bishop is? An overseer. He says, "Don't try to be somebody else's bishop. Don't be an overseer in somebody else's business. Don't try to be a meddler." There's a proverb: "Verily, he who sticketh in his nose shall find a fist at the end of it." And the reason that so many of us suffer is just simply because we ourselves have lived carnally. There is, there is common suffering. By the way, I didn't say natural suffering. When I made my notes, I wrote down natural suffering, and then I wrote it out because suffering is not natural. It's caused by sin. It's not the way God made us. Sometimes a man dies, and we say, "Well, he died a natural death." Nobody died a natural death. All death is unnatural. It's caused by sin. But common suffering, carnal suffering, and then Christian suffering.

### C. **Christian Suffering**

Now what Peter is dealing with here is Christian suffering. Look in verse 12: "Beloved, not, beloved..." These are God's people. "...think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." He's talking to God's beloved. Look, if you will, in verse 14: "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye: for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you..." Look, if you will, in verse 16: "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed..." There is some suffering, ladies and gentlemen, that we receive because we're Christians. The Bible calls it suffering as a Christian. Now suffering as a Christian and bearing your cross is not because you have an ingrown toenail or a migraine headache. That's common suffering.

It may be even carnal suffering. That headache may be because you're not trusting God with some things. But even if it's not carnal, it's common. No. It's not even the husband you married. You say, "He's my cross." Well, he may be cross, but he's not your cross. You chose to marry him. That's your choice, not your cross. You see, even an unsaved person could have married him. Now what I'm trying to say is this: That suffering that we have for the cause of Christ, for the cause of Christ, because we know

the Lord Jesus Christ, that's suffering as a Christian, suffering that we would not have done ordinarily.

Now I want us to learn that because we're Christians we're not immune to suffering. As a matter of fact, it will cause some suffering. And it is a false gospel that says just come to Christ and it'll be all honey and no bees; that you're going to have pleasure and prosperity and happiness. No, my dear friend, there will be adversity. There will be misfortune. There will be persecution. There will be pain.

Now notice, he says, "If any man suffer as a Christian..." the word *if literally* means since. "Since you're going to suffer as a Christian..." That's literally what it means. You're going to suffer as a Christian. Now Peter wasn't the only one who said this. Jesus said it. Jesus warned us in Matthew 5:11. He said, "Blessed are ye, when men shall (what?) persecute you, and (what?) revile you, and (what?) say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my name's sake." It has to be false and it has to be for His name sake. But Jesus said not if it will happen, but when it happens.

And, again, Paul said to Timothy in 2 Timothy the third chapter, "Yea, and all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. All they that live godly...." Have you suffered persecution? I have. I've known what it is to be persecuted for the cause of Christ. I'm not feeling sorry for myself. I'm not licking my wounds, but I know what it is to be lied about. I know what it is to have my words twisted. I know what it is to be misrepresented. I know what it is to be put down and passed over for the cause of Christ. I don't feel badly about it because God is ten thousand times ten thousand made it up to me.

But I want to tell you something, friend. The Bible clearly and plainly, without equivocation, says, "Yea, and all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." And if you're not suffering any for the name of Christ, it is because you're not living godly in Christ Jesus. Look in verse 14. Look at it. "And if ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye..." Look at that word *happy*. Do you know what the word *happy* means? It's the Greek word *makarios*. It's used in the Beatitudes. "Blessed are the peacemakers, blessed are the pure in heart...." It's the same word that's translated there blessed. Now what does the word *happy* and what does the word *blessed* mean? Let me just see if I can give you a translation, because the word *blessed* is kind of hard to get our hands on. And happy is not really the best translation of the word. It literally means prosperous, spiritually prosperous. That is, you are a prosperous person. God has blessed you. You are enriched. Now he says in verse 14, if you are reproached for the name of Christ, it is because you're prosperous. That is, you're a spiritual rich Christian.

Are you paying attention? The world is not going to reproach a carnal Christian. You're too much like the world. As a matter of fact, the world feels comfortable around

you. When you name the name of Christ and you still tell their dirty stories, you still drink the same thing, you still smoke the same thing, you still go to the same places, you still do the same things, the world's not going to persecute you. As a matter of fact, the world is glad to have you around, for you are their excuse for living that way. But when you become a prosperous Christian, I'm not talking about financial prosperity. Indeed, you may lose that. Christians have had their goods confiscated. I'm talking about when you are spiritually wealthy, the world is going to come down on you. You refuse to look at that Playboy Magazine. You refuse to flip for a Coke. You refuse to laugh at their dirty stories. You refuse to cut that deal with them in the business office. You refuse to go along with them in all of these ways and run with them the way they do, they'll come down on you like a hammer. "Yea, and all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution..." Oh, we go along with the crowd today.

Friend, I want to tell you something. When you're prosperous in the Lord, the world is going to see the difference. And when you glorify God, you're going to anger the enemy. The friend of this world is an enemy of God. But I want to tell you, dear friend, the friend of God is the enemy therefore of this world. And you're going to know. You're going to feel the heat when you begin to live for the Lord Jesus. And maybe some of you want out. I'm glad that Simon Peter didn't put any fine print in the contract. "All that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution..." We're looking for a cheap way, an easy way, a lazy way to serve God. There is none. There is none if you're an out and out Christian for the Lord.

Do you remember those two churches over there in the book of the Revelation? One was called Smyrna. Smyrna was the suffering church. The very word means crushed. They were a church that suffered. And they did, their goods had been confiscated. Jesus said, "I know your poverty," but then He said to them, "but you are rich." Now he was talking about another kind of riches. And you know the word for rich that He used? It's our, it's the Greek word that we get our word *plutocrat* from. He said, "Oh, you don't have much of this world's goods, but you're plutocrats. You're rich!" And because they were rich, they were persecuted.

But then there was another church, the church at Laodicea. Do you remember that church? Oh, friend, if they'd have been 20<sup>th</sup> church, Cadillacs would have been all over the parking lot, Mercedes, and all of the rest of it. There would have been a lot of ladies there with furs and diamonds, and so forth. There's nothing wrong with those things if God blesses you with them. But the problem was they thought they were rich when they were not. And Jesus said to this church, "Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked."

Laodicea got along with the world. Smyrna did not get along with the world. If you're

reproached for the name of Christ, prosperous are ye. Thank God for God's rich poor, and have pity upon God's poor rich who think they're so rich, but they're not prospering in the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm talking to you about reality, dear friends. You live for the Lord Jesus Christ, you're going to find out that you are a twice-born man in a world of once-born men, and you are going to be going against the tide.

Vance Havner said, "I'm often amused and amazed at the way we equate Christianity with success, popularity, and prosperity. We may not admit it, but we use the same old gauge that the world uses, except that we employ religious language. It would appear today that gain is godliness, in spite of Paul's formula that godliness plus contentment equals prosperity." And then Havner went on to say, "Christians are not supposed to run into trouble today. We're diplomats, not soldiers. We specialize in liaison, not loyalty. Nowadays, we're expected to get along with everything and everybody, including the devil himself." You let Christians say, "We're not going to go along with abortions; we're not along with sodomy; we're not going along with free love; we're not going along with these things. They are wrong!" And then you see, dear friend, what the Bible says. "All who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." We will. Now that's the reality of it. Don't think it strange, Peter says. Don't think it strange.

## II. The Results of Suffering

Number two: The results of suffering in the life of a Christian. Now, remember, we're talking about suffering for the cause of Christ. I want to mention five things that Peter says will be the results of this suffering, and they're all good. I'm not trying to frighten you today; I'm trying to encourage you, okay. I want you to write them down.

### D. Purification

Number one: Write down the word *purification*. Look, if you will, in chapter 4:12. He says, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial that is come upon you to test you..." Now this word, *fiery trial*, is a word that was used in the Septuagint to translate a word that means a smelting furnace. What is a smelting furnace? A smelting furnace is a furnace that you put ore in, metal in, silver or gold ore. And in that fiery, that metal is tested or tried, and all of the dross and all of the impurity is burned away. Ah, the refiner burns away, through a fiery trial, all of these things. And then what is left is the pure silver or the pure gold. You remember old Job said, "He knoweth the way that I shall take, and when He hath tried me, I shall (what?) come forth as gold." That's exactly what he's talking about. Or remember there in Malachi 3:3, that Scripture that prophesies the Lord Jesus, and it says, "And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and He shall purify the sons of Levi." Jesus is the refiner. And so, when our faith is in the fire, all that the fire is going to do is to burn out that dross and burn out that

impurity so the beauty and the value and the gold, of the gold and the silver will come forth.

You remember Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednigo, those three Hebrew children who were cast into the fiery furnace because they would not worship Nebuchadnezzar's, Nebuchadnezzar's image? They refused to worship. They refused to bow. And so they were cast alive into that fiery furnace. And Nebuchadnezzar, the king – you can read this in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Daniel – had them bound and cast alive into that fiery furnace that was heated seven times hotter than it normally heated; so hot that the men who threw them in fried like bacon throwing them in there. And then old Nebuchadnezzar came to look into the furnace, and he asked a question. The Bible says, "Then Nebuchadnezzar, the king, was astonished, and rose up in haste and spake, and said unto his counselors, Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose walking in the midst of the fire; three men bound, four men loose. "They were bound. They put cords and chains on them. And now they're loose. Are you listening? The only thing that fire burned off of them is what the world put on them. That's all. The Bible says they came out without even the smell of smoke in their clothes. I wish I could get out of the barber shop and the airplane that way. They came out without even the smell of smoke in their clothes. Three men bound; four men loosed. Those cords burned off of them. Those chains burned off. They went through the fiery furnace, but the Lord Jesus was in that furnace, and I'm going to get to that in just a moment. But you write down the word *purification*. It is there to try you. It is there to test you. That's verse 12.

### E. **Partnership**

Now look in verse 13 and I want you to write down the word *partnership*. Look at, at, at verse 13 now. "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings..." Now the word *partaker* is the word for partnership, *koinonia*. Do you know what *koinonia* is? *Koinonia* is a Greek word that is translated partnership or fellowship. It really involves both. It is a partnership that results in a fellowship. You see, when you become a partner and somebody to win a soul, then you're having fellowship that you could never have before. When you become a partner with somebody to pray, then you're having fellowship like you could never have before. That is sharing something in common. That's what the word means. Now what we have in common with our Lord Jesus Christ is suffering. He suffered and we can suffer with Him.

Now pay attention. You want Jesus Christ to be real to you? Do you want to have fellowship with the Lord Jesus? The apostle Paul prayed in the book of Philippians and, "Oh, that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection (and listen to it now), and the fellowship of His sufferings." I mentioned before that there have been a few times,

not enough, and I'm ashamed of the fact that there have not been more times that I've suffered for the cause of Christ, and I tell you this: Jesus has never been more sweet and more precious and more real, never! When you knowingly are suffering for the cause of Christ, when you are abused, misused, lied upon for the name of Jesus, oh, you don't enjoy that part of it, but I want to tell you, dear friend, that you can say there is the fellowship of His sufferings. There is a *koinonia* with the Lord Jesus Christ. And I wouldn't miss that for the world. And you're going to find out that Christians who have suffered for the Lord Jesus Christ are Christians who know Him and love Him and enjoy Him and understand Him in a way that other people don't.

So write down the word *purification*. Write down the word *partnership*. Then write down another word. Oh, let me just go back to partnership for a moment. Remember those three Hebrew children, remember them? When you get into the fiery furnace for Jesus, you always get into the furnace with Jesus. He was there. "Didn't I cast in three men? Lo, I see four," he said, "and the fourth is like the Son of God." And they had a fellowship with Jesus in that furnace that those on the outside never knew.

#### F. **Power**

All right. Now write down the word *power*, because this is the next reason for it. Look again in verse 14: And if ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, prosperous are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you..." Now who is the spirit of glory? And who is the spirit of God? The spirit of glory and the spirit of God is the Holy Spirit of God. And Jesus said, "You shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you..." Do you want power in your life? Do you want the spirit of glory and the spirit of God to rest upon you? Then you live for the Lord Jesus Christ in such a way that you may receive the persecution of this world. But when you do, you can understand that just as the Shekinah glory of God dwelt upon that Old Testament tabernacle, the Shekinah glory of God will dwell upon the tabernacle of your flesh and God's power, in a very special way, will be evident in your life.

The apostle Paul suffered this way. And, and the apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12:10, listen to it. "Wherefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses (now watch this next phrase) for Christ's sake..." Now Paul knew all of these things for Christ's sake. He said, "I take pleasure in them. They're for Christ's sake." And then he gave the reason that he takes pleasure in them, for he goes on to say in that verse, "...for when I am weak, then I am strong." Now what did he mean by that? He said, "Well, if they take my money, I've got greater riches." So that weakness becomes strength. "If they isolate me and put me in solitary confinement, Jesus is near." So that weakness becomes strength. "If they beat me and I hurt, I have the fellowship of His suffering." That weakness becomes strength. "And if, if I in my body am crippled, that causes me not to lean upon the arm of flesh, that I might lean

upon the everlasting arms. I take pleasure in it.” You see, listen, friend. God is wanting to make us strong, to make us strong. There’s power, there’s power in it. Remember last week, or the week before, we were talking about weight lifting? No pain, no gain, huh? Paul said, “When I’m weak, then I’m strong.” Okay. Sufferings not going to hurt you. It’s not going to harm you. It’s going to strengthen you.

### G. Persuasion

All right. Now let me give you the, the fourth reason, the fourth reason. Write down the word *persuasion*. Now look in verse 16: “Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.” It’s your way of glorifying God. Go back to verse, ah, 14: Ah, “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.” Do you know what glorifies the Lord? Do you want me to tell you what glorifies the Lord? When you, as a Christian, return good for evil. When you, as a Christian, love those that persecute you. When you, as a Christian, suffer for the cause of Christ without complaining, without carping, without crying, without murmuring, that gives Him glory. And let me tell you something, friend. There is a tremendous power of persuasion in that. The world is watching. The world wants to know whether what we have or not is real. They really secretly in their heart hope it is. But many times they cast things at us to see how we react to those things. And when we react in the right way, it has a powerful persuading effect.

Let me give you an example of what I’m talking about. Paul and Silas were persecuted for the cause of Christ. They were cast into the innermost dungeon at Philippi. And the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts says, “And at midnight they prayed and sang praises to God.” Now those inmates had often heard cursing, but not praising. They’d often heard complaining, but not praying. But they’re glorifying God. They’re singing to God at midnight in that dungeon. And God sent His earthquake angel to shake that place. Paul and Silas are set free, but they don’t flee. The jailor comes in. He’s going to kill himself because he thinks the prisoners are gone. Paul says, “Don’t do yourself any harm. We’re all here.” That is, “We’ve not escaped.” And the jailor says, “Sirs, sirs, tell me what I must do to be saved.” Most of the people in that day would have been glad to see that jailor cut his throat, and they would have helped him do it. And, and, and most of them would certainly would have fled. Paul said, “Don’t get all excited. We’re here praising God, glorifying God.” No wonder he wanted to be saved.

Let me give you another example. Old Stephen, you read about that in the book of Acts, 7<sup>th</sup> chapter. Stephen – I have a son named Stephen, named after that Stephen. Stephen stood up and preached a sermon. It was a powerful sermon; so powerful that they gnashed on him with their teeth. They took up stones and they stoned him. And as they stoned him to death, persecuted, suffering for the cause of Christ, he prayed for

them. He said, "Father, don't lay this sin to their charge." And the Bible says his face shined like an angel's face. What a tremendous illustration of that text that says, "The spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." The spirit of glory and of God was resting upon him, so, so much that you could see the Shekinah glory of God upon his face. But there's an interesting passage there that says, "...and they laid their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul." Remember that? They took off their coats in order to stone old Stephen. And they said, "Saul, watch our coats. We're going after this rascal." Old Saul is watching. He sees those stones fall. He sees that man with a face like the noonday sun. He hears him pray for those who stone him. Later on, that man named Saul is on the road to Damascus, and the Lord Jesus appears to him and says, "It's hard for you, isn't it, to kick against the goads?" Do you know what the goad was? What he saw old Stephen do. The way he saw Stephen die. "It's hard for you, isn't it?" Yes, it was hard for him. And Saul became Paul, the greatest preacher of the gospel because Stephen suffered as a Christian.

Earlier in this book, Peter tells these women who have unsaved husbands, "Wives, be in subjection to your own husband as unto the Lord. Oh, it'll be hard. He'll curse you. He'll abuse you. He'll neglect you. He'll misuse you. But keep loving him. He throws fire; you throw water. He curses; you pray. Don't nag him. Live for Christ before him. Return good for evil." Then Peter says, "And be ready to give an answer when he asks of the hope that's in you." What's he talking about? The persuading power. He's going to come to you after a while, and he's going to say, "Honey, you tell me how to be saved."

#### H. **Perfection**

All right. I'm almost finished now. Let me write down one other thing, and that's the word *perfection*. Look, if you will, in 1 Peter 5:10, 1 Peter 5:10. We're going to get a little ahead of our context here, but it's all there. "But the God of grace, who hath called you unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect. After you've suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you." Now the word *perfect* here doesn't mean sinless. It means mature. We say, "That's a perfect flower." We don't mean it's a sinless flower. God's going to make you perfect. He's going to help you to grow up.

You see, God's working on us, friend. Remember later, earlier in this passage, Peter called us "God's building?" We're living stones. Now when Solomon built his temple, the stones for Solomon's temple were cut out of a quarry that was an underground quarry there under Jerusalem. Those of you who've gone to Jerusalem, and those who will go, you will have the privilege of going up under the city of Jerusalem into Solomon's quarry. Those caverns go back, back, back, back, way back under there. It is said that Solomon had 80,000 stone cutters, and they were chipping and shaping those stones. And so, when those stones from beneath were brought to the temple mount above, there was

not a sound of a hammer, not a sound of a chisel. It had all been done below. Now, friend, let me tell you something. God is shaping every one of us as living stones for that temple above. And down here below is His quarry. Now those people who persecute you, don't look at them as your enemies. Just look at them as God's stonecutters. That's all they are. He's not your enemy. Next time somebody reviles you, say, "Thank God, another stonecutter." That's all he is. Another chiseler. Take that two ways. He's working on me. He's shaping me to be what I ought to be. And he doesn't realize it, but I want to tell you, my dear friend, that God uses the axe the devil sharpens. Don't you understand that? And he's just shaping these stones. And all he is, he's not your enemy; he's God stonecutter. After you've suffered a while, God will make you perfect, mature, and place you in that building up yonder because He's formed you down here.

### **III. The Reactions to Suffering**

Now, very quickly, let me give you your reactions. We've talked about the reasons. Now let me give the reactions to suffering in the life of a Christian. There are three, and I'm only going to mention them.

#### **A. Rejoice**

First of all, the first reaction is to rejoice. Write down the word *rejoice*. Look, if you will, in verses 13-14: "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. IF ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you..." Four times there in those two verses he talks about joy. Persecution can't take your joy. It increases your joy. Praise the Lord. Jesus said, "Rejoice and be exceeding glad."

#### **B. Review**

Now the second thing. Not only rejoice, but *review*. Look, if you will, in verses 17-18: "For time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" The second thing is to review your life. Are you suffering carnally? Is it because of something that you've done that you've suffered? Let judgment begin at the house of God. If it's for Christ, rejoice. If it's for carnal reasons, repent. So every time suffering comes not only should I rejoice, but I should review. I should look and let judgment begin at the house of God.

#### **C. Rely**

Thirdly, rely. Rely. Look, if you will, in verse 19: "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator." When you review and you find out that my suffering is for the

cause of Christ, then just rely on Him. Friend, it's not your problem and it's His problem. And that word *commit*, that word *commit* is an interesting word. It is a banking term. It means to put something with somebody else for a safe deposit. Suppose you had in your breast pocket, \$100,000 in an envelope. You say, "Yeah, suppose." One hundred thousand dollars in cold cash. You say, "Boy, I hope I don't lose this. I hope somebody doesn't find out it's there. I hope I don't get robbed. Oh, I want to get rid of this." So you go down to the bank and you make out a deposit slip, and you deposit that \$100,000 in cash, and you slide it beneath the teller's cage there. And he gives you a receipt for it. And then you say, "Ha, wow, boy, I feel better." Now you don't get a couple of pistols and go shoot on the front, ah, ah, sit on the front steps of the church with those six-shooters to protect it, or the front steps of the bank, rather, to protect it. I mean, if you didn't believe the bank could take care of it, you wouldn't put it in there, you see.

## Conclusion

Now that's, that's the idea here. Just, just commit it to God. Don't worry about it, friend. Commit it to God. He will take care of it, and you can bank on it. God is going to take care of it. You suffer for the cause of Christ, rejoice, review. If you need to, repent. And then just rely on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's bow in prayer. Heads are bowed, eyes are closed. Now while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, I want to speak for a moment to those of you who are not Christians. You say, "Brother Rogers, if I come to Jesus, that means I might suffer." Friend, you're going to suffer, whether you don't come to Jesus. That's not the point. "Man that is born of woman is full of trouble." But if you don't come to Jesus, you'll suffer for all eternity. That is the point. The only sorrow a Christian will ever know is this side of the grave. The only joy an unsaved person will ever know is this side of the grave. And I want to tell you, when a Christian lives for the Lord, even his suffering becomes joy. There's a reason, a purpose for it. If you don't know Jesus, I want you to be saved. And if you want to be saved, I want to invite you to receive Him right now. And I want to help you to, to receive Him. So while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, I want you to pray this kind of a prayer if you really want to be saved, if you want to be a Christian. Now, remember, you're not saved by joining a church or getting baptized. That's, that's important, but that's not what saves you. It's faith in Christ that saves you. So if you want to be saved, you pray like this: "Dear God." Just go ahead and pray. "Dear God." Just in the silence of your heart, "Dear God, I'm a sinner, and I'm lost, and I need to be saved, and I want to be saved. Jesus, You died to save me. And You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You, Jesus." Tell Him that right now. "I do trust You, Jesus, right now this moment with all of my heart. Come into my heart. Come in, Jesus. Come in, Jesus. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Jesus."

# Pastoral Leadership

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: June 18, 2000**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 5:1–4**

*“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;”*

1 PETER 5:2

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Genuine Experience
  - II. Glowing Enthusiasm
  - III. Godly Example
- Conclusion

## Introduction

Take your Bibles, and turn to 1 Peter chapter 5, and I'm going to try to give you a synopsis of the message that I preached to the Southern Baptist pastors at the Pastor's Conference. My assignment was to teach and to preach on leadership, and I'm going to collapse that message down, and leave some of the illustrations out, but I want you to hear what I believe is a very important message. And it will help you as a church to understand more about, especially about, pastoral leadership. The passage I want to read to you is 1 Peter chapter 5 verses 1 to 4.

And here's what Peter said: “The elders which are among you, I exhort, who am also an elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory which shall be revealed. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”

Sometimes I cringe when I hear pastors talk about leadership styles, because today modern pastors are attending seminars that are meant for business people, telling them how to get ahead, how to manage, how to lead, and the theme of those seminars is, you can be what you want to be, you can have what you want to have, if you will apply certain leadership principles. And, therefore, rather than being a godly pastor, they're more like a glorified CEO, a chief executive officer, and that's a very heady thing, because every pastor wants to succeed. Anybody who leads anything wants it to

succeed, and I've always, from the time of my youth, if I was in any kind of a contest, I wanted to win, I wanted to succeed.

I had a young preacher who wanted to chauffeur me around when I was preaching a citywide crusade in Oklahoma. Joyce was with me. He was just dying for the opportunity to be with me, and to be around me, and you could just tell he was just so charged up about what he was doing in his church, hoping that perhaps by association he could learn some pastoral secrets. Joyce said to him, You remind me of Adrian when he was your age. Oh, he said, thank you so much. She said, I didn't mean that for a compliment. It's a heady thing; everybody wants to succeed and so forth.

I was speaking to a young pastor, and he said to me—and I think he was trying to impress me—he was talking about his church, and he said, I hired me a minister of music. I said, Stop right there. A minister of music is not a hireling. You don't hire a minister of music. He's God's man, God's gift to the church. Number two: he doesn't belong to you. You are his fellow servant. You don't talk about your staff. He doesn't belong to you; he is not a hireling.

The hireling flees; the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. And the model for church leadership is not the CEO, or not that the pastor is not some prince of the church, and I told those preachers that it is time that some exchange the scepter for the staff. Now, I believe in leadership; oh, you better believe I believe in leadership. Everything rises or falls on leadership. A leader is able to inspire people to go places they would not go on their own, and attempt to do things that they would never have thought of, apart from leadership. And leaders, therefore, have incredible power for good or for evil. But the example of the pastor for leadership is Jesus Christ himself, and Jesus led through servanthood.

Now, there's a difference between leadership in this world and leadership in a church. A pastor is God's appointed and God's anointed leadership. The church is like a flock; it is a flock, and the pastor is a shepherd. I told those preachers, and I'll tell you, that the ministry is the best calling, but it is the worst profession. No one should seek the ministry as a profession. No one should refuse it as a calling. I believe in a God-called ministry. First Timothy chapter 3, verse 1: "This is a faithful saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." But Paul said, "I thank God that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." Only God can make a minister—not parents, not a bishop, and not a seminary.

Haddon Robinson said this: The modern preacher has a job description that sounds like Superman. He's expected to make house calls like an old country doctor, shake hands like a campaigning politician, prepare lessons like a professor, and see as many people as a psychologist. He has to be as skilled an executive as the president of a business and as shrewd a financier as a banker—and, in the middle of it all, so good a

diplomat that he could umpire a baseball game between the NAACP and the Ku Klux Klan. As a result, those entering the ministry are confused about who they are, and what they're supposed to accomplish, and how they're to live up to the impossible expectation. And I want to say to any young person out here who's thinking about the ministry: if you want a job like that, you don't have both oars in the water.

Now, what is our job description? What is our leadership? Well, these are given in the passage that I just read to you. Now, in the passage, we're going to see, and I'm going to show it to you, that a pastor is called an elder, he is called a shepherd, and he is called a bishop. He is an elder, he is a shepherd, and he is a bishop.

Now, go back to chapter 5 and verse 1: "The elders which are among you, I exhort, who am also an elder." Peter was an elder, and he's talking to the elders. Now, what does the word elder mean? It does not mean a man with a gray beard. He's not talking about someone who has many years piled up on him, though he could be an elder, but it does not speak of a man's chronological age. Timothy was an elder, and Paul said to Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth." It speaks not of physical age; it speaks of spiritual maturity. A pastor is to be a mature man, and the cause of Christ has been hurt many times by immature preachers. And many times immature preachers are the cause of their own undoing.

I once worked with a staff man who was an ordained minister, and I saw him heading for serious, serious trouble. As a matter of fact, there was an individual who was about, I believe, to pounce him. And I was able to step in between and pour a little oil on the water and get us out of that situation, Brother Mark. Later, I told my young preacher friend a story. I said, There was once a bull who loved to feed on alfalfa and clover in a beautiful pasture, and at 2 o'clock in the afternoon or thereabout, he would go under a great oak tree, lie down, and sleep for a while, and then chew the cud. He loved it, except for one thing. Near that pasture was a railroad, and there was a bend in the track, and there was a train that would come by about 2:30, and the engineer would blow the whistle when he came around that curve. It infuriated the old bull, it scared him and frightened him for a while. Every day when he was just about to go off to sleep and enjoy his alfalfa, that train whistle would blow. One day the old bull had enough. He got up, with his horns he knocked down the fence, he got out on the tracks, and waited for the train to come. And he heard it coming, then he began to snort and paw the ground, and he lowered his head, and started toward that train—the train coming toward him, he toward the train. They met head on. It took the engineer about a block to get the train stopped, and he got out and began to clean what was left of that bull out of the cowcatcher, and get it off the track. Then, when he did that, the engineer stepped back, and took off his hat, and he said, Old bull, I admire your courage, but your judgment's mighty poor.

I know a lot of preachers that way. They're fighting fights that don't have to be fought, and a lot of it is because of immaturity. I'm not talking about not standing for the things that really count.

## **I. Genuine Experience**

What is an elder? Number one: he is a man—listen to me—of genuine experience. Look in chapter 5, verse 1: “The elders which are among you, I exhort, who am also an elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.” An elder is someone who has seen the suffering; an elder is someone who has glimpsed the glory. I told those preachers, and especially the young preachers: Don't preach beyond your experience. If you preach beyond your experience, God may just bring your experience up to your preaching in a way you don't like. A lot of preachers are listening to other preachers preach on cassettes, and it's going in their ear and out their mouth without going through their heart. Sometimes young preachers ask me, Can I preach your sermon? I say, If I can help you, that's fine, if my bullet will fit in your gun, but you better be sure you use your powder. Don't preach beyond your experience. An elder is one with genuine experience.

## **II. Glowing Enthusiasm**

Number two: an elder is one with glowing enthusiasm. Now, 1 Peter 5, verse 2: “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.” Look at the word willingly; look at the word ready mind. A preacher ought to be so glad that God has called him to preach—not that he's coerced or forced; he's thrilled. I hear people talking about fighting the call to preach. I never fought the call to preach. I'm gloriously happy that God called me to preach. I would have to step down to be the President of the United States—not that there's any chance I would be the President of the United States; I'm not saying that. But I'd have to step down. Do you know why we sometimes have boring sermons? Because we have bored preachers. They don't have a glowing enthusiasm. I tell young preachers if, after thirty minutes, you don't strike oil, stop boring.

Do it willingly, not for filthy lucre. Of course a preacher ought to be paid. You'd expect me to say that, wouldn't you? No, the Bible says the elder that rules well is worthy of double honor, and that's the word we get our word honorarium from. But no preacher should preach for money. He's not a hireling.

I had an experience when I got out of seminary. I was pastoring a little church on the Gulf Coast of Mississippi, the Waveland Baptist Chapel. I think our salary was sixty-five dollars a week, pastoring that little chapel. When I graduated from seminary, there were two churches from Florida that wrote me a letter and asked me to come and be their

pastor. One was a church in Melbourne, the other was a church in Fort Pierce. Both of those churches were running less than 200 in Sunday School. The church in Fort Pierce was running less than 100 average attendance, as I remember. I didn't feel led to go to either of the churches—not because of their size primarily, I just did not feel that leading—but the church in Fort Pierce wrote me back, and said, We believe that you are God's man to come and lead our church. It was a little church; about every two years it would have a different pastor. It was in kind of a run-down building. But I prayed over it, and the thing got in my heart, and I felt well, maybe that's God's will for me, and I prayed some more, and I felt convicted, that's where I ought to go, to that church, and pastor that little church.

And so, on a Sunday—they'd already asked me to come, I had the call—and, on a Sunday, I had to tell my little church in Waveland, Mississippi, that I was going to Florida. And I said, Now, how can I do this? How can I make it sound very spiritual? So I thought about it, and I said, I know just how to say it. So I got up on Sunday to announce that I was leaving, and I said, Brothers and Sisters, a nail-pierced hand has pointed to Florida, and I must follow. Sounds pretty good, huh? Nail-pierced hand—who's going to fight a nail-pierced hand? A nail-pierced hand has pointed to Florida, and I must follow. And I really felt that; it was more than rhetoric. I really felt that. Now, the salary was a very meager salary, but I felt I ought to go.

When I got home that Sunday afternoon, before I told the Fort Pierce church I would come, but I'd already told my little church I was leaving, I got a phone call. It was a man named Mr. Graham. He said, Are you Adrian Rogers? I said, Yes sir, I am. He said, I'm Mr. Graham, and I serve on the pulpit committee, and he named the First Baptist Church of one of Florida's biggest cities. He said, I'm on the pulpit committee of this church, and we've heard about you, and we would like for you to come and be our pastor. He told about the salary, which was three or four times what the salary was in this other church, and he told about the staff. He told that they had a minister of music—I'd never heard of such a thing, hardly. They had an educational director, they had this, and they had that, and he said, And we would like for you to come and be our pastor. It is as if God had wrote it from the ceiling of that house that I was in all the way down to the floor in big letters flashing, This is a test! This is a test! This is a test! You see, I'd already told them that a nail-pierced hand was directing me toward a certain church. I said, Mr. Graham, I'm sorry, I cannot even talk with you about this, and hung up the phone.

Now, I tell you, I am not a hireling. No preacher should ever be a hireling. A preacher ought to be paid. If he's a good one, he ought to be paid well, but that is not the point.

What is an elder? An elder is a person with a genuine experience. He has seen the suffering; he has glimpsed the glory. An elder is somebody with a glowing enthusiasm. He feeds the flock willingly, and not of constraint, but of a ready mind.

### III. Godly Example

And then, thirdly, an elder is someone of a godly example. Look in 1 Peter 5, verse 3: “Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock.” The pastor is not lord. He is an example. He is a shepherd; he’s not a boss. Sometimes when we have a big church like Bellevue Baptist Church people say, Well, those pastors in those big churches. When I hear that, I always laugh. If I were a dictator, all our members would tithe. If I were a dictator, they’d all be here on Wednesday for prayer meeting. I’m not a dictator. A dictator rules by force. I can be dismissed by this church, whenever you get ready. I serve at your pleasure. A dictator leads by force, rules by force; a pastor leads by example. That’s the leadership that he has. “Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock.” That means an elder can never ask his people to go anywhere, do anything, be anything, or give anything that he is not willing to be an example of. I have no right to ask you to win souls, if I’m not a soul-winner. I have no right to ask you to tithe, if I’m not a tither. I have no right to ask you to abstain from certain things, if I don’t abstain from those things. The pastor is to lead by example. As Paul said, You be a follower of me, as I am of Christ. Leadership and character are linked together. I had more to say about that, but I’m going to cut on down to the next thing.

So, as an elder, a pastor is to be mature. Then, as a shepherd, he is to minister. Look, if you will, in chapter 5, verse 2: “Feed the flock of God which is among you.” Feed the flock. The word feed is a verb. The noun form is shepherd. Shepherd the flock. What is the duty of a shepherd? Number one, to guard the flock. Paul told the Ephesian elders, in Acts 20, verse 29: “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.” And there are people who look at Bellevue Baptist Church, and they see our sheep, they want to devour our sheep, they want to steal our sheep, they want to shoot, massacre our sheep. So the shepherd is to guard the flock.

And a shepherd is to guide the flock. I told the pulpit committee when I came here, I believe in pastoral leadership. Not arrogant leadership, but a shepherd is guiding a flock. A shepherd who leads the flock, he doesn’t say, All of you sheep want to graze over here say, baaaa. And, all you sheep want to graze over here say, baaaa. And then, he counts the votes. I defy you to show me a church in America that is an evangelistic, soul-winning church that does not have a shepherd that leads the flock. He is to guard the flock, he is to guide the flock, and he is to grow the flock. And how does he grow the flock? By feeding them—by feeding them. He says, “Feed the flock of God.” I’ve learned something in my ministry: that hungry sheep are hard to control. As a matter of fact, did you know that hungry sheep will bite one another? But if the sheep are fed, not only will they be content, but they will reproduce, and they will produce wool, and they will

reproduce lambs themselves.

And so, what is my job, and what is the job of a spiritual leader? First of all, he is an elder—that speaks of his maturity. Number two: he is a shepherd, which speaks of his ministry. And his chief ministry is to feed the flock. When they chose the first deacons, do you know why they chose the first deacons? So that the ministers could give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. That tells me that praying is more important than preaching, and that also tells me that preaching is more important than administration. And so, a pastor or preacher is to be one who feeds the flock.

Now, we hear a lot about church growth today, about seeker-sensitive, boomer-targeted, market-driven preaching—we need to hear some more about Bible-based and Christ-centered preaching. I told those preachers what I'm going to tell you: it is not primarily my job to fill the pews; it is my job to fill the pulpit. And you cannot always measure a preacher's worth by the size of the crowd. Sometimes good preaching will preach a crowd away.

Now, here's the third thing. A preacher is an elder—that speaks of his maturity. A preacher is a shepherd—that speaks of his ministry, to guard, to guide, and to grow the flock. Thirdly and finally, a preacher, a leader, is a bishop, and that speaks of his management. Maturity, ministry, and management. The word bishop is found here hiding in the shadows in this passage of Scripture. Look, if you will, in verse 2: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking over the oversight." Do you see the word oversight? That is, the verb form we get our word bishop from, *episkopos*—*epi* meaning over, *skopos* meaning to see over. A minister is an overseer. That is, he is to be a manager; he is a bishop. And so, you can call me Elder Rogers; you can call me Pastor or Shepherd Rogers; you can call me Bishop Rogers. These terms are interchangeable, and they can apply to the same man. They speak of maturity; they speak of ministry; they speak of management.

Now, we have a generation today who is afraid of pastoral authority. They think a pastor who leads with authority thinks he's little Lord Haha. That is not true. But there must be a man of God to lead a congregation. Here's what Paul told the Ephesian elders in Acts 20 verse 28: "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock"—now listen to this next phrase—"over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers." Over which the Holy Ghost has made you bishops. Who made me an overseer? The Holy Ghost. As a matter of fact, I was reading the articles, when I got home, in the Commercial Appeal, about the convention, and there was sort of a snide remark—at least I took it as being snide—that I heard one man say, and he was talking about me, the writer, that he says the Holy Ghost made him an overseer. Well I believe that—I believe that. Feed the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers. I believe in a God-anointed, God-appointed, God-called ministry. I believe

that. I believe that the man of God is God's gift to the church.

I told the pulpit committee, the deacons, when I came here what I want to tell you: that a church is to be pastor-led, deacon-served, committee-operated, and congregationally approved. It is the congregation that must answer totally to God for the man they have. The pastor is not a dictator. The pastor, as the head, the leader, cannot go anywhere that the body will not carry the head. And I serve at the pleasure of my people. I told them, and I'll tell you, if your pastor is a man of God, follow him. If he's not, fire him. He ought to be a man of God.

"Feed the flock of God over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers." Now, that doesn't mean that the pastor is a law unto himself, because the pastor is under the chief shepherd. Look, if you will, in chapter 5, verse 4: "And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." Who is the Chief Shepherd? Jesus. A pastor is an under-shepherd, serving under the Lord Jesus Christ, and no pastor can be over his flock as a shepherd until he's under the Chief Shepherd. We will never be over those things that God wants under us until we're under those things that God has put over us. And no pastor can pastor with pastoral authority and true godly leadership who's not submitted to Christ the Chief Shepherd.

Now, he says, "When the Chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away." Do you know what that crown is? It's the word *stephanos*. I have a son named *Stephanos*; Steve is his name. Steven, *Stephanos*—it means crown. But don't think of a diadem; it's not the word diadem that's used for crown. *Stephanos*—it means a laurel. Those athletes in those days would work, they would strive, they would sweat, they would strain, they would deny themselves, they would run in the Olympics, and if they won, they would appear before a throne called a *bema*, and they would put a little bit of weed on their head, a laurel, made of a laurel bush, and they would weave it, and put it on his head. Now, how long do you think that would last? A laurel, a crown that would fade.

And I've had some of those laurels, not made of grass and twigs. When I played football, I was on a championship team; we got a gold football. And I lettered in sports, and I got some sweaters with PB on them, Palm Beach High School. And I was given some honors, and so I got some big silver cups like this. A thief broke in the house and got the gold football; the moths got into the closet and got the sweaters; I have no idea where the cups are, they're gone. I couldn't lay my hand on one, if I wanted. Those kind of things fade away—they fade away. But I'm going to tell you something. I want a crown that will not fade, when the Chief Shepherd shall appear. You say, Well, Adrian, what do you want to do—go strutting around in heaven wearing a crown? No! I want one to lay at Jesus' feet. When the Chief Shepherd shall appear, then you'll receive a crown of glory that won't fade away.

I like what the French Foreign Legion has to say—their motto: If I falter, push me on; if I stumble, lift me up; if I retreat, shoot me. That's the way we ought to be, in God's army.

## **Conclusion**

Soon our King is coming; He's Jesus. And I'm telling you that we need to pray that God will raise up in this church and all over America men of God who are true leaders who have laid down the scepter and have taken up the staff, men of God following the Chief Shepherd. But lead we must, not arrogantly, but under the lordship of Jesus Christ. That's what's made Bellevue the church it is: not my particular leadership, but your wisdom since the early days to say we want a church that's pastor-led, deacon-served, committee-operated and congregationally approved. And may God keep it that way, and may we go forth marching under the blood-stained banner of our prince and coming King, Jesus, till He comes. Let's pray.

Father God, I thank you, Lord, I thank you that by your grace, Lord, you called me into your ministry, and I'm so grateful for that, Lord. And, Lord, I'm so grateful that you brought me to this wonderful and glorious church, and, Lord, you brought us together for such a time as this. And, Lord, I pray now that you will raise up leaders, not only pastors, and not only staff, not only men, but women, and even teens, and even children, who will lead on the playground, in the office, in the club, in the school, in the business, in the class, in the pulpit. O God, anew and afresh, we want to pledge our hearts, our lives, to you. In Jesus' holy name. Amen.

# Spiritual Leadership

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: December 5, 2001**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 5:1–4**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Man of God Is to Be a Man of Maturity
  - A. He Is to Have a Genuine Experience
  - B. He Is to Have a Glowing Enthusiasm
  - C. He Is to Have a Godly Example
- II. The Man of God Is to Be a Man of Ministry
  - A. The Shepherd Guards the Flock
  - B. The Shepherd Guides the Flock
  - C. The Shepherd Grows the Flock
- III. The Man of God Is to Be a Man of Management

Conclusion

## Introduction

**W**ould you turn in God's Word to 1 Peter chapter 5, and we're going to look at the first four verses. I want to talk to you tonight about "Spiritual Leadership."

Sometimes I cringe when I hear pastors talk about leadership styles. They attend seminars, they read books, they listen to tapes that are supposed to encourage them in the ministry. But most of these seminars, most of these tapes, and most of these books, are modeled after the movers and the shakers of this world. And they have, sort of, themes like "You Can be What You Want to Be," "You Can Achieve What You Want to Achieve." And they try to make pastors more or less entrepreneurs, or CEOs, some sort of a glorified CEO, and it seems like the spirit of the corporation has invaded the sanctuary. And I get a little nervous when I get around some of these young pastors who are boomers, like Bryan.

I'm not nervous about him, but some of those like him. I was in the study with one of them a while back, and he said, "I hired me a minister of music." I said, "You did what?" He said, "I hired me a minister of music." I said, "Now, wait a minute. He's not a hireling. The hireling flees. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. And number two: he doesn't work for you. He works for Jesus, and you're just one among many that is serving the Lord." But there's that spirit sometimes that happens with young preachers. And it's infectious.

I was preaching a revival crusade in a city in Oklahoma—in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

We were in a football stadium. And there was a young preacher who wanted to drive us around, Joyce and myself. He just wanted to kind of get up close, and so he was driving the car. Joyce and I were sitting in the back. And he was talking about all of these things that he was doing—ta-da, ta-da, ta-da, ta-da. And, I think he was trying to impress me, and he was a fine young man. Joyce said to him, “You remind me of Adrian when he was your age.” He said, “Oh, thank you.” She said, “I didn’t mean that for a compliment.”

And you know, young preachers, of course, want to be successful, and they do need to be leaders. But I want to talk to you tonight about “Spiritual Leadership.” A spiritual leader will inspire you to go places that you would not have gone by yourself, will inspire you to attempt things that you would never think that you had in you, and then find out that God has put it in there, and it does come to pass. Leaders have great power for good, and leaders have dangerous power for evil.

Now, the best example of good leadership is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. And Jesus led through being a servant. The Bible speaks of the church as a flock, and the Bible speaks of the pastor as a shepherd. And he’s to be a God-appointed and a God-anointed shepherd. A wise man said that the ministry is absolutely the best calling in the world and absolutely the worst profession. What he meant by that is no one should ever choose the ministry as a profession. God forbid. But if God honors you by calling you, and puts you in the ministry, thank God for it. Paul said—we’re going to get to our text in a moment—but Paul said, in 1 Timothy chapter 3, verse 1, *“This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work”* (1 Timothy 3:1). And only God can make a minister. Parents can’t do it. A wife can’t do it. A seminary can’t do it. A college cannot do it.

A leader of preachers is Haddon Robinson. Haddon Robinson is a master preacher and a wise man, and here’s what he said. I’ve copied his words down. He said, “The modern preacher has a job description that sounds like Superman. He’s expected to make house calls like an old country doctor, shake hands like a campaigning politician, prepare lessons like a professor, and see as many people as a psychologist. He has to be as skilled an executive as the president of a business, and as shrewd a financier as a banker, and, in the middle of it all, a good diplomat, such a good diplomat that he could umpire a baseball game between the NAACP and the Ku Klux Klan. As a result, those entering the ministry are confused about who they are and what they are supposed to accomplish, or how they’re able to live up to the impossible expectations.”

Well, thank God that’s really not what a minister is supposed to be, that description, because if a man aspires to do that, he doesn’t have both oars in the water. It is amazing what people expect of preachers today, and, as a result, in our Southern Baptist Convention and other churches, there are many ministers who, in discouragement, are leaving the ministry—not just a few, but many.

Now, Bryan, with that in mind, I want us to look in the Word of God and see what the Word of God says that a pastor is to be, what kind of spiritual leadership is a man of God to have, whether he's a youth pastor, a music minister, or a preaching pastor. What is the standard? By the way, now, the standard that God has for a man of God, for the most part, applies to those who are in the formal ministry, and those who've just been saved by the grace of God.

First Peter chapter 5, verses 1 through 4: *"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away"* (1 Peter 5:1–4).

Now, in this passage, as I'm going to show you in a moment, Bryan, God describes the man of God under three terms. He is described—and we're going to see in a moment—as an *elder*. He is described as a *pastor*. And he is described as a *bishop*. That may not be evident when you first read it, but we'll see that it is there.

## **I. The Man of God Is to Be a Man of Maturity**

Now, it is obvious that he is an elder. It begins this way: *"The elders which are among you I exhort."* Now, what does the word *elder* mean? It doesn't necessarily refer to someone who is older. It refers to someone who is mature. For example, Timothy was an elder, and Paul said to Timothy, *"Let no man despise thy youth"* (1 Timothy 4:12). I was pastoring a church when I was 19 years of age, and I believe that God had given me some measure of spiritual maturity. Now, you can be young only once, and you can be immature for a long time. A minister is to be a man of maturity. That's why he is called an elder. And I've been around the block long enough to know that a lot of trouble in a lot of churches is caused by pastors who are so immature that they are the source of their own undoing.

I had one, one time, for an associate—and, not you, Brother Mark, not Bob Sorrell—in another land in another state, so you don't know his name, but he was overloaded with immaturity. And I saw him one time get into a situation. After it was over, I shared with him a story about an old bull who lived by a railroad track, had a wonderful pasture there, but the train ran right through the pasture. Of course, there was a barbed-wire fence that separated the pasture from the train track. The old bull would get up in the morning and load up on clover and alfalfa and bahiagrass. Then he had a big oak tree. He loved about 2 o'clock in the afternoon to go lie down under that oak tree and chew the cud. But the problem was there was a curve in the railroad track, and about the time

the train would come around the curve every day about 2, 2:15, the engineer had a habit of blowing the whistle. It was an awful sound. It disturbed the old bull, who was there in the shade, meditating and chewing the cud. But it happened day after day.

After a while, the bull had enough of it. So he heard the train in the distance, he snorted several times, got up, pawed the ground, went over to the fence, put his head down, and knocked the fence over which was no difficulty for him, and he got out on the train track, and put his head down, snorted, pawed the ground, and started in the direction of the train. The train was coming in the other direction, and they met. And, after a while, the engineer managed to get the train stopped, and got out and was cleaning what remained of that bull out of the thing they call the cow catcher on the front of the train. And when the engineer had done that, he stepped back, and took off his hat, and said, "Old bull, I admire your courage, but your judgment's mighty poor." I've seen a lot of preachers that way. They are so immature.

#### **A. He Is to Have a Genuine Experience**

An elder, Brother Bryan, is to be a man of maturity. And, what makes a man mature? Look in this passage, look in verse 1, and you're going to find out that one of the marks of maturity is a genuine experience. Here's what Peter said: *"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed."* He doesn't have a second-handed ministry. He's seen the suffering. He's glimpsed the glory. He has a genuine experience. We have a lot of preachers today who are preaching beyond their experience. They're listening to cassette tapes or whatever, but they have not seen, they've not glimpsed, the glory; they've not seen the suffering. Maturity comes from a genuine experience.

#### **B. He Is to Have a Glowing Enthusiasm**

Another mark of maturity is not only a genuine experience, but a glowing enthusiasm. Look in verse 2: *"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre,"*—that means not for dirty money—*"but of a ready mind."* A man of God can never lose his enthusiasm. Of course, he shouldn't. Any man who's been a partaker of the glory is going to have a glowing enthusiasm.

Now, if a man preaches because they pay him, may God have mercy on him. I know preachers who are looking forward to retirement so they won't have to preach any more. It's ridiculous. He ought to preach, whether he has a church or not; somewhere on a street corner, if no place else. I preached on street corners when I didn't have a church. And don't tell the Finance Committee, but I don't preach for a salary. I would pay to preach—to preach the glorious gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now, the Bible teaches that a preacher ought to be paid. The Bible says very clearly and plainly, *“They which preach the gospel should live of the gospel,”* (1 Corinthians 9:14), and the Bible says, *“The elder that rules well is worthy of double honor”* (1 Timothy 5:17). I’m not opposed to a preacher being paid, but as I’ve said before, the man of God is not a hireling.

He is to have a genuine experience, and he is to have a glowing enthusiasm. *Do you know why we have boring sermons? Because we have bored preachers. If you don’t strike oil in the first twenty minutes, you ought to stop boring,* amen?

Now, do you know one of the reasons that I’m here at Bellevue Baptist Church? I was preaching on a street corner in Daytona Beach, Florida, literally standing on a bus bench, preaching at the top of my lungs as a kid, 18, 19 years old, a college student, and I saw a well-dressed man standing there listening to me. And after I finished preaching, the crowd kind of scattered, I thought I’d go witness to him. I said, “Sir, are you a Christian?” He said, “Yes sir, I am.” And he said, “Who are you?” I said, “My name is Adrian Rogers.” He said, “Why are you over here?” I said, “We just wanted to come.” I said, “I’m a student at Stetson University.” He said, “Does the university know you’re over here?” I said, “No, as a matter of fact, I don’t even think they’d like it, if they knew it.” It was kind of a liberal school. And I said, “Who are you, sir?” He said, “My name is Doyle Carlton.” He said, “I own this hotel.” We were standing in front of the hotel. He said, “I own this hotel.” And I found out he was a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. He said to me, “Young man, I want to get to know you.” I said, “Well, fine, I’d like to get to know you.”

He was one of the leading members of the First Baptist Church of Merritt Island, which church, subsequently, called me to be their pastor after I’d been to seminary. He never forgot that meeting that we had there on the street corner. From that time on, he wanted me to be his pastor. It was from Merritt Island that I came to Bellevue, but I’ll tell you it was from a street corner I went to Merritt Island. I wasn’t preaching there because somebody paid me to preach. I was preaching there because I had a genuine experience, and I had a glowing enthusiasm. I thank God for the privilege to preach.

### **C. He Is to Have a Godly Example**

Not only should a man be mature because he has a genuine experience, and not only would it show with a glowing enthusiasm—he doesn’t preach of necessity, but willingly, not of constraint—but the third thing is this: he ought to have a godly example. Notice verse 3: *“Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock.”* The minister is not some lord, some prince of the church, as they call the popes. He’s not a prince. He is to be an example. He’s not a lord over God’s heritage.

Every now and then, people say, “Well, these pastors of these big churches, they’re

dictators.” I always laugh when I hear that. I say, “Man, if I was a dictator, they’d all tithe. If I were a dictator, they’d all be in prayer meeting on Wednesday night.” A dictator rules by force. I serve at the pleasure of this congregation. They could dismiss me anytime they want to. But I am not a lord over God’s heritage. No pastor’s a spiritual dictator. Some may think that they are.

By the way, there are some who want to call Peter the pope, but Peter didn’t see himself as a pope. Look at what he said here in verse 1: *“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder.”* That is, I’m just a fellow elder with you; that’s all I am.

And we’re not lords over God’s heritage. Mature leadership always sets an example. No pastor should ask people to do what he will not do. He should never ask people to give what he will not give, or to be anything that he himself is not willing to be. And all of us ought to be able to say with the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 1: “Be a follower of me, as I am also of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). Now, he didn’t even mean, “You follow me while I follow Jesus.” He meant, “You follow Jesus like I follow Jesus. You be a follower of me, as I follow Christ. I’m following Christ. That’s what I want you to do. I’m not trying to get followers for me. I want you to follow Christ because I follow Christ.” That’s exactly what we’re to be. And so, leadership and character are linked together.

And, by the way, this example begins at home. Look, if you will, in Titus chapter 1, beginning in verse 5. Paul is talking to Titus. Now, Titus was like Bryan. He was a young preacher. And Paul says to Titus, *“For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:”*—then he says in verse 6—*“if any be blameless...”*—now, no preacher is sinless, but he ought to be blameless—*“if any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers”* (Titus 1:5–9). Now, in all of this scripture, he says one thing in verse 6: it begins at home—it begins at home. That’s a part of the example. What Paul told Titus is this: “Son, if you’re not doing it at home, don’t export it.”

My ministry does not begin behind this pulpit; it begins at the breakfast table. And Paul told Titus he was to be *“the husband of one wife.”* The Greek literally means he’s to be a “one-woman man.” *The man of God, and every married man, should never flirt with another woman, and never stop flirting with his own wife.* He is a “one-woman man.”

So, what makes maturity? Genuine experience, glowing enthusiasm, godly example—that’s what you’re to be, Bryan. You’re to be that man of God.

I’m amazed sometimes when I’m at a convention. I have the younger preachers come up to me and say, “Pastor Rogers, Dr. Rogers,”—whatever they call me—“would you give me a word for the ministry?” Like, you know, you’re going to lay all that wisdom on them as you’re passing down the hallway. And I finally thought about it, and I said, “Yes, I’ll give you a word: it’s *integrity*. That’ll sum it up.” Just *integrity*. Be mature.

## II. The Man of God Is to Be a Man of Ministry

Now, the man of God is a man of maturity. But now, not only is he a man of maturity, he’s to be a man of ministry, because not only is he an elder, he is a pastor, he is a shepherd. Look in verse 2 now again in this chapter. We’re back to 1 Peter chapter 5, verse 2. Paul says, “*Feed the flock*.” Now, the word *feed* there is a verb, but it’s the verb form of a noun, *poimen*, which literally means, “shepherd the flock.” So the man of God not only is to have a life of maturity; he is to have a life of ministry. He is a shepherd. He is to shepherd the flock.

### A. The Shepherd Guards the Flock

Now, you have to ask yourself, “If I am a shepherd, if Pastor Bishop here is a shepherd”—who we’re going to hear from later as he leads us in prayer—“what does a shepherd do?” Well, a shepherd guards the flock. Put in your margin Acts 20, verse 29—Paul said, “*For this I know, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock*” (Acts 20:29). There are people who want to feed on the Bellevue flock—false cults, isms, people who would devour this flock. Well, if I’m a good shepherd, I’m going to stand against these wolves.

### B. The Shepherd Guides the Flock

But not only does the shepherd guard the flock; the shepherd guides the flock. *What is the responsibility of the shepherd? He is to feed and lead. What’s the responsibility of the people? They are to swallow and follow.* That’s what a shepherd does. He guides the flock. Now, it’s not dictatorship if a pastor says, “This is where we’re going to graze; this is what we’re going to do.” *You never saw a shepherd say, “All you sheep that want to graze over here say, baaaaaa; all you that want to graze over here say baaaaaaa,” then count the baaaaaaas. No, he’s a shepherd. He leads.*

### C. The Shepherd Grows the Flock

So he guards the flock, he guides the flock, and he grows the flock. Feed them. I found out one thing, friend, from reading about sheep. I’ve never been a shepherd, literally, but they tell me that when sheep get too hungry, they’ll bite one another. I think that

well-fed, healthy sheep are going to reproduce themselves, and a good shepherd is finding good grass for his people—good pasture and plenty of grass. And if people are biting and devouring one another, it's because they're probably not being fed.

I want to say to you, Bryan, that praying is more important than preaching. I want to say that preaching is more important than administration. A man of God is not only to be a man of maturity; he's to be a man of ministry. He's a shepherd to guard, to guide, and to grow the flock. And he does that by the ministry of the Word of God.

We hear a lot today in the Southern Baptist Convention about being seeker-sensitive, boomer-targeted, and market-driven. Well, we ought to be Bible-based, as far as I'm concerned.

### **III. The Man of God Is to Be a Man of Management**

Now, thirdly—and we're coming to the end—he is to be an elder; he's to be a pastor or shepherd—the words *pastor* and *shepherd* are interchangeable, the word *pastor* is just a translation of the word *poimen*, shepherd; and he's to be a bishop. Now, we have a Bishop Bishop here tonight, because Pastor Bishop is a bishop, but here's what God says. Look again in verse 2: “*Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof.*” Underscore the word *oversight*. Now, he says, “*Feed the flock.*” That means, be a shepherd. And he says, as an elder, do it, but then he says, “take oversight thereof.” Now, this is a verb again, *oversight*, but it comes from a noun form, *episkopos*. What does that remind you of? Episcopal. Have you ever heard of the Episcopal Church? It gets its name right here. The word *episkopos* means overseer. That's the reason that Peter said here, “you take oversight.”

Now, here's the threefold responsibility that any preacher has—and we have a number here in the congregation tonight. It is, a. Maturity; b. Ministry; c. Management. He is one who is to manage. He is to take oversight. These three terms—*elder*, *pastor*, and *bishop*—are used interchangeably.

Now, in our Baptist life, we generally don't call our pastors *elders*. Most of us think of an elder as two boys with white shirts on bicycles. I always kind of laugh at that. But you could call me Elder Rogers and be using Bible language. Or you could call me Pastor Rogers and be using Bible language. Or you could call me Bishop Rogers and use Bible language. A bishop is not somebody who's running a bunch of churches; he's a pastor of a local church. So I'm a bishop. If you want to call me a bishop, fine. I was getting to be an archbishop. I've lost a little weight. I don't know whether you can tell it or not.

A bishop is somebody who's supposed to manage. And so, we have Baptists today who are afraid of pastoral leadership. Now, the pastor's not a dictator, but he's a manager. He's a bishop. And the devil doesn't care which side of the road he wrecks our car on, as long as he keeps us off the road.

Now, the Bible teaches strong pastoral leadership. Hebrews 13, verse 7—listen to this: *“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow”* (Hebrews 13:7). I tell our people over and over again, and I want you folks at New Hope to learn this: *a church is pastor-led, deacon-served, committee-operated, and congregationally approved*. All of those go together. God have mercy upon a committee-led church. That is a monstrosity. That’s an accident just getting ready to happen.

A church is to be pastor-led. The pastor is the *episkopos*. He’s the bishop. Not the boss—the bishop. It is to be deacon-served. We’re going to ordain a deacon tonight. Do you think because he’s a servant, that demeans him? Jesus said, “I am among you as one who deacons”—that’s literally what He said. “I’m among you as one who serves” (Luke 22:27). Jesus said, “He who would be chief among you, let him be the servant of all” (Matthew 20:27). He didn’t say, “Don’t be great.” He said, “Make sure it’s real greatness you get.” That comes by service. So it’s pastor-led, deacon-served. The deacons don’t free the pastor from work; they free him to work, to do what God called him to do.

It’s committee-operated, not committee-run. You don’t find the word committee in the Bible, but you find the word commitment in the Bible. Paul said, “That which you’ve heard of me, commit thou to faithful men, who will teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2). If the church is analogous to a body, my hand is analogous to a committee, a committee of five to hold things. But I don’t want my hand to run my body. I’d be afraid of that thing. “Good morning, Mr. Rogers. I’ll just be there if you don’t mind.” Now, my hand can do things that other parts of my body can’t do, and that’s the reason we have so many in our church who have so many wonderful committees.

The church is pastor-led. He is the *episkopos*. The church is deacon-served. They are the servants. It is committee-operated. And it is congregationally approved. That’s what keeps it from being any kind of a dictatorship. When we decide to buy ourselves property, or have a budget, or elect teachers or committee people, the congregation does that. It calls the pastor and dismisses the pastor. So that’s the wonderful ecology of a church. And so, I serve at the pleasure of my people.

## Conclusion

Now, what you want to remember—and we’re coming down to the end—is that one of these days Adrian, and Mark, and all of us, are going to appear before the Lord. Look at verse 4: *“And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”*

Bryan’s an athlete, and he’s a Marine. He’s tough. But he’s one of the crowns, but there’s another crown that’s a better crown. I’m a has-been athlete. I was captain of my

football team. We had a good team. I received some trophies and some things. I had a letter sweater. It had "PB" on it—Palm Beach, the voting capital of the world. We won a championship. I got a little gold football. And your daddy was the Dean of Men at that high school, Brother Price, a dear man of God. Folks, I want to tell you something. The moths got that sweater I used to strut around high school in. A thief broke into our house and got the gold football. And I have no idea where the trophies are. But I'll let you something: the man of God, a true man of God, or any true servant of God, has another crown that doesn't fade away. *"And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."* And so, I'm grateful for that.

You say, "Well, Adrian, what do you want a crown for? Do you want to strut around heaven wearing a crown?" No. I want a crown to place at the feet of my Redeemer. That's what I want. I want to hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21, 23). And I want to take the crown of glory, and lay it at His feet. And that, my young man, is what I want for you, what I want for this deacon; I want it for you, Brother Jim. I want it for all of us: that one day when our chief Shepherd appears, we'll lay a crown at His feet.

I'm going to ask this young man and his wife to come. I'm going to ask this young deacon and his wife to come here to the platform. Would you come and kneel here. I'm going to ask the wives to come. I'm going to ask the men on the Ordination Council—just put the chairs right there if you will—men on the Ordination Council, if you'll come and form a line here, and these are going to come and lay their hands on the heads of these servants—this young man who is being ordained to the ministry, and this young man who's being ordained to be a deacon. The deacon is saying, "I am here to serve the servants of God." The young man is saying, "God has called me to the ministry." We're saying, as a church, "We believe it." These men who will come for the laying on of hands are representing the Lord and His Church. And so, as they lay their hands upon the head, or the shoulders, or wherever, of these two, they're acting on behalf of all of us, and in the greater sense, acting on behalf of Jesus. This is a sacred time, so you have a prayerful heart.

# The Shepherd and His Sheep

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 5:1–4**

“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.”

1 PETER 5:2

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## Introduction

Turn to 1 Peter now—chapter 5—and we’re going to read the first four verses. Now you will remember that we have been preaching through 1 Peter, and we come almost to the conclusion of 1 Peter; but, I like it so well, I’m going to go right on with 2 Peter, when we finish 1 Peter, I believe. 1 Peter chapter 5, the first four verses—“The Shepherd and His Sheep”: *“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a*

*witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 5:1–4).*

Now Peter, here, is addressing the Church; and, the Church was living in tough times and dangerous times. And he reminded them of their character and what the Church was truly like. Now remember, these people knew a lot about raising sheep; and so, here was an analogy and a figure of speech that they could relate to. What Peter is saying is, first of all, that God's children are like sheep. Do you remember what the psalmist said? *"We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture"* (Psalm 100:3). And Carolyn just sang, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."

So God's people are like sheep. Now if God's people are like sheep, the Church is like a flock. Jesus said, *"Fear not, little flock"* (Luke 12:32). So the Church is like a flock. Now if the people are like sheep, the Church is like a flock, and the pastor is like a shepherd. That is the duty of the pastor: to shepherd the flock. And Jesus is the chief Shepherd to whom this shepherd is going to have to give an account, one day. Now that's what Peter is telling us, right here.

## **I. We Are the Sheep**

Now think about ourselves as sheep. You know, it's really not all that complimentary—the Lord calls us sheep. He could have been a little more complimentary, perhaps, and said we're strong as horses or, perhaps, we are beautiful as a gazelle or peacock; or perhaps he could say that we are, somehow, like one of these—brave as lions. He said we're sheep.

### **A. Sheep Are Wayward**

I want to tell you, folks, about a sheep. Sheep are wayward animals. As a matter of fact, they're kind of dumb. Anybody ever hear of a trained sheep? You can train dogs, cats, horses, maybe even fleas, but sheep are dumb. You know, a sheep gets lost. Look, that's what Peter is giving us—this idea. Look in chapter 2, verse 25 of this same chapter: *"For ye were as sheep going astray"* (1 Peter 2:25)—*"For ye were as sheep going astray."* And Isaiah said the same thing: *"All we like sheep have gone astray"* (Isaiah 53:6).

A sheep will nibble here and browse there; and, he just keeps on going. He doesn't know how to get back to the sheepfold, unless the shepherd goes after him and brings him back. Sheep really are kind of stupid; they're kind of dumb. And that's the way the Lord characterizes us. We're His sheep, and, therefore, because of that waywardness

in us, we need the sheepfold; and we need the shepherd; and we need the chief Shepherd. They just keep going; they don't come back. Did you ever try to get rid of a cat—take one out in the woods? They'll come back. A dog comes back. The horse can find the barn again, but the old sheep...

### **B. Sheep Are Weak**

But not only is a sheep wayward; a sheep is weak—the waywardness of the sheep, and the weakness of the sheep. Do you know a sheep just has no way to protect himself? Again, the horse can run; the mule can kick; the cat can scratch; the dog can bite; the skunk—you know what he can do; but not the sheep. You know, the Bible says, “*As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth*” (Isaiah 53:7). They're led as lambs to the slaughter. All of these picture the weakness of the sheep.

### **C. Sheep Are Worthwhile**

But you see, not only is there the waywardness of the sheep, and the weakness of the sheep; there is the worthwhileness of the sheep—the worthiness of the sheep—because the sheep is a valued animal, and the Lord values us. In that day, a man counted his wealth by sheep, because the sheep gave wool; and the sheep gave milk; and the sheep gave meat; and the sheep produced lambs. That is, in spite of our weakness, and in spite of our waywardness, the Lord loves us, the sheep—not like a dog, not like a hog. The sheep is a clean animal, representing the fact that we are God's saints; we have been born again—born of the spirit of God. So we are like sheep.

## **II. The Church Is the Flock**

Now therefore, because we're like sheep—and sheep are worth something, and yet, sheep are weak and wandering; they need to be protected—and so, the Church is like a sheepfold; the church is like a flock. The Lord so loves these sheep, and the Lord knows that they're so weak, and they tend to wander; but He values them so much that He puts His sheep together in a church, and the church is the flock. You see, the Bible doesn't teach that every sheep is to go off on his own. Every sheep is to be a part of the flock, and God gives to that flock a shepherd, because it is very, very important that the sheep congregate themselves together.

Now every now and then, some man will say, “Well, I'm a Christian. I love the Shepherd”—speaking of the chief Shepherd—“but I just don't want to be a part of the church. Jesus, yes; the church, no.” Friend, I want to tell you something: That's dangerous. It's a good way for a sheep to get devoured, and there are a lot of things around that would devour the sheep. For example, if you're in chapter 5, go ahead and look, if you will, in verse 8: “Be sober, be vigilant; for your adversary the devil walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). God wants us to

be in the protection of the flock, with a shepherd watching over us.

By the way, I heard the Lone Ranger was out one day on the prairie, and the Lone Ranger, with his keen eyes, looked, and said, "Tonto, I see Indians coming over the hill. What do we do? They're coming from the south." Tonto said, "We should go north." So they turned around and went north. And the Lone Ranger said, "Tonto, I see Indians coming from the north. What do we do?" Tonto said, "We go east." So they rode off to the east. "Tonto, more Indians—they're coming from the east." "We go west." They turned around and rode to the west. And the Lone Ranger said, "Tonto, Indians are coming from the west. We're surrounded by the Indians. What do we do now?" He said, "What do you mean *we*, paleface?"

Friend, let me tell you something: It can be mighty lonely doing it all by yourself. There are many enemies—not Indians—that surround us, and there are wolves that would devour the flock; there are thieves that would steal the sheep; and there are lions that would pounce upon us. And so our Lord, because of the weakness of the sheep, and the waywardness of the sheep, but also because of the worth of the sheep, has put the sheep in a sheepfold. And then, He has given to the sheep a shepherd to lead them.

### **III. The Pastor Is the Shepherd**

Now the pastor is the shepherd. One of the good things about reading through the Bible as I do, and preaching book-by-book and verse-by-verse: You can't skip over any Scripture.

And so now, we come to the Scripture then, because it talks to you; it talks to me; and I've got to preach it, anyway, because the primary part of this passage is not to you—it's to me. So you're going to hear a sermon by the pastor, about the pastor, and to the pastor; but you can listen, if you want to. As a matter of fact, you ought to listen, because much of what God has to say to the pastor will apply to you, because, in verse 3, he says the pastor is to be an example to everybody else. And so if these things apply to me, and I'm to be an example to you, then, in a sense, they're going to apply to you; or, they're going to apply to anybody who aspires to church leadership or spiritual leadership.

And all of us have some kind of a flock over which we are a shepherd. Your flock may be your family; your flock may be your Sunday School class; or your flock may be those of your friends in your school. But all of us have a spiritual influence; and, all of us ought to be spiritual leaders, or we ought to aspire to be spiritual leaders. So don't tune me out, even though I'm preaching to me. But I remind you: Every time that finger points out at you, three are pointing at me, this morning. And this scripture deals with the preacher—the man of God, the pastor.

Now there are three things I want you to notice, therefore, about the pastor, this

morning, as we look at this scripture. First of all, I want you to notice the role of the pastor. Secondly, I want you to notice the requirements for the pastor. Thirdly, the reward of a godly pastor.

### **A. The Role of the Pastor**

Now first of all, what is the role of a pastor? Look again in chapter 5, verses 1 and 2. I want you to underscore some words. First of all, “*The elders which are among you*”—I want you to underscore the word *elder*. Okay—“*I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God...*”—underscore the word *feed*—“*Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof*” (1 Peter 5:1–2)—underscore the word *oversight*. Okay, got those three words underscored? The word *elder*, the word *feed*, and the word *oversight*.

Now those three words tell of the role of a pastor; and, actually, three very common words that we’re used to come out of those three words. Now first of all, there’s the word *elder*, and I am an elder. Secondly, there’s the word *feed*, and from that word *feed*, which is a verb, the noun form is *pastor*, or *shepherd*. So not only am I an elder, I am a pastor. And then, the next word, *oversight*, is a verb, the noun form of which is *bishop*—*bishop*. So I am Elder Rogers, Pastor Rogers, and Bishop Rogers. That’s the role as a pastor—those three words. And in other places in the Bible, they’re given, also. So they’re used interchangeably. So if you want to address me, you can call me *Elder Rogers*. Now if that sounds a little strange, you can call me *Pastor Rogers*.

By the way, I like that term *pastor*, I really do. People say, “What should I call you? Rev. Rogers, Dr. Rogers. Brother Rogers?” All of those, I guess, will pass; but I like *pastor*—*pastor*—I really do. If you want something, just call me—make me feel good, just call me—*pastor*; I love that. And I really believe that’s a very descriptive term. So you can call me *Elder Rogers*; you can call me *Pastor Rogers*; or, if you want to, you can call me *Bishop Rogers*, because, really, I’m going to show you, in moment, that I’m also a bishop. That’s the role of a pastor. And we’re going to explain those things, right now.

Let’s just go ahead; and, by the way, all of these words are used interchangeably in the Bible. If you don’t believe that, you go home, get your Bible, and read all the way through Acts chapter 20, and you’ll find out that these three terms are used interchangeably to speak of the same office and the same person. Now what, therefore, is the role of pastor?

#### **1. To Be a Man of Maturity**

Number one: He is to be a man of maturity—a man of maturity. That’s what the word *elder* means. Now it doesn’t necessarily mean “old age.” I want you to get that real

plain. Okay, *elder* does not necessarily mean “elderly”; but, in the Bible, it means “one of maturity, one of wisdom.” And an elder is one who has been appointed by means of his gifts and calling as a spiritual leader. Actually, it’s a translation of the word *presbuteros*, and you hear the word *Presbyterian* in there, can’t you? See, the Presbyterians get their church name from this word *elder*. So I am a presbyter; or, that is, I am an elder. I’m to be a person that has spiritual maturity—not necessarily an old decrepit man, but still an elder.

## **2. To Be a Man of Ministry**

Okay now, the second thing: not only am I to be a man of maturity; I’m to be a man of ministry; because He also says I’m to feed the flock (1 Peter 5:2). And the word *feed* actually means—the Greek word is—to “shepherd” the flock, or to “pastor” the flock. So I am to take the maturity, and put that maturity into ministry, to feed the flock. Now the word that is translated in your Bible *feed* literally may be translated “shepherd” the flock, and it includes more than feeding the flock, though it does include that.

### **a. To Guard the Flock**

What is the job of the pastor-shepherd? Well, first of all, he is to guard the flock. Now Paul said—in Acts 20—said, “After my departure many grievous wolves will come not sparing the flock” (Acts 20:9). Huh? And then, again, he warned not only of wolves in Acts chapter 20, but Peter warns, in 1 Peter 5, verse 8: “*Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, [goeth] about, seeking whom he may devour*” (1 Peter 5:8).

Now the pastor knows that the devil is going to try to harm the flock. He would try to divide the flock; he would try to discourage the flock; and he would try to devour the flock. There are those out there who would steal the sheep; there are those out there who would fleece the sheep; and there are those out there who would lead the sheep astray. And so the pastor must be ever vigilant—vigilant about those who would do his sheep harm. And a pastor ought to be very protective of his sheep. And believe you me, there are a lot of them out there who want to. They take a church like Bellevue, and they just simply come upon it and try to feed on the flock—that is, as wolves in sheep’s clothing—to divide, to devour, and to discourage the flock. The pastor has to stand against that.

### **b. To Guide the Flock**

All right, but not only should he guard the flock; he ought to guide the flock. Now the very word *shepherd* means a “leader.” In the Bible, the shepherd leads. Jesus said, in John 10, verse 27: “*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and*”—they do what?—“*they follow me*” (John 10:27). Now the pastor, therefore, is to guide the flock.

Now you know, sometimes, we have the idea that a church is a democracy. You did not get that from the Bible. A church is not a democracy; a church is a theocracy, and it is led by God, who calls His shepherds. The chief Shepherd calls His underA shepherd.

And then, the Bible says that shepherd is to lead. Now we have some churches today where the shepherds are not leaders. He kind of stands up and says, “All you sheep who want to graze over here, say, ‘Baa.’ And all you sheep who want to graze over here, say, ‘Baa.’” And then, he just sees how many *baas* he has over here and how many *baas* he has over here. And then, that’s the way the church goes. Oh, no, no. He’s to be a leader. Somebody said, “If your pastor is a man of God, follow him; if he’s not, fire him.” He’s to lead. *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me”* (John 10:27).

### **c. To Grow the Sheep**

So he is to guard the sheep; he is to guide the sheep; but, I’ll tell you something else he’s to do: He’s to grow the sheep—and, that’s in the idea of feeding the flock. You see, it’s not the pastor’s job to reproduce sheep. The church may not be growing, and they say, “Well, we’re not growing. What we need to do is to hire us a great soul-winning pastor. If we get us a great soul-winning pastor, then our church will begin to grow.” No, that’s not what they need. Now the pastor ought to be a soul winner, as we’re going to see in a moment, because, if he preaches soul winning, he ought to be an example in soul winning. But that’s not the way to grow a church.

*I’ll tell you the way to grow a church: It is to be a man of God, stand in the pulpit of God, open the Word of God, and, in the Spirit of God, preach the Christ of God.* And build those saints up in the power of the Holy Spirit and the nurture of the Word of God, and healthy sheep will reproduce. That was a good place for an *amen*. Healthy sheep will reproduce, and the pastor is to feed the flock. And when those sheep are fed, and when they are guarded, when they’re guided, when they’re grown, then, the flock is going to reproduce itself. And that is the chief job of the shepherds. So many people get the idea that we can go out and hire a pastor, or hire a staff, to do the work for us. That is not the Bible idea. The Bible idea is that God gives to the church pastor-teachers, and those pastor-teachers are here to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:11–12). And *“We are his people, and the sheep of His pasture”* (Psalm 100:3).

And so what is my job, Brother Bob, as the pastor of this church? As the pastor, I am to guard the church; I am to guide the church; and I am to grow the church by feeding the church the Word of God, and that takes time. Therefore, you must see to it that your pastor—if you’re not a member of this church, and you’re listening by television, radio, or listening by tape to these services that have been taped, you must see to it, yea, demand that your pastor—have time alone with God. What a fearful responsibility! That’s the reason that early apostle says it’s *“not [meet] that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables”* (Acts 6:2); *“we will give ourselves to the ministry of the Word and to prayer”* (Acts 6:4).

### **3. To Be a Man of Management**

Now not only, however, does he speak of the maturity of the office—an elder; not only does he speak of the ministry of the office—a pastor; but he speaks of the management of the office—I'm also a bishop. Now the word *bishop* roots in our word *episkopos*, and that's where we get our word *Episcopalian* from. I am a bishop.

Now as I understand the term *bishop*, that does not mean some sort of a super clergyman who directs everybody else and moves preachers around. Every church is to have an *episkopos*; they're to have a bishop. And the word *bishop* actually means *Episcopal*, which means "oversight"; it means, "to look over—or to guide—the affairs."

Now the pastor, therefore, is not only to be a man of maturity, and he's to be a man of ministry; he's to be a man of management. He is to guide the affairs of the church. You do not find, in the Bible, churches run by committees. Anytime you have a church that's run by committees you've got a nest full of trouble. Churches are not run by committees. God ordains elders; God appoints bishops; and God gives leaders to churches. I'm not asking for authority; God knows I don't want it. I'm preaching it, though, as the Bible teaches: This man is to take oversight. This is not to say he will not use committees; indeed, he will. I tell you, we might as well be out of business, were it not for the grand committee.

And God calls His churches to be pastor-led churches, by men of maturity, men of ministry, and men of management. We are to be elders, pastors, and bishops; and, that is the role of the pastor. I'll tell you what: If you'll study any churches across America that are growing and being used of God, they're going to have that kind of leadership, to my knowledge; and, if you'll study the churches of the past and past history, the same thing will be true.

#### **B. The Requirements of the Pastor**

Now that is the role of the pastor. Now let me talk to you, for a few moments, about the responsibility of the pastor, because when those kinds of roles come, then there are great responsibilities and requirements. Now what are they? Well, let me just read them to you again, and then comment on them.

First Peter 5, verses 1 and 2: *"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock"* (1 Peter 5:1–3). Now what are these requirements, the responsibilities of the man of God?

#### **1. To Have the Right Ministry**

Well, first of all, he is to have a right ministry—and his ministry is to feed the flock; he

must be a preacher of the Word of God. And no matter what else he does, if he doesn't do this, he's going to be an ignominious failure. He is to feed the flock, and he's not going to be talking about things that he doesn't know anything about. But notice what Peter says, in verse 1: *"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder,"*— that is, "I'm a fellow elder"; and notice how he describes himself—*"...a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory"* (1 Peter 5:1). Peter had seen the sufferings and glimpsed the glory; and, every preacher had better do that. Every preacher had better know something of the crucifixion and something of the coronation of Jesus Christ. Peter did. Peter had seen the sufferings, and Peter had glimpsed the glory. And therefore, he could be a preacher of the Word of God. He was talking about that which was real to him—not something that he'd heard about or read in a book. But my requirement for my ministry is—number one—that I am to have the right ministry.

## **2. To Have the Right Motivation**

Number two: I am to have the right motivation. Notice in verse 2: *"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof,"*—now, watch this—*"not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind"* (1 Peter 5:2). Now how am I to do this? What is my motivation?

### **a. To Do It Willingly**

Number one: I am not to do it by constraint. I am to do it willingly—willingly—if you're taking notes. That is the way I'm to do it. I'm not to grudgingly preach. I'm not to preach because somebody talked me into it, because my mother called me into the ministry, or because some group of people said, "Adrian, you have the ability to preach. Maybe you are good at public speaking; therefore, you ought to be a preacher." Oh no, dear friend, every preacher ought to be called of God, and he ought to have within his heart, within his bosom, that knowledge that God has put him into the ministry. *"For it is God [that] worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure"* (Philippians 2:13).

You know, this is not something I do because I have to; this is something I do because I want to. I hear people talk about fighting the call to preach and surrendering to the ministry. It sounds like you've just been taken captive: "I surrender." I am infinitely glad that God called me to preach. God saved me as a teenage boy. And my pastor taught that God had a plan for everybody's life, and you ought to find it. So I said to the Lord, "Lord, I want to know what You want me to do." And I said, "God, I'll do it. Whatever it is You want me to do, I'll do it." It was as though I signed my name at the bottom of a blank sheet of paper and said, "Now Lord, there's the contract; it's already signed. Now You can fill it. Whenever, wherever, whatever—I'll do it."

And I had no idea that God would call me to preach. As a matter of fact, I thought of myself as the least likely to be a preacher. As a matter of fact, speaking in public was something I definitely did not have a passion for. As a matter of fact, the first time

somebody called on me to do anything in public that I can remember was in a Sunday School class. And our Sunday School teacher, with about four or five boys there, asked me to dismiss in prayer. I stuttered; I stammered; I was embarrassed—I didn't know how to do it. I was afraid to do it and ashamed to do it. Finally, I looked at that Sunday School teacher, and I said, "I'm sorry, I can't do that. You'll have to get somebody else." It embarrassed the teacher. It embarrassed the class. I couldn't even lead in prayer with four or five boys there. I might have led in silent prayer, if he'd asked me; but he didn't ask me to do that. And if you'd told me, at that time, that one of these days I'd be doing this, I would have told you that you didn't have both oars in the water.

But I said to God, "God, whatever it is You want me to do, I'll do it." And somehow—I don't know where, I don't know how—the germ thought got in my heart, in my spirit, and in my mind, that God wanted me to preach. And I began to say, "Lord, do You want me to preach?" My dad wasn't a preacher. My brothers weren't preachers. My uncles, and so forth, weren't preachers. I didn't come from that kind of a background. "God, do You want me to preach?" Then, after a while, that awareness got stronger. Then, it got stronger. "Lord, if You don't want me to preach, You'd better let me know. And then, after a while, "Lord, You want me to preach." And I made it public. And I've not looked back on that thing.

I think that's the way God reveals His will. *"The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day"* (Proverbs 4:18). At first, it was gray dawn, and then it became high noon; and, I saw that God wanted me to preach, and it was clear in my mind. And I made that declaration, and I've never thought really seriously about doing anything else. I don't believe I could get out of it, if I wanted to; and, I don't want to. I'm thrilled that God called me to preach.

I've often thought, sometimes, "What would you do, Adrian, if you weren't a preacher?" And my mind won't even function; it won't even work. I can't think of what I might do, if God didn't call me to preach. I would say, with the Apostle Paul, *"Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel [of Jesus Christ]!"* (1 Corinthians 9:16). And I want to tell you something, friend: I do this thing because I believe that God has put a holy *want to* in my heart, and I am thrilled to be the pastor of this church, which I personally think is the greatest church on the face of this earth. I hope you don't mind me thinking so. I thank God for the privilege of being the pastor of this church, Bellevue Baptist Church, and I am to do this thing willingly.

#### **b. To Do It Eagerly**

And then, it says I'm to do it eagerly. Continue to look, if you will, here. He goes on to say, in verse 2: *"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind"* (1 Peter 5:2)—*"of a ready mind."* I am to do it eagerly. I am to be chomping at the bits to do it. I am to be

glad to do it, thrilled to do it. I feel sorry for people who hate their work. You're looking at a man who loves what he's doing. I thrill at the privilege and the joy that is mine to serve this church.

Now why do I do it? Because you pay me? No, you pay me, and I think—well, you don't really pay; you give your money to God, and God pays me—but I'm so grateful that you take care of my necessities, and the Bible teaches that you should. First Timothy chapter 5, verses 17 and 18—listen to it: *“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour,”*—now, that word *honour* is the word we get our word *honorarium* from; that is, if an elder is a good leader, remember him for that—*“especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.”* Now if he's a good leader, give him double honor, especially if he's a preacher of the Word and stays to the Bible doctrine. Thank God for that kind of a pastor. *“For the scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And the labourer is worthy of his reward”* (1 Timothy 5:17–18).

Now the Bible teaches that the man of God ought to have those necessities taken care of, so that he can give himself to the ministry of the Word of God; but he should never preach for that. That is not his motivation. He is not a hireling. *“The hireling fleeth...the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep”* (John 10:13–15). And if I know the heart that beats in this bosom, I would pay for the privilege of preaching the gospel. I mean that with all of my heart.

I tell you, when I was a college boy, and I didn't have a church to preach to, some of these guys were sitting around moaning and groaning because some formal pulpit would not invite them in to preach. I didn't have to worry about having a place to preach, because I went out on the street corner and preached, and was glad to do it. I've stood on bus benches and preached. I've gone to labor camps and preached. I've gone to places where there's any kind of a congregation—trailer parks or anyplace where I could stand up—and I always had to because I had the loudest voice. But I would stand up in those open-air places. My buddies I'm talking about, who would go with me—they'd say, *“All right, Adrian. It's time you get a crowd.”* We didn't get paid. As a matter of fact, we got run out of a few places. And friend, there's fire in my bones—yes!

A man ought not to preach *“for filthy lucre”* (1 Peter 5:2). And as a matter of fact, this word *filthy lucre* doesn't just include money. It literally means, *“base gain.”* Not for possessions, not for position, not for popularity, not for praise, but for Jesus he ought to preach. He ought to know that God has called him, and he ought to do it willingly, and ought to do it eagerly.

### **3. To Have the Right Manner About Him**

But now, wait a minute. Not only should he have the right ministry—to preach the Word; not only should he have the right motive—willingly and eagerly; but friend, he ought to

have the right manner about him.

Look again, if you will, in verse 3: “*Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock*” (1 Peter 5:3). The minister is not a little lord. He’s not some sort of an ecclesiastical priest. He’s not some sort of an overlord over the church. Indeed, he is to be a leader, but he’s not a dictator. He is a fellow servant of Jesus Christ. And by the way, Peter calls himself here, in this chapter—chapter 5 and verse 1—a *fellow elder* (1 Peter 5:1). If Peter was the first pope, he certainly didn’t know it. He called himself *a fellow elder*. He didn’t see himself as some prince of the church, but he saw himself as a fellow servant of Jesus Christ. And he said, “We’re not lords over God’s heritage.” The flock doesn’t belong to you; it belongs to the chief Shepherd.

And we’re to be an example. That means the pastor is to live what he preaches. He cannot have the luxury of saying, “Don’t do as I do; do as I say do.” To the contrary, he must say, “Be ye followers of me, as I am a follower of Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:11). He has no right to ask you to soul win, if he doesn’t soul win. He has no right to ask you to give sacrificially, if he doesn’t give sacrificially. He has no right to ask you to live a pure, and a godly, and a separated life, if he will not live a pure, and a godly, and a separated life. He has no right to ask you to pray, if he does not pray; because the shepherd always leads—he always leads. He’s the example in there.

And we get the idea that God requires certain things out of me, because I’m the pastor, but He doesn’t require certain things out of you. You know, every now and then, somebody says, “Well, I don’t have any confidence in that pastor. He went to one church from another church, for more money.” Well, he shouldn’t do that. We’d all say *amen* to that. Any man who would go to another church because they’d pay him more is a hireling. In my estimation, he’s got no business in the ministry.

But you have no business to go from one job to another job for more money. Come on, say *amen*. It took as much of the blood of Jesus Christ to save you, as it did me. You have to say, “Does Jesus want me to go?” Not, “Am I going to get more money?” You move from Memphis to some other place, and you’ve got a job here in this church, and God is using you, and you have a ministry—you’re a deacon, or a Sunday School teacher, or whatever—and then, the big boss calls and says, “You’re going to get 10,000 more a year,” and you say, “That settles it.” No, it doesn’t settle it. I’m sick and tired of these corporations moving men around like checkers on a board, without thinking of the families, the homes, the schools, and everything else that they’re breaking up. It’s time that you sought the will of God. See what God wants you to do, because the pastor, who is to live this kind of a way, is to be an example to all the flock. That’s the way all of God’s people are to live. We belong to Jesus Christ, and we are to serve him.

Now the pastor is not some lord over God’s heritage; he’s not some ecclesiastical

dictator; he's not a prince. He's a servant, and he leads by serving. But he is a leader, and he's God's man in God's church. And when we see what God has done, when we see that we're His sheep, the people of His pasture; and, because of our weakness, and our waywardness, and our worth, He's put us in flocks, so that we could be protected, and be led, and be preserved; and then, God, in His goodness, who is called a Shepherd, and has given us a shepherd, says, "Now I'm going to call that man, and equip that man, and you follow that man"; then, when we start obeying God and living by God's command and God's plans, we're going to see churches be what God intended for those churches to be. Now the right manner—he's to be a man of humility, and a man of obedience, and an example.

### C. The Reward of the Pastor

Now let's go on, and I'll finish this simple message. I want you to think not only of the role of the pastor, and not only the responsibilities of the pastor, but I want you to think with me, for a moment, about the reward of the pastor. Look, if you will, in verse 4—the Bible goes on to say, "*And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away*" (1 Peter 5:4). He's talking to the pastor, and he says, "You're the shepherd, but there is a chief Shepherd. His name is Jesus. And before long, that chief Shepherd is going to appear."

And friend, that's what keeps me properly motivated. I know, one of these days, I'm going to have to say to my Lord, "Lord, here's what I've done with Your heritage; here's what I've done with the flock that You've given me." And frankly, people, that's a sobering thought. As he says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). And he's calling the pastor to be sober, to be vigilant—"The adversary is out there seeking to get my flock."

That's the reason I never look to Nashville. I want to tell you: The head of the Church is not in Rome, and the head of the Church is not in Nashville. The head of the Church is in Heaven; His name is Jesus. He is the chief Shepherd. I love our denomination, but I serve the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm not going to compromise for the Southern Baptist Convention, or any other convention, if I know my heart. Thank God, I want to make our convention all that it can be, but I'm not going to have to give account to Nashville. The chief Shepherd's coming, one of these days.

I thank God for the deacons of our church. They're good men, godly men; they're my friends. But I want to tell you I'm not going to bow down to the deacons of this church or anybody's church, because, one of these days, I've got to meet the chief Shepherd; and, I'm going to have to give an account to Him. I don't have to pastor this church. I can go back to preaching on street corners, if I have to; but, one of these days, I am

going to have to meet the chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus. And I'm going to have to say to Him, "Lord Jesus, this is what I've done with Your sheep." And frankly, that thought sobers me.

Now I think of the responsibility that is mine, and I ask you, would you pray for me, and would you pray for us, that the dear Lord Jesus would give to this poor shepherd the strength that he needs to pastor such a flock? Because, one of these days, the chief Shepherd is going to come, and the Bible says when He comes, He's going to have a crown. Now the word for *crown* here is the word *stephanos*. I have a son named Steve. His name comes from this word which means "crown."

There are two words for *crown* in the Bible: One is the word for a *diadem* that a prince would wear, or a king; but the other word is a *laurel* that a runner would win at the end of the game. It's just a little vine, a little wreath, put on his head. And here, he trains, and he works, and he slaves, and he gets in condition; and then, the race starts, and he runs, and his heart is about to leap out of his throat. His mouth is dry, his muscles ache, his head is pounding; but he wins. And they come and put a little grass on his head, a little vine on his head—a laurel—and, before long, it's going to wilt; it's going to fade.

Now Peter is making a play on words. He says, when Jesus comes, He's going to give you a laurel that's not going to fade away.

I am an old athlete, and I was captain of a championship team. And I know we got a little gold football—boy, what a prize: a gold football. Got a letter sweater: "PB"—Palm Beach—on it. I was given a football cup—a cup *about like that*—"Captain of the Team." Boy, my name was on it; it was wonderful. Let me tell you something: Somebody broke in the house and stole that gold football. The moths got that sweater. And they wouldn't even let me keep the cup. They kept that in the showcase of the high school; and now, the high school is gone out of business, and that sucker has gone somewhere—I have no idea where.

These people who do these things, friend—they have a corruptible crown: one that fades away. But Jesus is coming, and Jesus is saying to His servants, "I'm going to give you a crown that fades not away." Amen?

You say, "What do you want a crown for? Just going to strut around Heaven wearing a crown?" No, I want a crown to lie at Jesus' feet. And I believe you do, too. And that's to be the reward of a pastor. Friend, I'll tell you, there will be no greater reward than, when Jesus comes, to hear Him say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things. I'll make thee ruler over many" (Matthew 25:21, 23).

## Conclusion

Now look at me. My time is gone, but look right here. No one stirring—look; look, right

here. I want to ask you a question, and I want you to answer it in the precincts of your heart and soul. Look right here. Don't even put up your books; just look here. Are you one of His sheep? Are you? Do you know that you're saved? Jesus said, *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish"* (John 10:27–28). Have you heard His voice? I mean, do you believe this book is the Word of God? Do you follow Him? Not, "Do you follow the Baptists"; not, "Do you follow Adrian Rogers"—do you follow Him? Have you made Him Lord? Have you said, "Jesus, You are the chief Shepherd, I receive You as my Lord and Savior." If you have, He's given you eternal life, and you'll never perish. There's nothing that can take you out of His hand. Hallelujah!

Are you saved? I am. I know I'm saved, I know I'm going to Heaven—praise God, hallelujah! Do you know it? Are you saved? If you're not one of His sheep, you can hear His voice and follow Him today. *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"* (Acts 16:31). You say, "Brother Rogers, yes, praise God, I am saved; I am one of His." All right, I want to ask you another question: Do you have a flock? Are you a part of a flock? Have you come into His church? Have you submitted yourself to an under-shepherd? Are you under the discipline and the authority of a New Testament, Bible-believing, Bible-preaching church? If Christ is your shepherd, you ought to submit yourself to a New Testament church and be a part of God's flock. There are some of you, today, who have never been saved. You need to be saved. And there are some of you who are saved, who need to place yourself in the fellowship of a New Testament, Bible-believing church; and, God help you to do it. I want our heads bowed. ¶

# The Shepherd and His Sheep

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: March 16, 1997**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 5:1–4**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Shepherd and His Flock
- II. The Shepherd and His Function
- III. The Shepherd and His Faithfulness
- IV. The Shepherd and His Future

Conclusion

## Introduction

We want to study in God's Word here a little bit about what it means to be a man of God, to be a minister of the Word of God. And I would like for you to find, if you would please, in God's Holy Word, 1 Peter chapter 5. And we're going to talk a little bit about what it means to be a minister, what it means to be a pastor—and this man is a pastor. And God has called him to be a pastor. He is not the senior pastor of the church, but he is a pastor, and God has given him a flock in this church. So turn, if you will please, to 1 Peter chapter 5. And our Bible study and the ordination message is entitled, "The Shepherd and His Sheep."

I want to say to you, Bryson, I want to say to all of us, that the ministry is the best calling and the worst profession in all of the world. It is the best calling, but it is the worst profession. Nobody, nobody, nobody should seek the ministry as a profession. Nobody, nobody should refuse it as a calling. It is a calling, not a profession. Only God can make a minister. No seminary can do it. No bishop can do it. No set of parents can do it. No circumstances can do it. Only God—only God—can put a man in the ministry.

Now, let me just give you some scriptures before we read our text. For example, the apostle Paul said, in 1 Timothy chapter 1, verse 12: "And I thank God, and I thank Jesus Christ our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry"—"...putting me into the ministry." God have mercy upon those who've been put into the ministry by their mom, by their dad, by some well-meaning person. Only God has the right to put a man into the ministry. Now, it means, however, if God does this, that God has blessed him, for 1 Timothy 3, verse 1, says, "This is a true saying, If any man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." I don't know of anything—anything—I'd rather do than what God has called me to do. I am so

blessed to be in the ministry, to be the pastor of this church, but I would never choose it as a profession. It is the worst profession; it is the best calling.

Haddon Robinson had this to say about the minister: “The modern preacher has a job description that sounds like Superman. He is expected to make house calls like an old country doctor, shake hands like a campaigning politician, prepare lessons like a professor, and see as many people as a psychologist. He has to be as skilled as an executive as the president of a business, as shrewd as a financier, as shrewd a financier as a banker, and, in the middle of it all, be so good a diplomat that he could umpire a baseball game between the NAACP and the Ku Klux Klan. Now, that’s true. So many people have such high expectations of the man in the ministry, and they make demands that are really unrealistic. And sometimes those whom God has put into the ministry, because of these demands, are confused, and sometimes frustrated.

But let me say that there’s one word that I think more than any other word encapsulates and points up what the calling of a ministry is—and it is the word shepherd. It is the word shepherd. So, tonight, we’re thinking on this subject, as we ordain Bryson McQuiston to the ministry: “The Shepherd and His Sheep.”

Now, with that mind, I want you to notice about four things that come out of this passage. Let me read the passage first of all: “The elders which are among you, I exhort, who am also an elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed; Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre—that means not for money—but of a ready mind, neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” Now, it’s in these four verses tonight that I want to talk to Bryson. But I want to talk not only to Bryson, but I want to talk to all of us, so that we might know what to expect out of our ministers, so that we might know how to help and encourage our ministers, and so that we might be what God would have us to be as a flock under their leadership.

## **I. The Shepherd and His Flock**

So, the first thought I want to lay on your heart tonight is what I want to call the shepherd and his flock. Notice verse 2: “Feed the flock of God...” Now, a flock is a group of sheep. And God teaches that His people are like sheep. I’ve found some verses that tell us that very clearly. Psalm 79, verse 13: “So we thy people and the sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks forever...” We are His people, and we’re the sheep of His pasture. Here’s another one—Psalm 95 and verse 7: “For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand...”—the sheep of His hand. Psalm 100 and verse 3: “Know ye not that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath

made us, and not we ourselves; for we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.” Matthew chapter 9, verse 36, speaks of the Lord Jesus looking upon the crowds, and it says, “And when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.” And then, again, the Lord Jesus describes Himself as the Good Shepherd, in John chapter 10, verse 3. And it says, “...the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.”

Now, God did not say we were brave as lions, or strong as horses, or beautiful as peacocks. God said we're sheep: the shepherd and his flock. So we are a flock of sheep.

Now, why does God describe us as sheep? I think, first of all, because of our weakness. Did you know that a sheep is a very weak and a vulnerable animal? A sheep cannot even cleanse itself. A cat—you've seen a cat licking its fur; you've seen other animals that take care of the cleansing, but a sheep cannot even do that unless the shepherd would come and cleanse the sheep of the mud and the filth that gets caked on it. When a sheep is injured, the sheep doesn't know anything about doing any self-doctoring. A dog might lick its wounds. Other animals can take care of the pain and the wounds that come to it, but not a sheep. A sheep doesn't protect itself. If some wolf or lion or leopard comes, there's danger. The sheep just kind of huddle together and wait to be devoured, to be hurt, or be killed. That's the reason this same chapter over in verse 8, he warns them. He says, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour.” Sheep need a shepherd because of their weakness, because of their adversary the devil who takes advantage of their weakness.

But not only their weakness; their waywardness. Did you know the nature of a sheep is to get lost? You're in 1 Peter 5—in 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 25, he says, “For ye were as sheep going astray...” A dog can find its way home. The cows come home to the barn. The horse can find its way home. You can take a cat several miles away and leave it, and the cat will be waiting in the driveway when you get home. But not a sheep. A sheep—we're like sheep because of our weakness, because of our waywardness.

But, oh, we're like sheep because of our worth. A sheep is a clean animal. The sheep would give milk and wool. The sheep produces lambs, and the sheep provides food. And we're very valuable to the Lord, just as the sheep is very valuable to the shepherd. As a matter of fact, the Bible says that we were so valuable to the Chief Shepherd, that He laid down His life for the sheep.

So, God's plan is that we be gathered together in flocks. God doesn't want us scattered. He wants us in a flock, because, as sheep, we need protection, and we need provision, and we need guidance, and we need care. And that's why God gave us

shepherds to watch over the flock. Now, the Bible does not teach a “Lone Ranger” Christianity. God wants His sheep in a flock. Now, there are some people who say, “Well, I want to be a sheep, but I don’t want to be a part of the flock.” Well, that’s contrary to biblical Christianity. There are some people who want to be a part of a flock, but they don’t want a shepherd. That’s contrary to biblical Christianity. There are some people who get in the flock, but they’re not sheep; they’re goats. And the pastor is spending a lot of his time trying to teach billy goats not to butt. But God’s plan is that we be sheep, that we be in a flock, and that we have a shepherd, because of our weakness, because of our waywardness, because of our worth. God wants us in a flock. And this flock is Bellevue Baptist Church, because notice what he says: “Feed the flock which is among you...” The idea is there are many flocks. There’s one great flock and one Chief Shepherd. But God has put His Church in little flocks all over America.

## **II. The Shepherd and His Function**

Now, here’s the second thing we’re going to notice. Not only the shepherd and his flock, but the shepherd and his function. What is the function of a minister? What are we ordaining this man to do? Now, what I’m about to say will apply to any spiritual leader, not just to Bryson, and not just to those who are “called” and put into the ministry, because, if you are a child of God, you’re going to find out that God has given you a flock somewhere. It maybe, if you’re a mother, your flock may be your family. If you’re a teacher, it may be your Sunday School class. If you are a leader, in some area, you’re going to have some people over which God is going to hold you responsible to guide and to guard. So I want you to take these things tonight that I’m saying to Bryson, and saying to our church staff, and, especially, saying to me, because every time that finger points out, there are three that are pointing back at me, and I want you to apply them to yourself.

Now, a shepherd has a threefold function, and I want you to listen to this very carefully, so you’ll understand how we, as a church, are organized, and why God gives us men like Bryson.

A pastor, a shepherd, is an elder, a pastor, and a bishop. Have you got that? An elder, a pastor, and a bishop. Now, look in verse 1: “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder...” Now, the word elder speaks of maturity. It’s the word *presbuteros*. It’s the same word we get Presbyterian from—*presbuteros*. And it simply means “an elder.” Now, it doesn’t mean an older man. Bryson is a young man. But, when the Bible says he’s to be an elder, it’s not talking about the number of years that he’s lived; it’s talking about spiritual maturity. Young Timothy in the Bible was an elder, and Paul had to say to him, “Don’t let anybody despise your youth.” That is, in years, he was young; but, spiritually, he was mature. Now, you can be an old man, and not be a

spiritual elder; you can be a young man, and be a spiritual elder. When he's talking about an elder, he's talking about someone who is spiritually mature. So, after this man is ordained, we can call him "Elder McQuiston." All right, so he'll be an elder. That's a ministry of maturity. Every shepherd has to be spiritually mature.

But not only is he an elder—what else is the function of the shepherd? He is to be a pastor. Look again at verse 2: "Feed the flock..." Now, look at the word feed. Do you see it? Verse 2: "Feed the flock..." This is the verb of the noun *poimen*, which is "shepherd." And what he is saying is, "Shepherd the flock." He not only has the requirement of maturity, but he has the requirement of ministry. He is to be the shepherd of a flock. Every pastor is a shepherd.

Now, what is the duty of a shepherd? It is threefold. He is to guard the flock. He is to guide the flock. He is to grow the flock. That's what the shepherd is for. He is to guard the flock. Paul told the Ephesian elders, in Acts chapter 20, verse 29: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock." Did you know that the devil has his wolves circling Bellevue Baptist Church all the time? Grievous wolves that would devour our flock, that would come in to steal the sheep, to devour the sheep, to shear the sheep. And, a pastor, whether he be the senior pastor or any minister on the staff of this church that God has given, it is his duty before God to guard the flock. And I want to say you can thank God for the staff that God has given you. Sometimes, it's not always easy to guard the flock. And, we have meetings, and we say, "No, we're not going to allow that. That person is not going to teach, or this person is not going to do that, this person is not going to say that, and they say, "Says who?" And you say, "I say so." That's the job of a shepherd. Like it or not, a flock needs a shepherd to guard the flock. And, he needs a shepherd to guide the flock. Now, the shepherd is not a dictator who drives the sheep, but he does lead and guide the sheep. I don't know of a church in America that is growing and prospering without pastoral leadership to guide the flock. A shepherd doesn't say, "All you sheep want to graze over here, say, 'Baaaaaa,' and all you sheep who want to graze over here, say, 'Baaaaaa,'" and then he counts to see what's what. He's supposed to know what's what. He's supposed to know where is where. He is supposed, under God, to lead and guide the flock.

Now, his job is to feed and lead; their job is to follow and swallow. He is to guard the flock. He is to guide the flock. And he is to grow the flock. Now, that's doesn't mean that he's to do all the soul winning. He's to be a soul winner himself because he's a part of the flock, but, friend, let me tell you this: it is not the shepherd's job to give birth to lambs. It is the shepherd's job to feed the flock, and guard the flock, so that the flock will reproduce itself. Healthy sheep reproduce themselves. And so, therefore, the minister's job is to see to it that the sheep are healthy. And, that is, every man of God, and

including the one's who's speaking, must have time alone to be with God to prepare himself to feed, guard, and guide the flock of God. The best time I spend for you is not when I'm with you, but when I'm with God, talking to God about you; not when I'm with you talking about God—listening to God, so that I can feed and mature and help grow you in the Lord.

So, I want to say to Bryson, and I want to say to all the ministers on our staff, and any minister who may be listening to this tape later on, a minister, as a pastor, has to get his priorities in order. Now, let me tell you some priorities.

Prayer is more important than preaching. Prayer is more important than preaching. Number two: Preaching is more important than administration. Number three: Love is more important than ability. The shepherd cannot be allergic to the sheep. He's got to be a lover of people. That's one thing I love about Bryson. God has given him a love for people. So you may call Bryson, "Elder Bryson," or you may call him, "Pastor Bryson."

But not only has God called him to maturity, and ministry, but God has called him to management. Now, notice also, he is a bishop. Look, if you will, here in verse 2: "Feed the flock of God which is among you—now watch this—taking the oversight thereof..." Do you know what this is a translation of—this oversight? It is a verb, of which the noun form is bishop. Episkopos is the word we get Episcopal from. It means an overseer—episkopos. Epi means "over;" skopos "to see"—episkopos. He is one who has not only is he called to maturity, and not only is he called to ministry; he's called to management. It takes an incredible amount of management. A pastor is an overseer. Things are not just going to happen. Now, it doesn't mean that he is a dictator, but it does mean that he is a manager.

Do you know, in our Baptist churches, we say, "Well, a Baptist church is a democracy." No. A Baptist church is not a democracy. A Baptist church is a theocracy. A democracy means "the rule of the people." A theocracy means, "the rule of God." It is God that leads. Now, it is true that we do certain things by congregational vote, but we do those things by congregational vote under what we feel to be the leadership of Almighty God. As God calls leaders to the church, and those leaders lead the church, and the congregation feels that those people are leading, and the congregation approves, we have a wonderful symbiotic relationship, a wonderful synergy.

And I've said this to our deacons many times, and I want all of us to listen here on this Sunday night. Here's the way a church is to operate: It is to be pastor-led. He is a bishop. He is an overseer. It is to be pastor-led.

It is to be deacon-served. The very word deacon means "servant." Deacons are servants. That is not demeaning to deacons. That exalts the deacon. Jesus said, "He who would be chief among you, let him be the servant of all." And deacons are here to serve the church. That means there's no job that a deacon may not do. It means there's

no job that only a deacon may do. The deacon can't say, "This is deacon business. Stay out of it." He cannot say, "That is beneath me; I cannot or will not do it," or, "That is above me; I should not do it." There's no job that he cannot do. There's no job that only he may do. A church is pastor-led. A church is deacon-served.

A church is committee-functioning. Now, you don't find the word committee in the Bible, but you find the word commitment all over the Bible. A committee is a group that have committed themselves to a task. For example, everything that happens around here in Bellevue Baptist Church happens through committees. We have hundreds of committees here in our church, or hundreds of people who serve on committees at Bellevue Baptist Church. But it is not a committee-led church. It's a pastor-led church; a deacon-served church; a committee-operating and functioning church. And it is congregationally approved.

And, sometimes people say, "Well, you know Pastor Rogers, he's a dictator." I always laugh. Man, if I were a dictator, everybody would tithe. I'm not a dictator. Man, if I were a dictator, they'd all be here on Wednesday night for prayer meeting. A dictator I ain't. I serve at your pleasure. You could fire me, if you want. A dictator rules by force. I am a leader. And I serve because you believe that I'm God's anointed and God's appointed leader. That's the way I serve. So, the safety net is that it is congregationally approved.

When the early deacons were appointed, the Bible says, "Seek ye out from among you seven men of good report, whom we—the pastors—may appoint over this business." And then, it says, "...and the saying pleased the multitude."

Do you see the ecology? Do you see how that works? Pastor-led; deacon-served; committee-operated; congregationally approved.

And so, what is a minister? How does he lead? He leads by love. He leads by example, as we're going to see. He leads by the authority of the Bible, and by the anointing of the Holy Ghost. And so, what is the job of the man who is being ordained tonight, and all of the ministers that God has given us here? One of maturity. One of ministry. One of management. Amen? Do you understand that? All right. I got one amen. Boy, I'm doing good tonight. All right. Let's give you another chance. Amen? Do you understand that? All right now, see, we're growing already. That's wonderful. Growing the flock. That's the way it's supposed to be.

### **III. The Shepherd and His Faithfulness**

Now, here's the third thing I want you to see. I've talked about the shepherd and his flock. God puts us together in flocks. I've talked about the shepherd and his function. Now, let's talk a little bit about the shepherd and his faithfulness—his faithfulness. Look, if you will here, in verses 1 through 3. First of all, he's to be a man of genuine

experience. Look in verse 1: “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.” What’s he saying? He’s saying, “I know what I’m talking about. I am a partaker. I am a witness of the sufferings of Christ. I have seen the suffering. I have glimpsed the glory.”

When we, the Ordination Council, talk about this young man, we talked with him. We asked him to give his testimony, to tell of his salvation, to tell of his call, to tell of his convictions. He must be a man of genuine experience. But, number two, he must be a man of glowing enthusiasm. Notice in verse 2: “Feed the flock which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.” He ought to have a glowing enthusiasm. And you know why I think there are so many boring sermons? I think there are a lot of bored preachers. And why there are so many boring Sunday School lessons? Because there are bored teachers. But we ought to have a ready mind. There ought to be this glowing enthusiasm. And the Bible says that a man ought to do it willingly, not because he’s pressed into service.

I see some preachers. You know what they’re looking forward to? Retirement, so they won’t preach anymore. Friend, if you’re looking forward to retiring so you won’t preach anymore, you ought to get out of the ministry right now. Sure, a man ought to retire, but he’ll never stop sharing Jesus Christ every chance he gets, every place he gets, if God has called him. He might not serve on a church staff. But he says, “I do this not because you pay me.” The Bible is not the way a man makes his living; the Bible is a way a man lives his life. Now, he ought to be paid. The Bible says, in 1 Timothy chapter 5, verses 17 and 18: “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, the laborers is worthy of his hire.” And these men that serve us need to be taken care of so their minds are freed from those kinds of things, so they can give their hearts, their minds, to what God has called them to do. But no man should work or preach because you pay him. That makes him a hireling. And the Bible says, “...the hireling flees, but the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.”

So what is this man to be? He’s a man of genuine experience. He shared the suffering and glimpsed the glory. He is to be a man of glowing enthusiasm. And he is to be a man of godly example. Notice verse 3: “Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock.” No pastor, no minister, should ever ask the people to do something he is not willing to do. He is a part of the flock, as well as the leader of the flock. And notice how humble Peter was here in verse 1. He calls himself “...who am also an elder...” That is, “I’m just a co-elder.” He didn’t see himself as the Pope. He saw himself as a fellow worker. The pastor should always lead the way. If the pastor tells

people to tithe, he ought to tithe. If the pastor tells people to give over and above beyond the tithe, he ought to give over and above beyond the tithe. If the pastor tells people to be a soul winner, he ought to be a soul winner. If the pastor tells people to live clear and pure and clean, he ought to live clear, pure, and clean. If the pastor tells people to love their wives, he ought to love his wife. And the Bible says here he is to be an example to the flock. Now, that's the pastor and his faithfulness.

#### **IV. The Shepherd and His Future**

Now, here's the final thing I want to say to young Bryson tonight, as we ordain him. I want you to think not only about the pastor and his flock, and the pastor and his function, and the pastor and his faithfulness, but think about the pastor and his future. Verse 4: "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." Who is the chief Shepherd? His name is Jesus. One of these days, Adrian and Bryson and Bob and Jim, and all of us, are going to stand before the Chief Shepherd. One of these days—and, frankly, folks, it gives me concern. One of these days, I am going to stand before Jesus and give an account for the way that I've led this flock.

Now, I want to tell you, every one of us is a shepherd, to some degree. You're going to give account for your Sunday School class, for your family, for your influence, wherever it is. But the Chief Shepherd is going to come, and we're going to stand before Him. And the Bible says, if we'll do these things that He's mentioned above, then we will receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. The word for crown here is the word *stephanos*. I have a son named after this. My son's name is Stephen. It means "crowned one." I've just gotten a grandson whose name is Stephen—"crowned one."

The *stephanos*, the crown, was a laurel wreath placed on the head of an athlete. And, he would run. He would train. He would go through all of these rigors for years to get himself ready for the athletic contests. And if he would win, you know what they would do? They would put some leaves on his head—some leaves on his head—a laurel. You've seen the Greek statues with these leaves going around the man's head. Now, how long do you think those leaves are going to last? They're going to fade. But what he is saying to the shepherd, "When the chief Shepherd comes, if you've been faithful, you are going to receive a crown of glory that will not fade—that fadeth not away."

Now, does that mean that we're going to strut around heaven wearing a crown? No. I read in the Bible there's going to come a time in the glory when we are going to cast our crowns at Jesus' feet. And, friend, I want one to lay at His feet. I don't want to be there without a crown. I want to say, "Lord Jesus, You saved me by Your grace. You enabled me and counted me faithful, putting me in the ministry. Now, Lord Jesus, I want to lay this crown at Your feet."

## Conclusion

And, young Bryson, I pray God, when that time comes, sooner or later, and you stand before Jesus, He'll say to you, "Well done, good and faithful servant," and He'll place a crown on your head, young man, that will not fade when you see the chief Shepherd.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. That song that Laurie sang, "Hinani," is a song that all of us ought to just think about right now. And, please, nobody moving, nobody stirring. You just sit tight right where you are. Hinani—Here am I, Lord. Send me. Because, Lord, I believe that You've put some in the ministry, but You've called us all to Your service. So, Lord, I just pray anew and afresh that we might hear Your voice, for You've said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." So, Lord, if we've part of Your flock, help us to follow You now, because we hear Your voice and do Your will. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

# Maturity

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: March 9, 1997**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 5:5–10**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. A Spirit of Submissiveness
- II. A Spirit of Servitude
- III. A Spirit of Serenity
- IV. A Spirit of Sobriety
- V. A Spirit of Steadfastness

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you turn to 1 Peter chapter 5 tonight for our Bible study? And I want to talk to you about maturity. You know, one of the great needs in the last days—and I believe we’re living in the last of the last days—is to be mature, because if you’re not mature—if you’re immature—in perilous times you’re going to, perhaps, find yourself folding up and caving in, when you ought to be standing up for the Lord Jesus Christ. So I want to talk to you about how to hang tough when the going gets rough, because I have an idea that the going is going to get quite rough.

First Peter chapter 5. Now, what all of 1 Peter is, is, really, a handbook for survival, to teach you how to endure in desperate days. And I’m going to select just five verses, beginning in verse 5, and reading right on through verse 10. First Peter chapter 5, beginning now in verse 5. And the tone of this and the theme of this is maturity. “Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.” Now, here’s the key verse in verse 10: “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Jesus Christ, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect...”—now, the word perfect here is “mature.” Make you teleos, mature. It doesn’t mean sinless. None of us will be sinless, but we can sure sin less—“...make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”

A mature person is not blown about by every wind of doctrine. And what I want for the membership of this church is for you to be spiritually mature. My job, my responsibility—one of my responsibilities—as the pastor of this flock is to help you to get ready for the tough times that are coming. And they are coming.

Just go back to chapter 4, and look in verse 7, if you will, for a moment. Peter said, “But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.” Now, if that is true so long ago, and it was true so long ago, because the Second Coming of Jesus is always at hand from the time that He went away. But how much more true would it be for us who live in this day and in this age? So I want to give you some marks of maturity. And, remember, that to be saved is one thing; to be mature is something else. You can be instantly spiritual, but you cannot be instantly mature. And you can be immature for a long time. You can be young only once, but you can be immature for a long, long time. So, Peter here lists some marks of maturity.

## **I. A Spirit of Submissiveness**

The very first one is a spirit of submissiveness. Look in verse 5, would you please—look at it: “Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another...” Now, one of the marks of genuine spiritual maturity is having a submissive spirit, a spirit of submissiveness. Now, so many times, we have the idea that submissiveness is for women who are supposed to be submissive to their husbands. But submissiveness is not merely for women, though it is for women; it is for all Christians, young and old, male and female.

Let’s just see what Peter says about submission. Look back in chapter 2, if you will, and verse 13. He said, “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake...” If you are a guy who loves to break the speed limit, if you’re a person who loves to bend the rules—you say, “Well, those are man’s rules.” Yeah, but you obey them. You be submissive for the Lord’s sake. That’s what chapter 2, verse 13 says. Look at chapter 2, verse 18: “Servants, be submissive, or be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.” You’re to be submissive on the job. You say, “You think I’m going to submit to that two-legged devil I work for?” Well, that’s what the Bible says you’re to do. That’s what God’s Word says to do. If you have a spirit of arrogance on the job and rebellion against your employer, you don’t have a submissive spirit. You’re contrary to the Word of God. Look, if you will, here in chapter 3, verse 1: “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands...” Now, go back again to chapter 5 and look again, at verse 5. He says, “Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another...” Hey, do you get an idea Peter’s trying to tell us something? Do you know what the great tenor of our times is? It’s rebellion. Rebellion is in the air like a fungus. Do you know what rebellion makes you like?

Rebellion makes you like Satan. He is the original rebel. Submission makes you like the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, you say, “I know my rights.” You don’t have any rights. What right does a dead man have? I am crucified with Christ. You belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. As a Christian, you don’t have rights; you have responsibilities. Bill Gothard has rightly said, “If you teach a man his rights, you’ll have a revolution; teach him his responsibilities, you’ll have a revival.” And, we’re to learn to submit one to another.

What is submission? Does that mean that one person is superior and the other person is inferior? No! Submission is one equal voluntarily placing himself under another equal, that God may thereby be glorified. Did you know that when I submit to you, or you submit to me, or we submit to one another, what we’re really doing is submitting to the Lord? Now, look up here and let me tell you something.

The church is a body, isn’t it? Who is the head of the body? The Lord Jesus Christ. Who are the members of the body? We are members one of another. Now, my hand is a member in my body, and this hand, this left hand, is a member in my body. Now, this right hand cannot direct this left hand. This left hand cannot direct this right hand. But both hands have to receive instruction from the head. So, one hand cannot reject the other hand without, first of all, rejecting the head. You understand what I’m saying? You see, we submit to one another in the fear of the Lord. If this hand is connected to the head, and this hand is connected to the head, these hands are going to submit one to another. They’re not going to fight one another. And, really, rebellion against one another is really rebellion against the head, who is the Lord. If we are members in His body, and we are obeying Him, it follows, as night follows day, that we’re going to be submitted one to another. Do you know that God put us with some built-in limitations? God gave you some limitations. And why? God gave you some limitations to cause you to be dependent upon other Christians in this body. That’s a part of God’s wisdom.

For example, this hand is very good for holding my pen, but it’s not very good for seeing color. So God gives the eye the ability to see color. The eye cannot hold this pen. The hand cannot see color. So, therefore, the eye has to submit to the hand when something needs to be written, and the hand has to submit to the eye when something needs to be seen. Isn’t that wonderful? And if the hand is right with the head, and the eye is right with the head, we’re right—the hand and the eye are right with one another.

And so, we just have to learn that God just made us different that He might make us one. And God put us in the church together that we might have a spirit of submission. Unwillingness to submit to authority is a mark of immaturity. And if you are that way, you will have no authority under you, because, as we preached in that series on Kingdom Authority, you’ll never be over those things that God wants you to be over until you learn to be under those things that God has set over you. So, the very first mark of maturity is a spirit of submissiveness. Got it?

## II. A Spirit of Servitude

Second one: not only a spirit of submissiveness, but a spirit of servitude. A mature person can serve. Look in verses 5 and 6 again: “Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another—now watch this—and be clothed with humility...” Now, let me just stop right there, and look at the word clothed. The word clothed here is a very interesting word. It literally means to “tie on an apron.” That’s the way it’s used when it says, “...be clothed with humility.” It literally means—the Greek word literally means—to, “tie on an apron.” It has the idea of, of, of service. A servant would put on—it means a slave’s apron. What does that remind you of? It reminds you of when Jesus laid aside His garments and girded Himself with a towel. It’s the same word that’s used here. It’s exactly the same word. What Jesus did was to put on the apron of a servant. And mature people are willing to serve. And you know what it takes to do that? It takes humility. Look at it again. He says here, “...and be clothed with humility...” That is, to wear the apron of a slave. Would you do that? Jesus did. Jesus washed His disciples’ feet. He tied this apron around Him, girded Himself with a towel, with an apron, and got on His knees, and washed disciples’ feet. Now, who is this? This is Jesus. And John says, “Knowing that he came from God, and went to God, laid aside his garments, girded himself, took a towel, and washed his disciples’ feet.”

Do you know what the need of Bellevue right now is? Servants—servants. I was just in the deacons meeting and we approved the report on the committee on committees. How many people? Six hundred people serving on committees—six hundred. Now, those are only leaders of other servants. We saw this morning that film that shows people who are needed on the parking lot. Now, we sang tonight, “Take My Life and Let it Be.” That’s what a lot of us say. You know, take my life, and let it be. I mean, “Don’t bother me, Lord.” No, listen. Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord, to thee.

Now, if Jesus could wash feet, don’t you think you could work on a parking lot? If Jesus could wash feet, don’t you think you could work in the nursery? Easter is coming soon. And you know what we want to do on Easter? We want to have a church that will operate so smoothly on Easter that when people come here on Easter they’re going to want to come back the Sunday after Easter, right? We don’t want them to be jacked around on the parking lot. We don’t want them to come into the nursery and not have enough workers there in the nursery. We don’t want them to come to worship center and not have a place to sit. So, therefore, we’re asking some of our classes to meet in ancillary places. We’re asking some of our people, our regulars, to fill in the corners of the sanctuary up in the balcony. We’re asking some people to park off campus. We’re asking some people, as Gene Howard asked our deacons just a few moments ago in the deacons’ meeting, to go serve in the nursery on Sunday morning. You’ve been in an

Easter service before, haven't you? So go serve in the nursery. Be clothed with humility. Tie on an apron of service. Now, that's what a mature person does. It's the mature people who serve in the church. There's so much that needs to be done, but so many of us want to come and sit and be served. It's little babies that have to be served. It's mature people who can serve others, amen?

So what we need is for you to grow up. And, you know, if you want God's grace—I preached this morning on God's grace. How many of you remember the sermon? I hope you do. Where we talked about Noah who found grace. Well, folks, grace is what all of us need. What is grace? After we get saved, grace continues to work. Grace is the ability to know and do the will of God. That's what grace is—the ability to know and do the will of God. But the Bible says, "God resisteth the proud; he gives grace to the humble." If you are not humble, if you don't have the spirit of a servant, not only will God not give you grace, but God will actually stand in your way! So what we need, what we need in our church is, first of all, some grown up, mature Christians who have a spirit of submissiveness and who have a spirit of servitude, who will tie on the apron of a slave, and do those menial tasks that have to be done.

### **III. A Spirit of Serenity**

Now, here's the third mark of maturity that Peter gives us, and it's the spirit of serenity. Look, if you will, in verse 7. He says here, "Casting all of your care upon him; that, for he careth for you." Now, a mature Christian does not run around nervous, worried, upset all of the time. It's not right for the upright to be uptight. Why? Because He says we are to cast all of our care upon Him. The more mature a Christian is, the more he realizes that God is more than able to take care of every situation. The word care here in this passage of Scripture literally means, "anxiety." You put your anxieties upon the Lord. You cast them upon the Lord. The word cast here speaks of a very deliberate act, a definite and deliberate, a decisive act. How many of you have a problem? Don't lift your hand. How many of you have a care? Don't lift your hand. How many have an anxiety? They come to all of us. As a mature Christian, you have to resolutely cast that anxiety upon the Lord. It's one of the marks of maturity. You see these people up and down. They're always worried. You see, worry is faith turned inside out. Why should you worry when you can cast that anxiety upon the Lord? And, furthermore, He has commanded you to, and invited you to.

I heard a story years and years ago—I guess 40 years ago; it's stayed with me all this time—about a man who was carrying a heavy load of grain down a country road. And another man had a wagon being pulled by a horse. And he saw this man carrying this heavy load of grain, this sack of grain, maybe weighed 50 or more pounds, and he said, "Mister, you need a ride? Get up here with me and I'll take you." And so, the man

got up in the wagon with the man that had the horse, and they're going down the road. And the man driving the wagon looked over there. The man still had the load of grain on his shoulder. He said, "Man, put that down and relax." He said, "Oh, no. It's enough to ask you to carry me without having you carry this also." Have you ever done that to the Lord? You say, "Well, Lord, I'll let You save me, but I'll carry my own burdens." Friend, if He can save you from hell; I mean, if you can trust Him for that, don't you think you can cast your burden upon the Lord? I mean, can't you turn that over to Him? You might as well. Why are you going to carry it, when the Bible says, "Cast your burden upon the Lord"? The third mark of maturity is a person who can turn things over to the Lord. It is a spirit of submissiveness. It is a spirit of servitude. It is a spirit of serenity, learning that no matter what comes to you, God is bigger, God is greater. Romans 8:28 is there in the Bible, and we cast our burden upon the Lord.

#### **IV. A Spirit of Sobriety**

Now, here's the next mark of maturity. And look at it, if you will, in verses 8 and 9. It is the spirit of sobriety. Look at it—verse 8: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." Now, we're to cast our burdens upon the Lord. But to be carefree doesn't mean to be careless. Peter is deadly serious about what he has to say. Now, he says you're to cast your burden upon the Lord, but he says, "Now, don't get flippant. Don't get careless because your adversary the devil goes about." An immature Christian is, so many times, unaware of danger. Little children are what? They're often unaware of danger, so you have to be careful with little children who are not mature. We say, "Now, don't get in a car with a stranger. Don't do this, and don't do that. Don't leave the door open. Don't..." And, we're always warning little children because there's so much danger out there. Now, a mature person is sober and he is vigilant because he does have an adversary. Now, the immature are often unaware of this.

Now, Peter here gives you a threefold guide if you're going to be a mature believer in dealing with your enemy, the devil. First of all, you need to recognize him. Notice what he says: "...your adversary the devil..." Did you know you have an adversary? He doesn't say the adversary—"...your adversary..." You have an enemy. You have an enemy! You'd better recognize him. He has plans to sabotage your life. The dynamite is in place, the fuse is laid, and the match is struck. You say, "Well, he's not going to bother me." And that's where Peter says, "That's what I thought when I was asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane." You see, Peter knew what it was to be bushwhacked and ambushed by the devil. And so, Peter says, "Hey, open your eyes. Recognize that you

have an enemy. Recognize him—your adversary—and respect him.” I didn’t say give him honor. Respect him. What do I mean by that? He says, “Be sober, be vigilant...” You know, so I listen to people sometimes laugh and joke about the devil. They speak carelessly and flippantly about the devil. Have little nicknames for him, and all of that. Well, I’m certainly not going to give him any honor, but you have an adversary who is the devil who is awesomely powerful. Peter likens him unto a roaring lion. And, you need to understand this. As a matter of fact, there are two mistakes about the devil. There are some people who get so into demonology, and they’re always studying and wondering and talking about demons, that their focus is on Satan rather than on the Lord Jesus. Now, the Bible says we’re to resist the devil. It doesn’t say we’re to chase him, okay? We’re not looking for a demon under every bush. On the other hand, there are those who are so flippant, they are oblivious to the work of the devil. A mature Christian recognizes that he has an enemy and he respects that enemy for his power. But he also says that we are to resist him. Recognize him, respect him, and resist him. Look at this, in verse 9: “Whom resist steadfast in the faith...” Not in your own power, not in your own strength, but resist him steadfast in the faith. Why is this? Because, if you are saved, walking in the Spirit, “Greater is he that is in you—that is, the Holy Spirit—than he that’s in the world”—and that is the devil.

Now, a lion is powerful, but Jesus is all-powerful. One of my favorite stories is about an old lion who went walking through the jungle one day, and he was swaggering, and he had his big mane out there, and his tail was switching back and forth. And he loved to bully all the little animals. And he came up to a little rabbit, and he said, “Rrrrrr—who is the king of the jungle?” And that little rabbit just trembled and said, “You are, O mighty lion. You are!” The lion shook the dust in his mane, and he walked down and found a monkey. And he said, “Rrrrrr—who is the king of the jungle?” And the little monkey said, “You are, O mighty lion. You are!” And then he walked up to a big bull elephant that stood about 9 feet tall. And he looked up at that elephant, and he said, “Rrrrrr—who is the king of the jungle?” And that elephant looked down at the lion, wrapped his trunk around him a couple of times, and swung him over his head and threw him up against a tree. That lion hit the tree and slid down to the roots, and looked up at the big bull elephant, and said, “Well, just because you don’t know the answer, you don’t have to get sore about it!” Now, friend, I want to tell you Satan may be a lion, but Jesus is the bull elephant, amen? Jesus is the bull elephant.

“Whom resist steadfast in the faith...” “Greater is he that’s in you than he that’s in the world.” A mature Christian is a person who has a spirit of sobriety. He’s not flippant. He’s not casual about spiritual things. Folks, we are at war! Now, you say, “Why would Satan have any interest in me?” It’s very obvious. Satan’s war is not really with you. Satan’s war is with God. But wicked persons have always known if you can’t hurt

someone, hurt someone that someone loves and you've hurt that someone anyway. Isn't that right? So Satan is really trying to get at God by getting at His children, and so you have become a pawn in a chess game, but you need to resist the devil.

## **V. A Spirit of Steadfastness**

Now, that brings us to the fifth mark here that is very obvious. And these other things lead us and bring us to a spirit of stability. That is the quintessence of maturity. Notice in verse 10 now. "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Jesus Christ, after you've suffered a while—it doesn't say that you'll not suffer—suffer. That's the way you get mature, by the way. No pain, no gain—after you've suffered a while, make you perfect—literally, mature—stablish, strengthen, settle you."

Now, suffering, rightly reacted to, will just toughen you and will stabilize you. And, a mature person can stand in tough times. Now, we stand in His grace. Notice: "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Jesus Christ, after that you've suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, and settle you." He is the God of all grace. There is no grace apart from Him. Now, what kind of grace is this? Well, as we preached this morning, it is saving grace.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!

It is not only saving grace, but, as we preached this morning, it is securing grace.

Thru many dangers, toils, and snares we have already come; 'tis grace hath led me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.

It's surviving grace.

When we've been there 10,000 years, bright shining as the sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we first begun.

And that grace—that grace—is what makes you a mature Christian. As long as you're still trying to do it yourself, living by works rather than grace, you'll never have spiritual maturity.

Now, let me show you what grace does. First of all, grace makes us fit. Look, if you will now, in verse 10. It says, "...make you perfect..." That means, mature or fit. And not only does it make you perfect; it makes you firm, stablish or establish. That is, you're not going to be blown about by every wind of doctrine. And then, not only does it make you fit and firm; it makes you forceful—strengthen you. There is an incredible power of the grace of God in your life. And then, it makes you fixed. It will settle you. And we need to be fit. We need to be firm. We need to be forceful. We need to be fixed. All of that is in the amazing grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

## **Conclusion**

Now, it's the Sunday night crowd that I enjoy being with. I enjoy being here Sunday

morning. Don't tell those Sunday morning "morning glories" that bloom in the morning and fold up at night that I don't enjoy them. But, you know, I've been around long enough to know that it's the Sunday night crowd, as a general rule—now there are exceptions—but it's the Sunday night crowd that seems to be a little more serious about serving the Lord, and I want to thank you here. I don't want to puff you up, but I want to thank you for being here on Sunday night, and being here, many of you, on Wednesday night; many of you for choir; many of you for EE; many of you for committee meetings, and so forth. I just want to thank you for that.

But, folks, I'm telling you now, as Bellevue continues to get bigger, and as the world gets more violent, what we need are some mature believers in Jesus. I don't want to be the pastor of one colossal nursery. I want you to be established. I want you to be perfected. I want you to be a mature believer in Jesus Christ, because, folks, these are desperate days. I mean, these are desperate days. It's difficult for me sometimes to read the newspapers to see what is happening. Let's band ourselves together as an army of mature believers, and don't get blown about. Every little thing that happens, don't go off in a snit, or a pout, or get your feelings hurt, or don't sit around waiting for somebody to serve you, or cry over spilt milk.

Folks, none of us is perfect. Get your eyes off of the faults of those for whom Jesus died. Put your eyes upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And let's be mature believers in Jesus, all right? Let's grow up and have a spirit of submissiveness, and have a spirit of servitude, and have a spirit of serenity, and have a spirit of sobriety, and have a spirit of steadfastness, because our Lord is coming—and coming soon!

I want God to pour out upon us a great and a mighty revival. But, listen. Let me tell you, if we can't have revival in America, let's have it in Memphis. And if we can't have revival in Memphis, let's have it in Bellevue. And if we can't have it in Bellevue, let's have it in your family. And if we can't have it in your family, let's have it in you! Okay? Stop looking around, and let's just start looking inward, and say, "Lord, I just want to make myself a committee of one, to be a mature believer in the Lord Jesus Christ." These are the marks of maturity.

Let's bow together in prayer. Lord Jesus, seal the message to our hearts, and help me—and help us, Lord—that we might grow up unto Jesus, "...to the stature of the fullness of Christ," in whose name we pray. Amen.

# A Survival Kit for Tough Times

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: June 12, 1983**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 5:5–11**

**Sponsored by: Sponsor**

*“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”*

1 PETER 5:10

## Outline

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- I. A Spirit of Submissiveness
- II. A Spirit of Servitude
- III. A Spirit of Serenity
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  - A. Recognize Your Enemy
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- V. A Spirit of Stability
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Conclusion

## Introduction

And I want you to take your Bible now today and turn with me to 1 Peter chapter 5. This is the last message today in a series of messages entitled, “Timeless Truth for Tough Times.” And these are tough times in which we’re living. Peter knew that those Christians in that church to which he was speaking were about to go, undergo severe persecution. So he wrote the book of 1 Peter to give them some timeless truth for these tough times. And he’s trying to forewarn and forearm his people. Now, as your pastor, I am trying to do the same thing because I believe that the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is headed for tribulation, not the great tribulation, but tribulation. I believe we’re going to know troubles and trials and sorrows and heartaches in these last days. Now that doesn’t mean that’s necessarily bad, because Jesus will never be sweeter nor nearer nor dearer nor more powerful than we are going through those times. But we need to learn some timeless truth for tough times because 1 Peter isn’t just what God has said; it is what God is saying. Now, remember, I’ve told you, if you want to

understand a passage of Scripture, you ask three questions: What did it mean then? What does it mean now? And then, what does it mean to me personally?

Now we're going to be giving you today "A Survival Kit for Tough Times," or we might just say, "How to Hang Tough When the Going Gets Rough," because the going is going to get rough today, and you need to hang in there spiritually by the grace of God. Now what should you have in your survival kit? Well, let's read the Scripture first of all. First Peter 5:5: "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

## **I. A Spirit of Submissiveness**

A Survival Kit for Tough Times. What should you put in it? First of all, a spirit of submissiveness. Look in verse 5: "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another..." Now this is not the first time that Simon Peter has mentioned this matter of being submissive. I want you just to review with me for a moment. Go back to chapter 2 and look in verse 13: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake..." Amen? That means all the laws, even 55 miles an hour, hm. That's what it says. Ah, all you guys with a fuzz buster. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake..." We are to be in submission to the civil authorities. That's what he says. The Word of God clearly, plainly teaches that. Then look, if you will, in verse 18. By the way, you say, "Well, if we got a good government." I want to remind you that Nero, Nero was on the scene at this time.

All right. Look, if you will, in chapter 2 and, verse 18: "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear..." Do you know what that means? When you go to work, you're to be in subjection to your boss. You're to reverence your boss. You say, "Well, I will if I have a good boss." Continue to read. "...not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward." Now your boss may be a snake in the grass, but you're to be subject to him. That's what the Bible says.

Look, if you will, in chapter 3, verse 1: "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands..." You say, "Well, if I have a godly husband, I'll be in subjection to him." But he goes on to say that "...if any obey not the word (that is, if a husband is ungodly),

he may be won by the conversation (or the behavior) of the wife,” as she lives a submissive spirit before him.

And then, again, go back to chapter 5, verse 5: “Likewise ye younger, submit yourselves to the elder...” That is, respect the authority, the spiritual wisdom and maturity that God has given to old age. But then he wraps it all up and he says, “...all of you be subject one to another...”

Now why? I mean, if we’re going to survive, what is this thing of being in submission have to do with it? And, by the way, what is submission? Submission is not treating yourself like a doormat. Submission is not saying, “I’m inferior to somebody else.” The Bible teaches in Christ there is no male nor female, Jew nor Greek, bond or free. We’re all one in the Lord Jesus Christ. And the ground around the cross is level. Do you know what submission is? Submission is one equal willingly placing himself under another equal that God may therefore be glorified. That’s all it is. Ah, submission is one equal placing himself voluntarily under another equal that God may be glorified.

Well, why? Why do we do that? Because, you see, dear friend, through submission comes power. You submit and surrender yourself to victory. You see, you’re never more like the devil than when you have a rebellious spirit. It is rebellion that made the devil the devil to begin with. You’re never more like the Lord Jesus than when you have a submissive spirit. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant; and being found in fashion as a servant, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” You’re never more like Jesus than when you’re submissive. You’re never more like the devil than when you’re rebellious. And, you see, my friend, if you are rebellious, then you’re going to lose your power with God and you’re going to have tough times in tough days, because in these days you need power with God. And God does not give His power to rebels. And so, therefore, Peter is telling these people living in tough times, “Submit, submit, submit, submit.” You find your spiritual authorities and get under it. And God says, “Be submissive one to another.” All through the church God sets up different kinds of lines of authority, and we’re to find that authority, and we are to get under that authority, because we will never be over until we’re under. When we get under the authority that’s over us, God gives us authority over those matters which He has set under us. Do you understand that principle? It’s a basic principle in the Word of God.

Now why is it? You see, when I rebel against any authority, I’m not really rebelling against that authority; I’m rebelling against God who gave that authority the authority that authority has. Now what I mean by that is this: That the church, for example, is a head, a body, rather, that has a head. Ah, Christ is the head. The church is the body of Christ. And we’re members one of another. That’s what the Bible clearly teaches. All

right, so now this hand, if it operates correctly, is going to be receiving impulses and orders from the head, my right hand. Likewise, my left hand, if it operates correctly, is going to be receiving orders, impulses, and motivation from my head. Now my right hand does not tell my left hand what to do, and my left hand does not order the affairs of my right hand. The head orders the affairs of both. But, you see, therefore, if my right hand refuses to submit to the left hand, it is not really refusing to submit to the left hand; it is really refusing to submit to the head. Do you understand that? It is the head that is over both. And when I, therefore, refuse to submit to those spiritual authorities that God has put over me in His body, I'm not really rebelling against that other member; I'm really rebelling against the head who controls the whole thing. It is rebellion against the Lord Jesus.

You see, all of us have strengths that the others do not have, and all of us have weaknesses that the others do not have. God gave me some strengths He didn't give you. God gave you some strengths He didn't give me. God gave me some responsibilities He didn't give you. God gave you some responsibilities He didn't give me. Why? God made us different that He might make us one. For example, my hand cannot see color. My eye can. But my eye cannot hold things. My hand can. And so the eye needs the hand, the hand needs the eye, the foot, ah, needs the rest of the body, and so forth. You see, listen, friend. God made us different that He might make us one, you see. And so, therefore, He gives us this spirit of submissiveness where He teaches us, all of you be subject one to another, because in the last days we need one another. The noose is going to tighten round about us, and we need to be in this body called the church of the Lord Jesus, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is..., but so much the more, as you see the day approaching." That is, the closer we get to the end times, the more we ought to come together as a body to support one another. And so, Peter says, "Be subject, all of you, one to another." Put that in your survival bag – a spirit of submissiveness. I'm telling you, friend, in these last days, if you're a rebel, you're going to have tough times, tough times, and it's going to be tough for you in those tough times.

## **II. A Spirit of Servitude**

Secondly, secondly, not only a spirit of submissiveness, but a spirit of servitude. Look, if you will, again in verse 5: "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." This is one of the most interesting phrases in all of the Bible right here, and I want you to underscore it, "...be clothed with humility..." (verse 5). Just underscore that. "...be clothed with humility..." Now what on

earth does that mean? Well, the Greek word, *to be clothed*, actually means to tie a knot, to tie a knot, and it literally means to put on a servant's apron; to tie on an apron. He says, "Just tie on humility." And when he says, "...be clothed with humility..." what he's literally saying is, "Tie on the apron of a slave." When a slave would do a menial task, he had an apron that he would wear that he would tie behind his back. And that is the figure of speech that Simon Peter is using. And why do you think Simon Peter is using that figure of speech? I don't have to guess much about it. I believe that I know, because Simon Peter was there when the Lord Jesus Christ Himself had done exactly that same time. You remember there, supper being ended, Jesus laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded himself with it? The Lord Jesus Christ put on servant's apron. Jesus tied on that servant's towel. And then Jesus began to wash His disciples' feet.

Back in Bible times when you would come into a fine home, one of the first things they would do would be to remove your sandals, remove your shoes and wash your feet with a cool, clear basin of water. Can you imagine that? Boy, we ought to reinstate that. I mean, can you imagine having someone just massage your feet with cold water and just bathe them? You see, that, that, that would relax, that would refresh, that would restore, that would renew. And it was the job of a slave, a servant, to do that. Now, those high and mighty disciples, none of them would think about doing that. But the Lord Jesus laid aside His garments, got a basin of water, clothed Himself with humility, tied it behind Him, that towel, knelt, and washed their feet. When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Simon Peter said, "You're not going to wash my feet." I feel like saying, "Peter, you'd better let Him because you're about to put it in your mouth." Ah, ah, "No, You're not going to wash my feet." And Jesus says to Peter, "Now, Peter, if I don't wash your foot, I don't have anything to do with you." "Well," he says, "if that's the case, then wash me all over, not just my feet, my hands, my head." And Jesus said, "Peter, he that's had a bath doesn't need to be washed, except his feet."

Now Jesus here makes it clear that He's doing this as a symbolic act because the bath referred to salvation. The washing, therefore, of Peter's feet was symbolic of the fact that even though we've been saved, we walk in a dirty world, and day by day we need to come to Jesus and let Him refresh you, restore us, and cleanse us, and wash our feet. We don't have to get, keep getting saved. We've had a bath. But we do have to come day by day and let the Lord Jesus wash our feet. And then Jesus said, "And, Peter, if I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet." Now He's not talking here about a church ceremony, but He is setting an example for us, that all of us in these last days are to be clothed with humility. We are to have that towel gird about us at all times.

Now I want you to imagine something today. I want you to imagine the Lord Jesus

Christ in this service; I mean, physically, bodily. I want you to imagine Jesus Christ coming into this service in a physical body. And in His hands He has a basin of water, and He's wearing a towel tied in the back. And I want you to imagine of all of the people here this morning, that He comes right to you, to you, and He kneels in front of you this morning, and He says, "May I wash your feet?" what would you do? I mean, if Jesus Christ literally, actually, bodily, physically were here and said, "May I wash your feet." At first, you would say, "Oh no, Lord, You, You can't wash my feet." And then you would remember the mistake that Peter made, wouldn't you? And with tears streaming down your cheeks, you would say, "Yes, Lord. You may wash my feet." And suppose the Lord of glory kneeled before you and took your feet in His hands and bathed them and washed them? And then suppose the Lord Jesus were to look right at you again and say, "Will you wash My feet?" what would you say? Oh, you would say, "Lord, that I could have such a privilege, that I could wash those nail-pierced feet. Lord, I would wash them with my tears gladly, Lord Jesus. I'll wash Your feet."

Now put aside imagination because, friend, Jesus is here, for He said, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name (what?) there am I in the midst of them." Jesus Christ is here today. And do you know what He wants to do today? He wants to wash your feet. He wants to restore you. He wants to forgive you. He wants to cleanse you. He wants to renew you. The Lord of glory wants to wash your feet today. Are you going to refuse Him? Are you going to be like Simon Peter and say, "You'll never wash my feet?" Don't refuse Him. Let Him wash your feet today. Ah, but would you like to wash His today? Well, you say, "It can't be done." Oh yes, it can, for Jesus said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of one of these my brethren, you've done it unto me." Isn't that right? There are people in this congregation this morning who are hurting. There are people in our fellowship today who need their spiritual feet washed. And Jesus said, "Be ye kind, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God as Christ, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. If I have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet." That's the reason we're having this month that thing called Reaching Inward. That is, those hands there are hands that are meant to minister to one another, and we're trying to do some spiritual foot washing in our congregation this month as we are putting on the servant's apron and in these tough times; I mean, when the world seems to be caving in on the people of God, they need to submit to one another and they need to serve one another. And when the going gets tough, I want to tell you, dear friend, that all of us in this church need to wear that servant's apron and through love serve one another. That's what makes the glory of God upon a church. And there are people today who need your love. And when you bathe their feet, when you wash their feet, it's the same as though you were washing the feet of Jesus. And don't do it with a holier-than-thou attitude. I'll tell you, there's one thing you can't do and

that's look down on somebody when you're washing their feet, amen? You'll never do that. And that's the attitude that we need to take. The Bible says, "Ye, which are strong, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering yourself lest you be tempted." Not with a holier-than-thou attitude, but with a humble attitude. There needs to be the spirit of servitude. Is that in your survival kit? Is it? If not, you're going to have a tough time making it.

### **III. A Spirit of Serenity**

All right, the third thing that I want you to have in there is a spirit of serenity, a spirit of serenity. Look, if you will, in verse 7: "Casting all your care upon him; for he (Jesus) careth for you." Isn't that a wonderful motto? We have that one hung on our wall in our home. "Casting all your care upon him; for he cares for you." Oh, my friend, He loves you and He knows your cares today. I'm glad that the apostle Peter didn't just gloss over it and make it look like we, as Christians, that if we get saved, we're not going to have any trouble. It's going to be all honey and no bees, all flowers and all sunshine. No, no. Peter talks over and over again about suffering. He talks about cares. He talks about anxieties. He talks about problems. I've told you before; there are three classes of people here this morning. First of all, those who are having problems. Maybe you're in that category. Second category is those who are just getting over problems. Third category, those just fixing to have them. That's all! I mean, you, you're in one of those categories today. Ah, either you're in the midst of one, just getting over one, or just fixing to have one. I mean, that, "Man that is born of woman is full of trouble..." That's what the Bible says. Whether you're saved or lost doesn't have anything to do with it. But, hallelujah, glory to God, we can cast all of our care upon Him; for he cares for us." And that word *cast* is a strong word. It means with deliberateness and decisiveness we give Him those problems. Now that's hard to do, hard to do, because there's something in us that says we need just to hold on to them. We take our burdens to the Lord, but we don't leave them there. We just, we just kind of say, "Lord..." We get that big old heavy bag of burdens and we spread them all out before the Lord, and say, "Lord, look at all those problems." Then we pick them all up and put them back in the bag back on our shoulder they go, and off we go. And the song says, "Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there." "Cast your burdens upon the Lord; and he will sustain you." He cares for you.

Years and years ago, I heard of a little story about a man walking down a dusty road and he was carrying a big load of, of, ah, meal or grain in a sack on his shoulder. And a man came along with a horse and wagon, pulled alongside him, and said, "Mister, that's, it's such a hot day. Why don't you get up here in the wagon and ride with me?" So he climbed up, and the two were riding side by side. And after a while the owner of

the wagon looked over and saw that he still, this man still had this, ah, sack of grain still up there on the shoulder. He said, "For goodness sakes, man, put that thing down." "Oh," he said, "no. It's enough to ask you to give me a ride without asking you to carry this also." Now that's kind of silly. But, friend, listen. If you've gotten in the wagon with Jesus for salvation, don't you think He can handle your burdens also? I mean, if you can trust Him for eternity, can't you trust Him for time? And if He can't take care of your problems, how's He going to take care of your sins? Oh no, my friend, He cares for you. He's able. You cast that burden upon the Lord with decisiveness. Actually, the Greek word means once for all. Give it to Him. Now that doesn't mean that you might not want to reaffirm it.

I have a preacher friend who was on an airplane, and, ah, the weather got rough. Have you ever been on an airplane when the weather just really gets rough? And you're afraid of the airplane poison. You know, one drop will kill ya. And, ah, the weather was rough. And the lady next to him was kind of whimpering. She was afraid. So he turned to her, being a minister, you know, and tried to comfort her. She said, "Do you mean to tell me you're not afraid?" Well, he said, "Lady, before I got on this airplane, I committed my life into the keeping of my heavenly Father." He said, "I will have to be honest and admit that I have reminded Him about it several times since we've been up here."

All right, now look. Commit it to the Lord. Remind Him of it as many times as you want, but commit it to the Lord. Cast your burdens upon the Lord. In these last days, when the, when the times are tough, willingly, definitely, deliberately, decisively cast your burden upon the Lord. Some of you are listening to me are in hospital beds right now. Cast your burden on the Lord. Some of you who are listening to me need a job. Cast your burden on the Lord. Some of you have children who are tearing your heart out. Cast your burden on the Lord. Some of you have homes that are about to come apart. Cast your burden on the Lord. Some of you are being lied about, misused, abused. Cast your burden on the Lord. He cares for you. He cares for you. He loves you, dear friend.

#### **IV. A Spirit of Sobriety**

And so, there must be that spirit of submissiveness. There must be that spirit, dear friend, not only of submissiveness, but of service and servitude. And then, there must be that spirit of serenity as you cast your spirit, as your cast troubles, your cares, upon the Lord. And then, next, fourthly, there must be a spirit of sobriety. Look, if you will, now in verses 8-9: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary as the devil, your adversary the devil, rather, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are

accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.” A spirit of sobriety. Now Peter, in verse 7, has told them that they are to be carefree, but in verse 8 he has reminded them not to be careless. Just because we can cast our burdens upon the Lord does not mean that we’re to have a flippant, happy-go-lucky, careless attitude toward the devil.

#### **A. Recognize Your Enemy**

And Peter is speaking with deadly seriousness. He says, “Be sober, be vigilant; your adversary the devil goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” Now he gives us a three-fold recipe right here. First of all, we need to recognize him. Notice what he says. “...your adversary the devil...” Did you know you have an adversary? You do! I mean, friend, he is your adversary. If you’re a friend of Christ, you have an enemy. He is the devil. He’s your adversary. Not my adversary, your adversary. Oh, he’s mine too, but that’s not the emphasis here. “...your adversary the devil goes about as a roaring lion...”

#### **B. Respect Your Enemy**

So number one: Recognize him. Number two: Respect him. He goes about as a roaring lion, as a roaring lion. Don’t underestimate the power of the enemy. This is a strong figure of speech that Simon Peter is using. I mean, it doesn’t mean that we have to tremble before the devil. It doesn’t mean that we fear the devil. That’s not it. But we respect him. An electrician, who is wiring a house, if he’s going to be an electrician for a very long time, has a respect for the power that’s in those wires. He knows where the insulation is, and he knows how to handle those wires. But any electrician who loses his respect is going to be in serious trouble. So, friend, not only do you need, ah, ah, to recognize him; you need to respect him.

#### **C. Resist Your Enemy**

And then you need to resist him steadfastly in the faith. Do you know why Peter, why Peter said this? I’ll tell you, I think I know why. Because Peter was giving a personal testimony. You see, Jesus had warned Peter. Jesus had said, “Peter, the devil has desired you, that he might sift you as wheat.” Old Peter said, “Well, Lord, I’ll follow You to prison and to death.” A big old fisherman, he swaggers and brags. He’s not vigilant. He’s not sober. Later on in the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus Christ is praying, and His, and His sweat is as drops of blood, He comes to Simon Peter, and what’s Peter doing? He’s asleep. And what does Jesus say? “Peter, watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. Be sober, Peter. Be vigilant. Your adversary the devil goeth about as a roaring lion. Peter, he wants you.” But Peter had failed to be sober. He failed to be vigilant. And here’s the big fisherman, the one who says he’s going with Jesus to prison and to death, and three times he curses and swears and denies the Lord. And the devil pounced upon him and swallowed him down. Now I’m speaking to some of you today.

Boy, things are going good for you. You say, “Preacher, all this tough times business - I, I’m listening to it and taking notes, but I really don’t need it. Boy, I feel good. I’ve got money in the bank. My kids are around me. They’re happy. Everything is coming up roses for me.” Yeah? Yeah? You’re whistling, dancing through the forest and picking wildflowers, and I want to tell you, lurking behind the next bush is your adversary the devil. And he’s going to pounce on you and swallow you down so quick you won’t know what has happened because he’s been setting you up. And you’ve not been watching. You’ve not been praying. You’ve not been sober. You’ve not been vigilant. You think you’re going to make it, but you will not. Simon Peter knew, and you’re not a better man than Simon Peter was. Simon Peter went down, and so will you if you don’t do what Simon Peter said to do. Be sober. Be vigilant. Watch. Your adversary the devil, like a roaring lion, and he’ll pounce upon you with those vicious claws, with that voracious mouth, and he’ll swallow you down before you know what’s happened to you. Now you need to recognize him. You need to respect him. And you need to resist him. Notice what Peter says. Peter says, “Whom resist steadfast in the faith...” That is, how do you resist him? Not in your own strength. He’s greater than you are. But greater is He that is in you than him, the devil. So it is in the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ that you resist the devil.

Aren’t you glad there’s one mightier than Satan? I heard years ago about a lion was walking through the jungle one day. Oh, he was such a proud lion. And he came up to a little rabbit and he said to the rabbit, “Rrrrrr, who is the king of the jungle?” The little rabbit just trembled and said, “You are, O mighty lion. You are.” The old lion shook his mane, swished his tail, and walked off. Came to a monkey. “Rrrrrr” he said, “who is the king of the jungle, the mightiest beast in the jungle?” The little monkey said, “O mighty lion, you are, you are the king of the jungle.” The old lion shook the dust from his mane and went on till he came to a bull elephant about sixteen feet tall with tusks about six feet long. And he said, “Rrrrrr, who is the king of the jungle?” And that old bull elephant looked down at that lion, put that long trunk down there and wrapped it around the lion about three times, lifted the lion up over his head, and threw him against an oak tree. And the old lion slid down the base of that tree like melted butter and looked up at the bull elephant and said, “Well, just cause you don’t know the answer, you don’t have to get sore about it.”

Ah, the devil is a roaring lion. But I want to tell you, friend, there’s someone mightier than he is. There is someone who has said, “All power and all authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” And the Bible says we can resist him steadfast in the faith, in the faith. We can stand against him. But you’d better have a spirit of sobriety. I mean, I want to tell you again, Peter is deadly serious. Peter knew what it was to take his eyes from the Lord and to go down.

## V. A Spirit of Stability

Now the last thing. Ah, there needs to be not only that, but a spirit of stability. Look, if you will, in verse 10 now. “But the God of all grace...” Don’t you love that phrase, the God of all grace? This is chapter 5:10: “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” Here’s the picture of a person who is not blown about by adversity. Here’s a picture of a person who has met troubles, trials, tribulations, but that person is still standing. When all the dust is settled, and when all of the artillery of hell has been quietened, and when all of the, ah, imaginations of the enemy had been exhausted, here is that person who is still standing there because God is the God of all grace. There needs to be a spirit of stability, and that stability comes from the grace of God. He is the God of all grace.

And what will that grace do? Well, look at it for a moment. First of all, it says, “...make you perfect...” Do you see that? Now that word *perfect* does not mean mature as the other word for perfect means, but it actually means to mend. Ah, it, it was a word used for the mending of a net that had been broken, or it was the word used for the setting of a bone that had been broken. And what he’s saying is here that God is going to make us fit. Now many times we get unfit. I mean, we get out of shape. We do like, like, like Simon Peter did and the devil gets us, and he breaks our bones and he, he tears our nets. But the Lord Jesus is there - hallelujah – with His grace to restore us, to mend us, to make us *fit*. Now there are some of you here today that He wants to do that for, and, and His grace will do that. You, you’ve gotten bent of shape? You’ve gotten away from the Lord? Sin in your life? Ah, you’ve failed Him? You’ve gone down? You’ve disappointed Him? He’ll mend your net. He’ll tie up those loose ends. He’ll set that bone again straight. And Jesus will heal you today.

But not only will God’s grace make you *fit*; friend, it will make you *firm*. Look at it again. He says, “....and stablish you...” You know what that means? You’re part of the establishment, friend. You’re not going to be blown around. You’re not going to be maneuvered. The devil is not going to shove you around. Aren’t you tired of being shoved around by the devil? The grace of God will make you *fit*. The grace of God will make you *firm*. The grace of God will make you *forceful*, for look at the next verse.

“....strengthen you...” What kind of strength? Not physical strength, not monetary strength, not intellectual strength. You may have none of those. But, friend, you can be strong as iron through the grace of God. And in tough times, God will give you strength that is absolutely inexplicable apart from His grace. So God wants, dear friend, to make you *fit*. God wants to make you *firm*. God wants to make you *forceful*. And God wants to make you *fixed*.

Look at that next word, and that is “...to settle you.” That word *settle* means to lay a

foundation. I mean, that, how firm a foundation is laid for your faith, ye saints of the Lord. Now that's all by the grace of God. Isn't grace wonderful? I mean, just praise God for His grace. That's what makes God love sinners like we are. And He's called the God of all grace.

### A. **Saving Grace**

What kind of grace? First of all, *saving grace*. What is it that *saves us*? We're saved by grace. "For by grace are ye saved..." *Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me*. You're not saved by joining a church or getting baptized or keeping the Ten Commandments, obeying the Golden Rule. These are all well and good and fine. They have their purpose, they have their place, but they can't save you. If you could be saved by those things, Jesus Christ never would have died on the cross. But He died to do for us something we could not do for ourselves. We're saved by grace.

### B. **Sustaining Grace**

But not is it the grace that saves us; it's the grace that *sustains* us. Remember, old Paul was going through tough times? He came to the Lord, and the Lord said, "Paul, My grace is sufficient for thee, and My strength is made perfect in weakness." *Through many dangers, toils, and snares I have already come. 'Tis grace hath led me safe thus far, and grace will lead me on.*

### C. **Surviving Grace**

But not only is it *saving grace* and *sustaining grace*; friend, it is *surviving grace*, amen? I mean, he speaks here of God's eternal glory. Look at it again in verse 10: "But the God of all grace, who hath called us into his eternal glory..." Look in verse 11: "To him be glory and dominion (for how long, tell me?) forever and ever." *When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun*. We've no less days to sing God's praise than when we first begun.

Oh, friend, *saving grace, sustaining grace, surviving grace*. It's all the grace of God. And it's in that grace that we stand. And you'd better put that in your survival kit – the stability that comes only by the grace of God.

## **Conclusion**

I'm so glad that I'm saved today. I'm so glad that I know the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Savior. There was a time in my life, let me tell you about it, when I stood on a street corner in West Palm Beach, Florida. And I looked up into the starry heavens that night, and I said, "God, I'm confused. I don't know whether I'm lost and the Holy Spirit has me under conviction, or I don't know whether I'm saved and the devil is trying to make me doubt it. But I'm confused, and my life is not what it ought to be. And, God, I want to get it settled. So, Lord, right now with all of my heart, as much as in me is, with

every ounce, every inch, once and for all, now and forever, I trust You to save me. Come into my heart, forgive my sins, and save me.” And I didn’t wait for a feeling. I just said, “Thank You for doing it, because I receive it on the authority of Your Word.” And that night a wonderful river of God’s grace and peace started to flow in my heart. I want to give you this testimony. That was over 40 years ago, and it’s still flowing, almost 40 years ago, and it’s still flowing.

Do you know Him? Would you say, “Lord Jesus, once and for all, now and forever, I trust You to save me?” And the Bible says, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” And He’ll save you. Do you know how I know? He’s the God of all grace. He’s the God of all grace. And “For by grace as ye saved...” You could say, “Lord Jesus, come into my heart, forgive my sins, and save me. I commit my life to You.” And He will. He’ll forgive your sins. He’ll send His Spirit into your heart to make you a new creature. And one day, perhaps sooner than you realize, He’ll take you home to heaven to be with Him.

I want heads bowed and eyes closed. No one stirring. No one looking around. How many would say, “Brother Rogers, if I were to die tonight, this afternoon, I know that I know that I know that I’d go straight to heaven. I have, my sins have been forgiven. Jesus lives in my heart. God’s Spirit bears witness with mine that I’m a child of God. And I’ll give you this testimony by lifting my hand.” Would you just lift your hand if you know that you’re saved? Heads are bowed. Eyes are closed. Thank you. Take them down. Now not everyone could lift his or her hand, and so I want you to know that we’re concerned about you. And I’m going to pray for you right now. And while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, brothers and sisters in Christ are joining me to pray for you.

“Lord Jesus, I pray today for those who could not say that they know that they know that they’re saved. And, Lord, I pray that today by Your grace and through Your Holy Spirit they might say an everlasting yes to Jesus Christ. Father, save the lost here today. Bind the powers of darkness away from them and shine the gospel sunlight into their hearts. And reveal Jesus to them, Lord, and help them to understand that He suffered and bled and died upon that cross that they might be saved today. For we pray in His wonderful name.

# How to Hang Tough When the Going Gets Rough

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: September 13, 1989**

**Main Scripture Text: 1 Peter 5:5–11**

**Sponsored by: Sponsor**

*“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”*

1 PETER 5:10

## Outline

Introduction

I. Submission

II. Humility

III. Serenity

IV. Vigilance

V. Stability

Conclusion

## Introduction

Open your Bibles and let's study about that Savior tonight to 1 Peter, chapter 5. If you didn't bring a Bible with you, look in the pew rack in front of you. Most likely, there is one there. And if there were ever a book of the Bible written to this generation, as well as to the First Century generation, it is, indeed, the book of 1 Peter, because as 1 Peter was, as, as Peter was preparing the saints of that time and age for persecution in perilous times, you and I need to be prepared.

I enjoyed this pre-teen choir. And they could not have handpicked or even written music that would fit more, with more exactitude to what I have to say than the numbers they sang. The first song, “I Will be Steadfast. I Will Not be Moved.” That set the tone and was, indeed, exactly in line with what I'm going to speak about. Then their last number, “Don't Turn Back. Just Hold On. Keep Your Eyes on Him.” I said, “My goodness, either I knew what they were going to sing, or they knew what I was going to preach, or else we're both in tune with the Holy Spirit. And I really believe that the latter is true and, because I had no idea what the text of their music would be. But I want to talk to you tonight about, “How to Hang Tough when the Going Gets Rough.” And, brother, don't think this is just talking out into the air, because I'm going to tell you

something, folks. If you think in these last days you can live for the Lord Jesus Christ and it'll not be tough, you need to smell the coffee. I'm telling you something, friend. Tough times, glorious times, wonderful times, but tough times are coming for those of us who know the Lord and believe the Bible in these last days.

Now, I want us to get a running start on the Scripture that I have for you tonight, and I'm just going to kind of pick up the theme of what Peter's saying. And then, in a moment, we're going to begin in chapter 5 and verse 5 and read most of the rest of that chapter. But I want us to get a running start.

I want you to notice the theme, the idea, the heartbeat of the apostle Peter as he says in chapter 4, verse 7: "But the end of all things is at hand. Be ye therefore sober-minded and watch unto prayer."

And then, if you'll skip on down to verse 12: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to test you, as though some strange thing happened unto you."

Then go on to verse 14: "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you."

And then, skip on down to verse 19: "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful creator." Do you see how Peter is just preparing them? He's getting them ready for tough times. He's getting them ready for hard days, rough roads. And then, I want us to go on down to the Scripture that will be the way he tells them how to do what they ought to do in the kind of times that he has described.

And he says in chapter 5, in the first four verses, what preachers ought to be like. Now I'm going to skip that, but I want to tell you that as I skip it, I've not skipped it in my heart. I heard that laughter out there. But I want you to know that I have carefully, prayerfully, and very sensitively looked at those verses. But now I want us to pass over that and look now in verse 5: "In like manner..." Now he's talked to the preacher, the pastors, the leaders. Then he's going to talk to the laity. "In the like manner, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But (Oh, and thank God for this verse), but the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, make you perfect (that is, mature), establish, strengthen, settle you. To whom be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

That last verse is the verse that is the theme for my message, "How to Hang Tough

when the Going Gets Rough.” Notice what he says. “After you have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you.” So that’s what we’re going to be talking about here, how to, ah, be prepared for these days that are coming, these troublous days. The Bible says in the last days perilous times shall come. My dear friend, I want to say that we must be in the last days ‘cause they are here.

All right. Now, let me give you five qualities that Peter mentions here. Obviously, there are more than five, but there are five that just stick out. And these are qualities, characteristics, character traits that you need to build up in your heart and in your life. They need to be put into your survival kit, okay.

## **I. Submission**

The very first is submission, submission. Notice here in verse 5: “In like manner, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another....”

Now Peter has so much to say to suffering Christians and to beleaguered Christians about submission. Now you may not think that submission is necessary for survival, but these are the kind of people who will survive because they’re the kind of people who are going to have the grace and power of God upon them. Now let me show you something here in the book of 1<sup>st</sup> Peter. Go back to chapter 2, verse 13 if you will for just a moment. He says there, “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake...” That means keep God’s laws.

Some of you fuzz-buster parents are setting a bad example for your kids. Be subject, be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them, or as, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers,” and so forth. All right.

Then look, if you will, in chapter 2, verse 18: “Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the perverse, the froward, the perverse.”

Do you have a mean boss? You just serve him as if he were Jesus Christ. That’s what he says here. “Servants, be subject to your masters...” And, and do it as unto the Lord.

Then look, if you will, in chapter 3, verse 1: “In the same manner, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands, that if any obey not the word, they may also without the word be won by the behavior of the wives.”

And then look, if you will, again at our verse that we’re reading, chapter 5 and verse 5: “In like manner, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder...” And now he just sums it up. “...yea, all of you be subject one to another...”

Now do you think that Peter is trying to tell us something? If there were ever a person who by natural inclination was not want to be submissive to anybody, it’d be

Simon Peter. Simon Peter, big, rude, crude, boisterous, strong, self-willed. But over and over again he's telling us to have a spirit of submission.

And I want to say this, dear friend. Submission is not for women. It is for Christians, for Christians. Women are included. I don't mean to say women are not Christians. But so many times we hear about women submitting themselves to their husbands, and so forth. But Peter just goes through the whole gambit of life, and, finally, he just says, "...all of you be subject one to another..." Why? I'll tell you why. Rebellion makes you more like Satan than anything else on earth. Submission makes you more like Jesus than anything else on earth. As a matter of fact, in Philippians, the second chapter, a whole chapter is given on this. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; made himself of no reputation. Took upon him the form of a servant," and so forth. "And being found in fashion as a servant, he humbled himself and became obedient..." And the Bible says if the Lord Jesus lived that way, how much more are we to live that way?

Now, what is submission? Submission is one equal voluntarily placing him or himself or herself under another equal, that God may therefore be glorified. It is among equals. And it must be voluntary. You see, listen. When we submit to one another, we are really submitting to the Lord. Let me illustrate what I'm talking about.

The church is a body. Jesus Christ is the head. We're the members of that body. Now how is this body to operate? The body is to be receiving its impulses from the head. And the members of this body are to operate as the head gives direction. All right. Now this hand, if it's to be a good hand, it's not to tell the head what it's going to do and say, "Head, will you please bless my efforts." It is to report for duty. It is to be there ready for the slightest impulse from the head to do whatever it is the head tells it to do. Now if it ceases to take impulses from the head, it is sick. It's not a productive part of the body.

Now, my right hand doesn't take orders from my left hand, nor does my left hand take orders from my right hand. When my right hand is in right relationship with the head, it does what it's told to do. When my left hand is in right relationship with the head, it tells what it's told to do. And if my right hand does not cooperate with my left hand, and my left hand is in contact with my head, then my right hand is in rebellion against my head. Right? Say amen. Okay.

Now, what I'm trying to say is this: Look. The right hand cannot direct the left hand. The left hand cannot direct the right hand. But for one hand to reject the other hand is for that hand to reject the head. For you to reject me, or for me to reject you, is more than for me to reject you or you to reject me. It is to reject the God who leads us both when we're in contact with Him. That's what I'm trying to say.

You see, when we submit one to another, when this hand submits to this hand, it is

not submitting to this hand; it's submitting to the head that told this hand to submit to that hand and that hand to submit to this hand.

You see, all submission is really to Jesus. And all rebellion is really against God. You say, "Well, I won't submit him," or, "She shouldn't submit to me." Oh no. Listen. We are submitting one to another. And why do we submit one to another? Why does God tell us to submit one to another? Because we need one another so much. We're members one of another.

Now I have a hand. The hand can grab things, but the hand can't feel color. I have an eye. The eye can see things, but it can't hold anything. And so, what God did is, is, God gave us different abilities and then made us submit one to another. God made us different that He might make us one. And God wants us to be one in these last days because, friend, in tough times, when the going gets rough and we need to hang tough, ha, we need to hang together. We need to hang together. And for that reason he said there's to be a spirit of submission.

I'm going to tell you again, ha, ha, that rebellion will make you more like the devil than anything else. Submission will make you more like the Lord Jesus. If you read Isaiah 14, you'll find out how the devil became the devil. Five times he said, "I will, I will, I will, I will, I will." Five times he spoke out against God. "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will be like the Most High. I will sit on the fire, sides of the north. I will. I will. I will." You know what he was saying to God? "Not Thy will, but mine be done." What did the Lord Jesus say in Gethsemane? "Not my will, but Thine be done." I'm telling you, you're never more like Satan than when you're in rebellion. You're never more like the Lord Jesus when you're in submission. All right.

So how to hang tough when the going gets rough? Notice, in order to hang rough, we need to hang together. And in order to hang together, we need to submit one to another, because when one hand submits to another hand, it's submitting to the head that directs both hands. Okay?

## **II. Humility**

Now not only do you need, therefore, submission. The second thing you need is humility. Notice again in chapter 5, verse 5: "In like manner, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

Now grace is both the desire and the dynamic to do God's will. You see, it is God that works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Grace is God giving us the inclination, and grace is God giving us the power to do His will. You'll never live victoriously without grace. Grace, again, is the desire and the dynamic to do the will of God. Even your desire to do God's will is God's grace. It's God that works in us both to

will and to do of His good pleasure. All right, you wouldn't even have the desire to serve God apart from the grace of God.

But, you see, God resisteth the proud, and He gives grace to the humble. And so, therefore, if you are to live victoriously in these days, you need grace. And in order to have grace, you must have humility.

Now he says, "...be clothed with humility..." Humility is, is not thinking lowly of yourself. That's not humility. If a person thinks lowly of himself, he's going to act, he's going to grovel and scrap and bow and all of that. That's not humility. He just has a bad self-image. You know what humility is? Humility is knowing who you are, knowing what you have, understanding all of that, and then laying that aside in order to serve other people.

The classic example of humility is found in John chapter 13. Don't turn to it right now, but it's the story of Jesus washing the disciples' feet. And the Bible says Jesus, knowing that He came from God, and knowing that He was going to God, laid aside His garments, girded Himself with a towel, and washed His disciples' feet. Now did Jesus think lowly of Himself or highly of Himself? Well, I'd say He thought pretty highly of Himself. He said, "I've come from God. I am going to God." Was that humility? Indeed it was. Was His humility the kind of humility we're to have? Yes. He said, "If I've washed, ah, your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet." You see, the Bible says, "Let a man not think of himself more highly than he ought to think." But it also says, "Let him think soberly, according as God has dealt to every man a measure of grace," in Romans 12:3.

You see, listen. I have come from God. He created me. And then, I've been born of God. I've been born from above. I'm going to God. Therefore, I can serve you without saying I'm going to be diminished, because the grace that God gives me, He just keeps on giving. And I don't lose when I give, 'cause it just makes room for more grace when I give you grace. And it's out of His infinite riches in glory, He gives and gives and gives again.

So, a humble person is not a person who just says, "Oh, I know I'm no good. I know I don't count for anything. I'm just unworthy," all this. Hey, folks, a lot of that is just pride in reverse. It's just a subtle form of pride.

Jesus knew who He was, and yet He laid aside His rights and His prerogatives to serve someone else, knowing exactly who He is. Let me tell you who you are. You're a child of God. You're a saint of God. You're the righteousness of God in Christ. That's who the Bible says that you are. But, in spite of all of that, the Bible says just clothe yourself with humility. You know the word *clothe* there? It's a very interesting word. It has the idea of tying a knot on an apron. It says that Jesus girded Himself with that towel. It's the same word here that says clothe yourself with humility. I wonder if Peter

didn't have that in mind as he watched the Lord Jesus tie that knot and get down and wash his feet.

You know, old Peter said, "Lord, You'll never wash my feet." I feel like saying, "Peter, you'd better let Him wash it. You're about to put it in your mouth." (Peter said, "Lord, You'll never wash my feet." And Jesus said, "Peter, if I don't wash your feet, you're not going to have any part with Me." And, well, Peter says, "Well then, give me a whole bath." He said, "No, Peter, you don't understand what I'm doing. You've already been bathed." That is, "You've already been saved. Your sin is forgiven. But your feet get dirty. As you walk through this filthy world, your feet get dirty. And even though you're saved, you need to let Me wash your feet day by day." That is, forgive your sins day by day that every Christian falls into. We need to come to Him and say, "Lord, give us our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses." Daily we need to do that. Let Him wash our feet. We don't need to keep getting saved, but we need to let our Lord forgive us when we slip and fall....and we do, don't we? Say amen. But what did He say? He said, "Now, if I have...."

You see, to wash feet in that day was to do what? At, at the door would be a basin of water in a very wealthy home. They'd be a slave there who would come. And, and when you walk in that, that house, that slave would slip your sandals off. That slave would take that water and sometimes mix it with perfume and, and sweet smelling aromatic oil, and he would wash your feet. It was to keep the house clean. But it was more than that. It was a massage. It was to cool those hot feet on dusty days. And he'd just rub those feet in his hands and massage them, and so forth. Have you ever had anybody do that for you? One time, Joyce did that for me. Oh, I take it back. More than once, but not enough. And, do you know what that does? It renews. It restores. It refreshes. And when Jesus is saying, "Wash one another's feet," He wasn't saying start a church ordinance. What He is saying is there's some people around you that need to be renewed, restored, and refreshed. They need your love. I'll tell you one thing you'll do, you'll never do. You'll never look down on anybody while you're washing their feet, amen? You just can't do it.

I mean, you see, this is humility. Here is Simon Peter in front of a fisherman. I mean, Jesus kneeling in front of a fisherman, Simon Peter, and washing his feet.

We'll use this text Sunday when we're talking about kindness. Paul said in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 32: "Be ye kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." That is, "You wash one another's feet," Jesus saying. "Forgive one another, even as I have forgiven you."

And so, in these last days, I'm going to stumble. You're going to stumble. I'm going to get tired. I'm going to be, need to be renewed. You're going to need to be renewed. And so, let's walk in humility, not lording it over one another. But walk in humility,

servicing one another. And when we do, when we do, God's just going to keep pouring His grace out. As I humbly accommodate myself to you, as I submit to you, and as you submit to me, God's going to say, "Hey, I don't have to resist that person. I can trust him. I can just keep on giving him blessings. I can keep on pouring out power on him because he's trustworthy."

Someone has said that there is nothing that puts a person more out of the devil's reach than genuine humility. God can trust a humble person, and it's incredible what God will pour out into the life of a humble person. And, again, humility is not, not denigrating yourself, ah, not putting yourself down; it is saying, "I know who I am, but that doesn't matter. I lay that aside, just as Jesus laid aside His garments and, and girded Himself with a towel, that He might store one another."

I want you to learn something, friend. If you're not humble, it is not that you miss a blessing. That would be bad enough. But if I read this verse correctly, if you're not humble, you're got God for an adversary. Read it. God resisteth the proud. It's bad enough if God just stood aside and said, "Do it yourself, son." But the proud person has God as an adversary. Why? Because pride is just the opposite of submission. And you're never more like the devil than when you're proud. It was pride that made the devil the devil as he rebelled against God.

You want to hang tough in rough times? Well, then, you're going to have to be clothed with humility. You're not going to make it without humility in these days.

### III. Serenity

All right. Now there's a third thing that you're going to need, and that's not only submission and humility, but it is a quiet spirit. I'm going to call it serenity. Look, if you will, in verse 7. He says, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

Now Peter didn't tell these people they were not going to have care. He told them. In the verses that I read to you in chapter 4, hard times are coming. Now what do you do with it? Well, you can carry it or you can cast it. You just cast it upon Him. The word *care* here means "anxiety."

Now, we are to cast our cares upon Him. Look at the word *cast*. The word *cast* here is a word that speaks of a firm, deliberate act. It is a decisive, thought-out act. It speaks of doing something forcefully; not just putting a burden down and, and whimpering and trying to walk away from it. It is taking that burden and saying, "Lord, I place it on You. I place it on You." Cast all of your burden, not some of it, all your care, all your anxiety upon Him, for He careth for you.

Now when we worry, that's a contradiction of verse 7. When we worry, it's our way of saying, "God, You may care for me, but You're not able, even though You do care. Lord, I can't afford to put all this burden on You. Yeah, I must, Lord, carry a part of this

burden because, Lord, You're not big enough, You're not strong enough, You're not wise enough, You're not loving enough to carry it."

I want to confess from personal experience that it's one of the hardest things in the world to do is cast all of your burden on Him, isn't it? It's so hard to do.

But now, Simon Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says, "Look. In these tough times, take that burden and deliberately, decisively, knowingly with both hands, put it on Him. Why? Because He careth for you! Now sometimes we do that and, and then we take it back. Have you ever done that? I've done it dozens of times in the last few months. I just have to recommit, just recommit.

My pastor, when I was a kid in Florida, Alan Watson, told about getting on an airplane one time. And he was sitting down with a lady next to him. And they were in a conversation. And they got in one of these fierce storms where the airplane just bounces all around. Have you ever been on one like that? I've been on quite a few of them like that. I mean, you just think it's going to shake apart. And he was sitting there reading a book. And her knuckles were white. She's biting her lip. She's whimpering. She's afraid it, this is it, you know. And he's just reading that book.

After a while, she turned to him. She didn't know he was a pastor, a preacher. She said, "Aren't you afraid?" And he said to her, he said, "Madam, before I got on this airplane, I committed my life into the hands of my heavenly Father." But then, he said, "I will have to confess, that since we've been up there I have reminded Him about that several times." And I can say amen to that.

Now, serenity. We have to cast in on God, and maybe sometimes just remind Him that we've done it.

#### **IV. Vigilance**

All right. Now, next, of vigilance. Put vigilance in your survival kit. Continue to read here. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

Now, what he's saying is to be carefree is not to be careless. What he is saying is here that there are some real dangers. And Peter gives us a three-fold guide here in dealing with the devil, how to be vigilant.

First of all, we need to recognize him. He's called our adversary. He's called the devil. Now you probably do not realize how many things happen to you because of your adversary, how many things the devil has lined up against you and pulled off on you. You have an enemy. The Bible says he is an adversary.

Suppose you were walking through a wooded area tonight and you knew there was a wild, hungry, ravenous, ferocious lion in those woods. How would you feel? Would you be looking around? Of course, you would. "Be sober, be vigilant; your adversary, as

a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour.” He’s on the prowl.

Now the reason he’s your adversary is, primarily, he’s God’s adversary. But he knows he can’t get at God, so evil persons have always known if you can’t harm someone, harm someone that someone loves and you’ve harmed that someone anyway. Isn’t that true? And so, if he can’t get directly at God, he’ll try to get at you in order to get at God. So recognize him. He is an adversary. He is the devil. Devil means, “one who is casting malevolent actions at others.”

All right. Now not only recognize him, but respect him. I didn’t say admire him. I said respect him. Notice what he says. He says here, “Be sober, be vigilant....” Recognize him and respect him.

Peter knew whereof he spoke. Jesus had warned Peter, “Peter, Satan has desired you, that he might sift you as wheat.” And He said, “Peter, watch and pray, lest you fall into temptation.” But Peter was sleeping in the Garden of Gethsemane rather than watching and praying. And this ravenous lion swallowed him down. Peter remembered that. Now, folks, I want to tell you, Satan is on the prowl today.

In Los Angeles, Richard Ramirez, the night stalker, is convicted of multiple crimes of rape and murder. At his arraignment, this man, who has been convicted of all of these horrible crimes as the night stalker, yells out in the courtroom, “Hail, Satan!”

In New York, Richard Bekowitz, some years ago known as the Son of Sam, and in Texas, Henry Lee, are convicted of mass murders. Both of them confessed that they had taken part in satanic blood rituals.

In Massachusetts, satanic cult members murder a 20 year-old woman, slit her throat, then cut off her head and use it for a soccer ball. That’s in the United States.

In Cave Junction, Missouri, three high school seniors are convicted of beating a classmate to death during a satanic ritual. At their trial, the defense emphasizes their obsession with Satanism, drugs, and heavy metal music, which urged devil worship, suicide, and murder. The defense said, “Well, have mercy on them. They were into devil worship.”

Recently in Matamoros, Mexico, a satanic cult of drug smugglers slaughter, sacrifice, and apparently cannibalize twelve persons, ate them, including Mark Kilroy, an innocent tourist and a U. S. college student.

Are these isolated instances? Perhaps. But let me give you the testimony of an expert witness. The Director of Child and Adolescent, ah, Unit at the University of South Florida Psychiatry Center said this, and I quote: “Ten years ago, I never saw cases related to Satanism. Now it is reaching epidemic proportions. For the kids who are on the edge of this incredibly, for the kids who are on the edge of this, on the edge, this is incredibly dangerous. Some of these kids will go out and kill their mothers and their fathers. It is an offering to the devil. They feel it makes them powerful.”

Greg Bobb, detective on the Crestwood, Missouri Police Department, said and I quote: “As far as I’m concerned, there’s enough activity with satanic overtones going all over, going on all over the St. Louis area to warrant police concern and action.”

And I could read more, but I don’t want to glorify the devil either with these stories. But just enough to let you know, dear friend, there are two ways that Satan appears. One is a roaring lion; the other is an angel of light. One way is to intimidate you; the other is to entice you. And many Christians are going down either way. They’re failing to understand that Satan is an adversary. He is real.

Now you’re to recognize him. You’re to respect him. But you are to resist him. “Whom resist...” he says. Look at it. “...steadfast in the faith...” “Greater is He that’s in you than he that’s in the world.”

You see, how are you to resist him? Steadfast in the faith. There are many people who are trying to fight the devil in the strength of the flesh. And Jesus told....let’s go back to Simon Peter. Simon Peter knew what it was to be swallowed down by the enemy, didn’t he? But Simon Peter was sleeping when he should have been praying. And then, when the enemy came into the garden to take Jesus, Simon Peter reached up, drew his sword, smote off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest, trying to do spiritual work in the energy of the flesh. All he did was to do a poor job of swordsmanship and mess up the whole deal and give the name of Jesus a bad reputation. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual. Later on, on the Day of Pentecost, he used the sword of the Spirit and slew 3,000, but only cut them alive and not cut them dead, and brought them to the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **V. Stability**

All right. Now, last of all. If you’ll take these other four elements that I’ve talked about here, submission, humility, the idea of sobriety or, or the idea of vigilance, and then the idea of serenity, they’ll all bring you down to the bottom line, which is verse 10, which is stability. “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that you’ve suffered a while....” He doesn’t say that you’re not going to suffer. “...after you’ve suffered a while, make you perfect (that is, mature), establish, strengthen, settle you.” And the way He’s going to do it is by His grace, the God of all grace. And here’s what His grace is going to do:

God’s grace is going to make you fit. Notice what it says here. “...after you’ve suffered a while, make you perfect...” The word here for perfect has the idea of restoration. It’s really, it has the idea of mending a net. He’s going to put you back together. His grace is going to make you fit. And then, look. “...establish you, or stablish you...”

Not only is His grace going to make you fit; it’s going to make you firm. You’re not

going to be blown around. You're going to be like these kids sang just a little while, "Just Hold On. Keep Your Eyes On Him. Don't Turn Back."

But not only is He going to make you fit and firm; it's going to make you forceful. He says, "....strengthen you...." You're going to have all of the strength that you need to hang tough when the going gets rough.

And not only is He going to make you forceful, but it's going to make you fixed. He's going to "....settle you." You're not going to be blown about by every wind of doctrine.

## **Conclusion**

You see, what our Lord is saying is, "Look. Tough times are coming." That's okay. That's okay. The grace of God is sufficient to make you fit, to make you firm, to make you forceful, to make you fixed. You're just going to stand. But you're not going to do it, dear friend, unless you have that humility, I mean, unless you have that submission, unless you have that humility, unless you have that serenity, unless you have that vigilance, you're not going to have that stability.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father God, I pray that You'll give to our church, to our families, to our teachers, our deacons, and our staff, dear God, great stability. That, Lord, in these days we'll not let up, or back up, or fold up, but, Lord, that we'll stand up and speak up and show up till we're taken up. In Jesus' name, amen.